

Frog Toggs Rainsuit

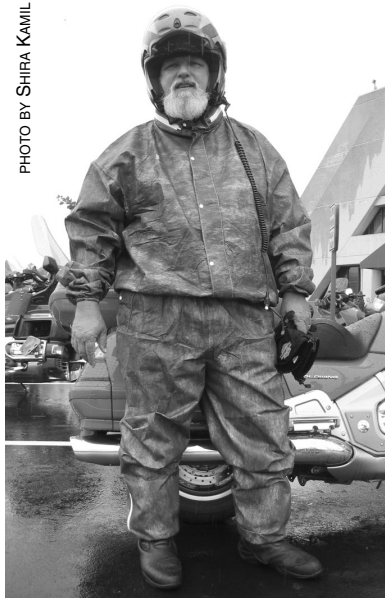
FIRST REVIEWED Frog Toggs rainwear nearly 10 years ago, and when the suit from that original test finally wore out this season, I was impressed enough to pick up another for replacement. Now, I'm even more impressed.

Frog Toggs rainsuits are made from an extremely lightweight material that is two layers of polypropylene sandwiching a third, center layer, of a microporous film. The pores in the film are 20,000 times smaller than a drop of water, so water cannot penetrate, yet the material "breathes," so you don't sweat wearing it like you do inside those plastic "sauna suits" we've all endured in the past. Also, the seams are "welded," rather than stitched, so you don't have the problem of leakage through needle holes.

Unfortunately, a lot of riders pass by this amazing suit after they see it or feel it, obviously thinking that something so light and flimsy-feeling couldn't possibly stand up to motorcycle touring duty. Well friends, I'm here to tell you it just ain't true. Not only did I wear my Frog Toggs during an 18-day ride through the rainforests of Brazil, but a few months later I wore them during a 200-mile ride from Knoxville, Tennessee, to the Cumberland Gap and back, on a day when the heaviest rainfall ever recorded in the history of the state occurred. And I stayed *dry*. If that's not the acid test, I don't know what is.

I had a couple of nitpicks about my original suit: The stress of mounting my bike a few hundred times eventually pulled the seam apart at the crotch, and the weather flap over the jacket zipper would

PHOTO BY SHIRA KAMIL



June 25, Knoxville, TN—Me and my Frog Toggs set out to ride through the heaviest rainfall ever recorded in the region.

sometimes flip open when the wind was just right, letting water seep in through the zipper. Both of these I fixed with good old duct tape. But when I got my new suit, I was very pleased to see that the manufacturer had obviously been made aware of these problems, and had fixed them both. The crotch now has an extra "expansion" panel installed for more freedom of movement without stressing the seams, and the seams themselves are now double-overlapped in this critical area. In addition, the zipper cover on the jacket now has plastic snaps installed to keep it from flapping open in the wind. In my opinion, they took an already-excellent product, and made it darned near perfect.

Frog Toggs come in six different styles of suits, including one-piece, two-piece, pullovers, short jackets, long jackets, bib overalls, etc., and also come in a variety of colors. You can spend anywhere from about \$55 to \$105 for your suit, depending on the style. And though they were hard to find when I got my first pair, nowadays you can find them at most cycle shops and rallies, and there are dozens of dealers on the internet.

As I said, Frog Toggs are very light, and pack up into almost no space at all. If you live in a cold weather climate and use your rainsuit as an extra layer of insulation, then Frog Toggs aren't for you. But if, like me, you often ride in warm summer rain, I promise you that you'll experience a whole new level of comfort with Frog Toggs.

—Fred Rau

Frog Toggs—114 Bright Rd., P.O. Box 428, Gunterville, AL 35976; (800) 349-1835; www.frogtoggs.com

HJC AC-11 Helmet

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN a fan of HJC helmets, due, in part, to their sheer affordability. I know of no other sub-\$200 helmet that comes close in terms of fit and finish. HJC's latest offering is their full-face AC-11, featuring a removable Coolmax liner and an integral neckroll to reduce wind noise. The shield closes in two stages: First as a series of ratchets and, when the shield is pulled all the way down, a second mechanism pulls the shield against the face opening for a snug fit. This new system is superior to any other HJC I've ever tested. HJC also redesigned the airflow system on the AC-11, including the four-position forehead vent, the six-position side vents, and the chinbar vent. The chinbar vent is purported to minimize fogging, but I still experienced fogging when not using the included breath guard. However, the breath guard is the best I've ever used, on any helmet.

The AC-11 secures with the standard D-ring fasteners and, like all HJC models, ear pockets are included for speakers. Available accessories include a chin curtain and a cold-weather breath guard liner. I recommend adding the chin curtain (\$6.95), as cold air still made its way into the eye pocket above the breath guard even when all the vents were closed. The chin curtain terminated such airflow.

Tested during a 5000-mile sojourn, I came away with only three



small complaints. First, the helmet's shield release mechanism is cumbersome, and while it doesn't require the degree of finesse that an Arai helmet does, it takes some getting used to. This is less of an issue when using a clear shield because the AC-11 doesn't use sideplates so you can see the attaching mechanism. Second, the chin strap doesn't include a snap. Instead, the end of the strap must be fed through a rubber band to prevent it from flapping. Third, without the addition of the chin curtain, airflow made my eyes water.

These complaints aside, the AC-11 is a great choice. The fit and finish is top notch, the liner is removable, the breath guard is a revelation, and fancy mirrored shields are available for less than \$30. In actuality, my head cannot distinguish between the \$199.95 AC-11, the posh Arai Astra or the stellar OGK FF4 sitting next to it on the shelf in my garage. The AC-11 is the fourth HJC I've owned, and I'm delighted to give a mighty thumbs up to the helmet. Be sure to try the fit prior to purchase. I wore a large size when using the AC-10, but wear a medium AC-11. So much for standardization.

The AC-11 retails for \$189.99 for solid colors, \$194.99 for metallic colors, and \$200-\$250 for graphic models.

—LT Snyder

HJC Helmets—16918 Edwards Rd., Cerritos, CA 90703 ; (888) 452-2269; www.chatterboxusa.com

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