Today’s motorcyclist can choose from a vast array of stylish, comfortable and protective riding gear for any weather condition; hot or cold, wet or dry. But is there any situation more challenging than a very cold day in heavy rain? To survive this scenario, a pair of proper wet-weather riding gloves that is well-insulated should be part of every well-equipped rider’s kit.

While there are a wide array of textile or combination textile-leather waterproof gloves available on the market, the selection of all-leather waterproof gloves is more limited. But our long-standing preference for the abrasion-resistant qualities of leather as well as its desirable appearance and comfort led us to search for leather gloves that would meet the following criteria:

- Truly waterproof
- Exterior construction of at least 95% genuine animal-hide
- Designed for motorcycle use
- Incorporating a gauntlet long enough to be worn over the cuff of a riding jacket, yet capable of being fitted under a jacket sleeve if desired
- MSRP: Less than $100!

An Internet search turned up eight pairs meeting our requirements. To be as objective as possible, we developed a list of characteristics that could be rated to rank the available selection from top to bottom, using our 10 point (5 dot) scoring system.

Fit: If it’s right, the material around the middle of the hand will not be too tight that it restricts making a fist or holding a twist-grip, nor so loose that there is excess material at the sides of the hand or palm when making a fist. In addition, the length and circumference of the gloves’ fingers should match those of the wearer’s hands, being neither too short or long, nor too loose or tight. For purposes of this comparison, our tester’s size medium hands were deemed average enough to be used in making this determination.

Comfort: The comfort of a pair of gloves is a function of how well they work when used under the conditions for which they are designed, in this case, gripping motorcycle handlebars for possibly hours at a time. The presence or absence of vibration-damping padding on the palms, and seams or other structural features that may initially cause slight irritation and eventually develop into distracting pain in the hands are all part of the elements enhancing or detracting from comfort.

Waterproofing: The dictionary definition of the word waterproof is that of an adjective that describes something that will “keep out water.” In the case of allegedly waterproof riding garments, there is no room for almost. Either the rider is wet or dry. Therefore the point score for this criterion is either pass or fail.

Liner Integrity: This is our term for the propensity of the liner to remain nested in the glove’s fingers while removing the hand from the glove. When riding in wet weather conditions, it is sometimes necessary for the rider to fit the gloves over wet hands. Or in some cases, a rider’s hands may sweat inside of a thermally insulated glove when worn in warm weather. It is the unfortunate characteristic of some glove liners to stick to the rider’s skin as the glove is being removed so the liner can become completely dislodged from one or more of the glove fingers, turning inside out and making reinsertion of the hands into the gloves difficult if not impossible. All gloves were tested for this characteristic by fitting the gloves to wet hands, and then briskly removing the gloves.

Wiper Blade: Gloves that incorporate a thumb- or first-finger-mounted wiper blade for clearing the face shield of rain receive a higher score than those not having this feature.

Grip Enhancement: The presence of non-slip material attached to the glove’s palm and/finger gripping surfaces is deemed to be a desirable feature, especially in wet riding conditions.

Glove Retention System: Methods of keeping the gloves in place in the event of an unintended get-off. Point scores are given on the perceived effectiveness of each pair’s retention system in a worst case situation.

Value: Determined by dividing the price by the total of the scores in other ratings categories. A score of 10 was given to the best price/score and a 1 to the worst.

Rather than wait around for a series of torrential rain storms in which to test our selection of gloves, we employed the time-tested method of full immersion. This involved the tester dunking his gloved hands to within one-inch of the gauntlet tops in a 5-gallon bucket of water for 5 minutes. Needless to say, this is pretty much a pass or fail test. Any piece of “rain gear” that fails in its ability to keep the wearer dry cannot be deemed to be effective in any sense of the word. Fortunately, our tester had the opportunity to do some real-world weather testing during a motorcycle trip to Oregon, where rain riding is a way of life. As expected, the waterproof characteristics of those gloves that passed the “bucket test” were confirmed during the Oregon trip.

Although we have every reason to believe that the manufacturers and/or distributors of the gloves that failed our laboratory testing would have provided a refund or properly functioning replacements had they been notified of these failures, our experience verifies the validity of the Latin slogan caveat emptor, meaning, “Let the buyer beware.” Manufacturing mistakes can happen, and a responsible consumer will make a reasonable effort to assure that purchased products meet his or her expectations. Fortunately, the method of verifying the claimed waterproof capability of a pair of gloves is as simple as spending a bit of testing time with a bucket of water before subjecting them to the “combat conditions” of real-world riding. Learning that a purportedly waterproof garment fails to live up to its intended purpose in the middle of a day-long frog-choking downpour, constitutes a worst-case scenario.
Bilt Hurricane Gloves #610312  $69.99

Fit:  ★★★★★  Comfort:  ★★★★★  Waterproofing:  ★★★★★  Liner Integrity:  ★★★★★  Retention System:  ★★★★★  Value:  ★★★★★

Specifications:

Bilt Hurricane Impressions:
Although designed for cruiser riders according to the manufacturer’s advertising literature, this rather narrow categorization seems all too limiting considering the number and type of features contained in the design of these riding gloves. Three-inch long gauntlets adequately cover the rider’s wrists whether worn over the jacket cuffs to block the wind or under the jacket cuffs to foil the rain running down the rider’s sleeves while under way. Waterproofing is handled by a waterproof, windproof and breathable membrane insert called “Dry+,” that is “like Hipora,” according to information provided by the distributor/retailer, CycleGear. The wrist retention system consists of a Velcro strap on the inside of the wrist, and an internal gathered stretch band completely around the wrist. Knuckle protection is integrated into the leather. A non-slip fabric is sewn onto the palm and gripping surface of the index and middle fingers. Overall fit and comfort are very good. A wiper blade is not present. A thermal liner provides for rider comfort over an ambient temperature range of 40°F to 80°F. Despite the “Water Proof” tags sewn to the exterior of each glove, they immediately began to leak upon immersion in water, and the tester’s hands were completely soaked at the end of the testing period. Whether the catastrophic failure of this particular pair of gloves represents a manufacturing error (forgetting to include the waterproof insert, perhaps?) or a failure of the insert material to perform as advertised is unknown. One thing is for certain, however, it is better to have discovered this failure in a simulated setting at home rather than during a torrential downpour in Bullet Hole, Wyoming, miles from shelter.
Overall, this is a very competent cold weather riding glove, so long as the cold weather stays dry. CycleGear—800-292-5343; www.cyclegear.com

Firstgear Navigator  $99.95

Fit:  ★★★★★  Comfort:  ★★★★★  Waterproofing:  ★★★★★  Liner Integrity:  ★★★★★  Retention System:  ★★★★★  Value:  ★★★★★

Specifications:

Firstgear Navigator Impressions:
Firstgear’s Navigators are made of goatskin, which is reportedly tougher, lighter and more flexible than cowhide. A Hipora™ membrane provides these gloves with their waterproof, windproof and breathable characteristics, and works very effectively in keeping the wearer’s hands dry in both simulated and wet weather testing. A layer of Thermolite® insulation on the back of the glove provides warmth. The palm is not insulated, so a rider with heated grips can more effectively enjoy the benefit of that heat source. A polyester lining effectively wicks perspiration from the hands, and the liner is secured within the fingers to prevent any tendency to be dislodged from the interior of the gloves when they are being removed.
Non-slip material is used on the palms and gripping surfaces of the first two fingers, and strategically placed gel pads are incorporated on the heel of the hands. An adjustable strap in combination with an integral elastic band secure the gloves around the rider’s wrists. The wedge-shaped gauntlets vary from 2” to 3” in length, incorporate zipper closures and are effective in providing coverage whether worn over or under a jacket’s cuff. Reflective piping increases nighttime visibility. And the left thumb features a faceshield wiper blade.
Sizing and fit are excellent both around the circumference of the hand and in the length and tapered design of the fingers. This is a medium-weight pair of gloves that provides excellent grip and dexterity. The effective temperature range was use-tested and determined to be between 50°F and 90°F. Made in China, the Firstgear Navigator Gloves come with a 2-year limited warranty.
The single fly in the ointment is in regard to comfort and has to do with a seam located at the base of the thumb. This seam is located in such a position that its bulk causes a “hot-spot” at the base of the rider’s right thumb where it grips the throttle.
Motorcycle Superstore—501 Industry Rd., Ste. 400; Louisville, KY 40208; 877-668-6872; www.motorcycle-superstore.com

RECOMMENDED

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Product Comparison

MAS GL180 Gauntlet $29.99

Fit: Comfort: Waterproofing: Liner Integrity: Value:
Wiper Blade: Palm Grip: Retention System:  

Specifications:

MAS GL180 Gauntlet Impressions:
These cowhide gloves feature a unique removable cuff that allows some airflow into a riding jacket’s sleeves with open cuffs, to enhance comfort when the weather turns warm. Articulated knuckles provide finger flexibility, while padding on the palm and heel of the hand are intended to dampen vibration and improve comfort. Grip-enhancing material is sewn to the web between the thumb and forefinger as well as the tips of the index and middle fingers to aid grip in the event of wet weather. A wiper blade is not an included feature. A light-weight thermal lining provides warmth in cool-to-warm weather riding conditions, with a demonstrated comfort range of 50°F–90°F. An inner elastic band around the wrist provides a moderate level of glove retention. Overall fit and comfort were among the best of the gloves being compared. Unfortunately, the all-important water-proofing did not live up to the quality of the fit. The specific method of treating the leather to provide it with the claimed waterproof characteristics is not specified by the distributor and/or manufacturer, nor did this treatment demonstrate any more resistance to water than non-treated leather would have. Both gloves began leaking within two seconds of being immersed in water. Hands and fingers were completely soaked 2 minutes into the 5-minute test.
Considering the abundance of features and the price of $29.99, we can say these gloves are a bargain as a cool–dry weather riding glove. But based on our testing, they are a complete failure as waterproof gloves.

MAS Leather Inc.—829 Hanley Industrial Court; St. Louis, MO 63119; 800-481-2552; www.msleather.com

Harley-Davidson #98339 $95.00

Fit: Comfort: Waterproofing: Liner Integrity: Value:
Wiper Blade: Palm Grip: Retention System:  

Specifications:

H-D #98339 Impressions:
Constructed of goatskin, these gloves incorporate stretch nylon fabric over the knuckles for enhanced flexibility, and the fingers are pre-curved to provide a good fit with motorcycle hand grips. To their detriment, the undersized fit of the gloves across our tester’s hands and a too-tight fit of the fingers prevented the ability to make a fist. Felt-like patches cover a portion of the palms, thumbs and forefingers to aid grip. Small gel pads are located in the palm for comfort.
A Gor-Tex® insert provides effective waterproofing, windproofing and breathability. The liner is polyester fleece and has the frustrating tendency to become dislocated from the fingers. In our “wet hands” test, the liner of the right glove pulled completely inside out, requiring over 1½ hours of careful poking and prodding to put it back into place. Unfortunately, portions of the insulation in the fingers got displaced in the process, resulting in several lumps in the fingers, which in time became distractingly uncomfortable.
This mid-weight glove can be expected to provide comfort in the 50°F–90°F temperature range. We found the 2” gauntlet portion insufficiently long enough to provide full coverage whether worn over or under a jacket sleeve. Wrist closure is accomplished with a shock cord that can be operated with one hand. However, securing the gauntlet opening around the wrist resulted in 3” of looped shock cord protruding from the gauntlet opening. Although effective in closing the gauntlet cuff, we were unable to completely dismiss the concern that this protruding length of looped cord might get tangled or caught on something, compromising control of the motorcycle. A mounted faceshield wiper is not present. Scotchlite™ reflective piping enhances nighttime visibility. These Chinese-made gloves also incorporate the familiar H-D Bar and Shield on the back.

www.harley-davidson.com, or your nearest Harley-Davidson Dealer.
**Hugger Classic Gauntlet Impressions:**

Hugger Classic Gauntlet Gloves are constructed from 1.0mm-thick Technaline® cowhide. Technaline® is an exclusive, patented process that is claimed to render leather completely waterproof. Further, Hugger gloves are lined with a waterproof and windproof WonderDry® insert that wicks perspiration away from the rider’s hands, dispersing it to the atmosphere.

With all of this “waterproof” technology, we expected satisfactory results from our immersion test. Unfortunately, such was not the case. Within 1 minute of beginning the bucket test, leakage could be felt at the tip of the right ring finger. At the 2-minute mark, leakage could be felt at the web between the left ring and pinky fingers. No additional leakage points were detected for the remaining period of testing. At the end of the test, all four fingers and the lower part of the right hand were wet. On the left hand, soaking was limited to the ring and pinkie fingers only. Due to the specific points of leakage, we suspect a failure of workmanship (perhaps a needle hole in the insert) rather than a design or material flaw. This is certainly something that would be covered under the manufacturer’s generous warranty. However, for purposes of this review, these gloves failed the principal test criteria, and are rated appropriately.

The gloves performed well in cold and dry weather riding in an ambient temperature range of 40°F–80°F. Although fingers length and fit around the palms was quite comfortable, the fit around the fingers initially felt a bit tight, but loosened adequately once the leather warmed up a bit. Fit around the wrist is enhanced by an internal elastic band, however, the lack of an external adjustable belt could make these gloves more vulnerable to being pulled by abrasion in the event of a tumble.

**Hugger Glove Company—4413 Shagbark Ct.; Lexington, KY 40515; 859-245-8445; www.huggergloves.com**

**Olympia 180 Monsoon Impressions:**

Olympia’s 180 Monsoon Gloves are made from washable/waterproof cowhide, intended to remain supple even after repeated soaking and drying cycles. These gloves feature an Aquatex waterproof and windproof, breathable insert, along with a 100% nylon liner. There is no thermal liner since these gloves are intended for use in warm, wet riding conditions. They proved to be water-proof in both “bucket testing” and extended use in an Oregon rainstorm.

Fit is a mixed bag. The finger length being correct, but these gloves are on the large and loose side around the fingers and palm. Despite the lack of expansion panels on the knuckles, grip is quite good due to the lightweight nature of the glove’s design. The 1-3/4” gauntlet is marginal for fitting over a jacket cuff or remaining inside a jacket cuff. Retention is provided by an integral elastic band around the inner part of the wrist, along with a Velcro-secured strap on the back of the wrist. This strap’s potential for keeping the gloves on the rider’s hands during a get-off is marginal. When tightened securely around the rider’s wrist, there was less than 1/2” of contact between the hook and loop aspects of the Velcro.

Even when the rider’s hands are dry there is an irritating tendency for the liner to become displaced, and removing hands that are wet with rain or perspiration invariably results in the displacement of the lining from one or more fingers. This is a serious shortcoming of these gloves.

An extra layer of leather is sewn to the palm and inner part of the thumb for abrasion protection. A byproduct of this extra layer is the additional stitching on the inner part of the right thumb where it wraps around the throttle; a bulky double-thickness seam that creates a distracting “hot spot” that interferes with long-term comfort. A non-slip, grip-enhancing material is not part of the package; nor is there a wiper blade included.

**Olympia Moto Sports—824 Locust St., Ste. 100; Hendersonville, NC 28792; 866-473-4327; www.olympiaglove.com**

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Product Comparison

Olympia Gor-Tex® All-Season

$79.95

Fit: ⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤ Comfort: ⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤ Waterproofing: ⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤ Liner Integrity: ⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤ Value: ⬤⬤⬤⬤ Total Score: 75

Specifications:

Olympia All-Season Impressions:
Olympia All Season Gloves are made from cowhide. Gor-Tex® provides an effective waterproof, windproof and breathable barrier between the wearer’s skin and the wet outside world. No leakage occurred in either simulated or actual wet-weather riding conditions. These are cold-weather gloves, with Thermolite being used as the insulating material—effective between 40º F–80º F. Fit and riding comfort are as good as it gets. Ribbed expansion panels across the knuckles of the hand and fingers provide effective gripping capability. An additional layer of leather is sewn onto the palm and gripping surface to the thumb for reinforcement. However, there is no anti-slip material incorporated in the glove’s design. Although there is some effort involved when inserting a wet hand into the gloves by virtue of the clinging tendency of the polyester liner material, there was no tendency for the liner to become displaced when removing the gloves from the wearer’s hands. The thumb of the left glove features a face-shield wiping blade, and reflective piping is incorporated to enhance night time visibility. The glove’s retention system is excellent, with an integral compression band that surrounds the wrists and a Velcro closure. The 4” gauntlets also incorporate Olympia’s proprietary “2X Auto Cuff” method of clinching the gauntlets around the wearer’s forearm. An elastic shock cord passes through grommets located on either side of the hands, the ends secured by plastic pull-tabs. Pulling the tab on the pinkie finger side of the gauntlet tightens the gauntlet. A pull on the tab located on the thumb side loosens the gauntlet. This provides a moderately effective alternative to fitting the gloves under a jacket sleeve to avoid rainwater running down the wearer’s sleeves.

Olympia Moto Sports—824 Locust St., Ste. 100; Hendersonville, NC 28792; 866-473-4327; www.olympiaglove.com

Olympia 4380 Seasonal Throttle

$74.95

Fit: ⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤ Comfort: ⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤ Waterproofing: ⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤ Liner Integrity: ⬤⬤⬤⬤ Value: ⬤⬤⬤⬤ Total Score: 48

Specifications:

Olympia Seasonal Throttle Impressions:
Although called “All Season,” the presence of 100gm of Thinsulate™ thermal material makes them too hot and heavy for summer use. However, they were found to be effective between 40ºF and 80ºF, at which point our hands began to perspire. This makes them good cold weather, three-season gloves.

Although this Olympia model uses the same waterproof and windproof Aquatex membrane used in the 180 Monsoon Gloves, which proved to, indeed, be waterproof, the same cannot be said for the model 4380 gloves. At the 45-second point in the “bucket test,” a leak was felt between the index and middle fingers of the right hand. By the end of the 5-minute test, the palm of the right hand was soaked, although the back of the hand remained dry, as did the entire hand in the left glove. Logic indicates that the failure was not the fault of the Aqua-Tex membrane; rather, it appears to be a quality control issue. Unfortunately, even one-half of a pair of waterproof gloves failing to be waterproof is not acceptable. It seems akin to being “a little-bit pregnant.”

Fit is a bit on the large side around the hand, although finger length is adequate to prevent pinching of the finger tips while wrapped around hand grips. Extra padding on the knuckles of the hands and fingers and on the palms and thumb’s gripping surface provide an added measure of protection. Integrated flexible finger joints facilitate good grip characteristics, particularly for an insulated glove. Although security is handled by Velcro straps on the back of the wrists and inner surface of the gauntlets, there is only minimal contact between the hook-and-loop Velcro material when pulled tight and cinched down. On the plus side, there is no tendency for the polyester liner to become displaced upon removal of the gloves from the rider’s hands, and a face shield wiper blade is located on the left thumb.}

Olympia Moto Sports—824 Locust St., Ste. 100; Hendersonville, NC 28792; 866-473-4327; www.olympiaglove.com