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MISHMI TAKIN CAYAMBE SOFT SHELL JACKET

Test Series by Richard Lyon



Initial Report June 16, 2017
Field Report July 30, 2017
Long Term Report November 5, 2017

PERSONAL DETAILS and BACKPACKING BACKGROUND

Male, 70 years old
Height: 6' 4" (1.93 m)
Weight: 210 lb (95 kg)
Torso: 22.5 in (57 cm)
Sleeve: 36.5 in (93 cm)
Chest: 47 in (119 cm)
Waist: 37 in (94 cm)
Email address: Montana DOT angler AT gmail DOT com
Home: Outside Bozeman, Montana USA, in the Bridger Mountains

I've been backpacking for nearly half a century, most often in the Rockies. I do at least one weeklong trip every summer, and often take three-day trips. I'm usually camping in alpine terrain, at altitudes 5000 to 10000 ft (1500 - 3000 m). I prefer base camp backpacking, a long hike in with day trips from camp. Though always looking for ways to reduce my pack weight, I still tend to include my favorite camp conveniences. I always sleep in a floored tent and like hot meals. Summer adventures are often centered on flyfishing opportunities; winter on ski or ski touring.

INITIAL REPORT - June 16, 2017

THE PRODUCT

The name says it all - the Mishmi Cayambe Seam Taped Takin Cayambe Soft Shell Jacket is, well, a soft shell jacket that is seam-taped for improved waterproofing. The jacket takes its name from a town in Ecuador, said to be "the only place on [the E]quator with snow cover," underscoring that the jacket is "designed for aerobic activities in cold and wet conditions."

Manufacturer: Mishmi Takin, mishmitakin.com

Model: Cayambe Seam Taped Waterproof Soft Shell Jacket - Men's. Mishmi Takin also offers a Women's version.

Size: XL. Available in sizes S-XXL

Color: Blue Grey, the only one listed

Weight: listed 865 g (30.5 oz) for size large; measured 33.5 oz (950 g) for size XL

Dimensions, measured: torso (hem to bottom of hood) 32.5 in (83 cm), sleeve length 37.5 in (95 cm), waist 49.5 in (126 cm)

MSRP: \$300 US

Listed features: Two pack-compatible handwarmer pockets; Napoleon pocket; pit zips; fixed adjustable helmet; "water proof 3-layer 4-way stretch fabric;" YKK Aquaguard vision zippers; Velcro cuffs; hem cinch cuffs

Countries of origin: Designed in the European Union, manufactured in Vietnam

FIRST IMPRESSIONS



Out of the box the striking feature of the Cayambe is the seam taping, which is in colors contrasting sharply from the reserved but handsome blue-grey fabric. Reflective grey tape, 3/4 inch (2 cm) wide, runs around the jacket just above the hem, from the hem to the bottom of the handwarmer pockets, from the sleeve cuffs to the shoulder, around the sleeves four inches (10 cm) up from the cuff, around the top of the jacket at the bottom of the hood, around the jacket at sternum level, and all over the hood (see photo at left). The three outside pockets' zippers are taped in bright blue. That's a lot of tape! In addition to giving the jacket considerable panache, this design illustrates construction in a number of fabric panels that I hope will add to flexibility and comfort when wearing the jacket while exercising.

The waist hem may be adjusted by means of two toggles on the sides on the inside. The hood has three toggles. One at each side of the front, about three inches (7 cm) above the top of the zipper tracks. The third, at the middle of the rear of the hood, adjusts a separate elastic band. As advertised each sleeve has a Velcro adjuster at the cuff. An unlisted feature is a stretchy liner, with a thumb hole, at each sleeve cuff.

The Cayambe body has a sewn-in, non-removable fleece liner that extends through the hood.

All pockets are large, and there are also two non-zippered ones on the inside, each big enough for a folded-up climbing skin. A pit zip on each side runs 14.5 inches (37 cm) has double zippers to fine-tune adjustments, which I can do while wearing the jacket. Each zipper has a pull attached by a rubber pull and a knotted fabric.

All zipper are stout, all stitching sound, and the design well thought out and on first inspection consistent with the jacket's intended use.

FIT

I tried on the Cayambe with three different upper body garment combinations: a tee shirt; a long-sleeved base layer topped with a lightweight merino midlayer; and a long-sleeved base layer with a down midlayer. These represent, respectively, likely summer, shoulder season, and winter wear when hiking. The Cayambe's fit is snug but comfortable in the third, heaviest configuration, and slightly looser in the first two. I like this. I plan three-season use the Cayambe as an evening and rest-stop piece in three seasons and as a full insulating layer in winter, so an athletic fit should help keep the elements out.



FEATURES

All features match their listed description except the hood, which is a very tight fit over my ski helmet. I really like the size and location of the five pockets. The three outside pockets are placed to facilitate access when wearing a pack and as noted each has a generous capacity. The liner fleece is a bit on the heavy side, thicker and denser than the inside layer on other three-layer jackets that I own - appropriate for use in colder conditions.

WATERPROOFING

I had a chance to test this yesterday on a walk to my mailbox, about half a mile (1 km) from my home. I tried to time the trip between the rain showers that peppered the day, but on the way back I was caught in a heavy downpour. Thanks to the Cayambe I stayed completely dry from the waist up. I should also note that I was warm but not overheated in the cold, windblown rain. I didn't measure the temperature but my educated guess (borne out by snow on the hills about 500 ft/150 m above me) was about 35 F (2 C).

INITIAL LIKES

Design. I like the use of multiple panels for flexibility when I'm in motion. Pocket placement is great.

Lining. The Cayambe fits into a rare missing niche in my gear closet - a lined weatherproof performance jacket. I'm planning frequent use.

CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Small hood

FIELD REPORT - July 30, 2017

I have good news and bad news to report.

Bad news first. The Cayambe is too warm for my daytime summer use in the Northern Rockies, even over nothing more than a thin tee shirt. I have worn the jacket on three day hikes near home and an overnight backpack in Yellowstone National Park (Wyoming) in May and June. Hiking time temperatures ranged from an early-morning 50 F (10 C) to an afternoon high of 85 F (29 C), in mostly sunny weather, though there were a couple of rain squalls. I also packed the jacket for a fishing trip to the Soca Valley in Slovenia in mid-June, where the mercury rose to an unseasonable 90-95 F (22-25 C) in bright sunlight, interrupted by one ferocious thundershower.

Even use solely for protection from the rain (*i.e.* no exercise) simply doesn't suit me at these warmer temperatures. Hiking in the jacket at 80 F (27 C) made me uncomfortably warm, even with the pit zips wide open. One reason for this is the handwarmers, which limit air flow out the sleeves. But the real culprit is the liner itself, which I consider unnecessary at these higher temperatures. Wearing it while hiking in the rain at about 70 F (21 C) turned me into a sweatbox. As discussed below that doesn't mean poor wicking. This lined jacket is just too much insulation for me in those conditions.



Now the good news. The Cayambe just might have been designed for summer in Scotland. This jacket was perfect during four days' hiking in the Orkney Islands, off Scotland's northwest coast, in mid-July. The temperature didn't rise above 65 F (18 C). On three days it was sunny; on the fourth it reverted to drizzle and fog and a high not much above 55 F (13 C). Typical of the Atlantic Coast, it was windy, except for a hike on the Isle of Hoy when it was very windy - according to the locals, even windier than usual. I don't pack an anemometer but I'd estimate regular gusts up to 20 mph (30 km/hr), twice that on Hoy, whenever not sheltered by the terrain. Which was nearly all the time; except for Hoy, which looks much like the Highlands and offers occasional respite, the Orkneys are generally flat. The photo of this old man with the Old Man of Hoy (the sea stack, as they're called in Scotland) in the background may give some idea of the wind. Take a look at the front brim of my hat as I sit on the cliff.

In these conditions the Cayambe was ideal. The sleeve liners sealed in warmth and kept out the wind, and the liner allowed me to dispense with a midlayer on every sunny day. I'd regulate air flow with the front zipper and pit zips and never became overheated while hiking, and wasn't chilled by the gusts. This was true whether wearing my daypack or not. Nor was I chilled when I wore the jacket, zipped up to my chin, around town in the windy evenings at 50 F (10 C). The liner served its purpose quite well. (To be fair, it did so also in the evening and early morning in Yellowstone. It's a good jacket to wear around camp.)

Fit is good; I'm glad I didn't size up as Mishmi Taken suggested. I got a good athletic fit over a tee shirt (and on one day with a tee shirt and down sweater), with no constraint on arm movement.

Design. I really like the design and placement of the pockets. All are large. An item placed in one of the handwarmer pockets for protection from the rain settles right above the waist hem, which reduces the risk of something falling out and minimizes interference with the waist strap on my daypack. The Napoleon pocket is large enough for my mobile phone and an energy bar or two, and its zipper sits just to the right of my left pack strap for easy access. The inside non-zipper pocket is sized and placed just right for a folded-up map.

I confess to having some reservations about sleeve liners in a summer jacket, but they were gone after those windy days. In fact the liners make up for a sleeve length not quite equal to my overlong arms.

The hood fits nicely over a baseball cap, my Aussie-style bush hat, and my sun protector summer hat shown in the Old Man photo. It's easy to cinch down the hood to avoid losing a topper to the wind.

As for **waterproofing**, I've stayed dry so far. The only heavy weather came in Scotland, on a brief downpour on the drizzly day and several drenchings on ferry rides between islands. The latter proved a fine test. My hiking pants were soaked through completely; sea water rolled right off the Cayambe. I'm not saying that I'll risk intentional exposure to sustained precipitation, but early signs are promising.

Wicking when in service on the Scottish days was excellent. While keeping me warm in the gusts I didn't notice any perspiration build-up when I was hiking up Moorfea Hill en route to the Old Man. Nor did I have to pack a wet jacket. After ditching my pack the back was slightly damp but it was completely dry fifteen minutes later.

Care. The Cayambe hasn't been to the laundry yet. I'll try to do a test wash before I conclude this Test Report. To date I've noticed no stains or unseemly odors.

LONG TERM REPORT - November 5 , 2017

Field Conditions. Late summer and early autumn have brought cooler and more varied weather to the Northern Rockies. Since posting my Field Report I have worn the Cayambe on half a dozen day hikes and a backpacking trip in Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, over the three-day Labor Day weekend (early September). On the latter trip the weather was fair, temperatures reaching 85 F [29 C] during the day but dipping to 40 F [4 C] at night. While hiking the Cayambe was folded up and stuffed into the shovit pocket on the front of my pack, but it came out for use once we arrived at our campsite. I usually wore it in place of, rather than in addition to, a sweater, regulating temperature with the front and underarm zippers.

Day hiking has taken place in the Gallatin, Absaroka, and Bridger Mountains near my home, in fair and foul weather. It's been as warm as 85 F [29 C] and as cold as 18 F [-8 C], from blue skies to heavy overcast and fog, and occasionally in rain, snow, sleet, and various combinations of all of the above. At temperatures above 50 F [10 C] the jacket was in my pack unless it was gusty, but at colder temperatures I wore it over a tee shirt, tee shirt plus merino sweater, or tee shirt plus down sweater.

I have also worn the Cayambe when fishing in the Northern Rockies, as described in more detail in the following section. Temperatures from 70 to 31 F [21 to -1 C], in wind, rain, snow, and fair weather. Except for the coldest days I wore the jacket over a merino or cotton tee shirt, adding a sweater on colder occasions.

On a recent business trip I managed a free weekend in Gstaad, Switzerland, and got in some good hiking, but at about 65 F (18 C) it was too warm for the Cayambe. Later on the trip, though, I put the jacket to use as everyday wear at a conference in Portland, Maine. Weather was overcast or rainy at 50-60 F (10-16 C). Unfortunately I didn't have enough free time to check out any Atlantic Coast beaches or trails.

I've also been wearing the Cayambe on early morning dog walks and outdoor chores, and for casual wear around town. The coldest temperature has been 18 F [-8 C] and as noted the weather has been variable.



Performance. Without downplaying this jacket's utility on the trail or in camp, I've appreciated it the most when fishing. Some of the best fishing in Montana (and therefore the world) occurs in autumn, and until very recently I've had less travel and therefore more opportunities to wet a line. Much of this took place in the Yellowstone River Valley, known as Paradise Valley for its scenery and infamous for frequent and ferocious winds. Flyfishing has been described, sarcastically but reasonably accurately, as standing in the water waving a stick. The point is that it's less aerobic than hiking or mountain biking. For that reason and to adjust his casting to take account of the wind, this angler tends to notice the wind and weather more when fishing than when hiking. And catching (as opposed to fishing) often improves as the weather deteriorates, so bad hiking weather can be great fishing weather. In the past six weeks I've walk-waded the Yellowstone, Gallatin, and Madison Rivers and a couple of nearby spring creeks when the mercury was near freezing and snow and sleet falling. The Cayambe has been great. The sleeve liners keep out the wind and the athletic fit keeps me warm as I chase the wily trout.

Water repellency is as good as I've ever encountered with a jacket marketed as a soft shell. Though I have yet to test its mettle in sustained heavy rain, the Cayambe has done nothing with precipitation but repel it - no leaks, no wetting out, no soggy spots. Not a drop has penetrated through to me. The liners at the cuffs began to get saturated at the end of a long day's fishing, but I doubt that can be avoided.

This jacket has been especially durable; it truly looks like new after several months' use and abuse on the trail. I gave it a careful inspection immediately before posting this report. Not only did I discover no loose threads, fraying, or other signs of wear and tear, there were no marks from brushing rocks, tree branches, or other trail obstacles. Also no odors from perspiration. I have washed the jacket once, using non-detergent soap on a gentle cycle, with cold water, followed by air drying on a hanger. This was more for testing purposes than from necessity. I can happily report no shrinkage.

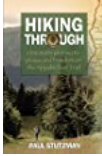






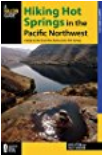
For my outdoor requirements the Cayambe is really terrific within its temperature range - depending upon midlayers worn, from 18-50 F (-8 to 10 C). It keeps me warm and dry and definitely keeps out the wind. What more can one expect from a jacket? It fits comfortably over a variety of upper body garments. The jacket has held up wonderfully to everyday trail hazards .

My only reservations are that, for me at least, this jacket is just too warm for me at normal Montana summer temperatures, and that I find it a bit on the bulky side. It doesn't pack down as efficiently as a rain shell or down sweater, or even those two items together. I emphasize that these are minor matters that detract very little from a very versatile and functional jacket.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My Test Report ends here. My thanks to Mishmi Takin and BackpackGearTest.org for the opportunity to test the Cayambe.

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