

## Traveler's Gear Box: A Tale Of Shell Jackets

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By Kurt Repanshek (/users/repanshek) on March 2nd, 2016

Spend enough time outdoors in the national parks, and you'll need a good shell jacket that sheds water, both that falling from the sky and that which your body generates when active. While many jackets do a good job of keeping you dry from falling precipitation, many aren't quite as efficient with venting your perspiration. But a new line of shells from **Mishmi Takin** (<http://mishmitakin.com/#homepage>) seems to have solved that vexing problem.

Kapil Dev Singh began his search for the answer while hiking in the eastern Himalayas. Part of the problem was the humidity. His gear just couldn't vent his body heat and prevent it from condensing on the inside of his jacket. With a background as an MIT-educated engineer and a stint working with the Clinton Foundation on supply chain issues, Dev Singh set out to find a shell jacket construction that would provide the breathability needed in humid areas of the world.

"We need to get the moisture out as fast as we can," he told me earlier this year. "The idea is to maximize breathability."



Mishmi Takin founder Kapil Dev Singh has developed a series of shell jackets designed to maximize breathability in an effort to cut down on the condensation that can build up on the inside of jackets when you're exerting yourself/Mishmi Takin

The problem, explains Dev Singh, is that in humid climates the humidity difference between the outside air and that next to your body beneath the shell is not great enough to substantially drive breathability. To solve that issue, his new company relies on a proprietary membrane known commercially as eVent. It utilizes "millions of microscopic pores" to help speed venting.

The eVent membrane is used in this new company's top-of-the-line jacket, the Virunga (MSRP \$375), which takes its name from Africa's oldest national park. Other jackets in the line, notably the Salonga (MSRP \$300), also are breathable, but not quite up to the task if you're working hard. I tested both while hiking and snowshoeing in Utah, which normally has a very dry climate, and the Salonga didn't live up to my expectations. The first 20 minutes or so were on a gradual uphill that had me huffing and firing my internal furnace. The jacket does have lengthy "pit zips" and a generous vent between your shoulders, but they couldn't keep up with my exertion. That said, the company is leaning against releasing the Salonga this fall due to concerns about the fabric's performance raised by field testers.

The Virunga, though, was a night-and-day difference. On several snowshoe outings that featured a variety of exertion, this jacket did an excellent job of breathing to keep me dry on the inside. Like the Salonga, the Virunga employs pit zips with two pulls so you can really customize your venting.

The 88 small holes between your shoulders (they are covered by a flap on the outside so moisture can't enter the jacket through them) serve almost like a drain for your body's heat output; this was the one area of the jacket where a small amount of moisture built up, but it was inconsequential. There also are vent holes at the top of the jacket by your neck, but they would only come into play if you zipped the jacket all the way closed.

Why the difference in performance? In order to provide shell jackets at a range of price points, Mishmi Takin didn't use the eVent membrane in the Salonga.

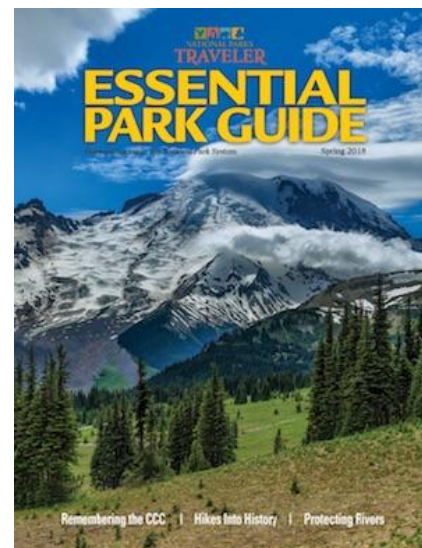


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"Instead of worrying about breathability ratings, we focus on maximizing air exchange across the garment," explained Dev Singh. "So, we use air permeable fabrics which allow a small amount of exchange through the fabric. Then, we add in as many physical venting options as possible - laser cut vents in front and back, pit zips, core vents through mesh lined pockets. It is a combination of using the direct venting eVent DV Storm fabric along with the large number of physical venting options which makes the difference."

Beyond the venting performance of the two jackets, what also comes through is their cut. The tail extends to more fully cover your butt, and the cuffs are tapered a bit longer over the top of your wrist. The colors are eye-catching - men won't get lost in a snowstorm wearing the Salonga in "Tomato Red" (other colors are Teal for both men and women or Bright Rose for women) -- while the men's version of the Virunga comes in a steel grey with bright green and blue taping on the zippers. The women's version comes in pink.

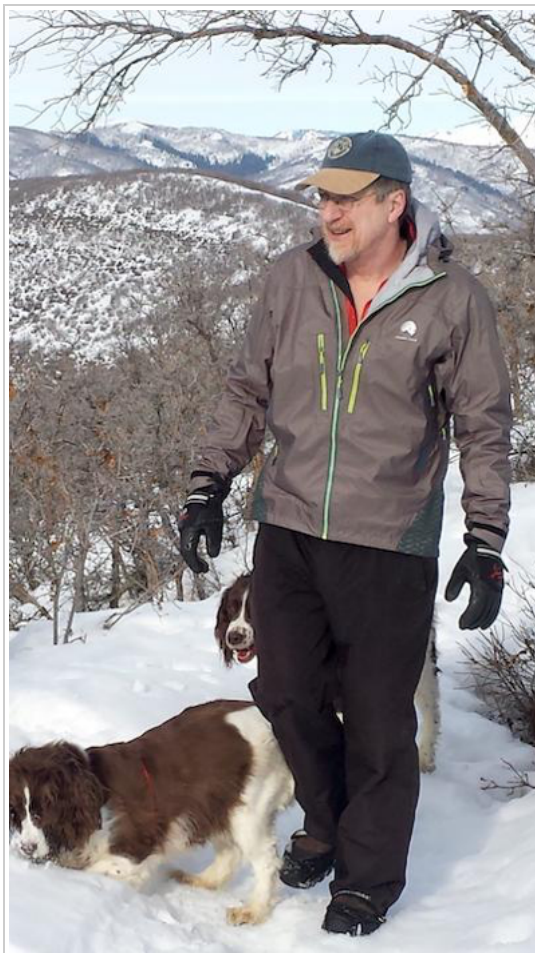
Both have attached hoods that are said to be "helmet compatible," and while the hood did go over my ski helmet, I couldn't zip the jacket all the way to the top. But then, if the conditions required me to pull the hood over my helmet, I probably would get off the slopes. That said, I've learned that the company's testers noted the same issue, and the production models addressed that with larger hoods.

It's refreshing to see a new, independent company enter the outdoor industry. Mishmi Takin, which takes its name from an endangered goat-antelope native to India, Myanmar and the People's Republic of China, strives to produce jackets that perform well not only in the Western world, but also in countries where conditions are, frankly, damper and warmer and thus create more issues with breathability of garments, Dev Singh told me.

As an aside that should interest park travelers, the shell jackets are named after national parks. As noted above, Virunga was named for its namesake national park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the Salonga for Salonga National Park, also in the DRC; the Garamba for another national park in the DRC; and the Sapu for a national park in Liberia.

Another jacket I tried from Mishmi Takin was one of their soft shells, the Misti (MSRP \$150). Wind- and water-resistant and fitted with generous pit zips, this jacket is good for knocking around town and day hikes without a lot of exertion.

The company also is coming out with a line of footwear with the same approach to breathability. We haven't yet had the opportunity to test these.



The Virunga jacket from Mishmi Takin performed exceptionally in venting body heat and preventing condensation/Marcelle Shoop

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Submitted by [ecbuck \(/users/ecbuck\)](#) on March 2, 2016 - 8:47am. [\(/comment/54683#comment-54683\)](#)  
Styling Kurt. You even have the "skinny arm" pose. Abel Van Oeveren look out. ;)

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Submitted by [e271828](#) on March 2, 2016 - 11:48am. [\(/comment/54684#comment-54684\)](#)  
It is NOT refreshing to see yet more women's outdoor merchandise in (\*&#@\$@! pink.

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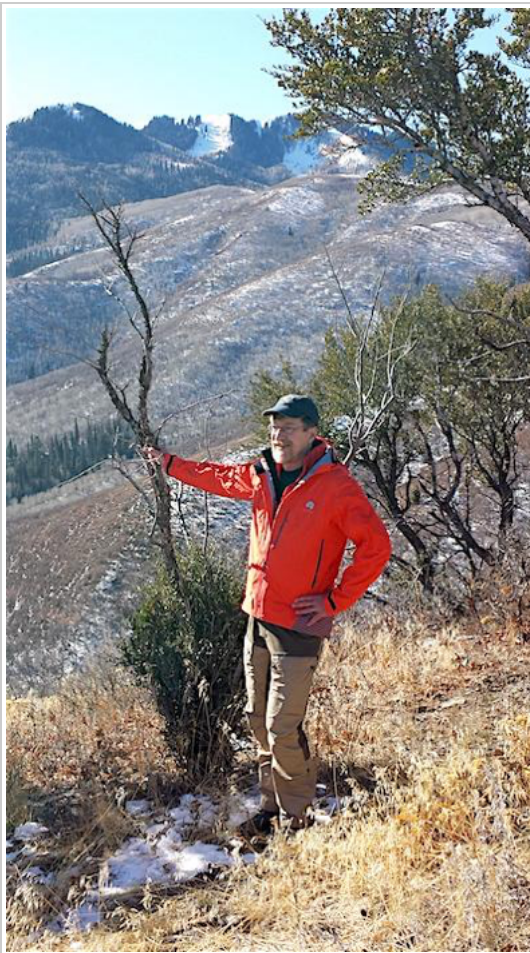
Submitted by Kapil on March 4, 2016 - 10:14am.

Hi e271828, I am Kapil, the founder of Mishmi Takin. I completely share your sentiment regarding Pink. We ended up on Pink due to some unavoidable circumstances during the sampling process. But, you can bet that this is going to change soon. We are working to get atleast one more color for women by the time the product comes out in market in fall. If you take a look at our entire line at mishmitakin.com , you will see that this jacket is the only one with Pink color in our otherwise very colorful lineup.

Thanks for your feedback,

Kapil

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The Salonga jacket doesn't perform quite as well as the Virunga when it comes to breathability, but protects you well from the elements/Marcelle Shoop

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