

**Gerbing Cascade Extreme Heated
Jacket and Pants**
Tom Matthews



Why winterize your bike when it's easier and more fun to winterize yourself and keep riding. Gerbing's Cascade Extreme jacket and pants let you do just this. Using the system allowed this reviewer to undertake a 1,900-mile ride from Florida to Colorado in early December.

The first thing you'll notice about the Cascade Extreme is the weight of the clothing. This is heavy-duty gear. The fabric is high denier weave Cordura® and features ballistic fabric on the sleeves, seat and knees. The shoulders, elbows, knees and hips have CE approved heavy-duty high density foam body armor. Lots of pockets and vents on the jacket, all with both zippers and fold over flaps makes getting to wallets and cells phones easy. Three inside pockets allow even more secure stowing of your I-Pod and such. There is also a large rear cargo pocket that has a snap down flap. Vents on the back, sleeves, under arms and on both sides of the front zipper will allow the wearer to stay cool when the weather gets warm.

On the pants, two large patch pockets on the front of the thighs have Velcro® flap folders, easy to get to, even with gloves on. There are no places on the pants to worry about water getting in. Zippers on the lower leg of both the pants and the liner allow easy on and off over your boots. A Velcro® strap closure allows the pant legs to be pulled tight at the ankles. Adjustable belts

on each side of the zipper allow the waist to be cinched up. While the pants zip to the jacket adding a pair of heavy-duty suspenders can be helpful for those with no butt or hips to help keep the pants up. For summer riding, remove the inner liner and you just have a lightweight shell.

The jacket closes with a full-length double pull zipper, a fold over Velcro® flap and snaps. The double pull zipper allows the bottom of the jacket to open and accommodate different saddle/seating situations and make it easier to get the pants on and off without removing the jacket. With the combination of three closures, it will keep the wind and water out. The sleeves have zippers and Velcro® closures at the wrists making the jacket easy to get on and off. The cut of the jacket allows the full range of motion needed to ride comfortably.

An abundance of reflective seam piping increases visibility. All the seams are sealed and the quality of the stitching is first rate. The neck closure is well designed, one of the best around, and fastens with a single snap. No Velcro® to tangle with a neck gator, helmet strap or abrade your skin. An easy to find snap lets you secure the collar off to the side to ride with the neck open.

The heated jacket liner shows all the quality of construction found in the shell. Knit elastic cuffs on the

arms keep the air out. Inside, an open style breast pocket on each side and a zippered security pocket add storage. The liner is made to zip to the jacket and can't be used by itself or with another jacket, as there is no way to close the front. No matter, this will be the only jacket you'll want to wear.

The liner for the pants closes with a zipper and a Velcro® flap and a waist snap. Just the right amount of strategically placed Velcro® tabs and buttons secure both the jacket and pants liners to the shells.

That's the mechanics, now, the heat. The jacket liner has a power distribution unit below the waist. This plastic block (the Power Distribution Unit or PDU) has a power-in plug and two power-out receptacles. This allows the pants to be plugged in and provides for heated gloves with plugs in at each wrist. The pant liner has plugs at each ankle for heated socks (Splurge, get the socks, you will be happier.)

Using the optional portable digital dual controller unit lets you plug the pants and the jacket into separate plugs and control the heat for each individually. Using the y-plug means high heat all the time. An optional leather belt clip lets you keep the controller handy or you can use Velcro® to attach it to the bike. Using the controller, in addition to letting the rider adjust the heat settings, allows the heat to cycle on and off and put less of a load on the charging system.

Performance of the heating ele-

ments is impressive. Gerbing uses multiple heat pads inside the liners. They claim this makes them more durable and creates "hi-density heat." Whatever they call it, it works. At the full high heat setting on the controller, the jacket cranked out waves of chill chasing heat, even at temperatures in the teens at highway speeds. At temperatures in the low 50's, the jacket and liner are almost enough protection without the heat on, but it is so easy to get spoiled and reach down and turn up the dial on the thermostat.

The suit is heavy and bulky. The high thread count fabric and the extremely heavy body armor add the pounds as does the wire and connectors in the liners. The armor can be removed and replaced with lighter foam inserts but they may not provide the same protection. The clothing takes up a lot of room in the saddlebags or top case and takes up a lot of room hanging in the closet. Use a heavy-duty clothes hanger. The weight and bulk are worth it for the performance and durability the clothing provides.

Fit is critical for heated clothing. The liners must be slightly snug against the body to impart the heat through to the skin. The Gerbing web site lets you order the correct sizes to fit your body measurements. Wearing anything but a light to mid-weight shirt will insulate you from the heat you are trying to get into your bones.

Riding with just the jacket over a mid-weight pullover and the vents open was quite comfortable at 80



degrees in Florida. With the liners in place and the controller cranked to high, the pants and jacket were toasty warm at cruising at 70 in 15 degree cold.

Available in gray, red and yellow, the clothing has a lifetime guarantee on the electrics and a one-year guarantee on the fabric and other components

The liners and shells are washable – not dry-clean. Available from select dealers and on-line direct from Gerbing.com. Jacket and liner, \$425; pants and liner \$299. Dual controller \$99, leather belt case for controller, \$10. Splurge and get the socks.

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