

If you need to travel ultra-light, the Laser Photon is hard to beat.



Inset: A 110g weight saving and room for two adventure racers.

TERRA NOVA LASER PHOTON £300

THE WORLD'S LIGHTEST TENT BY 110G: BUT DOES IT DO THE JOB?

FIRST TEST

Perfection. So hard to reach. So hard to improve upon. Yet even perfection can sometimes be bettered.

Not content with achieving the 2005 Guinness World Record for 'the lightest tent in the world' with the Laserlite, in 2006 Terra Nova launched the Laser Competition, breaking its own record by nearly 200g. Now they've skimmed another 110g off the packed weight and given the new world record-holder the name Laser Photon.

The Photon's arrival coincided with storms and high winds, so any test would be harsh. I set out with the lightest tent in the world feeling like I was in a mountain marathon having taken up running a week ago!

Terra Nova recommends the Photon for use during adventure races and short trips, but they do concede that for backpacking trips lasting one or two weeks the Laser Competition with its more durable materials would be a more suitable option.

Lightest tent

The tent came packed in a stuffsack, tipping the **Trail** scales at 766g. The 11 pegs were 12g; peg bag 1g; poles 128g; pole bag 2g. The main stuffsack was 18g, making the tent 605g, including two guy lines at 5g. So the minimal two-skin weight comprising of outer and inner sheets, poles, pegs and guy lines is 745g (740g if you ditch extra guy lines). You can also leave the inner

fabric behind and use the Photon as a single-skin tent, reducing the weight to roughly 500g. However, this is not ideal in the UK as condensation is greatly increased and there's no separate porch for gear storage.

I tried to pitch the Photon on a windy, grassy plateau, but its titanium pegs tended to bend and ping out on this uneven terrain. The new, lighter pole slips through a sleeve on the outer without difficulty though.

Inside you get a porch and an inner tent. I could just about sit up under the main pole and was easily able to 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 vent the inner. In a mountain marathon when weight matters, two athletes could squeeze inside – assuming they didn't mind mixing body sweat!

Windy issues




The Laser Photon is not as stable as a geodesic or even some other lightweight tents – but then that isn't the idea of this model. In a storm I wouldn't want to sleep in it for 8 hours unless I was in a mountain marathon. But on a fine day this is a stunning shelter, ideal for an adventure race or a weekend backpacking trip.

The Terra Nova Laser Photon pushes the boundaries of what's acceptable for camping. But for lightweight fanatics hurtling towards the finish line, this tent could make the difference between winning and losing. 

FACTS



Design single hoop **Capacity** 1-2 person
Poles shockcorded alloy poles
Materials outer – Watershed Lite, 2000mm hydrostatic head; inner – ripstop nylon; groundsheet – Waterbloc Lite – silicone coated ripstop nylon, 4000mm
Internal dimensions length 220cm; width 93cm; height 95cm
Packed size 13x44cm
Total weight 766g **Made in** Vietnam

-  lightest 1-2 person 2-skin tent ever
-  minimal space, minimal stability
-  ideal mountain marathon tent or superlight tent for a night or two

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

Two-skin tents the Photon beats:
Terra Nova Laser Comp 940g
Mtn. Equipment AR Ultralite 1150g
VauDe Hogan Ultralite Argon 1370g
Lightwave t0 Ultra 1440g

 Go to www.youtube.com and in the search bar, type 'trailmagazine' (all lower case, one word) to see this video and lots more.