

Waterproof Touring Boots Compared

Six brand-name touring models are run through the wringer *by Scott Rousseau*



Day & Night photos of (left to right) the Alpinestars Roam WP, BMW Allround, Dainese Pannier ST, Gaerne G. King, Sidi Stivali Traffic Rain and Sidi Way rain boots. Four of the six passed our soak test.

MOST MOTORCYCLISTS DON'T swim in their boots (we hope!), and not everyone lives in Seattle, but it's nice to know that you can count on your boots to keep your feet warm and dry if you should find yourself caught out in the rain while riding. A lot of manufacturers claim to offer affordable

waterproof boots, but there's nothing worse than blowing your hard-earned money on a new pair, only to find out those claims are baloney when Mother Nature turns ugly.

So we invited several reputable boot manufacturers to let us put their waterproof boots to the test. Being our thrifty selves, we set a hard cap of \$250 retail. All the manufacturers stepped up but one; Tour Master was unable to participate because its boot was on back order.

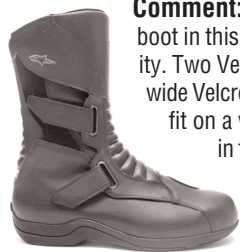
Our test consisted of riding in each boot model (of course) but also walking in them for a considerable distance to truly determine fit and comfort. For repeatability, both tests were conducted with the same medium-weight Road Gear Coconut socks. To determine their water resistance, each model was subjected to a five-minute soak in a "kiddie pool" filled with 8.5" of water while the rider wore them. A fresh, dry pair of cotton socks was used for each pair of boots, and we also rechecked the boots the next morning to determine if residual moisture had worked its way into their linings. This portion of the comparison was pass/fail, meaning a model received five points for passing or one point for failing. We also evaluated their night-time conspicuity (photo at left) by shining the headlights of an SUV at them in the dark from a distance of 50'.

What we learned was that most of these boots pack a lot of features and value at this modest price point, and while some with proprietary and/or low-cost Gore-Tex-alternative membrane materials are effective, a Gore-Tex model emerged victorious.

Alpinestars Roam WP

\$159.95

Weight (per boot): 1 lb. 13.7 oz. ●●●○ Fit: ●●●●●
Comfort: ●●●●● Protection: ●●●●● Conspicuity: ●●○○○
Soak Test: (Fail) ○○○○ Value: ●●●●● Overall: 25 pts.



Comment: The Croatian-made Roam WP is the only boot in this comparison that offers true fit adjustability. Two Velcro straps on the outside of the leg and a wide Velcro flap at the top ensure a snug, comfortable fit on a wider range of calf sizes than other boots in this comparison. Made of synthetic leather with a Cordura insert on the outside of the leg, it features Alpinestars' exclusive Drystar polyester waterproof membrane material for water resistance. It is

double-stitched in all areas except for the Velcro straps and the front and rear flex panels and features a rubberized shift panel on the toes. The waterproof gaiter inside the leg extends only to the second strap. We rate the Roam's fit as excellent, and its shin area is well-padded, increasing leg protection. Its soles are thick yet flexible, making the Roam comfortable for walking long distances. Shift lever feel is excellent, although, like the Gaerne G. Kings, the material under the toe pad feels thin, which could cause discomfort after multiple upshifts.

From the moment we put on the Alpinestars Roams, they were so comfortable that we were confident they'd win this comparison hands down if they passed the five-minute soak test. But they failed, leaking through the toe pad area on the left boot. Furthermore, the day after the soak test, the inside of the boots were extremely damp as if they had wicked moisture into the inner liner.

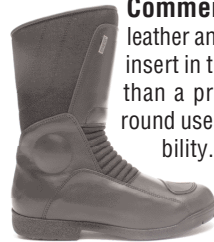
Alpinestars—2780 West 237th St.; Torrance, CA 90505; 310-891-0222; www.alpinestars.com

BMW Allround

\$235



Weight (per boot): 1 lb. 8.3 oz. ●●●●● Fit: ●●●●○
Comfort: ●●●●○ Protection: ●●●●● Conspicuity: ●●●●●
Soak Test: (Pass) ●●●●● Value: ●●●●○ Overall: 32.5 pts.



Comment: The BMW Allround is constructed of leather and Cordura, with reinforced ankles and a hard insert in the shin area for excellent protection. Rather than a proprietary waterproofing material, the Allround uses Gore-Tex for water resistance and breathability. The Allround features a YKK zipper on the inner leg and a Velcro top flap on the inner leg, offering some calf adjustability.

The Allround is double-stitched in most areas but single-stitched on the front flex panel and on parts of the leather shin area. The waterproof gaiter inside the boot isn't as tall as some of the others, extending only to the top of the zipper. The Allround is the lightest in this comparison.

We rate its fit as very good, although we did notice that the reinforced area around the heel tends to nip at the achilles tendon. We expect this to lessen as the boots break-in. The Allround's gasoline and oil resistant sole doesn't feel as thick as the Alpinestars, but it's thicker than the Sidi Way Rain or the Gaerne and the Dainese. Walking comfort is very good, and the material on the shift panel is harder than the Alpinestars or the Gaerne, offering very good shifter feel and excellent comfort during multiple upshifts.

With its generous textile panels, we were skeptical that the Allround would pass our five-minute soak test, but it did, and it exhibited no evidence of moisture absorption the next day.

BMW Motorrad USA—see your local BMW motorcycle dealer or visit www.bmw-riders-gear.com

Dainese Pannier ST D-WP

\$249

Weight (per boot): 1 lb. 11.3 oz. ●●●●○ Fit: ●●●●●
Comfort: ●●●○ Protection: ●●●●● Conspicuity: ●●●●●
Soak Test: (Pass) ●●●●● Value: ●●●○ Overall: 30 pts.

Comment: The most expensive boot in this comparison, Dainese's Romanian-made ST Pannier D-WP is a touring boot that features sport-touring-oriented styling. High-impact Thermoplastic Polyurethane is used on the shin and around the ankle and inner arch, and the boot incorporates full-grain cowhide leather along the top of the foot with nylon polyamide fabric on the sides and a suede reinforced shifter panel and outer toe. The Pannier's rear-entry YKK zipper zips all the way to the throat and is protected by a tiny Velcro flap at the top. The Pannier offers no calf adjustability and is single-stitched on the side and front flex panels but double-stitched in all other areas. Dainese uses Gore-Tex in its higher-priced boot models, but the Pannier uses Dainese's proprietary D-Dry waterproof, breathable membrane material.

The Pannier's sole is thin yet extremely stiff, and its reinforced TPU heel area tends to pinch around the rider's ankle, making it uncomfortable when walking. Its on-bike performance is very good, however, with the toe panel offering excellent shifter feel and excellent comfort through multiple upshifts, just like the BMW Allround.

With its generous nylon and polyamide panels, we were skeptical about the Pannier's ability to survive the five-minute soak, but it passed the test.

Dainese USA—1645 Superior Ave.; Costa Mesa, CA 92627-3612; 949-645-9500; www.dainese.com



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The Pannier offers no calf adjustability and is single-stitched on the side and front flex panels but double-stitched in all other areas. Dainese uses Gore-Tex in its higher-priced boot models, but the Pannier uses Dainese's proprietary D-Dry waterproof, breathable membrane material.

Gaerne G. King

\$239.95

Weight (per boot): 1 lb. 11.7 oz. ●●●●○ Fit: ●●●●●
Comfort: ●●●○ Protection: ●●●●● Conspicuity: ●●●●●
Soak Test: (Fail) ●○○○○ Value: ●●●○ Overall: 26.5 pts.

Comment: Unlike some of the other boots produced by Italian brands in this comparison, the Gaerne G. King is actually made in Italy. Constructed of top grain leather, it features hard inserts in the shin area and in the inner and outer ankle areas for increased rider protection. Its shifter panel is rubberized like the Alpinestars, and its outer toe area is also rubberized. The G. King's closure system uses a YKK inner zipper on the inside of the leg with a Velcro flap at the top of the boot.

The waterproof gaiter extends to the top of the zipper opening—a design plus. The G. King is double stitched except for its front and rear flex panels and the leather area at the throat, which are single stitched. The G. King uses Gaerne's own Gore-Tex-like Drytech waterproof one-way breathable membrane. Measuring 14.25" tall, the G. King's leg is the tallest in this comparison by 2". Its sole is thin like the Dainese yet flexible like the Sidi Way Rain, rating "very good" for riders who do a lot of walking in their boots. Fit and comfort are otherwise excellent, although the shift panel may become uncomfortable during multiple upshifts.

Like the Alpinestars, the G. King failed our five-minute soak test by leaking into the toe box under the shift panel, although it did not wick additional moisture into the boot like the Alpinestars when we re-checked it the next day.

Gaerne USA—27833 Ave. Hopkins, Suite 2; Valencia, CA 91355; 800-426-0213; www.gaerneusa.com



Sidi Stivali Traffic Rain

\$215

Weight (per boot): 1 lb. 11.0 oz. ●●●●○ Fit: ●●○○○
Comfort: ●●○○○ Protection: ●●●○○ Conspicuity: ●○○○○
Soak Test: (Pass) ●●●●● Value: ●●●○○ Overall: 20 pts.

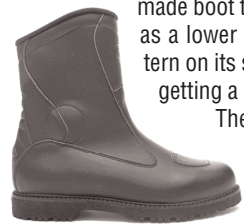
Comment: The Stivali Traffic Rain is a brand-new for 2012, Italian-made boot that features traditional styling cues, such as a lower bootleg cut and a hiking-style tread pattern on its sole. In fact, it's so new, MCN readers are getting a sneak peak at it in this comparison.

The Traffic is made of Lorica, a leather-like composite micro fiber material. It features a YKK zipper on the inside of the leg with a small Velcro flap at the top but no calf adjustability and no significant padding or protection in the shin area. It does have hardened internal armor on the inner ankle, outer ankle and heel area. A breathable membrane system similar to Gore-Tex repels outside moisture while allowing the boot to breathe. The Traffic is the sturdiest-appearing here, with double-stitching everywhere except the rear flex panel and around the ankle protection on the bootleg.

Fit was not up to par with the other boots here. Ours were extremely loose, feeling half a size too large; be sure to try them on before you buy. The sole is thick and flexible, however, making a comfortable boot (if they fit). The toe panel lacks shifter feel, and unlike the other boots here, the Traffic has virtually no reflective material for night-time conspicuity (only the tiny Sidi logo on the heel was reflective).

The Traffic passed our five-minute soak test and showed no effects from the test on the outside of the boot the next day.

Motionation—10225 Prospect Ave.; Santee, CA 92071; 619-401-4100; www.motionation.com



Sidi Way Rain

\$200

Weight (per boot): 1 lb. 9.6 oz. ●●●●○ Fit: ●●●●○
Comfort: ●●●●○ Protection: ●●●○○ Conspicuity: ●●●●●
Soak Test: (Pass) ●●●●● Value: ●●●●○ Overall: 30.5 pts.

Comment: The Sidi Way Rain is Sidi's current touring boot at the under \$250 pricepoint. Made in Romania, it is constructed of Lorica and Cordura. Lorica is composite micro fiber material that, when injected with special resins, takes on a leather-like durability but with lighter weight and better abrasion resistance than cowhide. The Way Rain features a YKK zipper on the inside of the bootleg, with two Velcro flaps. The lower flap covers the zipper, making the Way Rain

the only boot in the test with a fully covered zipper and a full-length inner gaiter. The upper flap offers some calf adjustability. Sidi's Rain membrane provides a water-resistant yet breathable barrier from the elements. The inside of the boot is lined with a lightweight perforated breathable Teflon treated fabric that also repels water. The Way Rain is double stitched in all areas except the Velcro flaps and the reflective panel on the back of the boot. It features stiff shin and heel areas but no significant ankle padding or protection.

The Way Rain closely resembles the BMW Allround in overall fit, feel and comfort—that's very good—but it lacks the hard ankle protection that even its Traffic Rain sister has. Shifter feel through its Lorica toe panel (which extends all the way across the metatarsal bones) is not as sensitive as the Alpinestars or Gaernes, but comfort through multiple shifts is very good. Like the Traffic, the Way Rain passed our five-minute soak test with ease.

Motionation—10225 Prospect Ave.; Santee, CA 92071; 619-401-4100; www.motionation.com



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