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The Absolute Guide To Sleeping Bags



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If there's one item that you just can't go without when you venture into the great outdoors, it has to be your sleeping bag. Whether you're a lightweight camping enthusiast or prefer something a little more luxurious, your sleeping bag is the most important thing you have to pack.

With literally hundreds of variations of sleeping bags being manufactured since their very humble beginnings, the sleeping bag has **adapted to the needs of all different types of campers** and the locations they like to visit.

Not only are our sleeping bags the ideal place to get some shut-eye, but they can be a source of comfort and rejuvenation to get us ready for the next day's adventures.

There are sleeping bags for cold weather, warm weather, campers who travel light, and those who have to fit a lot of people in. If you need it, you can guarantee there's a sleeping bag out there that will have it. With thousands of **unique features** designed to improve comfort and convenience, the sleeping bag is one product that continues to evolve.



For those in the market for a new sleeping bag, it pays to have a solid understanding of your own camping habits or goals. Depending on where you like to travel, who with, and under what circumstances, your requirements for a bag can greatly differ to the next person. You can sure, though, that any need you have can be satisfied by these modern style portable beds.

The History Of The Sleeping Bag

One of the very first sleeping bags to have been invented came about in 1876 by a Russian-born designer. These bags were intended to be used as a shelter and were referred to as a “rug”, with orders being shipped to the British and Russian armies. Other variations were used by pioneers in the Australian outback as well as African tribes, all of which had their own unique design.

These Russian rugs were one of the earliest models of sleeping bags that we have today, and since then they have seen many changes.

During World War 2, troops used a newer variation of this sleeping bag which consisted of the mummy shape design that we know today. As they went from something used only in military settings or survival situations, they slowly became an **accessory for those who enjoyed exploring and hiking** as a hobby.

The modern day sleeping bag has seen many changes, with advancements being made in temperature survival and lightweight capabilities. As the habits of hikers and campers continue to change also, we will likely see these designs become even more compact and protective than ever before.



How Does A Sleeping Bag Work?

A sleeping bag is essentially a cover for someone to sleep in which protects them from the ground, weather conditions, and cold temperatures.

These sacks are usually designed with a zip which goes all the way around and are rectangular in length to meet the human shape. Some of these feature a padded bottom to aid comfort, but it's generally recommended that to get the most heat and comfort you use a sleeping pad as well.

A sleeping bag **works as an insulator** and basically traps all of the heat inside the bag with the user to keep them warm. These portable beds are usually lightweight so they can be carried around while camping or hiking, and covered with a waterproof or water-repellent material to keep you from getting rained on or damp.

When the user is zipped inside, the fill inside of the sleeping bag offers insulation, and some modern types of sleeping bags even put a larger focus on certain parts of the body known for retaining heat.

Although studies have disproven the myth that we lose up to half of our body heat through the head, having this covered with a contoured hood or bag can have a phenomenal effect on how warm we stay through the night.

These bags keep a layer of uncirculated air within which stays close to your body to **keep you warm**. As your body warms the dead air, the bag acts as a barrier between yourself and the cold ground to ensure you stay toasty and dry. The snuggler your sleeping bag is, the less air there is in between, and the warmer you become.



Types Of Sleeping Bags

Just as there are many types of campers and sleeping bag owners, so too are there different types of sleeping bag. Depending on the style of camping you enjoy and what you regard as important, there's a type of bag to fit you. These are just some of the most popular styles of bag, however, there are much more to suit other styles as well.

Cold Weather Sleeping Bags

Sometimes referred to as alpine bags, these are bags that have been designed to specifically **handle freezing conditions**. A sub zero sleeping bag is heavily insulated and usually with more fill than a standard one.

These bags are popular with hikers and campers who visit snowy areas or those of extreme temperatures, and they usually come in a mummy shape so that they can cocoon the user for warmth.

Warm Weather Sleeping Bag

If you regularly travel to hot places or just don't need as much coverage as an alpine bag, a summer sleeping bag is ideal. These have relatively light fill inside and are usually made from synthetic fabric as to keep temperatures done.

The most common shape for these is a rounded edge rectangle as it allows the user easy exit and entry, and the option to unzip in especially hot conditions.



Ultralight Sleeping Bag

For a lightweight sleeping bag to suit ultralight campers, these generally achieve this by decreasing the comfort factor. An ultra compact sleeping bag is usually **made with a compression sack**, and might not have as much fill to keep the weight and size down. The fill usually made of down as it weighs less than polyester without compromising on comfort.

General Use Bag

A general use bag is the name given to standard sleeping bags, generally without any stand out features such as lightweight or alpine. These are usually extremely comfortable as their users don't have any weight requirements and are happy to carry something a bit heavier if it means they get to sleep in luxury.

Travel Sleeping Bag

A travel sleeping bag is similar to the general use, however, they have been designed for indoor use mainly. This suits tourists and holiday makers who might use their sleeping bag in shared accommodation or a hostel, so it doesn't need to be as padded as regular ones.

Top Features Of A Sleeping Bag

If you've been shopping around for a new sleeping bag you've probably already realized how daunting the process can be. With hundreds of variations all claiming to offer the user the most comfortable and coziest sleep they'll ever have, it's difficult to know which product to trust.

Depending on your personal needs as a camper, you'll likely need something unique from your sleeping bag. Thankfully, these essential items can start as low as \$20 for a quality brand and reach high into the hundreds, so it just depends on your budget. Here are a few features to consider when shopping for a sleeping bag, and what some of the basic terminologies means.

Material

The material of a sleeping bag consists of two parts usually, the shell or **outside and the lining**. One of the most common materials used for the shell is polyester, and usually with some water repellent or resistant qualities. The inner lining should be something soft and comfortable such as cotton so that it's able to keep warmth in but feel cozy to your skin as well.

Size

The size of a sleeping bag is usually measured in inches and can indicate whether it's intended for one or multiple users. Size may be important for ultralight sleeping bag products as their users want something that can store away easily in their pack. Some single sleeping bags can be zipped together with the same model so this can be a helpful way of getting more space.



Shape

There are two common shapes of sleeping bag; the mummy and the rectangle. The mummy shape is generally found with colder weather sleeping bags as it allows the user to be completely enveloped, and women's sleeping bags follow this shape too generally with feminine colors.

A rectangular shape sleeping bag is an everyday use one or those used indoors, as they allow the user more freedom to move around without fear of losing heat.

Insulation

When purchasing your sleeping bag you'll have to decide on the insulation or fill that you want, whether it's natural or synthetic. Most campers choose synthetic insulation made from Polyester, however, there are natural types available such as goose down. **Each has their own benefits**, though, so it depends on personal preference.

Waterproof And Weatherproof

Not every product is a waterproof sleeping bag, but most are. These bags are either made from a material that repels water or has special lining or treatment on them that gives this quality. A waterproof sleeping bag is ideal for keeping you free from moisture and wet conditions, and it's usually quite important for campers to have.

Storage

If you're after hiking sleeping bags, the storage is usually very important in your top features. How compactly the bag stores away and in what it is stored will determine how easy it is to carry and if you're able to travel lightly. Compression sleeping bags are popular these days as they can get your bag down to quite a small package for convenience.



Weight

The weight of your sleeping bag once rolled up will also be important to its storage, and it's something that ultralight campers look for specifically. Depending on the type of sleeping bag, these can range **from 2lbs upwards** for the more comfortable types. If you're more interested in comfort and luxury, expect your bag to weight around 4lbs or more.

Temperature Rating

The survival temperature rating of a sleeping bag indicates what type of weather conditions it would be suitable for. These are usually listed in Fahrenheit and indicate what temperature the sleeping bag can keep you protected and comfortable in. They can range from below freezing and up, so depending on the conditions you camp in you should choose based on this.

Warranty

As with any camping gear, you should always select a product that has a solid warranty behind it. This indicates that not only is it a quality product, but that the brand stands for its strength and durability. This gives the camper peace of mind that their chosen sleeping bag will serve them well in the wilderness, so they can relax and enjoy their trip.

Not all of these features are going to be important to every camper, and it's really up to the individual to decide. As a bare minimum, though, look for a sleeping bag with a **good warranty and solid reputation** behind it, and one that can keep you protected from the weather and a slight drop in temperature at the very least.

Benefits Of A Sleeping Bag

If you've never owned a sleeping bag before, you might be wondering what all the fuss is about. Surely you can just borrow someone else's if you go camping or pick one up at the local camping store without doing too much research?

Having the right sleeping bag to suit you actually has a range of benefits, and considering they can cost as low as \$20 for a quality brand, there's no reason not to grab your own.

Weather Protection

The number one benefit of owning a quality sleeping bag is **how well it can protect you from the weather**. Whether it's freezing temperatures, rain, or impending snowfall, you won't feel a thing when you're rugged up in your 20 degree sleeping bag. This one product can help reduce your risk of hypothermia and is a useful way of treating the condition too.

Proper Rest

The benefits of a good night's sleep are hard to pass up, and without a comfortable place to rest your head at night you won't see any of these. A sleeping bag is essential when camping as it allows you to get a decent sleep so you have energy and motivation for the following day.



Protection From Insects And Animals

A big benefit of sleeping bags that many don't realize is how well they protect you from wildlife. When camping, we can encounter a range of insects that can be dangerous or deadly.

According to CDC, camping brings us into contact with insects which can cause Lyme disease, zika virus, dengue, and more. With a sleeping bag and liner, we are protected from these and can feel safe dozing off each night.

Personal Space

If you're camping with other or staying in shared accommodation, having a sleeping bag can be a simple way to get your personal space. These snug and small cocoons can help relax you and give you the **feeling of privacy** that some people might miss when on a shared adventure with others.

With just one simple item you can get all of these benefits, so it pays to do your research and shop around until you find the best sleeping bag for you. When you invest a little time and money you'll be rewarded with a quality bag that will last you through many years of camping and adventures.

Synthetic Vs Down Sleeping Bag

One of the oldest debates, when it come to sleeping bags, is whether synthetic or down is better for you. The truth is, each of these has their own advantages and disadvantages, so it all depends on the individual user and what they find important.

For the hiker or camper that is looking for the most lightweight option, down is always better. Not only can down keep you warm and insulated, but it's virtually weightless which suits anyone who wants to travel lightly. Traditionally, down sleeping bags used to be bad for wet conditions but now that you can purchase waterproof down bags, they're more appealing.

If you're looking to spend as little as possible on a sleeping bag but don't want to give up any comfort, synthetic is the choice for you. These polyester filled bags will do a wonderful job of **keeping you warm, dry, and it won't cost an arm and a leg just to buy one**. They're also ideal for wet conditions and usually won't retain any damage even if they get soaked.

Overall, there's no clear winner as it depends on the individual. However, if you're talking about warmth to weight ratio and need something to keep you toasty in freezing conditions, you probably shouldn't pass up a down sleeping bag.

For those who enjoy general camping and indoor conditions at times, synthetic is the way to go. There's really no right answer here, but most campers will have their personal preference.



Best Backpacking Sleeping Bag

The most common reason people invest in a sleeping bag is usually to take it camping or backpacking, and as there are such unique needs for this kind of outing you need to ensure you have the best sleeping bag for it. The number one feature to look for in a backpacking sleeping bag is something lightweight and easy to carry, so anything around 2 – 3lbs is an ideal weight.

Secondly, your sleeping bag **should match the climate you're traveling in**. The best way to ensure the right bag for the climate is to check average temperatures in the area and then deduct a few degrees for safety.

This way, if the worse should happen and temperatures should drop below average, you'll be covered. If it's warmer, simply lose some layers of bedclothes to cool down.

Finally, the best backpacking sleeping bag should be high quality. This includes everything from its stitching and construction to the type of material used.

When you're out hiking or backpacking, you can be days away from civilization, and you don't want to run the risk of your bag breaking or becoming damaged. Just these few features will ensure you pick the best backpacking sleeping bag that will see you through with years of service.



The Essential Camping Accessory

There's no denying just how important a sleeping bag is when you think about travel. Whether you get outdoors and rugged in freezing conditions or enjoy a spot of glamping and want to stay comfortable inside, there are literally thousands of different sleeping bags out there to suit your needs.

Even if you don't consider your sleeping bag to be that much of a big deal when thinking about your next adventure, you should remember just **how essential a good night's rest is** when you're in the wilderness.

Without adequate and comfortable sleep, you won't have the energy you need to give it your all the following day, and you may have even fallen prey to weather-related illnesses.

As the sleeping bag continues to evolve past its original basic form of a rug, it will be interesting to see what changes will occur. As a society, we enjoy getting into the wilderness now more than ever and are constantly looking for ways to improve productivity and convenience with our camping gear, and the sleeping bag is a huge part of this.

No matter what type of sleeping bag you favor, if you prefer down to synthetic, need your bag to weigh just two pounds, or want a cozy pillow under your head when camping, there'll be that one perfect product out there for you. A sleeping bag can be just as unique as the user that's resting on it and has a whole range of benefits to your body when you choose the right one.

