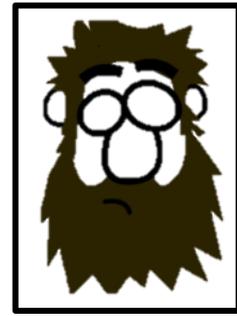


# Uncle Wacko's Gear Corner



## TRAMPING GEAR ADVICE FROM THE EXPERT

### How to get a beaut sleeping bag

Start by deciding on the lowest temperature your bag will have to handle.

For most of you, this'll be -2° to -4°. Unless you *really* feel the cold, this should see you right for all but winter or alpine camping trips. If it gets a bit brass monkey on you, piling on more clothes will help.

Now all bags have stated temperature ratings, so choosing one that'll handle the range you want should be a piece of cake, right?

Yeah, nah. Not so fast.

#### **The truth about manufacturers' temperature ratings**

So there's this Standard, EN13537, with a recognised method for testing sleeping bag temperature ratings. So it's all scientific – great right?

Problem is, many manufacturers ignore it completely and concoct their own ratings. Many of those ratings are dodgier than a loyal Trump staffer – some are so fanciful they're downright dangerous. So follow this rule:

**Only believe temperature ratings where the bag has been tested and rated against the Standard, or you know you can trust the manufacturer.**

Stick to this, and you're pretty much right. Blokes should work off the "Lower limit", sheilas the "Comfort" rating.

Here's a few other things you'll want to know.

#### **Buy down, not synthetic**

Only consider a synthetic bag if you're going to be in prolonged wet conditions. They handle moisture better, but hey, you'd be a bit of a drongo getting any sleeping bag wet, wouldn't you?

Down is way lighter and crunches down much smaller in your pack.

#### **Only buy high loft down**

Down quality varies big time. You want at least 800 loft, ideally higher. It fluffs up much more than lower loft, so is warmer – you need less of it for the same temperature. Meaning a lighter, less bulky bag.

There is one ever so minor downside to this though – high loft down is eye-wateringly expensive. Suck it up, geese with the good genes don't come cheap apparently.

## DO YOU SLEEP WARM OR COLD?

**Shape** A mummy bag hugs your body more so is warmer – great if you're a cold sleeper. But they can be way too hot, or claustrophobic, for warm sleepers. A looser rectangular shape is better for you.

**Zips** add weight and are source of air ingress/egress. So the lightest bags have shorter zips. But warm sleepers often prefer longer zips for better ventilation options.

**Hoods** Do you need one? Warm sleepers often don't, so can bank the weight savings a bag without one gives. If it gets too parky you can wear a beanie - or take a separate down hoody.

Now that you know the basics, here are the brands to go for:

### **Western Mountaineering – they're simply the best**

I'll let you into a secret – WM bags are so good Uncle Wacko was gonna recommend them and nuthin' else here (*but the bloody editor talked him out of it*). They're impeccably constructed, and temperature ratings spot on. Pick one that suits from their ExtremeLite Series – you won't get better.

**Recommended:** TerraLite, semi rectangular, -4° comfort, 850 – 900 loft, 820 grams, USD510.

### **Sea to Summit**

The Spark or women's cut Flame ranges are the go. They're excellent bags, light and well-made, with the added advantage you should be able to climb into one and test it at your local supplier before buying.

**Recommended:** Spark III, mummy, -2° comfort, 850 loft, 650 grams, NZD600-700 with a bit of luck.

### **ZPacks**

This is the brand if you want hoodless. They're either full or  $\frac{3}{4}$  length zip, 950 loft down, and just look at those weights! Trampers who own them invariably rave (on and on) about them – which says something.

**Recommended:** 20F Classic, -7° comfort, 950 loft, 560 grams, USD379.

### **MacPac**

They make good bags but don't used the highest loft down so they're a tad heavy. Their advantage is price – you'll save yourself a hundy or two.

**Recommended:** Epic 400, mummy, -1° comfort, 800 loft, 810 grams, NZD460.

So there you go. You'll be as snug as a bug in any of these bags. We're really starting to get you sorted, aren't we.

Spot ya.

*Uncle Wacko*

