

Exposed: the great cover up

Car covers offer vital classic protection for a relatively small outlay. We test some of the best

If you don't have the luxury of a garage, then the next best thing to protect your classic is an outdoor car cover. We've put six of the best to the test, and graded them on the fabrics used, where breathability scores more than just waterproof, plus measured the weight of the fabric, counted the stitches and tugged at the seams to work out which are better made and will protect best. Ease of cleaning and folding is also graded.

Councils now have more power to remove old, unused vehicles so popping a cover over a resto project or spares car can protect it from prying eyes as well as deterioration. Colours of covers reflect ambient colours in local markets: British ones are often steely grey-blue, whereas dusty areas use sandy tones and in Florida they go for brighter blues.

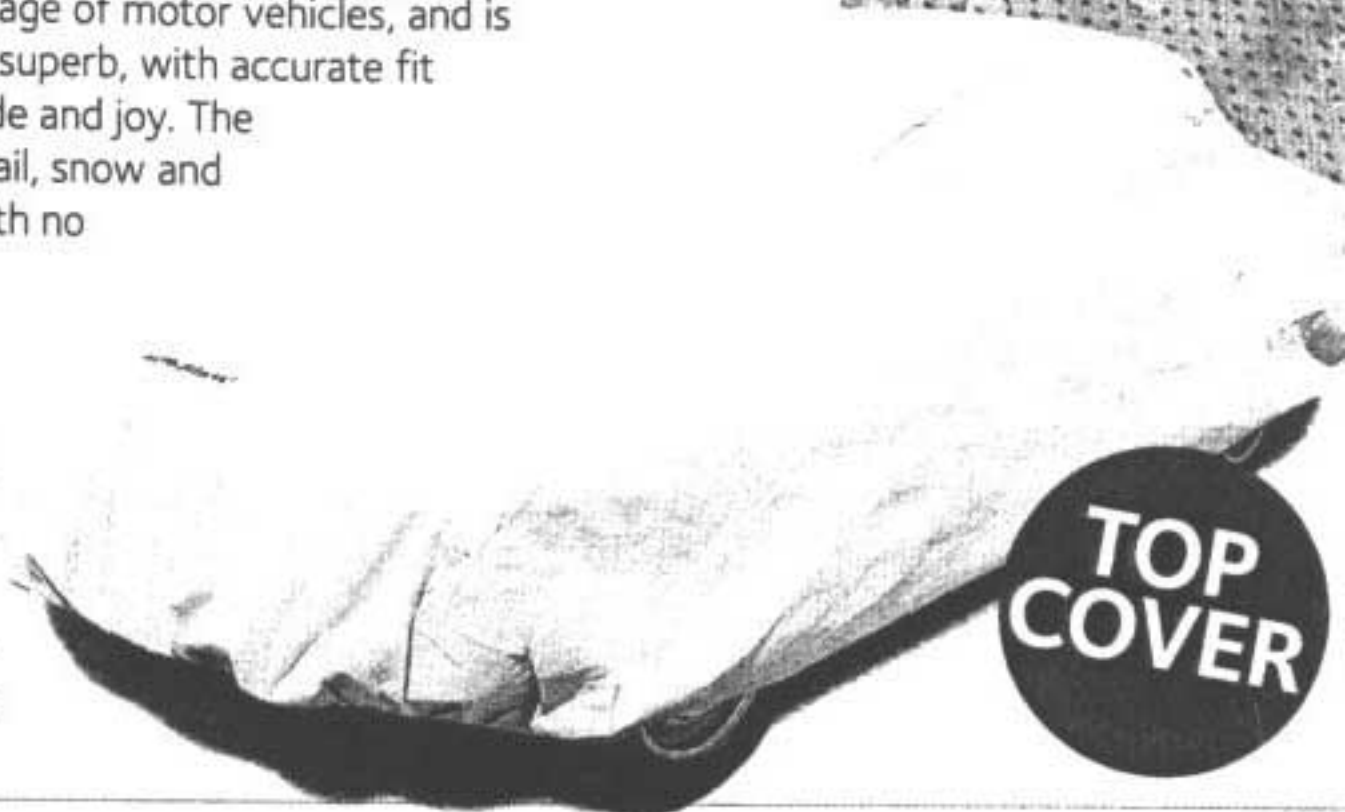
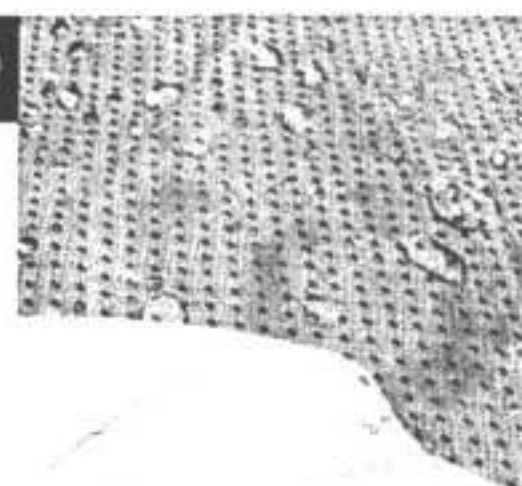
Basic covers are roughly sized to fit small, medium or large vehicles, but for a little more money covers can be tailor made. Prices quoted here are for the sizes tested.

AUTO-PYJAMA AUTO STORM £113

9/10

Material breathable microfibre **Stitches per inch** 5 **Type** double row running stitch **Fitting** Elasticated hem, securing straps

This cover is made from a four-layer tear-resistant breathable fabric. It has been designed for long-term storage of motor vehicles, and is soft to the touch. The tailoring is superb, with accurate fit that shows the shape of your pride and joy. The weather protection covers rain, hail, snow and UV light. The stitching is even, with no loose ends. The water beads up and runs off even on the flatter surfaces. The breathability allows the cover to darken as moisturisation continues, but the fabric allows complete air drying. The carry bag is made from the same fabric, so a wet cover will dry out even in the bag.



SPECIALISED CAR COVERS

£152.75

8/10

Material Webflex-TLP **Breathable?** Yes

Stitches per inch 7 **Type** double row running stitch **Fitting** elasticated hem with click snap fit fastening straps

This is tailored to the car, so you get impeccable fit, and made from a triple-layer material that protects from sunlight and moisture while a central membrane allows it to breathe. This cover repels water readily and comes with advice notes about cover performance.



COVERCRAFT WEATHERSHIELD

£260 (includes bag & straps)

7/10

Material encapsulated nylon core

Breathable? Yes **Stitches per inch** 6 **Type** double row overlapped **Fitting** elasticated, lock guard straps

This fits well, is lightweight and easy to use. The markings which state 'front' to assist fitting can be seen easily in daylight, but fade out under street lamps. The stitching helps shape retention and is double locked to prevent dirt passing through. Repels water excellently.



NF AUTO DEVELOPMENTS

£44

5/10

Material polyester **Breathable?** Yes **Stitches per inch** 6 **Type** single row running stitch **Fitting** elasticated

This lightweight cover is low cost, but is the bare minimum if you need to cover your car. The generic, untailed shape fitted the BMW 2002 test car reasonably, without being too baggy, and the biggest failing is that the water does not bead or run off, but soaks into the material straight away. It is economical, though.



CLASSIC ADDITIONS

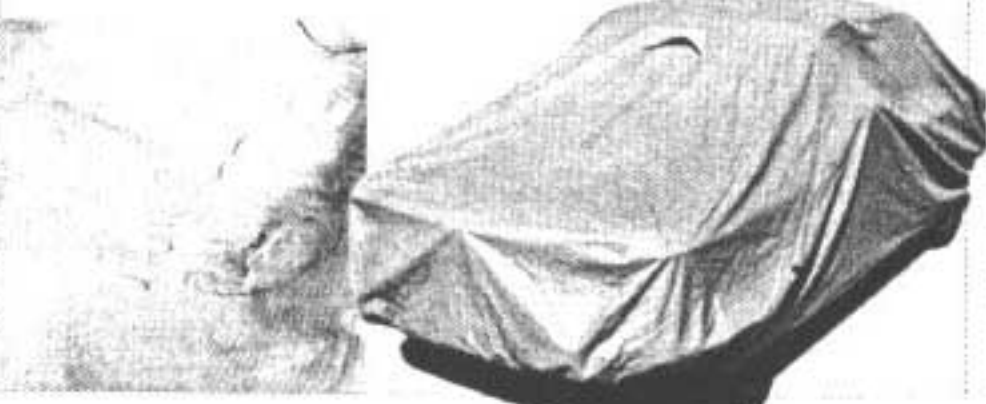
£136

8/10

Material vinyl with bonded soft cotton liner.

Ventilated **Stitches per inch** continuous **Type** vinyl welding **Fitting** elasticated ends, anti-theft strapping, wheel hooks

This heavy-duty long-term outdoor storage cover is completely waterproof and moisture is released through air venting built into the top. It is anti-UV treated. The anti-theft straps are a great idea and this cover seems constructed to last through many winters of arduous weather.



THOROUGHbred COVERS

£59

9/10

Material Fabric 42 (soft internal coating)

Breathable? Yes **Stitches per inch** 8 **Type** single row running stitch

Fitting elasticated ends, securing straps

This breathable cover is internally coated to prevent damage to paintwork. The material – in a matt finish for summer use outdoors – is lighter than others so it is easy to fit and remove on your own, plus it folds up smaller meaning less to lug around.

TOP
VALUE

TOP TIPS FOR COVER CARE

- The car must be clean before any cover is put on – dirt will scratch it
- Cars with rear spoilers or fins should have the cover fitted rear end first
- Sponge the cover clean with non-detergent soap and cold water
- Never heat your cover to dry it – this can affect the breathability of the material
- When fitting the cover, make sure the car has cooled. Hot bonnets and exhausts tips can damage the breathable fabric
- Let fresh paintwork mature before using a cover on it – two months for two-pack finishes, six months for cellulose
- Remove covers as often as possible
- Strap it down. Rope or bungee will do, but Kwikkips, at £7.50 for four, are an excellent, affordable alternative



THE FINAL VERDICT



BEST BUY AUTO PYJAMA AUTO STORM

WHY? An extremely good combination of well-packaged high-tech materials and a reasonable price.



BUDGET CHOICE THOROUGHbred COVERS

WHY? It is almost as highly specced as the Best Buy, but amazingly just half the price. Wonderful value for money.