

UK EXCLUSIVE

LIGHTER NIGHTS TERRA NOVA SUPERLITE QUASAR

Spurred on by the acclaim heaped on its lightweight Laser and Voyager backpacking tents, Terra Nova is stripping pounds from other models.

By substituting lighter fabrics and materials, and making subtle changes to the tent's design, Terra Nova has managed to hive an admirable chunk off the well-established Quasar. In fact, the company's claim to have shed 20 per cent of the original Quasar's lard doesn't ring true by my maths – the Superlite Quasar is a phenomenal 40 per cent lighter, yet there's no compromise with space.

The main savings come in the use of sil-nylon for the flysheet and DAC 8.55mm Featherlite poles instead of 9.5mm 7001 Reflex alloys. More subtly, the poles now clip to ultra-light plastic clips on the inner tent, instead of threading through fabric sleeves. The supplied pegs are tiny titanium models, not the standard Quasar alloy stakes, and the zippers have tiny cord-not-metal pullers.

Those four colour-coded poles create a sturdy geodesic shape that should withstand wild weather: two run diagonally, corner-to-corner, to cross at the tent's apex; the others angle across each door from the tent's sides. The inner-first pitching is simple, thanks

to the colour coded poles and eyelet ribbons around the base. The poles simply slip into the base eyelets and clip to the pegged-out inner. The flysheet is thrown over the top, attached at the eyelets to the same poles, and the guys pegged out. In total 22 pegs are needed for a proper pitch though you could pitch the inner alone, without pegs even, to fend off bug swarms in calm weather.

Well-vented doors at either end give access to small porches, each big enough for either gear storage or cooking but not both. Each external door has two zips, and can be opened from bottom or top, giving even better control over ventilation; the doors can be fastened back on either side to allow better access and views. The fabric/mesh inner doors can also be fastened back and are great for venting or midge-ridden conditions.

Inside the tent there's room for two to stretch out comfortably, with some gear space. There's also space for either to exit the tent without crawling over the other or brushing the steep interior walls.

Each inner corner features a good-size mesh pocket, and there are slim mesh pockets on the right hand side of each inner door too, as well as attachments in the ceiling

for hanging an optional gear loft. That ceiling is high enough for me to sit upright, though there's not quite enough height to sit up in the doorways. The bathtub floor is slippery and it might be worth smearing on some lines of seam sealant before a trip, to give sleepmats something to grip.

The phenomenal weight difference in the Superlite Quasar makes this a terrific two-person backpacking tent, easy to carry when split between two. For one it's still a tad burdensome – though I have lugged heavier tents into the hills – and occupies quite a bit of pack space.

If there's any sacrifice it's in the tent's rating, downgraded from "four-season mountain" to "four-season backpacking". That's a reflection of the fact that the lighter materials, while strong in their own right, aren't going to provide the high-mountain, gale-proof standards of the original Quasar, which remains on the market. But first appearances suggest that this is likely to be a superb backpacking tent for all but the worst weather, one that I'm looking forward to giving a proper test on this year's cross-Scotland TGO Challenge.

John Manning



SPEC

£430

Design: geodesic

Flysheet fabric: silicon-nylon

Dimensions: inner: 136cm wide x 217cm long x 105cm high; fly: 361cm long x 136cm wide, tapering to 65cm at entrances

Poles: four DAC 8.55mm Featherlite

Stakes: 22, titanium

Weights: four poles, 666g; 22 pegs, 128g; flysheet, 738g; inner, 823g; three stuffsacks 62g. Basic repair kit & instructions: 54g

Total weight: 2.47kg

TRADER INFO

www.terranova.co.uk

01773 837373