

Aerostich Roadcrafter Light

By Jim Gebhardt #79025

JUST WHEN I THOUGHT MY MOTORCYCLE outer garment collection was complete, I was given the opportunity to road test the Aerostich Roadcrafter Light one-piece suit. I'm no stranger to the Rider Wearhouse in Duluth, having purchased a Roadcrafter two-piece suit 13 years ago that still has a lot of life left in it. That was followed in succession by a Falstaff jacket in 2002, then a Darien Hi-Viz yellow jacket and black Darien pants in 2009. With the addition of the Roadcrafter Light, there is now an Aerostich garment in my closet for every season.

Briefly, the Roadcrafter Light is a "cooler-wearing, unlined, all-new design about two pounds lighter than the original." Beyond that, all the technical specifications of this garment are available for your reading and viewing pleasure on the Aerostich Website (www.aerostich.com), where you can also request a free catalog.

First, it's important to note that my ride is a 2004 K1200GT. The windshield and fairing leg recesses have a significant impact on the temperature range of this suit. If you are riding an unfaired motorcycle or lack a windshield, your temperature envelope of comfort may differ widely from mine.

Now let's get down to testing this new suit on the road. It was hot in eastern Kansas when my Roadcrafter Light arrived in late July—like 95 degrees hot. Initially I wore the suit over a short-sleeved cotton T-shirt and lightweight synthetic pants. I learned very quickly that I needed to wear a long-sleeved cotton T-shirt. The sleeves of this suit became uncomfortably warm on my arms in direct sunlight. The added benefit of wearing long sleeves was that as I perspired, the cotton material retained the perspiration and allowed for better evaporative cooling with all vents (cuff, armpit, upper back) open.

The real test came in a two-hour ride that began with an ambient temperature of 106 degrees. To get a jump start on the air conditioning, I poured a 16-oz. bottle of water

on my chest, back, and both arms, then donned the suit. I was surprisingly comfortable for the 110-mile ride, during which the temperature dropped to the low 90s. Two hours later, when I arrived at my destination, my T-shirt was still damp to the touch and I had not overheated. So I can reasonably say that this suit can be worn safely in temperatures in excess of 100 degrees with normal hydration precautions.

What is its bottom temperature range? In early September, I left on a multi-day, 2900-mile trip through Nebraska, the Dakotas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan (UP and "mainland"), northern Indiana, Illinois, Iowa and Missouri. I expected to encounter much colder temperatures somewhere along this route, and finally did—on the very last day. But I learned some things about this suit along the way.

When you buy your Roadcrafter Light, spend the extra \$97 and also purchase the Electric Chest Insulation Pad. This is a 16- x 17-inch heating pad that attaches to the inside chest of the suit. It comes with a BMW-compatible connection. I found that I was comfortable in the suit without the pad down to about 70 degrees. Below 70 degrees, I needed the heating pad, with the juice turned on at about 65 degrees. Below 60 degrees I recommend adding a wind shirt to the ensemble. Below 50 degrees, I removed the heating pad and wind shirt and put on a Gerbing's heated jacket liner. I turned on the juice at 45 degrees, and was quite comfortable at 35 degrees, the lowest temperature we



experienced on this trip. I also replaced the light synthetic slacks with a pair of denim jeans at 35 degrees. More information at: www.aerostich.com/aerostich-suits/roadcrafter.

That's quite a broad temperature range—from 105 degrees down to 35 degrees, using various types of undergarments and

electrical accessories. But keep in mind that I was behind a windshield at all times. Your experience will be conditioned by your motorcycle.

We rode for about two hours in light rain in western Illinois, during which I experienced absolutely no leakage at any joint or zipper. There was water on my seat when I dismounted, but it was outside my suit and not inside. While I did not test this suit in a heavy downpour, I am confident in its ability to withstand any level of precipitation in which I would still be riding.

The other features of this one-piece suit reflect the over 25 years of Aerostich experience making Roadcrafters. After a brief

break-in period, the suit was very easy to don and comfortable to wear. I found the one-piece suit much easier to get into and out of than my older two-piece suit.

As for protection, the substantial elbow, knee, and shoulder pads are held securely in place by hook-and-loop fasteners. My suit has Hi-Viz yellow panels at the shoulders, outer arms, and leg fronts from the knee down. A Hi-Viz yellow suit with grey ballistic panels is also available. The suit has the standard 3M Scotchlite® reflective panels at the upper back vent, chest pocket, and ankle closure tabs.

Other available options include a non-electric chest insulation pad (\$32), a chest

impact pad (\$75), and a pair of lightweight emergency boot rain covers (\$57) that attach to the inside shin area of each pant leg. The suit can be purchased without the elbow, shoulder, and knee pads for \$667, and with the complete pad set for \$767.

Given the seasonal weather where I live (Kansas City area), I am comfortable saying I could wear this suit about 8–9 months of the year. It certainly will see more use during the heart of our riding season. In more southern climes, and with the judicious use of electrical accessories and other undergarments, this could easily be a year-round suit. Aerostich has hit another one out of the park. ☺

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