

**SKI LAB
TRIED &
TESTED**



MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR SNOWTASTIC JACKET & PANTS

TESTED BY NICOLA

The first thing I noticed about the Snowtastic jacket and pants, besides the unusual colours (a refreshing change from the slap-you-round-the-face primary colours that have taken over the clothing rails in recent years), was the feel of the fabric; soft shells can often feel slightly stiff, but here Mountain Hardwear has managed to create a material so soft and supple you could happily wrap a newborn baby in it.

The material in question is Mountain Hardwear's Dry.Q Elite fabric. Unlike traditional waterproof-breathable fabrics, Dry.Q Elite doesn't require humidity to trigger its breathability – it breathes instantly, allowing air, and moisture, to pass outward through the fabric (a similar concept to Polartec's NeoShell).

I tested the kit during an unseasonably warm week in March and considering I didn't need to open the vents

(good-sized pit zips on the jacket; three-quarter-length exterior zips on the pants) all day, I'd say it works.

I didn't test the gear in really cold/windy conditions, but judging how lightweight the material is, I'd opt for decent thermals/mid layer underneath when the mercury drops. Sonic welded seams keep moisture from seeping in on wet days.

I can never have too many pockets. The jacket has plenty – exterior pockets that are actually big enough to put stuff in (not always the case), as well as two stash pockets and a zipped valuables pocket inside. Oh, and a ski pass pocket on the arm. It also has a removable, adjustable powder skirt for deep days and a fixed hood.

My favourite feature of the pants (besides the aforementioned mega vents) are the kick patches – oversized and re-enforced to stand up to several seasons' touring.



LOWDOWN

RRP: Jacket £385; pants £300

Verdict: One of the comfiest soft shell combos I've worn. Great for long days in the backcountry

Website: www.mountainhardwear.com

SNOKART KARGO

TESTED BY DICKIE

We've used SnoKart luggage for several seasons, and it's tough and well thought out. The Kargo is a good size and will take you over the 18kg budget airline limit fairly easily. We got around that by driving, so the seams were given a workout as it absorbed two pairs of boots and a load of batteries as well as clothing.

It's a two-part bag, with the smaller top half unzipping from the larger bottom. The top half has shoulder straps and the lower has wheels and a handle. Both bags can be accessed when you half-unzip the top. The carry straps also hold both bags together, so it's a pretty solid unit when everything is fastened. The outer zip is protected and there's a useful external pocket.

It holds its shape well when loaded, so can be stood up in a car boot, saving space. When empty it folds pretty flat though the base unit keeps its shape.

Size-wise it's 60 litres on the bottom, which is big enough for a weekend including boots, and 30 litres up top which makes for an easy week's worth of clobber.

This is relatively new so we can't comment on its durability, though the zips and material are

LOWDOWN

RRP: £129.99

VERDICT: Useful, tough, the right size.

WEBSITE: www.snokart.com

robust spec and we've seen them on ski bags that we've had for several seasons.

