Tents for a Party of One
Three tents and one bivy offer lightweight shelter for solo trekkers

By Allison Woods

Full disclosure: I don’t like one-person tents. Why, you might ask? I have my reasons. Back in the olden days when I was a kid, backpacking ethics were a bit different. People backpacked together, shared equipment and camp duties, and relied on one another for navigation and support. I prefer this ethic, and to this day, attempt to backpack this way with friends rather than approaching a backpacking trip as a solo event with a bunch of other solo travelers, each completely self-contained. But enough about that. Let’s talk tents!

Black Diamond
OneShot
Advertised weight (tent+poles) 2 lb. 5 oz.
$289

Black Diamond’s little OneShot is one hot number. It’s a single-wall affair, with the truly incredible eVent by Nextec fabric to keep the raindrops out while still being breathable. eVent has largely been used for jackets up until recently, but Black Diamond took the fabric to another level by making a line of tents from this fabric.

The weight is just under two and a half pounds, a remarkable weight for a relatively roomy shelter. The interior space is comfortable and functional, and the jumbo side door and rear window provide excellent ventilation. The big door makes it quite easy to get in and out without having to do yoga. Love the yellow color, it’s soothing and not too gloomy.

This is a really, really cool tent. However, even the coolest tent might have a few little things wrong with it. The OneShot is a complete bear to set up in the wind. The poles are pitched inside the tent, rather than outside, and this requires crawling inside and stuffing the poles into the corners of the tent. Try that in wind, and you’ll see what I mean. The other thing—and this is really minor—is that the fabric is pretty noisy in the rain. I think it’s because the tent pitches quite taut. You’ll probably get used to it.

The Hubba
Advertised weight 2 lbs. 13 oz.
$249

We’ve reviewed the Hubba Hubba and the Mutha Hubba in these pages, and now comes the baby of the family, the one-person Hubba. It employs the same hub-and-pole setup as its larger counterparts, and setup is easy as pie. The fly pops on in moments, and has a nice large vestibule for storing gear on damp nights. We liked the interior peak height which made this rather narrow tent feel pretty roomy inside. If conditions allow, sleeping with the “D” shaped door rolled open makes this tent feel downright palatial. The tent is constructed in a traditional two-wall style, employing a body made mostly of mesh for good ventilation, and a separate rain fly to keep heat in and rain out. This tent is tall enough, though fairly narrow, for most people to comfortably sit up.

Exped Vela 1 Mesh
Advertised weight 3 lbs. 5 oz.
$230

I love this tent. To an average American hiker, like myself, it’s nutty, and it’s fussy, but it’s also way COOL. Like the rest of the Exped line, the tent and fly all go up together in one fell swoop. It’s simpler than it sounds. In the case of the Vela, just one single pole does the majority of the work for you. Assemble the pole, stick it in its sleeve and grommets, and stake down the ends (there is a tiny pole in each) and voila! Your wacky Euro-tent is (almost) up. A bit more fiddling with the cord tensioners and you have a very tough little shelter. It can be secured further with numerous guy lines, already tied to the tent and stored in tiny mesh bags, ready for deployment at the first signs of a coming storm.

The single roof pole incorporates another interesting feature; rather than unzip the vestibule, you just kind of stuff...
it up out of your way. Impress your friends by doing it one handed! Once inside, the interior space is of a similar size to the Vela’s counterparts. A “D” shaped door leads into a mesh enclosure with a bathtub floor. A nice large pocket stores must-haves at arm’s reach, and the interior colors are soothing. One complaint: the stuff sack is ridiculous. This just gives you another reason to leave the stuff sack at home, and pack your tent into your pack loose. This enables the tent to be at its most amoeba-like, filling all the small voids of your pack. I’ve been asked if I have ever damaged a tent by packing it this way, and the answer is no.

The Vela is for the discriminating solo backpacker who likes to stand out in the crowd, and enjoys a little fussing and fiddling with their tent.

**Gear We’ve Tried**

Integral Designs

**Bugabivy and 5 x 8 tarp (not pictured)**

Advertised weight 16 oz./7 oz. $70/$70

At a pound and seven ounces (not including lines and stakes) and $140, this mesh bivy and silnylon tarp are far and away the lightest and cheapest shelter among the ones we tested. The difference here is that you don’t get much of a shelter, merely a wisp of mesh and nylon and a scrap of tarp overhead to (hopefully) keep off the drizzles. This is camping at its simplest, no Cascades Westin here. This type of setup requires practice, and a relatively modern, high-quality sleeping bag to make it all work. The Bugabivy thoughtfully includes a nylon bottom to keep morning dew off. A 60-inch hoop and curved zipper opening allow for graceful exits and to keep the net off of your face. This baby goes up in a snap, and is fairly roomy for a bivy sack. Mesh construction makes the small space feel relatively roomy.

Sleeping in a setup like this is not for the uninitiated, but once you get the hang of pitching a tarp, it’s pretty simple. It can be fun figuring out how you’re going to pitch the tarp with natural “tools” in the vicinity, such as trees. I’d hoped to find the definitive manifesto on Tarpology (yes, it’s really called that!) on the Internet or in a book, but was not successful. Let me know your tarp strategies at Allison@wta.org. ♦

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**Do I need a footprint for my tent?**

I’m glad you asked that. You should get a footprint for your tent so that you can boost the nation’s economy by buying an additional piece of gear. You need one because it makes your outdoor lifestyle better. You should get one so you can carry it on your back all the way up a mountain.

Do you see where I’m going with this? You should buy a footprint for your tent because the manufacturers want you to think that your tent floor is vulnerable, and that it needs to be protected from harm. Also, because they would love to get a few more bucks out of you. Does your tent floor need to be protected from harm? Of course it does, and that’s why you should clear the ground of sharp objects like machetes and pointy rocks before you set up your tent. Simple as that. Still, you might persist and ask if I’ve ever seen a hole in a tent floor. Matter of fact, I have not, ever. But if I did see one? I’d patch it with a couple of pieces of ripstop tape, available where sailing supplies are sold. —Allison Woods

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**I have a freestanding tent. Can I pitch it without staking it?**

Freestanding tents are not designed to be pitched without staking. They will not pitch taut without staking. If the ground is too hard/soft/rocky, use your imagination and GET THAT TENT STAKED!! For example, if the ground is rocky, or you’re, say, camping on a granite slab in the Enchantments, stretch out the stake points and pile rocks on them. You can get away without stretching out the guy-out points, but in high winds, those points are essential to making your shelter as solid and wind-resistant as possible. —Allison Woods