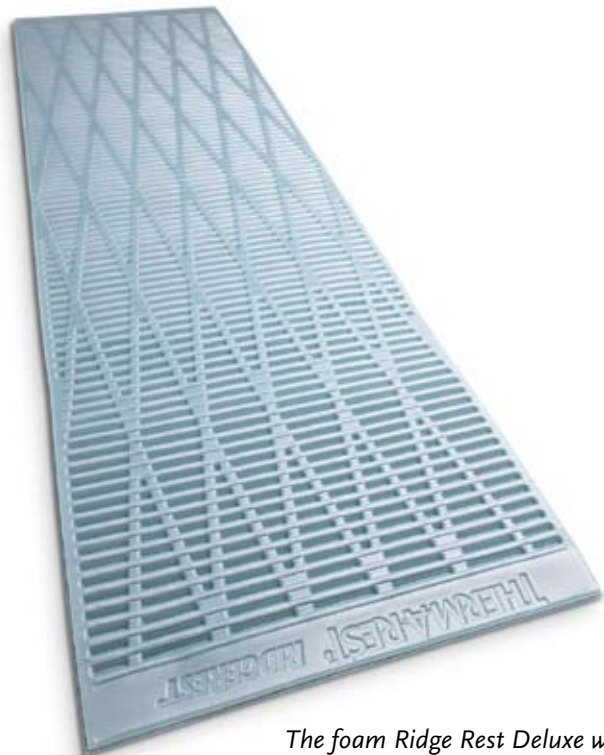


Better Sleep On It

Four new sleeping pads offer different strategies for comfort



REI enters the sleeping pad market with the Lite Core 1.5, an effective pad, but a little pricey.



The foam Ridge Rest Deluxe will never spring a leak, but can be bulky when rolled up.

BY ALLISON WOODS

This month finds your intrepid gear testers fast asleep on the job once again.



We were able to load up both last month's tents and this month's sleeping pads for some spring and summer trips. These new pads traveled

far afield, from bivy sacks in the North Cascades to spring fly fishing trips in Eastern Washington. We've tried to bring you a wide variety of pads to choose from, and here are our findings. Weights are courtesy of the WTA Test Labs, and do not include stuff sacks.

REI Lite Core 1.5
1 lb. 11 oz.
\$75

REI's Lite Core 1.5 is a fairly new entry to the field. Last year, it was so popular that REI could not keep this inflatable

pad in stock. This pad received mixed reviews from our testers; some side sleepers bottomed out on it, though most back sleepers liked it a lot. The Lite Core has a nice, positive valve on it, and stays put under your sleeping bag. Caveat: seemed a bit expensive for its weight.



Camp luxury: The Downmat 7 from Exped combines an inflatable air mattress with a down featherbed. It offers a plush experience, but comfort comes with a hefty price tag.

Shopping for gear?

Read Allison's archived gear reviews at www.wta.org.



The Thermo Lite from Pacific Outdoor has inflated side rails that hold you like a hug. Those who sleep on their sides may bottom out on this pad, however.

Cascade Designs Ridge Rest Deluxe

1lb. 3 oz.
\$29

Cascade Designs' Ridge Rest Deluxe stands out in a few ways: rock bottom price, loads of comfort, and no worries about the pad going flat in the middle of the night. By far the simplest pad solution in the lot, the Ridge Rest will tolerate loads of abuse. If you are one of those types who likes to drag your pad around in camp, foam is the way to go. Caveats: Foam pads wear out more quickly than the others, and their bulk might be a problem with a small backpack. This model in particular, is quite a lump when it's rolled or folded. We always keep a foam pad or two on hand for loaners, and also to double up with an inflatable pad when camping on snow.

Exped Downmat 7

1lb. 12 oz.
\$139

Exped's Downmat 7 was our most controversial pad. People either loved it or hated it—or in some cases, both. The Downmat 7 is a fully inflatable pad. Think of it as an air mattress with down inside of it, though it's properly durable for backcountry use. We found the storage sack/inflating bag less than useful and

left it at home. The bag popped off the valves when inflating. It's perfectly easy to inflate by mouth. We liked the hefty inflation valves, which click shut with a twist of the wrist, but found nothing was gained by there being two of them. A few testers complained about the noisiness of the Downmat, but everyone liked the plush, warm, down-filled ride. This pad is at its best left slightly underinflated for optimal comfort. Compressibility was favorably commented by all testers—it's a lot of pad that shrinks down small. Caveats: the astronomical price, and the pad is useless if chewed on by a rodent.

Pacific Outdoor Insul-Mat Max Thermo Lite

1 lb. 5 oz.
\$64

We included the Thermo Lite for its unusual design; the middle of the pad is the typical foam/inflatable combo, but the sides of the pad are more like air mattress tubes. The result is a pad that is reminiscent of a bowling alley lane set up for kids—complete with inflated side rails. The pad holds you like a hug. It's a nice lightweight pad for a decent price. Like other less expensive inflatables, side sleepers may bottom out on this pad. ♦

NEAT STUFF!

Simms G3 Guide Stockingfoot Waders

\$400-\$475
Womens sizes
S-XXL + petites
Mens sizes S-XXL +
short and long

If you decide to take up fly fishing, a world of opportunity will open up to you. Besides fishing in high lakes, you might find yourself wanting to fish lowland lakes and rivers—it can easily become a year-round sport if you fish the steelhead runs. You rely on your chest waders to keep you dry in rivers and desert lakes, so why not get the best? Simms G4 waders do not disappoint. They are made of 3- and 5-ply Gore-Tex with Neoprene stocking feet. We took these out on many desert lakes this summer with nary a problem. The adjustable waist belt on the women's model allows for easy changes in clothing layering. The differential suspender buckles make putting them

on the right way a snap, and the zippered chest pocket's the perfect place for keys and a fishing license. For the discerning fly fisher, the G3s prove to be simple and functional. Like most high-end equipment, the G3 Guide comes with outstanding warranty service.

