

Tents



[bomb shelter]

The North Face Mountain 25

"Of all the tents we tested, this is the one I want to be in when the apocalypse comes," says our gear editor, who slept in it on the summit of Mt. Washington in truly horrendous weather. While several other tents crumbled around her in winds gusting to 59 mph, the two-person, double-wall Mountain 25 held firm, thanks to a geodesic, four-pole design with seven pole junctions to boost strength. "It's dry as a bone, too," says one tester who used it in Utah's Uintas during a drenching summer storm. The rectangular, 32.5-square-foot floor plan is compact to save weight (one reason mountaineers love it), but headroom (38.5 inches) is good throughout; two average-size testers were perfectly comfortable. There are two big doors on either end, a small vestibule off the back (four square feet) and a decent-size one at the front. "It only measures eight square feet," says our tester, "but because it has its own pole, the space is suitable for cooking or stacking packs." Two ceiling vents—they're sealable to keep rain and spindrift out—and ventable doors kept the inner sanctum condensation-free. **\$500; 8 lbs.; thenorthface.com**



[shoulder-season bargain]

REI Arete ASL 3

You: Flirt with the rougher edges of spring and fall, and the occasional mild-weather winter trip. Your tent: the three-person, double-walled Arete. It earned huge props right out of the bag for its no-brainer setup, with color-coded dead-end pole sleeves and an "insert this pole first" decal. "My eight-year-old twins popped it up on Mt. Hood in less than three minutes, including the fly," says one tester. The asymmetrical dome shape shed rain and withstood 20-mph winds in Norway and high on Mt. Rainier, but the tent's three-pole structure isn't strong enough for serious snowloads. And ventilation is excellent. "Zero condensation," reports one tester, "thanks to the mesh doors and vestibule vents." Space (38 square feet) is adequate for two plus gear or three smaller campers, but pinched for a trio of XLs. The vestibule covers the single door and holds boots and wet shells, but not a lot more. Bonus: affordability. **\$239; 6 lbs. 5 oz.; rei.com**



[ultralight alpinist]

Brooks-Range Rocket A2

Ignore the space-age look and consider the numbers: all-conditions shelter for two, at just over two pounds. The single-wall is made with a silvery CT³ material. It's a multilayer, nonwoven fabric, similar to the stuff used in space suits. And seams are fused, not stitched. Not only is the fabric and construction strong and weatherproof, it reflects body heat so the tent stays warmer than an average single-wall, says one tester who used it down to 12°F. And the exterior reflects sunlight, so you don't roast when it's warmer. "The dark interior kept me cool in temps up to 85°F," says a tester who used it near Bishop, California. "I'd pack this on any ultralight trip, any month of the year." You can pitch it with ski poles to save weight (13 ounces), or the included DAC poles. When fully guyed out, says a tester, "It's amazingly strong. It flapped a bit in 37-mph winds, but held firm and easily shed a few inches of wet snow in Montana." Space is pinched (25 square feet, with a 38-inch peak height and a seven-square-foot vestibule that holds two small packs, stacked), but ultralight alpinists are used to tight quarters. Three zippered vents prevented all condensation. **\$600; 2 lbs. 4 oz.; brooks-range.com**



[yurt]

Hilleberg Altai XP

You don't need a palace like this on every trip, but when the group is big and the weather bad, it sure is nice to have one—for gear storage, group dinners, or a communal crash pad. It sleeps up to eight and can seat 12 around the perimeter, which is why our testers—from Alaska Mountain Guides and Climbing School—raved about it after 24-day outings in Great Basin and Glacier Bay National Parks. It's floorless, with one giant door, and the center peak height is 79 inches (so standing up is no problem). Setup requires four hands, but it's sturdy in wind (we encountered up to 40-mph gusts) and can handle a few inches of snow thanks to eight vertical side poles and webbing straps across the floor, which increase stability. The single-wall Kerlon fabric is super tough: "It's a true expedition-ready shelter," says a tester. **\$645; 11 lbs.; hilleberg.com**