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APRIL 2006

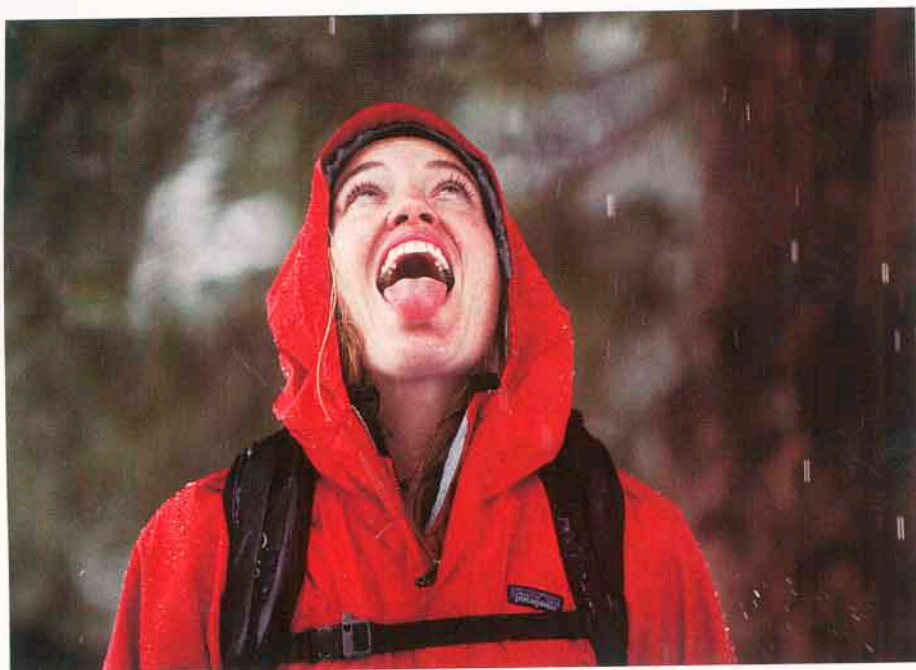
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SPRING STYLE
AT LATITUDE ZERO

WILD ROADS
NEW MEXICO

KEEP DRY
ON THE TRAIL



The Wet Look

A downpour can defeat even the best rainproof gear. Here's how pros keep the cats and dogs (and hypothermia) at bay. BY JONATHAN BLUM

For Peter Whittaker, co-owner of Rainier Mountaineering, Inc., in Washington's Cascade Range, staying warm and dry requires a bit of resource management. "In lots of rescues on Mount Rainier, I've seen, time and again, people overestimating what their gear can do," he says. "They get soaked and push on when they should stop. Moisture ups your exposure to the wind, so even a light breeze sucks out your body heat." Whittaker has guided more than 60,000 people safely up and down one of the wettest places in the U.S. (with 126 inches of annual precipitation). His bottom line is simple: "Gore-Tex is great, but it's best to temper the techno-gear babble with some common sense."

WHAT TO GET * Protect Your Dry Zone



www.mountainhardwear.com
\$80

MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR FTX VENTIGAITER Durable and waterproof, these full-length gaiters cinch above the calves and have vents on the sides to keep your hoofs cool once the skies clear.



www.golite.com
\$30

GOLITE CHROME DOME Your friends may snicker as you traipse down the trail like a backcountry Mary Poppins. But this light (ten ounces), yet sturdy trekking umbrella gives you the last laugh.



www.hellyhansen.com
\$55

HELLY HANSEN ESSENTIAL JACKET Even the priciest rain gear doesn't work if you leave it behind, which is why this waterproof, polyurethane-coated shell is so invaluable: It packs down to the size of a softball.



CORE KNOWLEDGE *

Whittaker's Wisdom
How Mount Rainier's main man weathers the storm

BAG IT.

"I'll have 3,000 people climbing with me this summer. And I insist that they bring half a dozen three-mil trash bags to keep their sleep system, food—heck, even their underwear—dry."

TREASURE IT.

"I see hikers go to their dry stuff when it starts to drizzle. That's a major mistake. Your dry stuff is like gold. Keep it for when you're drenched."

BRING GAITER AID.

"Knee-high models are best and lighter than a pair of wet socks. Wear them under your pants so the rain can't seep inside the gaiter and down into your boots. You'd be surprised how many people get that wrong."

SOAK IT UP *



PLUNGE IN: The weather descends on Strathcona, British Columbia.

* **MOUNT RAINIER, WASHINGTON** On a three-day summit climb with Rainier Mountaineering, Inc. (\$795; www.miguide.com), you'll get a tutorial in basic climbing skills and a guided ascent up the signature peak of the lower 48.

* **STRATHCONA PROVINCIAL PARK, VANCOUVER ISLAND, BRITISH COLUMBIA** Rugged, remote, and prone to frequent downpours, this park (\$5 a day for a permit; www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks) is a sodden paradise of hiking trails, biking singletrack, and frigid, mist-shrouded waterfalls.

PHOTOGRAPHS: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: WOODS WHEATCROFT; FRANK CARTER/LOVELY PLANET IMAGES; COURTESY OF HELLY HANSEN; COURTESY OF GOLITE; COURTESY OF MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR. ILLUSTRATION BY AARON ASHLEY