

# Backcountry

## The Gear Closet »



**The REI Quarter Dome T2 is lightweight and quick to set up. It was one of the first in a line of feather-light tents with two doors that's now standard.**

## Seeking Shelter

Three tents that will keep you and a friend dry in three seasons

This month, we revisit an old standby—the three-season, freestanding, two-person tent. If some names seem familiar here, it's because two of our three tents are updated versions of very popular designs. Several years ago, REI came out with the Quarter Dome. The Quarter Dome was a classic dome tent with two side doors, but with one little twist—it weighed just four pounds. That same year, MSR debuted the Hubba Hubba with a similar idea, slightly roomier, but with a single side door. The following year, the Hubba Hubba had two doors. Now the two-door, two-person tent dominates the backpacking market, and picky hikers everywhere demand the convenience, ease of access,

and light weight. WTA Development Director Lace Thornberg generously lent a hand to the testing process, you'll find her impressions mixed in with mine. —AW

### REI Quarter Dome T2

Advertised weight 3 lbs. 12 oz.  
\$259

reviewer: Lace

Trip One: Desert camping on rocky ground. Initially disappointed by the need to consult the directions and a fellow camper in order to get it set up. I did not expect that half of the poles



### Allison Woods

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**Well ventilated, sturdy in the wind and extremely light, the Big Agnes Copper Spur is a great choice for backpackers—but it does run a bit narrow.**



would not touch the ground. Once the tent was set up, I thought it looked pretty cool. Loved that the tent was mainly mesh. Left the rain fly off on a cloudless night. It was like sleeping under the stars, minus the thought of snakes, bugs, and small rodents crawling over me in the night

Trip Two, night one: camping on snow above an alpine lake. It felt light in my pack. Though light and made mostly of mesh, the tent stayed reasonably warm. I appreciated the guy lines included with the stakes and put them to work attaching snow anchors. I wondered why only four lines were included and no spares. I thought, again, that pulling on the zippers might rip the tent, as the set-up seems flimsy. It rained all night, but no rain snuck into the tent. My gear stayed dry in the vestibules.

Trip Two, night two: downhill from the alpine lake on a well-manicured gravel pad in a campground. By now tent set-up is quick. Slight rain prevented further fly-less sleeping. Tent was plenty roomy for two tired people [Note: the OD is a modest 84 inches long, so make sure it will accommodate your height before buying this one.]

### **Big Agnes Copper Spur**

Advertised weight 3 lbs. 6 oz.

\$400

reviewer: Allison

I did the unspeakable with the Copper Spur. I took it outside and pitched it in the dark with

no idea of the tent's shape, and without reading the instructions.

My consort and I did a pretty good job of figuring it out, though we put the rain fly on backwards. It didn't affect performance much, and the next day we were able to attach it correctly and easily due to the color-coded buckles. For its extraordinary light weight, we found the tent had great manners in high winds. Ventilation was top-notch, and the vestibules nice and roomy. The teeny tiny zippers on the main doors of the tent may be lightweight as all get-out, but late night bathroom forays were somewhat hampered by excessive fiddling and yanking to get the doors open without snags. Another thing about the Copper Spur that we didn't like was the width—it was just a touch too narrow for two larger-than-average adults.

### **MSR Hubba Hubba HP**

Advertised weight 3 lbs. 11 oz.

\$450

reviewers: Allison and Andrew

Allison: My weekend with the Hubba Hubba HP showed me that it is true to its claims as a more weatherproof tent than the very popular Hubba Hubba. We stayed warm, cozy and relatively dry over a wet weekend at Goldmyer Hot Springs. The tent went up in a snap, and is essentially the same as its companion tent, the Hubba Hubba, except it sports much more fabric on the tent body, and much less mesh. If you plan to use one tent in summer and perhaps "shoulder season" conditions, this is going to be the ticket for you, though on our Goldmyer weekend there were condensation issues. That's bound to happen on a tent with little mesh, and ventilation in damp conditions

becomes absolutely essential to staying dry.

Andrew: I've been an owner of both the Hubba and the Mutha Hubba, so I was somewhat familiar with the newest version of the Hubba Hubba, the two-person variety of MSR's flagship tent. It's light, and it really sets up quickly (I especially like the multi-piece single pole that suspends the tent). The tent feels quite roomy and has high headspace. Neat little details abound: the mesh "drying rack" on the ceiling, easy-tightening lines on the fly and stake-ins (making it tight as a drum is really simple). And the nifty little side windows/vents in the fly can be propped open with a built-in stay. The two vestibules held a good amount of gear. Overall, a great tent. ♦

**The Hubba Hubba HP, the latest version of MSR's popular two-person shelter, is even lighter and has more fabric in the tent body. It's a snap to set up.**



## How to Buy a Tent

When selecting a tent, consider buying one that will work for what you plan to do the most—in other words, if you typically hike to high lakes in late summer, but hope to someday try winter camping, you'll be happiest with a three season tent for now—you can always rent or borrow for a special trip. Once you get your choices narrowed down, assemble it in the store, including the fly, and use the available Velcro stake-out points to fully pitch any tent you're interested in. Try not to look at the directions if possible. Then get inside, preferably with those you will be sharing the tent with. Make sure there's enough room in every direction—sit up, lie down, get in and out, and remember, you'll be in sleeping bags and you'll be getting dressed in there too. Try out the zippers and the pockets. The last piece of advice: Don't buy a tent on impulse unless you already **know** it's the model you want. Many major and incorrect purchases have been made by improperly researching this essential piece of gear. —A.W.



Arlo Smith