



# Tent commandments

## Choosing the right tent makes the difference between a great holiday and a camping disaster

Does it matter which tent you choose? They're all much the same aren't they?

Well, no. There is as much variety in modern tent design as you'll find in a caryard and the opportunities to choose poorly are just as plentiful.

There are few experience as miserable as spending a night in a tent that is too small, leaky, not wind-proof, not insect-proof or not warm enough for the conditions.

That's why you should do your homework before you buy.

Before buying, ask to see the instructions for setting up. A few minutes extra set-up time makes a big difference if you have to set up and take down your tent twice a day on a Country side walk or touring holiday.

As with most things in life, the more you spend, the more features you get. Useful features to look out for include wall storage pockets, gear lofts and vent windows. As a minimum, check your tent is waterproof, solidly stitched and has good quality zips and reinforced stress points.

## Size and weight

Tents divide roughly into three sizes:

Family tents:designed for four or more people. Have the advantage of space but are too heavy to carry in a backpack. Not appropriate for Country side walking holidays, perfect for family car camping trips.

Midsized tents:designed for two to three people. May be light enough to carry in a backpack. Disadvantage: much smaller than family tents. Perfect for small groups of Country side walkers but too cramped for more than a night or two.

Solo tents: designed for one person. Lightweight and easy to carry but only of use if you never plan to share with someone else.

Weight is not too important if you are always going to be able to drive right up to your camp site. However, it is extremely important if you have to carry your tent to your destination. If you plan to backpack, choose the lightest tent you can afford.

## **Weather conditions**

Like sleeping bags, different tents are appropriate for different climates. Most tents sold in Australia are designed to keep you cool in typical summer conditions. The flipside is that they will not keep you warm in very cold conditions.

### **The three main categories are:**

**Warm-weather tents:** designed for mild conditions only. Lightweight and incorporate lots of mesh panels and openings to encourage ventilation. Fine for most Australian conditions but will not cope with high-country cold or tropical rain.

**Three-season tents:** designed to provide good ventilation and weather protection in a range of conditions. Slightly heavier than warm-weather tents but provide more security against bad weather. A good all-round choice.

**Four-season tents:** designed to handle winter conditions. Tend to be heavier and more expensive. Only worth considering if you expect to camp in snow or at very high altitudes.