

# Metro Man to Outdoors Man - What's Changed?

For hundreds of years, people venturing into the outdoors kept themselves warm with woollen long johns and trousers, jackets and animal skins. Look at any of the photos of Captain Scott in Antarctica or Sir Edmund Hillary, before he was knighted, on Everest. These were the available products and did the job amazingly well. Today we are blessed with state-of-the-art materials, Many developed as part of the military or Space Exploration.

Thirty years ago kayakers were told, "Bring a wetsuit if you have one, polypropylene or a wool top and bottom (state-of-the-art then) and a windbreaker". On one river trip I froze, became hypothermic and made the cardinal sin



of yelling at my wife – she reminds me it was all over a "stupid spanner". Hypothermia increases the chance of making really bad decisions. Yelling at your partner might be the least of your worries, as a bad decision in the outdoors is when an accident happens. Keeping warm is a crucial safety issue.

What will keep you warm and safe? My preference is a range of polypropylene, neoprene, sharkskin, paddle jackets and dry tops.

Often neoprene shorts, booties and a single polypropylene top will be ample. However, it is vital to "plan for the worst and hope for the best". You need to take the next layers, a paddle jacket for a temperate climate and a Dry top for cooler climates. I layer up more polypropylene as needed to get the desired warmth.

Recently wind proof and fleece lined watersport apparel known as Sharkskins have been developed. On colder days these have become my standard first layer. I support them with a paddle jacket or a dry top and a good beanie or scull cap on my scone.

Sharkskins are extremely warm, comfortable and practical. There is absolutely no reason to be cold these days, the space age stuff is here: all you have to do is put it on.

So to recap, a polyprop on warm days with neoprene shorts is great but when the days turn cold don't be hypothermic, get some Sharkskins and a GOOD paddle jacket and enjoy your paddling year round.

Peter Townend  
Editor

## What people are saying:

**Tony Barrett** of Canoe & Kayak Hamilton told me "I was on the Mohaka River in May, wearing just a Sharkskin and dry top. Although I was wet all day, I never felt the cold. When I took it off, it felt as if there had been no water in it. The water vanished very quickly."

**Steve Knowles** - Spozhub

"The Sharkskin top is awesome. I have paddled with it twice on very cold and windy nights, on the Auckland harbour and stay toasty. Good fit, stretch, and was not a sweat shop like a wet suits or 0.5 mil titanium tops. Good length even covered my back with low shorts cut which expose back when sitting. It's a winner for winter paddling!"

**Andy Doncaster** at Canoe & Kayak North Shore said "I've bought two sets for my fishing sorties. That way I know that they're completely dry and they'll continue to keep me warm. It was a revelation when I started using Sharkskins!"

**Robbie Banks**, an instructor at Canoe & Kayak Bay of Plenty. Having paddled all day in her top, she crawled into her sleeping bag still wearing her Sharkskin! "Way too cozy to be taking it off!"

**Andrew Hill** - Jet Ski Fishing

"Since using the Sharkskin range my adventures have been more enjoyable, also sustaining longer periods of fishing, even in extreme conditions, as I am no longer suffering from the cold. I totally recommend any athletes that are subjected to the elements, keep warm and dry, use the Sharkskin range and you can really enjoy your sport."

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