

Choosing the right sleep system



Getting away from everyday life comes in many forms, and camping is one of those great adventure activities many of us do, to escape. Even though you are camping with the intention of getting back to nature in the outback, the bush, or by the beach, it doesn't mean you need to sacrifice a good night's sleep. The options for sleep systems are endless, and choosing the right one for you is not something you need to "lose sleep" over.

Damien Ewin from Premier Defence Agencies (Carinthia distributor) has a few pointers:

WHY YOU NEED THE RIGHT "SLEEP SYSTEM" WHEN ADVENTURING

Oddly enough, it's the same reason that you have a good bed and coverings at home in order to be rested for our best performance. Sleep recharges us and it requires being physically comfortable and temperature stable so that there is no disturbance or waking during the sleep period. Yes, you can get by on four hours of rough sleep, but every day will get worse and your performance and enjoyment will suffer, until you crash.

Getting your full period of undisturbed rest is the key to how you enjoy your adventure and this is where your choice of sleep system comes into play. If you can get the quality rest you require, you can run yourself ragged all day and be ready to do it again the next day, without much of a penalty. This is where your choice of sleeping bag, insulation mat and shelter come into play, and this system can vary depending on the activity you're engaged in. Whatever you're doing, your system still needs to get you you're required rest.

THE TOP 5 THINGS YOU SHOULD TAKE WHEN CAMPING FOR A GREAT NIGHT'S SLEEP

The easy ones are a quality insulating sleeping mat, and a well-designed tent or bivouac bag. You can't put your bag directly onto the ground or a tent floor as where your body flattens the insulation; it stops working, so you need some form of effective insulation. An external shelter allows for more insulation and creates a microclimate around you.

Food is a must as it provides the energy to heat your body and the sleeping bag. Remember that the bag only traps your body heat, it can't generate heat, and food, hot or cold, is what generates your body heat.

If you are going somewhere cold, and insulation jacket and trousers can keep you out of your bag for longer as well as boost your bag rating if you wear them to bed. They can also act as a pillow if you're not wearing them.

Lastly, take a book. The paperback is not dead and it's nice to escape into a good story while you wait for sleep to overcome you!

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G-LOFT



WHAT SLEEPING BAG SHOULD YOU CHOOSE FOR SUMMER?

In Australia, Summer is relatively easy, although I have used a winter bag in the tropics! Lot's of humidity, sweating and temperature variations with a dew-point that can make you think it's raining so, obviously, something light, but with reserve warmth. Here I would suggest a two part system of a +5 to +10 comfort rated back with a fleece liner.

Use the fleece only if it's really hot, the bag for the normal temps and combine both keep you warm on those odd nights where the temp really drops. And in this humid environment, it has to be synthetic. Why? You're also going to be pretty dirty and oily and this can quickly degrade a down bag.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SLEEPING BAG TYPES: G-Loft vs Down

Obviously, one is a natural, sustainable fill and the other a man-made creation, but the real difference is performance. Carinthia uses the highest quality selected down from cultivated suppliers in the cold north of Europe, but despite innovations like Carinthia's DISCover system and new treatments, down is still not as robust or impervious to moisture as a high quality synthetic like G-Loft. And that is why G-Loft was developed.

Carinthia wanted a synthetic fill that was as close to the properties of down as possible, but durable and robust. Down is still best in warmth for weight, but if you're adventure racing or some other hard-use activity, you want to know that if you and your gear gets wet and dirty, you can still sleep warm that night and at the end, throw your bag into the washing machine and be ready for the next adventure with your bag still performing.

Down just doesn't respond well to that treatment, whatever the type. But remember, Synthetics are of different qualities, just like down and you need a high quality synthetic for the best performance.



BEST SLEEPING BAG STYLE FOR THE SNOW

You've chosen the environment with narrowest margin for error here! Unlike temperate or tropical climates, your margin for error has almost evaporated when you go into the snow and even getting sweaty can be terminal in these temperature ranges. This is also where your tested temperature rating is at its most important. So, to choose your sleeping bag, first research the historical temperature range for your destination.

Your bag should be Comfort Rated to the average lowest temperature at your destination, with the Extreme Limit being around the worst temperatures ever recorded there. This means that if the weather goes bad, you'll have enough thermal protection to survive.

Next, you need to decide on down or synthetic and this depends on your exposure to moisture. We have a "wet" kind of snow here that quickly dampens gear so if you're expecting to be carrying a lot of moisture into the bag at night or there's a risk of you getting wet, you'll need a synthetic despite the weight and bulk penalty. If you can keep fairly dry, then down is best.

I know people will point out the treated downs, but these only go so far and if wet enough, it stops working and you're dead. With good technical synthetic, you can get into it wet, as in I've just fallen through the ice wet, and create a temperature inversion that will dry you and the bag out! Don't forget that the bag is only one part of your sleep system and in snow, your shelter and ground insulation are also very important, as is your calorific intake.