

8 OF THE BEST: camping essentials

Get ready for a trip in the great outdoors with these must-have items for all eventualities

With staycations being the best way to catch a break this summer, camping is on the cards for seasoned campers and newbies alike. But before you begin packing up everything bar the kitchen sink, it's worth assessing what you really need for a few days sleeping under the stars.

Top of the list should be a tent, but what type comes down to who will be spending time in it. 'We often get feedback from customers that wish they'd bought bigger,' says Paul Trepte, Managing Director of independent outdoor retailer Trekitt. 'I'd recommend getting a tent with a porch as a good halfway house – you get a larger footprint for less weight,' he adds.

Somewhere comfortable to rest your head should be a high priority too, as you don't want a poor night's sleep hindering your trip. 'Sleeping bags have comfort and season ratings, and while this may seem like jargon it's actually really important information,' explains David Scotland, owner of Outdoor World Direct. 'A one-season sleeping bag will only be suitable for warm summer nights, whereas a three-four

season sleeping bag is thicker and better suited to year-round camping but perhaps too thick for hot summer nights. Each sleeping bag has a comfort rating or suggested usage, which will include two temperatures such as -2°C to 18°C. That means checking that the forecasted temperatures of your trip don't fall outside of that temperature range.'

Other essential buys are comfortable chairs, something to cook on – such as a gas stove or a compact barbecue – as well as some cooking utensils and picnicware. Portable lighting will also come in handy when the sun goes down. Most other items, however, are considered more of a luxury. The best course of action is to write a checklist before you go so you don't forget anything or end up over-packing in a last-minute panic. 'Even experienced campers forget the less obvious items,' says David. 'If you do forget something like a mallet, try not to sweat it and don't be afraid to ask fellow campers. We're typically a friendly bunch and often more than happy to help out others and impart our wisdom on those with less experience.'

TYPES OF tents

Tents come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, so make sure you buy something that suits your specific or future needs

Ridge tent

The original-style tent, with a pole at each end and a cross pole. While they're very stable, these tents don't offer much head height so are best for one or two people.

Dome tent

A popular style with flexible poles that bend into semi-circles for a dome-like shape. Their shape

provides more space inside, though the poles are less flexible the larger the tent.

Geodesic tent

The most stable design thanks to poles that cross over one another. Ideal for windy conditions or temperamental weather, though more complicated to set up.

Tepee

Much like a bell tent, this boho style is on-trend though not the most practical unless set up semi-permanently for glamping.



KESTREL DELUXE HIGH-BACK CAMPING CHAIR, £24.99, TRAIL OUTDOOR LEISURE

Complete with a high-back rest, padded panels and breathable mesh, this portable camping chair is an incredibly supportive design – ideal for those looking to sit back and relax after a long day. Available in five colours, it comes with a shoulder bag for transportation.

- Weighs 3.5kg
- 45cm seat height
- Insulated cup holder
- High-back padded rest
- Padded panelling



CAMPING KIT IN BLUE, £16, FATFACE

An ideal gift for happy campers, FatFace's camping kit includes a trio of essentials in a stylish tin box. The highlight is the Swiss army knife, which cleverly features a corkscrew, bottle opener, knife, fork, and spoon.

- Matching camper motif gifts are also available.
- Swiss army knife
 - Small torch
 - Compass and carabiner
 - Tin container
 - Compact design

OUTDOOR REVOLUTION CAMP STAR 500 TENT BUNDLE, £599, OUTDOOR WORLD DIRECT

This five-person tent with footprint uses air technology rather than poles – simply inflate using the pump included. There's one large bedroom with a toggled divider so it can be turned into two smaller bedrooms if needed. The bedroom also has darkened fabric for less disturbance from light and heat on bright mornings.

- 120 HDE lightweight polyester fabric
- Fully sewn in groundsheet
- Zip-up front door with mesh panel
- Includes pegs, pump set and carry bag
- 500 x 400cm pitching area



EDITOR'S CHOICE



CAMPINGAZ CAMP BISTRO TWO PORTABLE GAS STOVE, £14.99, GO OUTDOORS

Simple and safe to use, this compact portable cooker is great for camping. It's easily transported in its sturdy plastic case, and there's no fuss with matches or a lighter thanks to the automatic piezo ignition.

Gas cartridges are sold separately.

- 75-minute run time with a Campingaz CP 250 cartridge
- Boil time 5 minutes 30 seconds
- Measures 33 x 28 x 9cm
- Enamelled pan support
- Piezo ignition



COLEMAN PACKAWAY TABLE, £190.38, ONBUY

Ideal for family trips away, this foldable camping table is made from a sturdy yet lightweight frame and comes complete with two double bench seats topped with removable padded covers for washing. These all fold down inside the tabletop when not in use, turning into a convenient carry case.

- Weighs 8.4kg
- Measures 90 x 39 x 9cm, closed
- Seats four people
- Machine washable cushions
- Easy to transport



INVESTMENT BUY

CLASSIC BUNDLE BED IN SUNSHINE NAVY, FROM £220, BUNDLE BEDS

A mattress, duvet and a pillow all in one – neatly rolled up into a handy bundle. It comes with a duvet cover and pillowcase for extra comfort, both of which are machine washable. Better yet, the duvet and pillows filling are made from 100 per cent recycled plastic bottles, making this an eco-friendly choice.

- Self-inflating mattress
- 15-tog duvet
- Machine washable
- Measures 190 x 60cm
- 100 per cent jersey cotton fitted sheet



BALAD PORTABLE LIGHTS, £84, THE WORM THAT TURNED

These portable outdoor lights can be carried, placed on a surface or hung around your campsite. The LED light provides 16 hours of glow per charge and has a useful USB recharging point. Available in three sizes – 12cm, 25cm and 38cm – the smallest also comes in a set of three for £149.

- Stylish design
- Six handle colours available
- Choice of three sizes
- Wireless
- Two brightness settings



STAMFORD FOUR-PERSON PICNIC COOL BAG IN STELLAR MAUI BLUE, £65, REGATTA

A complete picnic set with a cool bag compartment, which includes cutlery, plates, tumblers and a bottle opener. Made from recycled polyester with an easy-clean PEVA lining, the bag also features an adjustable shoulder strap.

- Four knives, forks and spoons
- Four plates, tumblers and bottle opener
- Mesh water bottle pocket
- Cool bag compartment
- Weighs 1.2kg