

## Outdoor Tip 2: The Basics of Layering

Living in Europe offers many opportunities to participate in outdoor activities in cold weather. Layering is the key to staying warm and comfortable in any kind of weather because the layers can be taken off just as easily as they were put on.

**The first layer** next to your skin should be “wicking” or able to move moisture away from your body. Silk, synthetics, and Merino wool such as Under Armor, Patagonia Capilene, or SmartWool are ideal for this layer. As you perspire, the moisture is moved to the outside of the material where it can evaporate.

**The second layer** is the insulating layer. This traps a layer of air close to your body which helps you retain heat, similar to a wetsuit except without the water. In very cold weather, down is a fantastic insulating layer but that is reflected in the price. Merino wool is another good one but fleece is the most readily available and least expensive. While not water or windproof, fleece comes in different thicknesses and dries quickly.

**The third layer**, or outermost layer, is the protective layer that shields you from the elements, it's your shell. Shells that use laminated coatings are more expensive than those using material coatings. If you are in an environment with a lot of wind and rain, Gor-Tex is probably the best material to use.

Other options using material coatings are soft shells which breathe but are only water-resistant and may or may not have an insulating layer. Soft shells are a great middle-ground for price and protection if insulated. They can be worn almost year round in light rain, moderate wind, and chilly if not cold temperatures.

Perhaps the least expensive options for an outer shell are those that are waterproof but not breathable. These are a bit like wearing a garbage bag. If you wear one while exercising in the rain, you will end up soaked in your own sweat because there is no ventilation or wicking. However, these are great for low levels of activity when it is very wet outside.

For more information, please contact Jill Christmas x1382.

Until next time, Happy Camping!