

Small

four- and five-berth tents

CANDY EVANS and other members of the magazine team investigate the variety of four- and five-berth tents on the market

MANY Club members enjoy camping with others – perhaps family or friends – in good-sized four- or five-berth tents. These tents often take a while to pitch but it's worth it because they make comfortable holiday homes for a fortnight's stay.

But there are also many tents on the market that claim to sleep the same number of people but don't take up quite so much space. When might you use one of these?

We pitched a selection of such tents at our photoshoot at Blackmore Club Site in Worcestershire to take a closer look.

1. The classic weekender

One good reason for having a smaller tent is that you may not need quite so much space or extra features for shorter holidays

The Sunncamp Breton 500 is a classic example of a tent that's ideal for a weekend break. It's a tunnel tent with a frame made from three steel poles. As a result it's straightforward to pitch – taking about 15 minutes. It sits like a cube on the grass, with good head height in both the living and sleeping areas.

The small front porch is effective at keeping most of the rain out of the front of the tent when you're going in and out while the large windows make it light in the living area, whatever the weather. Ventilation panels are over the windows and at the rear of the sleeping area.

You won't find loads of extra features here but there are still front and side doors with protective flyscreens, high-visibility guy lines and more. Overall, this gives a well-priced tent with just enough space for five for shorter stays.

2. The quick pitch

There are a number of quick-pitch tents on the market including pop-ups, but one of the more traditional styles relies on a central hub at the top of the tent. The Coleman Instant Tourer is one such tent. As in most quick-pitch units, the poles are permanently threaded into the tent fabric. In the Instant Tourer it's simply a case of unfolding the tent's legs carefully – avoiding pinching either the fabric or your fingers – and pegging out the tent.

This unit doesn't have an inner tent but there is another in the Coleman range (the Instant 4) with a separate inner, to make things a little more comfortable if you're sleeping inside.

The Instant Tourer would be a great utility tent as it's so quick to pitch and has good head height throughout. Ventilation is provided by panels in the roof and opening back and front windows. In each case, the openings are protected by fine flyscreens, designed to stop even the smallest biting insects, known as no-see-ums in North America, hence the term 'no-see-um mesh'.

1 The Breton 500 by Sunncamp



3 The Terra Firma by Terra Nova



2 The Instant Tourer by Coleman

4 The Malibu 5 by Outwell

3. The expedition tent

The Terra Firma from Terra Nova is not a standard campsite tent. You can't stand up inside and there's no spacious living area to relax, but if you're looking for a stable tent for more extreme conditions it's designed to fit the bill. It's proved itself as a base camp tent on both Himalayan and polar expeditions.

The geodesic structure means the tent is self-supporting. You'll probably want to peg it out – especially in bad weather – and there are plenty of guying points to keep it in place, but the shape is formed by the poles rather than the guys.

There's storage space in the porches at either end of the tent and several pockets in the inner tent. This inner is a cheerful yellow colour but it's covered by a more sober dark green outer so the overall tent is kept quite dark inside.

Pitching is straightforward with colour-coded poles, though unlike most family tents, the inner tent is pitched first with the flysheet thrown over it.

Although this is described as a four-berth tent it's probably more comfortable with two or three occupants. Nevertheless, the large mesh doors at either end of the inner tent make it feel larger inside since it's almost as if the porches are part of the main tent.

At a recommended price of £900 this is the most expensive of the tents here but this reflects the quality of materials and robust design, which should easily stand up to anything the British weather can throw at it.

4. A weekender with potential

The Outwell Malibu 5 seems like a standard weekend tent at first glance. It's a tunnel tent with a good-sized inner divided into two sections and sleeping up to five people.

It has plenty of Outwell's family tent features, including colour-coded pegs to differentiate between groundsheet, main tent and guying pegs. And the fluorescent yellow guy lines are secured to the tent fabric and the structural poles using the Outwell Wind Stabiliser System.

The unusual feature of the Malibu, however, is its expansion options. The basic tent can be unzipped in the middle, separating the sleeping area and the living section with its large windows and doors. You can zip in one or two sections between these parts. Depending on the section you choose, these add 1.3m- or 2.6m-lengths to the tent, making a much larger tunnel. If you buy one single and one double expansion module, for example, you'll end up with a large family tent measuring 8.4m by 3.6m, which will make the most of a 9m x 5m Club pitch.

■ Turn the page to see specifications and other details about the tents pictured here.

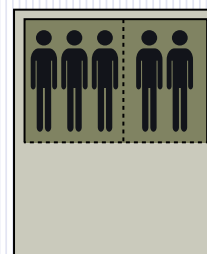
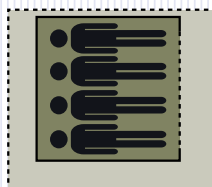
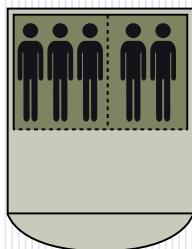




at a
glance



	The Classic weekender	The quick pitch	The expedition tent	A weekend with potential
	Breton 500 by Sunncamp	Instant Tourer by Coleman	Terra Firma by Terra Nova	Malibu 5 by Outwell
Price	£299.99	£199.99	£900	£399.99
Sleeps	Five	Four	Four	Five
Weight	18kg	7.4kg	7.2kg	22.8kg
Packed size	74cm x 34cm x 34cm	20cm x 103cm	78cm x 22cm	37cm x 78cm
Dimensions	Outer 4.3m x 3.3m, inner 2.1 x 3.1 (divided in two 2.1m x 1.2m and 2.1m x 1.9m)	Outer 2.43m x 2.44m	Outer 4.68m x 2m; inner 2.18m x 2m	Outer 4.4m x 3.6m; two inners 2.15m x 1.8m and 2.15m x 1.4m
Height	2m	1.62m	1.47m	2.15m
Materials	Outer polyester; inner breathable polyester; poles GRP	Outer polyester; groundsheet polyethylene; poles steel	Outer coated nylon; inner coated nylon; groundsheet coated nylon; poles aluminium alloy	Outer polyester; inner breathable polyester; groundsheet polyethylene; poles steel and GRP
Warranty	One year	One year	Limited lifetime warranty	Two years limited manufacturer's warranty
Contact	Sunncamp	Coleman	Terra Nova	Outwell
Tel	01245 329933	01275 845024	01773 833300	0151 645 2278
Web	sunncamp.co.uk	coleman.eu	terra-nova.co.uk	outwell.com



verdicts

A straightforward weekend tent for the family.

A quick-pitch tent that would make a good utility tent.

A lightweight expedition tent designed to be stable in more extreme conditions.

A flexible family tent that rings the changes between weekend and longer stays.