

TIPI OR NO TIPI...?



by
SIMON ELLAR
Editor

To some, camping is a bit like Marmite, some love it, some hate it, but can the experience be enhanced? A common complaint when sleeping under canvas is that you can't stand up to get dressed, another is being cold. The replacement of many conventional tents with a tipi means that you can indeed stand up to get dressed and some are suitable for using a wood burner in to keep you toasty.

In this issue we are looking at a selection of tipis from budget models to higher end canvas models.

When we pitched the tipis there was about 8 inches of snow on the ground, over a few days this melted and the winds picked right up. Tested in snow, very strong winds, (32 mph at ground level, which is equivalent to 7 on the Beaufort scale!) and driving rain these tipis were really put through their paces.

Each tipi will be rated for Quality – this is the quality of the materials, stitching and general workmanship. Features – looking at the ventilation, doors, pockets etc. Value for Money – determined by assessing the materials, workmanship and features linked with the cost. Storm Proofing – this evaluates not only the tipi's ability to remain standing during high winds but also the risk of water ingress through rain and driven rain, or through flaps blowing open. And finally, Ease of Set up – as you would expect, this rating is for how easy it is to set the tipi up, based on you being on your own. Marks will be given out of five for each category.



MFH Indian Tent "Tipi"

Olive • £89.99 • www.military1st.co.uk

Spec:

Sleeps: 3 (as stated online, I think this should be 4)
Outer shell: 190 T Nylon PU coated, 1-ply
Floor: non-slip PU material, waterproof
Framework: 22mm metal
Dimensions: 290x270x225cm
Pack size: 62x15.5x15.5cm
Weight: 3690g
Carrying bag included

The description on Military 1st's website, 'being ideal for summer camping or festivals' is a good one, this tipi would be ideal for a summer camp, sleepover in the garden, night fishing trip or the like. It lacks the adaptability with venting, facilities for having a stove in the tipi and the option to add an inner tent etc. that the other models do, but at just shy of £90 versus hundreds, or even over a thousand pounds it is well worth a consideration!

This 'tipi' is well made, there is a built in groundsheet rising approximately six inches up the sides as a mudwall with two pockets sewn into the inside at this low level.

Three windows comprise of a clear panel at the bottom with a mesh panel above, both covered by an outer flap that is kept closed with velcro tabs. The squares in the mesh are not very fine, being around 2mm.

The idea of the windows and this option of ventilation is good, but the outer flap is only kept closed with 4 velcro tabs, not the most secure fixing and can allow a draught in. It would not be a big cost to run velcro all the way around the window to resolve this issue. It is nice to be able to look out and see around you and have the option to let light in and use this for ventilation on warm days.

There is venting at the top which is permanently open, the mesh is covered by a good sized outer cone so shouldn't be too draughty and the good covering of material should ensure that there is no water ingress.

The triangular double door allows for a very large opening with the outer door zipping closed with a storm flap over the zip secured by two velcro tabs on the vertical flap and two along the bottom. Synonymous to this flap design used on many tents and tipis there is the risk that driving rain could find its way in through the zip. The inner mesh door zips closed.

The pole is a standard tubular steel push together pole with a cap at the bottom to protect the groundsheet. Unfortunately

this can fall apart when putting it up if you do not keep an eye on it. The pegs were just standard straight steel ones, which are not brilliant and can pull out easily in soft ground and when it is windy.

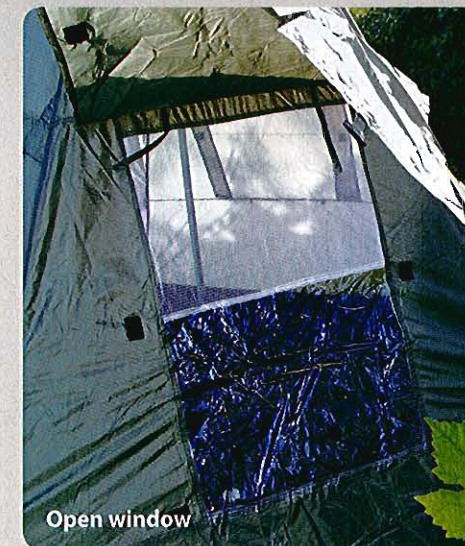
The tipi came with some basic instructions and is very easy to erect, basically you peg the corners out, open the door and walk the pole in, you then need to guy the tent around the outside. It has guying points which are about 3 feet from the ground, with additional points at around 5 feet.

Not an expedition spec tipi, but amazing value for money for general camping. This tipi is easy to set up and provides quite roomy accommodation for four to five people at a push but I would say comfortable accommodation for three with their kit.

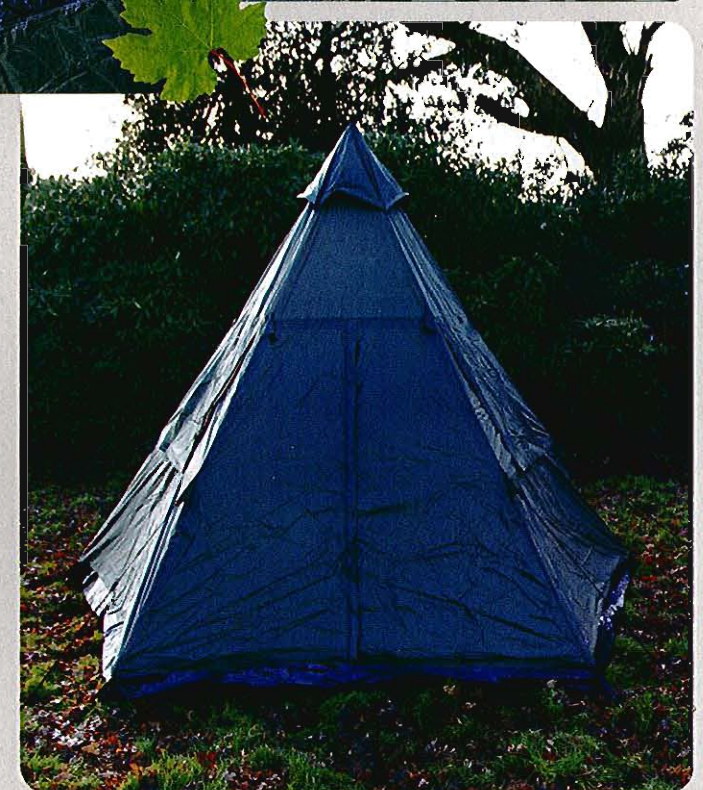
Quality: 4/5
Features: 4/5
Value for Money: 5/5
Storm Proofing: 3/5
Ease of Set up: 4.5/5



'Simple, super value for money, highly recommended!'



Open window



"When we pitched the tipis there was about 8 inches of snow on the ground, over a few days this melted and the winds picked right up"



With thanks to Paul for his help!

Mil-Tec Pyramid Tent "Tipi"

Olive • £89.99 • www.military1st.co.uk

Spec:

- Sleeps: 4
- Outer shell: 190T Polyester, PU coated
- Groundsheet: 120g Polyester
- Dimensions: 290x270cm
- Height: 220cm
- Weight: 4750g
- Drawstring carry bag with handle/shoulder strap included

Very similar to the model above but with much finer mesh all round and a few extra features detailed below.

Again this model has a piece together pole but it has a push button adjustment system so that you can alter the tension on the fabric by changing the length of the pole.

It has a short lifter pole at each corner, about 1ft in height, this is a nice idea as it creates a vertical wall of approx eighteen inches, enhancing the sleeping/ gear stowage area. As a result of this there is a skirt around the outside of the tipi, this allows the watershed to be away from the tent slightly and there is a guy at each corner of the skirt to add to the structure of the vertical walls. Again there are guys at about 3ft, then further up at 5ft if needed.

Differing from the previous model this one has a single door with a storm flap over the outer zip that has a velcro tab at the bottom. The flap is slightly gathered at the top, so a bit better, but again driving rain could still find its way in.

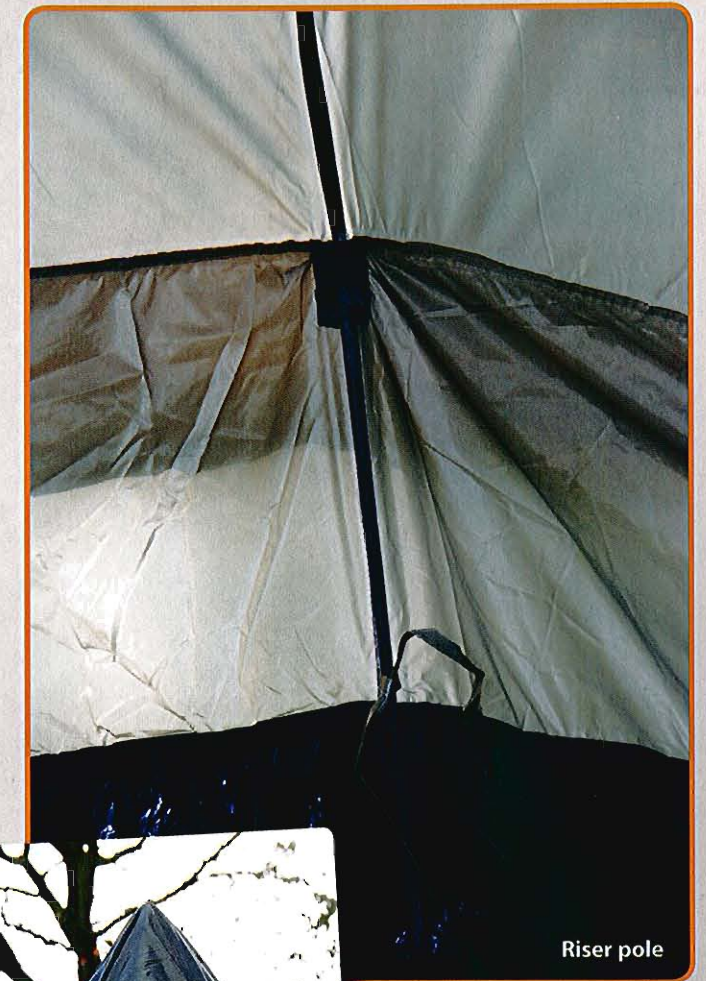
The other difference with this model, which is a shame, is that the cones that cover the mesh venting panels at the top are not really long enough and so wind and rain can come in easier.

- Quality: 4/5
- Features: 4/5
- Value for Money: 5/5
- Storm Proofing: 2/5
- Ease of Set up: 3.5/5

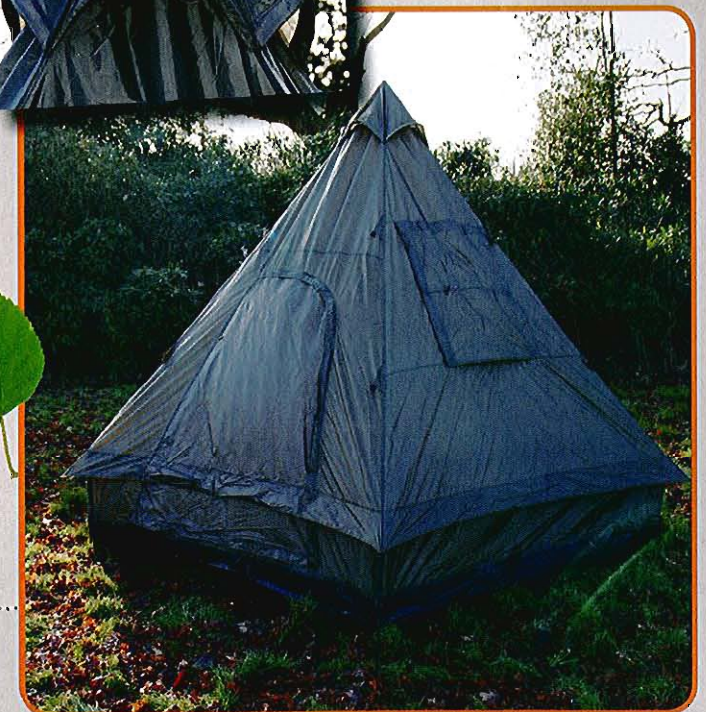
'Nice design but not quite there!'

Mini Conclusion

I have drawn a conclusion here as these budget models are worthy of their own conclusion. Whilst I like the idea of the skirt on the Pyramid to throw the water away from the tent slightly and the fact that the riser poles create a vertical wall in the tent giving a bit more room, this is not of enough significance. I think that the simplicity of the Indian model and the better 'hood' make it a better all round choice, the thing that lets it down a little is the size of the mesh. If this was addressed and the outer door had



Riser pole



zips along the bottom with a few more velcro tabs on the storm flap, and the windows had a strip of velcro all around then it would be super, scoring 4.5 – 5 for Storm proofing. To go a step further, if the pole was elasticated and of a lighter material, and the pegs replaced with some alloy v's then this would be a serious contender for more serious camping trips.



Bergans of Norway 6041 Lavvo 6-8 Person

RRP £399 (floor £115, Mosquito netting £35) • www.bergans.com

Spec:

Sleeps: 6-8
Material: 190T Rip-stop Polyester with a PU coating
Dimensions: 388x408cm
Height: 280cm
Weight: 6kg
Floor: 1372g Mosquito netting: 250g
Carry Bag



I had high expectations for the Lavvo from Bergans after being very impressed with the clothing that I have tried.

The quality was not quite to the high standard I would have expected, some of the stitching in critical areas could benefit from some reinforcement, for instance where the 'pegging point' webbing attaches to the tent fabric where it may be weakened with wind movement.

You can purchase a floor for the tipi which I would always advise where there is not an inner in use. You can also purchase mosquito netting to attach with velcro across the door, I find this a hassle and would really expect this as standard.

Entering the tipi I noticed a nice addition to the zip pulls, there is a glow in the dark zip pull with reflective tape in the cord. This is the same for the guy lines so you can highlight them with your torch light at night. The lower guys (approximately 3ft from the ground) have mesh pockets to keep them tidy when packing/not in use. I am not sure why this is not the same for the guys higher up at approximately 4.5ft.

There are no windows in the sides of the tipi, which I actually think is an advantage as it adds weight and extra seams and places where wind and water could ingress. Ventilation is via three vents around the bottom, there is a cover over the mesh attached with velcro, they are more than adequate with a rain flap that pulls out on the exterior. A draught could get in as they do not seal completely. Further ventilation is available from what I will term the hood, over the cone at the top. This idea is the same on both Bergans models and the Green Outdoor Tipi and I have to say is not one that I favour. The tipi is open at the top with just the webbing straps going up to the top of the pole, this is covered by a piece of material (the hood) which straps around the top, overlapping to seal the tipi. If you want ventilation you peel back a portion of this hood to let the air in. There are a few reasons that I am not keen on this method, one is that on some models (this one was not bad) it is hard to get the hood to wrap around tight enough to provide a good seal, particularly if the wind is blustery and changing direction. The second reason is that, especially if it's windy it is a hassle fitting the hood when setting up the tent; I have seen people chasing them across a field. Another reason is that you have no control over this method of ventilation from within the tent, therefore if the weather is inclement or the wind direction changes you have to go outside to open close or adjust

the vents. This is more of an issue if you want to have a fire or firebox inside your tipi. Versatility and the level of control you have is also a factor with this 'hood' system which will be clear when you read about the Tentipi Safir.

There is the option to fit mesh at the top using a velcro band, although one length of velcro is longer than the other, so it doesn't fit perfectly so insects could still get in.

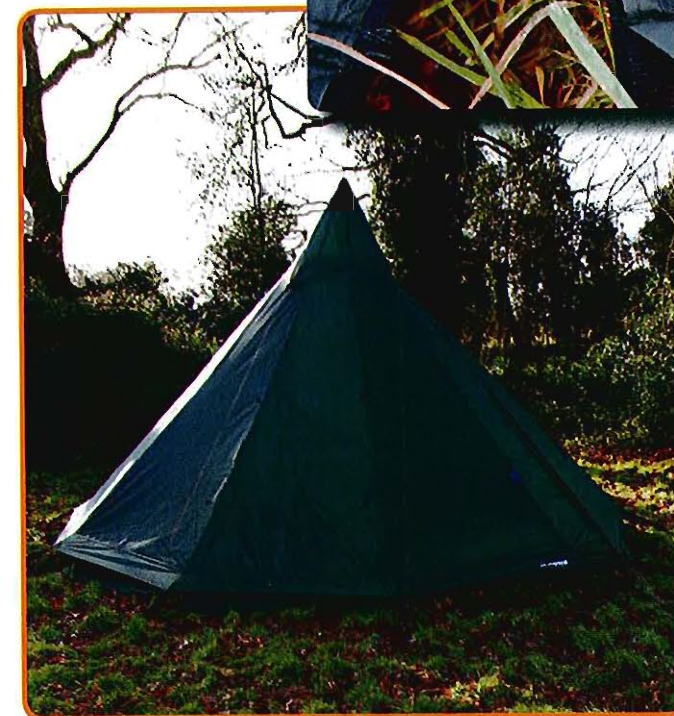
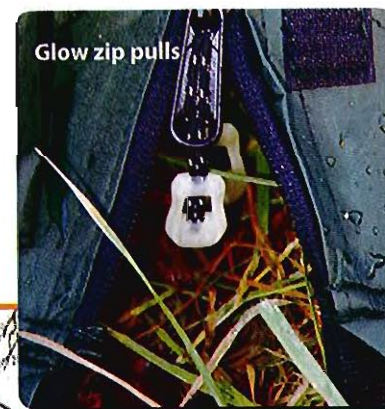
The door has a storm flap over it with three velcro tabs to keep it down, it is a long flap for just three tabs and does blow up, driven rain could get in here quite easily.

It comes with a piece-together pole, this is good quality, it narrows from the base to top so some stability is lost, this enables the sections to slot inside each other but this is a bit fiddly to do. As it does not have any elasticsation the pole can fall apart when you are putting the tipi up and so can be a bit fiddly, particularly if you are on your own as you try and get the hood right too. The pegs are super sturdy Alloy V section pegs of a good length, the best in the review!

There were no instructions, pitching involved pegging round the perimeter then walking the pole in, then adjusting the position of pegs if needed and tightening the straps. As you put the pole in you need to ensure that the hood is in place, then adjust the hood once erected to ensure a good seal. A flap folds into the tent, and then the optional floor snaps in. There is a skirt around the outside which is good to ensure that watershed is away from the groundsheet. I feel that this tent would sleep five people with kit, four comfortably, particularly if you have a small fire box in it.

Quality: 4/5
Features: 3/5
Value for Money: 3.5/5
Storm Proofing: 3.5/5
Ease of Set up: 4/5

'Best pegs in the review!'



nordicoutdoor **Tentipi** 
embrace the elements



To see the Tentipi adventure range of Kåtas up close, visit our Keswick and Edinburgh (Grantont) Shops, or come along to any of the shows we're at throughout the year - including our large display of several Tentipis at the Bushcraft Show 2013!

For more information on the tents or other shows we're attending this year, please visit www.nordicoutdoor.co.uk/tentipi or give us a call on 0131 552 3000

Green Outdoor Tipi

£800 • www.greenoutdoor.co.uk

Spec:

Sleeps: 6
Material: 55% Hemp, 45% Cotton Canvas
Dimensions: 450x450cm
Height: 300cm
Weight: 19kg



Hot off the sewing machine we test the pre-production model of the new Green Outdoor tipi. Green Outdoor's ethos is to provide environmentally friendly tents, using environmentally sound processes, made in Great Britain. This tipi reflects just that with the bug mesh being made from recycled polyester and even the guy lines being made from recycled material. It certainly feels well made and durable.

The quality of the materials and workmanship is very good although there are a few design elements that compromise this slightly.

We were sent this tipi with the inner already attached, the groundsheet has a central reinforced patch where the pole stands and a cross zip so that you can peel the floor back to have a fire/fire box. The inner tent has a finer mesh over the areas where the windows are. It also has some pockets sewn in at around 4ft from the ground, as the pockets are sewn onto side walls of inner tent I have concerns about what can be put in them, really a head torch is as heavy as I would go as the stitching could tear the walls. There is a drop down material cover over the mesh windows, which have finer mesh to better keep the insects out. There is a drawstring insect mesh panel at the top, which is attached to the inner for convenience.

There are window style vents which have a zipped external canvas covers over the mesh, the mesh size is 1.5mm, not as fine as it could be. The vent covers can be guyed out right open or zipped to give a four inch opening. There are two lower level ones and one high level.

Further ventilation and an exit for the stove flue is through the cone and hood method, I have described this in some detail for the previous tipi, so suffice to say here that I am not a fan of this method. The difference here is that the 'spike' at the top of the pole protrudes through the top of the hood, held in place to some degree with a rain deflector cap. I am always shy of things protruding out of the tent as there is scope for water ingress, however minimal.

The outer door has a canvas flap over the zip with three Velcro tabs to keep it in place, this is effective but as with all models there would be the possibility of water ingress if the rain is blowing sideways...

With the sections reducing in size, the pole is not the sturdiest, and again, a bit fiddly to pack away. The pegs are very small and not adequate for this tipi (this may change with the production model) there were some straight alloy pegs and some small semicircular ones (not v section), all about five inches long. That said, the

pegging points on the outer skirt and inner tent are small webbing loops so you would struggle to get a good sturdy V peg through the hole.

When pitching, peg out the mud walling and then walk the pole in, you need the guys really to keep heavier canvas in shape, with these in place you have a sturdy tent!

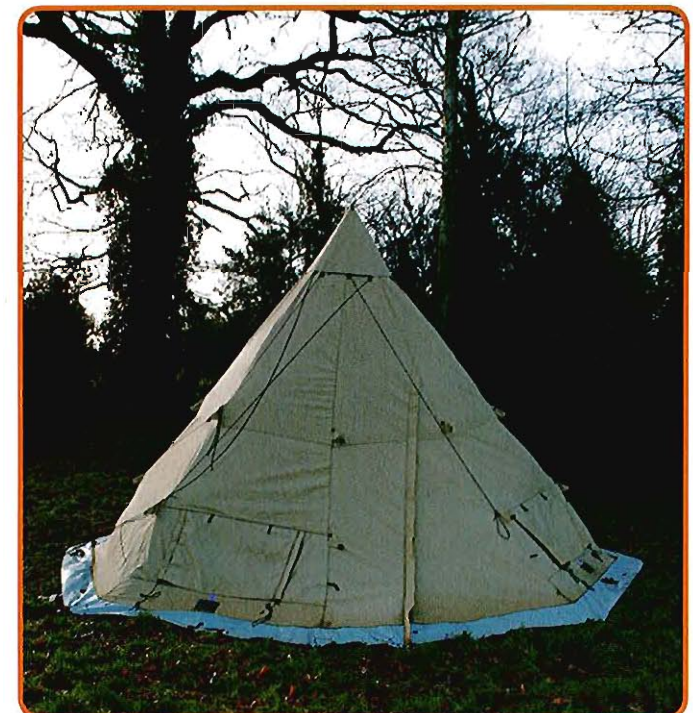
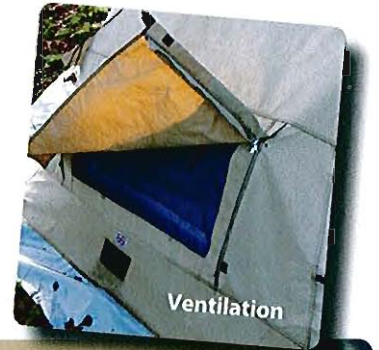
This is the only tipi that had some evidence of water inside, it is fair to say that this may just be that the canvas had not yet had a good soaking and so the canvas and stitching had not tightened up.

Overall, this is a good sturdy tipi that would provide a nice living space for up to 6 people, 4 comfortably with kit.

A Tipi Stove & Flu Kit is available for this tipi priced at £465

Quality: 4/5
Features: 4/5
Value for Money: 3/5
Storm Proofing: 4/5
Ease of Set up: 4/5

'Best of British, a strong contender'



Bergans of Norway 6051 Wiglo

RRP £525 reviewed here with 0654 inner tent • www.bergans.com

Spec:

Sleeps: 6-10
Material: 190T Rip-stop Polyester with a PU coating
Dimensions: W x L x H: 560 x 490 x 250 cm
Weight: approx. 8.8 kg
Inner Tent: 3.4kg
Carry Bag



Quality, again as per the Bergans Lavvo I was a little disappointed after having high expectations... the issues particularly relate to the stitching and reinforcing of vulnerable attachment points. One of the pegging out straps just ripped straight off, upon examination there was just a single (possibly double line of stitching, not crossed over or reinforced). The webbing band across the door base also tore away. A further idiosyncrasy of this model is the skirt, it does not fold into the tent as at the point where the poles cross you would be stressing the material to do so but it doesn't peg out. Looking at images, the design is for it to be out but as there are no pegging points it just flaps around in the wind.

The inner tent with built in groundsheet, is very nice, it is bright yellow, which adds to the light inside. In each corner of each pod there is a zip down triangle with mesh behind which is great for ventilation. The groundsheet has a small section that can be 'ripped out' (it is attached by velcro) so that you can have a fire. Additional ventilation is provided by some permanent mesh panels in the side walls and through the top. Again there is an insect mesh panel which velcros in, again as with the other Bergans model this is not the most effective method. There are some pockets in the inner that end at the seams, so these have a stronger design than the Green Outdoor tipi inner.

Other ventilation comes from the hood and cone system at the top. With this model, due to the shape of the 'tipi' it is even harder to get a good wind and rain tight seal. On the outer there are some hooped ventilation points which when zipped open spring out.

Again the pole narrows so losing some stability and is fiddly to pack and can be awkward when pitching solo.

There were no instructions again and it paid to have some experience of tents and tipis. To pitch you feed through three poles into the tent structure, then peg out, then walk the centre pole in. This model is best pitched with more than one person and does take some time.

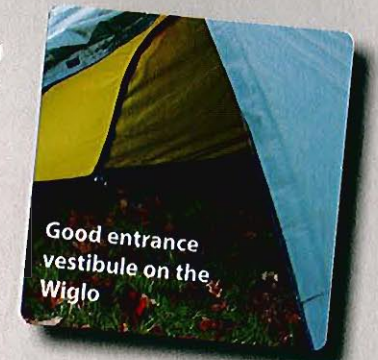
There are at least two of the points that need guying in order to give the tent its structure with the pod poles in place. One

of these points is a guying point with three guys attached that then merge into one guy line. I would be tempted to try modifying this and guy out with three separate guys from that point as they tend to pinch the side in and cause it to sag a bit. There are additional guying points around the tent and the guylines have reflective tape in them. The zip pulls are also on the same cord with glow in the dark ends.

It is a shame that the negatives outweigh the concept of this tent. It is a super idea, the idea being that when you are inside the three hooped living areas provide roomier living space, increasing the height where the sides normally come down, so it in essence creates three pods that can comfortably accommodate two people in each pod with gear. I like the idea of the hooped/zipped vents springing out too.

Quality: 3/5
Features: 4/5
Value for Money: 4/5
Storm Proofing: 3.5/5
Ease of Set up: 2.5/5

'Great Space, ease of pitching definitely lets it down!'



Tentipi, Safir 9 man

£1650 with Pro Floor • £525 (Comfort Floor £275) • www.nordicoutdoor.co.uk

Spec:

- Sleeps 10
- Breathable cotton polyester fabric
- Weight 13.6 kg
- 5.3m diameter
- 3.1m high
- Pack size: 730x305mm
- Storage: Bag with compression straps for tighter packing



The two smaller versions are priced at: 5 man £1195, 7 man £1450.

We reviewed the 7 man version in issue 8 some years ago now and I have had personal experience of the 5, 7 and 9 man versions. Sweden is renowned for producing some great bushcraft kit and this is no exception, regarded by many as the flagship of all tipis

The quality of the workmanship is unquestionable; it is of an exceptionally high standard with attention to detail being paid to everything from the guy line retention to the reinforcing on the door.

Venting is via three vent points around the bottom, a two way zip unzips a section of the base material to reveal a mesh panel. Marring up on the outside there is a peg out flap that you can guy out with 3 guys to create a covered venting channel. The two way zip system allows you to open the vents as much or as little as required. The top venting system is a feat of design and engineering! It is ingeniously controlled by a series of cords running through a concealed strip to the side which raise the 'cap' allowing you to adjust the amount and direction of ventilation with ease from inside the tipi. Built-in insect mesh toggles away if not needed. Unlike the 'hood and cone' systems mentioned above you can stay dry when adjusting the ventilation, there is no separate hood to worry about when erecting and no concern at all about getting a good wind and water tight seal!

The design of the door means that this can be used for further ventilation, it rolls back to provide a good sized opening and there is a smaller panel that can be unzipped with the insect mesh still keeping out any unwanted visitors. When closed you can secure it shut with steel rings and toggles for security. The flap over the door is such that it sits well covering the zip but if there was horizontal rain and the wind blowing at the right angle then very minimal penetration may be possible. That said, a group of us sheltered in one in Sweden in very bad weather and this was not a problem.

The alloy pole is elasticated, and, being the same diameter throughout makes for very easy pitching and good stability. The pegs are very good too, there are two lengths included in the bag and they are more than adequate in sand, stony soil or soft damp ground!

The tipi comes with some very comprehensive instructions; there is a little pot with them in, along with a Tentipi memory stick! It comes with a tape for pegging, the process is simple. Put a peg

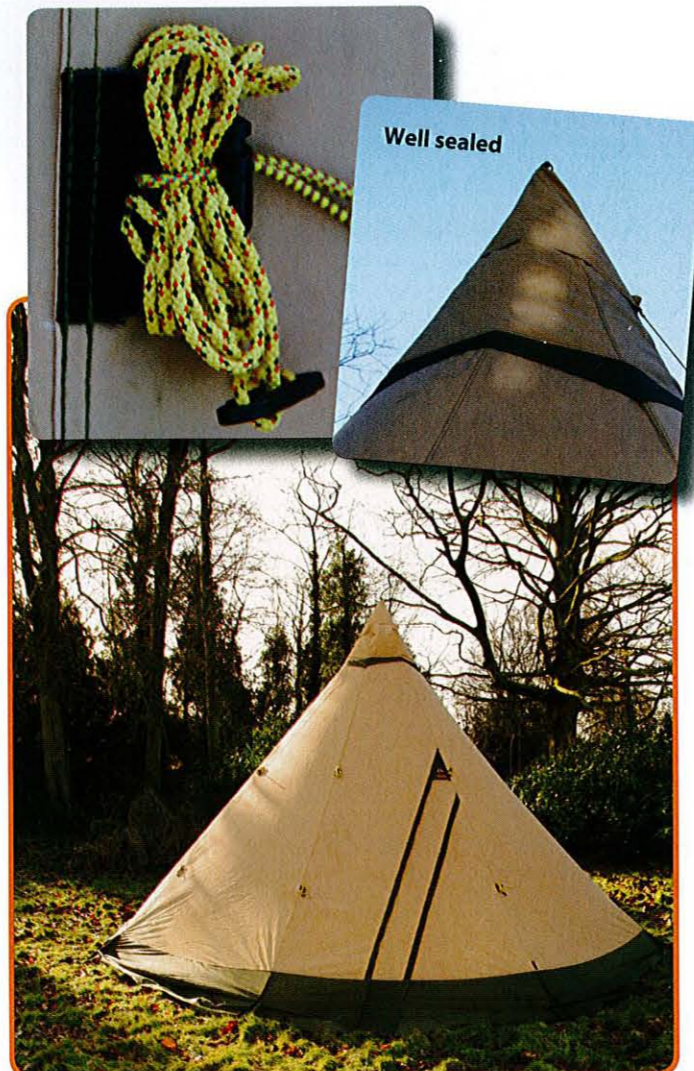
where you want the centre of the tipi to be, loop the pegging cord over it, extend it and place a peg in the ground, place another one opposite it, then two either side to form a cross, then using the tape to show the locations place a peg in between each of these points, hook the tipis pegging rings onto the pegs and walk the pole in. A few minutes and hey presto! The pegging points can then be tensioned. The skirt folds internally and has toggles at each corner of it to give a nice shaped fit, then the floor clips in over this. The floor has a zipped T- section so that you can have various configurations to allow for an access area, fires etc.

I have never actually needed the guys as the tent alone is very stable. The guying points (about 3ft and 5ft from the ground) with bright yellow guys already fitted are more than adequate for all but a full blown hurricane! When packing away, once you have bundled your cord tapes with bungees, sliding toggles secure them neatly out of the way.

There is also a purpose built exit point for a stove in the roof, which closes with velcro, and, not surprisingly in terms of attention to detail, the Eldfell stoves are designed to fit and are available in steel (£560) and stainless steel (£800). This tent will sleep 8 in comfort and 10 if needed, 6 in real comfort with a reasonable amount of gear.

- Quality: 5/5
- Features: 5/5
- Value for Money: 5/5
- Storm Proofing: 5/5
- Ease of Set up: 5/5

'The Safir really is the ULTIMATE tipi'



Win this Tipi.
Send in your details
See T&C's P3



Conclusion

There is really no comparison at all, we have taken the top model from each brand, so this Tentipi model has no advantage in that respect, however even the cheaper Tentipi models such as the nylon Onyx priced at £665 for the 7 man version are manufactured to the same standards and even have internal cord adjustment systems!

Whilst the idea is nice, windows/vent points on the side of tipis create more seams and a potential places for draughts and water ingress. The simple, yet well thought out features of the Tentipi, in my opinion justify the price

of this tent; things such as having a zip to completely close off the low level vents, the cord management system, the adjustability of the cap and the exit point for a stove flue. These features have clearly been refined through use and testing in the field.

As a runner up I would have to say that the little MFH Indian tipi represents super value for money, and an excellent purchase. It would be worth dropping it into a seamstress to add some velcro and possibly a zip to the bottom of the door to make it that bit better.

Happy Camping!

