



Mountain Equipment Shroud **£80**



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BEST BUY

OVERALL ★★★★★

MATERIALS Polartec 100 microfleece body, Polartec Power Stretch hood, cuffs, underarm and side panels
HOOD yes
FRONT CLOSURE full length zip with internal flap
POCKETS 2 chest, 1 inner
CUFFS Powerstretch, thumb loops
SIZES Men: S-XL, women: 8-16
WEIGHT 396g (Large)
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN China

THE MAIN DIFFERENCE between garments made from similar fabrics lies in the design and here Mountain Equipment has got it just right with the rather disturbingly named Shroud (I know it's a famous Alpine climb but there are other meanings!). Firstly the garment combines two of the lightest fleece fabrics, with slightly warmer Polartec 100 on the body and stretchy Power Stretch under the arms and down the sides for freedom of movement and fast wicking. There's a close-fitting Power Stretch hood too, which is warm and fits neatly under a waterproof jacket hood. The Shroud also has big chest pockets that will hold maps and are at the right angle to make good handwarmers. The pockets are mesh-lined for ventilation. The fit is on the dose side and I needed a Large size rather than my usual Medium. The weight is higher than alternatives with simpler designs but they don't have hoods. There are less expensive fleeces too, but they don't have the fabric mix or the features of the Shroud.

- ✓ fabric combination, hood, pockets
- ✗ nothing

Mountain Equipment 0161 366 5020
www.mountainequipment.co.uk

EDZ Cold Climate Yeti **£80**



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BEST BUY

OVERALL ★★★★★

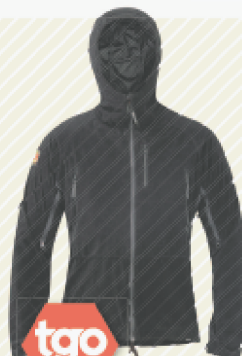
MATERIALS 400g of double-sided polyester fleece
HOOD no
FRONT CLOSURE full-length zip
POCKETS 2 handwarmer, 2 inner
CUFFS elasticised, thumb loops
SIZES men: S-XXL, women: 8-18
WEIGHT 514g
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN China

THIS IS A GORGEOUS fleece and one of the warmest I have ever worn. It has a thick shaggy pile on both sides that is wonderfully soft and luxurious. The design is simple with just non-zip handwarmer pockets, open-topped inner pockets (useful for keeping gloves or hat warm), a high neck and thumb loops. The warmth means this isn't a garment for wearing while walking, except in bitter sub-zero temperatures, so a basic design is fine. Where it's excellent is for putting on at rest stops and wearing in camp. The weight is okay given the warmth. It is bulky when packed and takes up a fair amount of room in the rucksack. The price is excellent for such a warm and comfortable fleece. EDZ is a small Cumbrian company and the Cold Climate Yeti is the only fleece it makes. There's nothing like getting it right first time. If you want a fleece for warmth in the coldest weather, you can't beat this one.

- ✓ warmth, softness, cost
- ✗ slightly bulky

EDZ Outdoor
 01900 810260 www.edzlayering.com

Páramo Summit Hoodie **£117.50**



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RECOMMENDED

OVERALL ★★★★★

MATERIALS Nikwax Analogy Fleece
HOOD yes, adjustable
FRONT CLOSURE full length zip with internal flap
POCKETS 2 handwarmer chest, 1 small chest
CUFFS elasticised
SIZES S-XL
WEIGHT 553g
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN Colombia

THIS is made from an unusual fleece fabric with a smooth inner face and a soft raised outer face. It's designed to act like the inner layer of a Páramo waterproof garment, pushing moisture away from the body, and has a water repellent treatment to reduce absorbency. The Summit Hoodie can be combined with the Fuera Windproof, which it's designed to fit inside, to produce a fully waterproof system. I found the combination too warm to test this properly in autumn but I intend doing so during the winter. Of course, the wicking and fast-drying properties of the Summit Hoodie will work under any outer layer. The design is good, with a snug adjustable hood and handwarmer pockets accessible when wearing a pack hipbelt, though these aren't big enough for maps. There are long underarm zips for ventilation. Warmth is about the same as other thin fleeces but the weight is quite a bit higher. The price is high too. Even so, this can be recommended for both the design and the fabric.

- ✓ hood, pockets
- ✗ quite heavy for warmth, expensive

Páramo
 0189 378 6444 www.paramo.co.uk

Icebreaker Sierra Half-Zip **£120**



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RECOMMENDED

OVERALL ★★★★★

MATERIALS 260g/m² merino wool
HOOD no
FRONT CLOSURE 1/2 length zip, internal flap
POCKETS one sleeve
CUFFS plain
SIZES men S-3XL
WEIGHT 446g (Large)
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN China

JUST IN CASE you think fleece has to be synthetic, Icebreaker calls the wool used for the Sierra Half Zip RealFleece. This has a smooth outer and a fluffy raised pile inner that feels very soft. The design is basic – just a sweater with a zip neck. There's a tiny pocket on one sleeve that isn't really much use and that's it for features. The high collar is snug and warm and made of double fabric so it doesn't sag. The zip isn't actually half-length but is long enough for getting it on and off and for some ventilation. The warmth is somewhere between the thinnest synthetic fleece and a medium thickness one. I find it warm enough for sitting round at 10°C and could only wear it under a shell when walking in much colder weather. Like other merino garments it should remain smell-free on long trips. The weight is a little heavy compared with synthetic alternatives and the price is high but this is a lovely garment if you prefer wool to polyester.

- ✓ merino wool, soft feel, odour resistant
- ✗ quite heavy, expensive

Icebreaker
 0157 377 3437 www.icebreaker.com

WIC: weights are for a men's medium size unless stated otherwise