

# Outdoor Research Helium UL Jacket – Gear Review

## Overview

The Outdoor Research Helium UL Jacket is the latest evolution of the legendary Helium rain shell. Designed for trail runners, hikers, fastpackers, cyclists, and ultralight backpackers, the Helium UL prioritizes minimal weight, exceptional packability, and dependable waterproof protection. The newest version utilizes Toray Dermizax® 3D technology and is lighter, more waterproof, and more compact than previous Helium generations.

## Weight

- Published Weight: **6.3–6.5 oz (179–184 g)** depending on size and source.
- OutdoorGearLab measured approximately **6.5 oz (184 g)**.

## Key Specifications

- Weight: 6.3–6.5 oz (179–184 g)
- Waterproof Rating: 20,000 mm hydrostatic head
- Breathability Rating: 20,000 g/m<sup>2</sup>/24 hr
- Fabric: Toray Dermizax® 3D 2.75-layer laminate
- Face Fabric: 15D shell fabric
- Sealed seams and YKK AquaGuard® zipper
- Adjustable hood and hem
- Single chest pocket that doubles as a stuff sack
- Best Uses: Hiking, trail running, cycling, fastpacking, travel

## Comfort & Fit

The Helium UL offers a trim athletic fit designed for movement. The lightweight fabric remains comfortable over base layers and packs small enough to disappear into a running vest or daypack.

## Weather Protection

The 20,000 mm waterproof rating and fully taped seams provide reliable protection from rain, wind, and mountain weather. While not intended as a heavy-duty alpine shell, it performs exceptionally well as an emergency or fast-moving rain layer.

## Breathability

Laboratory breathability ratings are impressive, though field testers note that during intense activities the jacket can feel clammy due to the lack of pit zips. Venting is managed primarily through the front zipper and lightweight fabric.

## Packability

Packability is one of the Helium UL's greatest strengths. The jacket stuffs into its chest pocket and compresses to roughly the size of a coffee mug, making it easy to carry on every adventure.

## Durability

The 15D face fabric keeps weight low but is less durable than heavier three-layer mountain shells. Reasonable care around sharp rock and brush is recommended.

## Pros

- Extremely lightweight
- Exceptional packability
- Reliable waterproof protection
- Comfortable athletic fit
- Excellent emergency shell
- Packs into its own pocket

## Cons

- No pit zips

- Limited storage (one pocket)
- Less durable than heavier alpine shells
- Can feel clammy during high-output efforts

**Best For**

Trail runners, hikers, fastpackers, cyclists, ultralight backpackers, and travelers seeking an emergency waterproof shell with minimal weight.

**Editor's Rating: 9.4 / 10**

The Outdoor Research Helium UL Jacket remains one of the best ultralight rain shells available. Its combination of sub-7-ounce weight, compact packed size, and dependable weather protection make it an outstanding choice for hikers and adventurers who prioritize carrying less without sacrificing safety.