

Canvas Wall Tents

Contributed by Luke McMistry
Thursday, 02 November 2006

Many of us have spent cramped, cold nights in nylon dome tents, wondering when we could get back to our nice warm homes. This is as true of car campers as it is of backpackers, since most families don't have enough space in their tents as they need. One nice alternative to the standard nylon tent is a canvas wall tent.

Bringing up visions of old west cowboys, the canvas wall tent has a long history in the western U.S. Cowboys, hunters, and herders have used them for hundreds of years as base camps and homes away from home, packing in the canvas and constructing frames from locally cut timber. Even now, canvas wall tents are the shelters of choice for anyone spending a large amount of time in the backwoods since they offer unparalleled comfort and warmth, even in heavy wind and snow. Since the walls and frames are relatively heavy compared to nylon they usually aren't used by backpackers, but many hikers use them as base camps for a series of day hikes.

Wilderness outfitters have never stopped using canvas wall tents, as they serve as excellent hunting camps with room for an entire crew of hunters. Ranchers and cowboys use them as well for working stock, since the tents can be easily packed in by horses, set up in a matter of minutes, and provide reliable shelter for months. Many families even use them as guest houses; they're economical and pack away easily when company has left.

Canvas wall tents can also be outfitted with a number of accessories, which make them more comfortable than any nylon tent. Perhaps the best feature is that you can stand in them easily! The first addition most people make to their canvas tent is that of a stove. Since canvas is a natural material it won't melt like nylon, so wood-burning or propane stoves can heat up a canvas tent quickly and safely. Porches or cooking extensions are also handy accessories, as they can make the tent cover more area as well as adding a nice place to sit with a drink and watch the sun set.

Other options include cots (or even bunk cots), storage racks, and tables to allow you to use your canvas wall tent however you see fit. They also double as handy awnings for outdoor events once their walls are removed. Though they may not be the tent of choice for backpackers, if you're looking for a sturdy, durable tent to spend a lot of time in, you don't need to look much further.