Belstaff Adventure Jacket

When it gets really hot, I begin thinking of alternatives to my Aerostich Roadcrafter and Darien suits. Belstaff addresses hot weather riding in a cool way with its new Adventure Jacket.

I'd been looking for a three-quarter length jacket that would work in a variety of riding situations and climates, and keep me cool when riding in hot weather. What first drew me to the jacket was the integrated water pack zippered onto the back of the jacket. In the past six months I've tested it in an abnormally hot northern California summer and on several trips in triple-digit Phoenix heat. The final test came on a 10-day trip in late September around the Seattle area that gave me a sampling of the northwest's weather delights — mild to cool and a good deal of wet.

Hot Weather Performance

Cooling begins with long zipper vents on the sleeves and back, as well as two ventilation pockets at the front top of the jacket, just below the shoulders. The front vents can be opened while moving, providing you can get a hand free, but don't bother trying for the rear vents until you've stopped.

The water pack feature, which holds about a liter, worked flawlessly in Phoenix. A clear neoprene hose is intelligently routed from the back, over the shoulder to a hook near the face, making it easily accessible without having to remove my hands from the bars. The water container comes off easily. A unique feature of this jacket is that the sleeves can be zipped out. I used this feature only once and then only walked around to test it. As the point of wearing a jacket is protection while riding, I can't see riding without the sleeves. However, once converted to a vest, you can more easily walk around, take pictures or just stand around a camp fire. Having zip-out sleeves eliminates the need to transfer your phone, cash, cards, passes and other paraphernalia into a less bulky jacket for walking around.

I called the folks at Belstaff for additional insight on the zip-out sleeves. It turns out their surveys included requests for a rugged jacket with zip-out sleeves, with many of the requests coming from Australia, where cattlemen use dirt bikes and whips to round up the cattle. When swinging a whip, the sleeves with armor get in the way. The mobility gained from removing them is very helpful.

Cool Comfort

After zipping the vents closed, adding a sweater and neck warmer, I was warm enough to ride in the cool of Washington in September when morning temperatures were down to 44°. The outer shell is 500-denier nylon and blocks the wind very well.

Fit

The jacket features a number of intelligent ways to adjust the fit to precisely the way you want it. The sleeves have adjusters on the upper arm, and two-position snaps and hook and loop fasteners at the wrists. Zippered hip expanders on the sides of the jacket help keep the jacket from riding up on you—no more looking like an NFL tackle in full dress. Hook and loop adjusters on the sides of the jacket allow you to let the jacket out at the waist a bit after a big meal or when you've added heavier garments underneath the jacket.

Lots Of Pockets

Convenience pockets are plentiful, including a removable mobile phone pocket with a clear plastic covering. On the front are double-opening pockets: you can segregate contents in each pocket via the side or top entrance.

And, like a lot of well-designed motorcycle jackets, the pocket zippers zip from the bottom to the top when closed. Rubber tabs make locating and opening the zippers easy with gloves on. A clear pocket on the left sleeve is a good place to store parking or toll passes or even a business card or two. The right sleeve has another tiny zipper pocket that is handy for ear plugs and other small items.

Protection

The external shoulder, elbow and lower arm areas are reinforced with a Texland anti-abrasion material that is typically found in hunting gear, boots and luggage — tough stuff. Belstaff uses Texland's very light yet durable Airguard fabric on major portions of the jacket sides and sleeves.

Internal padding consists of EVA (Ethylene Vinyl Acetate) foam pad inserts for the shoulders, elbows and back. EVA armor is used in a variety of applications such as headgear for boxers and in martial arts. The jacket comes with the armor installed, but it is easy to remove it from the pockets for cleaning. Kidney protection around the back also uses the EVA inserts.

Warm And Waterproof

The jacket does better than expected in lower temperatures. It comes with a waterproof/windproof shell that can be stored quite conveniently in a zipper pocket at the rear of the jacket.

At first, I mistakenly zipped it inside the jacket the first time it turned cold, closing the vents and the flap which covered the front zipper. I was soon too stuffy warm and I'm likely to do this again.

Riding in cold rain in Washington state, it worked perfectly. A microfiber inner collar kept my neck warm but I found myself adding a second one to really keep the wind away. A neoprene collar material that does not absorb water rings the top and keeps precipitation from running down inside the jacket. It works.

The one real flaw I experienced was neck chafing from the fuzzy collar. My wife complained of the same thing the day she wore the jacket. A scarf or turtleneck shirt solves the problem although the longer I've worn the jacket, the less this has occurred. I suspect it may have been due to new jacket stiffness.

Finding This Jacket

First, make sure you get to the right Web site. The Belstaff brand was bought by a Venetian fashion house. They are producing a fashion line that Kate Moss looks great in. British Motorcycle Gear, under the direction of Paul Brooks, continues to manufacture the motorcycle line under their brand name.

—Steve Larsen

Belstaff Adventure Jacket—(800) 432-9004; www.britishmotorcyclegear.com