

Bargain price for a simple and stable shelter

The Sololite, a brand new model for Spring 08, is a three to four season backpacking tent for one person. The total weight of the test sample is 1937 grams, which isn't that light in modern terms, but in every other respect the Sololite is excellent.

It's a cross between a ridge and a tunnel tent, with a hoop at the front and a low back supported by a pole along the ridgeline. The poles are external and fit together via hubs to give a strong structure. The flysheet then clips to the poles with substantial double clips. The inner can be left attached to the flysheet or separated for drying. No pitching instructions were provided with the sample Sololite and the first time I pitched it the weather was cold, wet and windy and I was wearing gloves. Even so the whole process took less than five minutes, making this one of the easiest tents I've ever pitched.

The flysheet is made from coated ripstop polyester. This is a relatively heavy fabric compared with silicone nylon but much less expensive, the main reason

for the heavier weight and low price of the Sololite. Both sides of the door can be opened, fastening back with little clips. The inner is made of breathable ripstop nylon with a mesh rear panel and a zip-around door that packs away into a pocket on the side when open. The top half of the door can be zipped down to leave a mesh panel for ventilation without letting the midges in. The poles are high quality DAC lightweight ones and ten alloy V-pegs are provided.

The weather ensured that the Sololite had a tough test as it was used in a series of January storms. The first time, the rain turned to heavy wet snow overnight, which continued throughout the next day, leaving the tent almost invisible under a thick white blanket. The Sololite stood up to this well, with little deformation of the fabric under the weight of snow. The next night the snow turned back to rain, which became very heavy and continued for most of the following two days, with a strong wind gusting to 50mph. Again the Sololite stood up to this without problems, keeping all the rain out and not moving much in the wind. There was, inevitably, condensation on the inside of the flysheet, something that's impossible to avoid in such humid conditions, but none came through the inner.

The inner is roomy enough for one, as long as you're not very tall. I can just sit up in the front, though my head touches the fabric, and I'm 5'8". The length

is fine but the back is low and narrow. A long sleeping bag could push against the inner and pick up condensation from the flysheet. The porch is just big enough for storing a rucksack and can be enlarged for cooking by removing the single front peg and rolling it back, a neat touch.

While the Sololite certainly stands up to winter weather it's a little small for the long dark nights of midwinter when you can be inside a tent for up to 16 hours at a time. The weight is on the heavy side but still okay for backpacking unless you're going ultralight. The design is so good that it would be nice to see a version made with a silicone nylon flysheet and with lighter components to get the weight down. As it is this is a great solo tent at a very reasonable price. **CT**

SPEC

£120

Flysheet Fabric: ripstop polyester

Poles: DAC Featherlite alloy

Porches: one

Pitching: fly first or as unit

Size: inner 220cms long, 90 cms wide

tapering to 60cms, 88cms high at front

Manufacturer's weight: 1790g min, 1900kg packed

TGO weight: tent 1393g, tent stuffsack

30g, poles 381g, pole stuffsack 19g, 10

pegs 103g, peg stuffsack 11g, Total: 1937g

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