

# TENTS

The dictionary defines a tent as a portable shelter usually of canvas or other cloth stretched over poles or supports and fastened to the ground with pegs and ropes. That definition covers a wide variety of structures in many sizes, shapes and styles.

Tents are the most expensive part of camping equipment. A good tent is an investment which, with care, lasts many years. There are many different types of tents on the market, each made for a specific purpose. It helps to know what these different types of tents are, so that you can choose the best tent for the situation.

There are usually two main purposes for tents within Scouting; firstly, there is the traditional standing Troop camp which normally uses the large, heavyweight patrol tents that sleep up to six people and, secondly, lightweight one, two or three person tents ideal for smaller camps and expeditions where the tents need to be carried in or on rucksacks. There are four main types and shapes of tent:

## Ridge tent

This tent is any tent which has a horizontal pole going across the top. The upright poles that support it may be a single upright pole, or two sloping poles (also known as an 'A' frame). More commonly, the upright at the back is lower than at the entrance making access easier, and yet allowing for movement. Most ridge tents that are sold are made of a lightweight nylon material and it is because of their lighter weight that they can be used for backpacking as they take up a very small amount of space when folded. They are often found as one, two or three person tents usually consisting of an outer tent and an inner one, with a sewn-in groundsheet.

The Patrol tent, commonly used for Scout camps, is a form of Ridge Tent. Made of a heavy canvas material, it is particularly robust and hardwearing. It is a very basic tent with none of the added extras that come with more modern and lightweight tents, and has been made in this style for many years. It does not have a sewn-in groundsheet so a separate one must be used. Patrol tents can sleep up to six people with kit and because of its size, normally requires at least three people to erect it.



## Bell Tent

This has a single upright pole in the centre of the tent, and is then guyed out from it. There are very few lightweight bell tents available, most are made from the same heavy canvas as the patrol tent. The groundsheet is not sewn into this tent. (Many of the ridge tents, have a 'bell end', which means a curved back to the tent, to allow for the storage of equipment.) Bell tents are used less these days and tend to have been replaced by the dome tent.



## Dome tent

This tent looks a little like a bubble and its design has only been possible with the introduction of strong flexible materials. It consists of several hoops going across the tent in different directions; this shape means that with no corners, sharp edges or flat surfaces, these dome-shaped designs are better at shedding water and standing up in high winds. These tents are usually used for lightweight camping and walking and are made of lightweight materials rather than a heavy grade canvas.



## Frame tent

This tent is considered to be a larger, 'family tent' and, not surprisingly, is used by families for camping holidays. As the name suggests, it is comprised of a basic frame which is built first and then covered with the canvas. They are fairly bulky when packed away, but when erected take on the appearance of a small chalet, with an inner sleeping area that is at the back, a large area in the front for cooking and relaxing, unlike all other tents where this is very minimal. Due to this size and shape, it can often provide a small Patrol with a self-contained unit at camp.

