

FlyLow Higgins \$260

It stretches and feels like a soft shell, but thanks to a waterproof-breathable membrane, taped seams, and waterproof YKK zippers, the Higgins repels snow and rain like a top-of-the-line hard shell. And, as with most stuff FlyLow makes, the Higgins can take a beating. "I thought more than once that it had ripped when I snagged it in the trees," said one tester. "But it never did." For touring, 15-inch pit zips open like air scoops, while the brushed lining feels cozy in the cold and wicks away moisture. The waterproof zippers can get sticky—but that's what makes them work. 1.5 lbs; flylowgear.com

Rab Baltoro Alpine \$200

There are lots of versatile soft shells in this price range, but none as smartly constructed as the Baltoro Alpine. The stowable hood was the best we tested: A three-point adjustment secures over hat or helmet, while the moldable wire-stiffened brim can be tucked out of the way or expanded to deflect blowing snow. The front and back panels are windproof Polartec Power Shield (a perennial tester fave), while the bottoms of the sleeves and top of the hood are lighter and unlined, to boost wicking and breathability. 1.4 lbs; us.rab.uk.com

Patagonia Skinnard \$300

In-bounds or out-of-bounds, the Skinnard has your back. With a ski-pass window, detachable powder skirt, and headphone port, it's ready for a full day on the lifts (it's cut to fit over bulky midlayers). And while the Skinnard has neither pit zips nor vented pockets, the midweight shell fabric offers just enough breathability for mellow tours and laps in hike-to terrain. The hood is merely adequate, but testers loved the massive inside front pockets for stashing climbing skins and goggles, and the suede-like brushed lining was even comfortable on bare skin. 1.8 lbs; patagonia.com

KILLER VALUE



BACKCOUNTRY SOFT SHELLS

To help keep out the snow, both the Patagonia and FlyLow jackets have **powder-guard loops** that attach to any pair of pants or belt.