

## Clothing

### Layers!

Consider the clothing that you wear as a collection of barriers. If all you had to wear was a fantastic, heavy coat, you would still be cold. The best way to keep warm is to trap air between layers of clothing. Of course, if you are too warm, and perhaps anyway, you will sweat. If sweat pools on your body, then you will get colder - as per the design, yes? Great, but in extreme cold this is uncomfortable, or even dangerous.

You should design your daily clothing around a base layer, a mid or insulation layer and outer layer. In Arctic conditions, you would probably use a secondary layer between base and mid. On warmer days it is easy to shed a layer.

### Base Layer

Typically, this is quite a thin layer of clothing - like pyjamas almost. Things have come a long way since your Grandma squeezed your Grandad's long johns through a mangle though. If you are a stranger to base layers, you should look for items that are made from Merino Wool. My favourites are made by Lundhags - yes, they are Swedish! Their base layers are 100% Merino Wool which means that they do not itch and are excellent at 'wicking' away moisture from the skin. I do know that other base layers using a low mix of Merino and other fibres can cause itching. There are some superb items out there with Scandinavian brands at a premium, but readily available through the Internet. For the most recent Arctic Trip, I bought some Trekmates base wear locally which was really good.

I, being a reasonably clean soul, change my underwear daily when at home. It is worth knowing that wool, being naturally anti-bacterial can be worn on consecutive days without alienating your traveling companions.

### Mid or Insulation Layer

At the risk of getting shot by the adventurer-police, I would say that for less extreme conditions, the mid layer is not so critical. Usually a fleece top, or woollen shirt will suffice. Of course, you may choose to wear two thin mid layers - perhaps a couple of T-Shirts. This allows you to lose a layer if you start to get warm. Two thin mid layers are usually warmer than a single thick layer due to the efficiency created by trapping air.

### Outer or Shell Layer

This layer is responsible for keeping you dry in the case of rain, or protected from the wind. If your other layers are up to snuff, a reasonably light jacket will do and some 'outdoor' trousers. I have been very impressed with trousers made by Fjallraven and Laksen. Laksen's range includes trousers with a built-in liner which makes them warmer and less of a shock to put on in the morning. ;)

### Cotton - the work of the devil - cast it out and sin no more!

A word about cotton. You should avoid layers with high cotton content. When it gets wet, it doesn't dry easily. It tends to hold moisture next to the skin which is uncomfortable. Finally, jeans do not make good outdoor trousers - despite their popularity. They get wet easily and offer no insulation at all. Having said that, you will still catch me wearing jeans on warmer days. But mostly on all but the most extreme Winter trips, I wear trousers made by Fjallraven which are breathable and waterproof.