



Appearing in the *Guinness Book of Records* any day soon!

Terra Nova Laser Competition | £235

The lightest tent in the world just got lighter still. So should you pay more for less?

André J Ludwick from South Africa has a collection of 505 different nail clippers. Brit Nick Thompson ate 136 baked beans from a plate with a cocktail stick in 3 minutes. Ashrita Furman balanced 75 one pint (20oz) beer glasses on his chin for 10.6 seconds in his backyard in New York. And my point is? Well, some people spend their days coming up with daft records to break. However, others are creating records that affect the lives of the hill-walker and backpacker. Terra Nova has spent the last year whittling down the weight of its world record-holding Laserlite.

In 2005 Guinness World Records recognised the Laserlite as 'The lightest tent in the world'. (And yes, you do get a certificate to stick on the wall and everything.)

Desperate to put the record even further out of rivals' reach in 2006 they now bring us the Laser Competition. With a packed weight of 1035g and a minimum useable weight of 926g, Terra Nova claims

to have shaved nearly 200g off the previous record, without reducing the size of the tent.

The Laser Competition arrived at my door during a period of wet and windy weather – not ideal conditions for testing such a lightweight bit of kit. For no matter how good a lightweight tent is, it's never going to perform as well in wild weather as a bigger, heavier and more substantial design (which is why Terra Nova also makes the Endurance range of tents such as the tried and trusted Quasar, for example). But I like a challenge, and wild weather will always reveal the shortcomings of a tent far quicker than a fine summer's day would.

The tent in its stuffsack was tipping the **Trail** scales at 1035g. That includes a 'complementary pole sleeve cover' weighing 68g – that's the bit you can ditch if you're a lightweight fundamentalist. In fact if that sounds like you, you'll also want to know that the pegs weigh 42g and the peg bag's an extra 4g; the poles

weigh 154g with the pole bag being 6g; there are two guy lines that total 10g, and the stuffsack is 20g. That leaves the tent weighing in at 720g, comfortably under the Laserlite's 1140g packed weight.

Light weight has other advantages apart from sparing your back: with weight goes packed size, meaning the Competition is a doddle to stow in a compact rucksack. This was the last observation I was able to make before I had to grit my teeth and head out onto the wind-scoured, rain-lashed early evening hillside.

Thankfully, the tent pitches very easily. You just take the pole, slide it through a sleeve on the outside of the flysheet and locate the ends. Peg out the sides and a couple of guy lines, and the job is done. The pole sleeve cover protects the top of the pole sleeve from leaking at the seams by acting as an 'umbrella'. There are no frills to the weight-saving design, so you don't have to adjust buckles or have options as to how the tent is




pitched. This is fine on a dry day in calm weather, but in wild weather this makes it a little tricky to get the tent well-tensioned. You have to just hope that there isn't a rock in the ground where you want to stick the pegs as you can't adjust them to suit the peg position. A short vertical pole at each end of the tent adds valuable height for the head and feet.

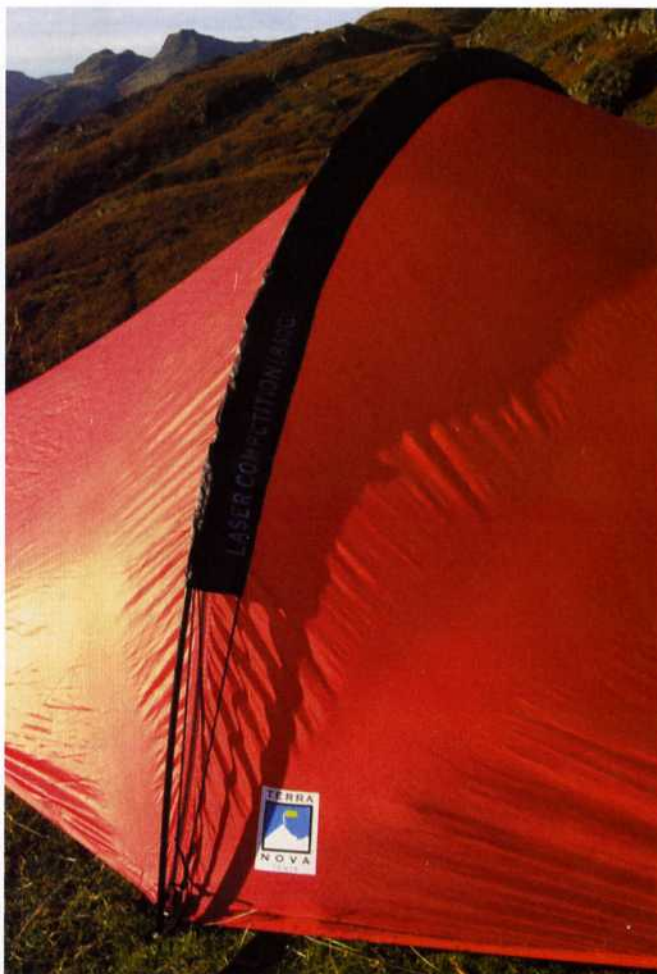
The Laser Competition is not as stable as a geodesic design or even some other lightweight tents, but then 'bombproof' wasn't in the design brief. However it is stable enough for breezy weather, and even in gusts I was happy to be inside without thinking it was going to become airborne.

As a 6-footer I could just about sit up under the main pole, and I could easily knock up a meal in the porch with my rucksack and boots stored at one end. The doors are a basic design, with just single pulls on the zips, so you can't open the top to ventilate the inner. The tent is small

FACTS

Price £235**Design** single hoop**Capacity** 1 person backpacking, 2 person for mountain marathons**Poles** shock-corded alloy poles**Materials** outer: Watershed SL 3000mm hydrostatic head; inner: ripstop nylon; groundsheet: Waterbloc SL 5000mm hydrostatic head**Internal dimensions** length 205cm; width 93cm; height 95cm**Packed size** 12x46cm**Total weight** 1035g**Made in** Far East

-  lightest 1-2 person 2-skin tent on the planet
-  minimal space and tight for two; you could just split a normal tent between two
-  great for a mountain marathon tent or superlight backpacking for a night

Stockist details tel. (01773) 837370; www.terra-nova.co.uk

Every single detail of the Laser Competition has been designed to...




...shave off a few more grams. Result: a truly record-breaking tent.



sliver of time when it's absolutely in its element; frustrating when it comes to parallel parking.

It's great that the Competition will nail the 'Lightest tent in the world' certificate to the wall at Terra Nova HQ. Just don't get too carried away

in all the excitement to forget the image of a rain-soaked Michael Schumacher at Sainsbury's, forced to park in the mother-and-baby slots, disconsolately looking for somewhere to stow a bag of sprouts in the fastest car in the world. 

RIVALS

3 MORE LIGHTWEIGHT DOUBLE-SKIN TENTS



MTN. EQUIPMENT AR ULTRALIGHT £160

Outstanding space for the weight; you can sit up inside and there are two good-sized porches. It's low at just 90cm and it's also narrow at 120cm, making it tight for two. To save further weight you can use your trekking poles to hold it up.

Weight 1300g**Internal dimensions** length 220cm; width 90cm; height 90cm**Stockists** - tel. (01457) 854424; www.mountainequipment.co.uk

LIGHTWAVE ZRO TREK £150

Just wide enough for two, but headroom is a little low, so you can only just sit up. But an ideal tent for one during multi-day backpacking trips. The large porch easily takes a rucksack with room left to cook, and you get good doors. The price is attractive too.

Weight 1500g**Internal dimensions** length 230cm; width 120cm; height 80cm**Stockists** - tel. (01434) 673724; www.lightwave.uk.com

HILLEBERG AKTO £280

There's a huge amount of space inside this tent, which makes it great to use for long periods. You can sit up in the middle, and the foot and head end are quite good too. The porch is massive with plenty of room for gear and cooking. It was voted Best in Test for one-person tents in July 2003.

Weight 1550g**Internal dimensions** length 220cm; width 90cm; height 90cm**Stockists** - tel. (0046) 6357 1550; www.hilleberg.com

for one person but two would be happy to use it during a competitive adventure or fell race.

With the wind and rain lashing the sides, I was comfortable enough inside this tent; but I wouldn't want to spend more than a couple of nights in it due to the limited space. I'd also prefer to use it in reasonably good weather, again mainly as it is so small. So if I were expecting foul weather I'd go for something slightly bigger, such as the Terra Nova Solar or Solar Minor, and just accept that sometimes I have to carry a heavier load.

On a fine day, though, this is a stunning shelter, and it's ideal for a night or two during an adventure race or when tackling a two-day backpacking trip over a weekend.

Think about that caveat though: don't mistake this tent for a regular camping device to be considered alongside your usual array of stable, spacious two-person geodesics. It's the backpacking equivalent of a Formula One car. Brilliant for that tiny