

Tents: Top Tips

Shelter is not a luxury; it's a basic necessity of life. So it makes no sense to leave for an overnight camping trip without providing yourself with a dependable source of shelter.

Camping in the wilderness requires the use of a good tent. There is nothing worse than deciding to "rough it", only to find you are exposed to rain and wind. Camping tents can be as simple as a two-person pop up model, or an elaborate three-room family affair. What's important is having a dependable tent that will save you from undue aggravation or danger.

There are lots of things to look for in finding the perfect tent to fit your needs. Consider the shape of the tent, along with the weight, types of poles and setup time. If camping alone, be sure to choose a model that's easy to assemble. If you're not sure, ask an associate at a sporting goods store or outdoor outfitters.

Finally, be sure that the tent will fit in your car, while leaving room for all of your other gear.

Size

Size most definitely matter when it comes to choosing a tent. Make sure that there's enough room for you, and your fellow campers. Everyone needs to have space to stretch out and to move around. You may be using air mattresses, so keep that in mind when judging the depth. The tent must be high enough to stand up, or at least sit up. Manufacturers tend to overestimate the number of people that can sleep comfortably in a tent. So, while it is possible to cram four fully-grown adults into a four-person tent, you'll all sleep better in a six-person model. Similarly, a two-person tent might be able to hold two people, but they're clothes and food will have to wait outside.

Weight

If you are hiking or portaging to your destination, you'll have to give serious thought to the weight of your tent. Big canvas tents and ten-kilometre hikes just don't mix. You'll be carrying all of your gear and necessities, so you don't want to be weighed down even more by a heavy tent. Choose a secure but lightweight model. On the other hand, if you're driving to the campsite in a heavy-duty vehicle with lots of cargo room, then go crazy and bring a big tent.

Material

Most of today's modern tents are manufactured with lightweight nylon or taffeta. These are strong, durable materials that can stand up to all types of weather. Be sure that the tent you choose is certified waterproof. You may pay a little extra, but it will be worth every penny when the storm clouds start brewing.

Assembly

Ask to see the assembly instructions before you buy the tent. Then, try assembling the tent at home before you leave on your camping trip. The tent you choose should be easy to assemble with few or new tools required. You'll have a lot to do when you reach camp, and you don't want to spend a lot of time fighting with a difficult tent. Camping is about relaxing and becoming one with nature, not stressing and struggling with a tent.

Tents are not luxuries for the faint-hearted, or copouts for rookie campers. They are necessary tools that satisfy the basic human need for shelter. Even the most experienced outdoor enthusiasts will agree, there is no thrill in coming face to face with a forest critter at four a.m.