

GROUP TEST



INTEGRAL DESIGNS SILTARP £72

A classic tarp: a basic shelter with no frills.

FOCUS ON...



Packsize

The Siltarp stakes a claim for the tarp still being the lightweight option as it's easily the smallest-packing model on test.

A conventional tarp needs guy lines, pegs, trekking poles, a bivy bag and perhaps a groundsheet, so any weight saving in the overall load you have to carry is welcome.

EASE OF PITCHING	■■■■■
ADAPTABILITY	■■■■■
WEIGHT/PACKSIZE	■■■■■
WEATHER RESISTANCE	■■■■■
LIVING COMFORT	■■■■■
VALUE FOR MONEY	■■■■■

TRAIL RATING

4.0

Integral Designs is one of many small US companies that produce small amounts of specialist and technical outdoor, backpacking and expedition equipment. They have several tarps of different designs, and hybrid shelters, but the Siltarp we tested is the most basic model – a classic tarp.

Design

The Siltarp is designed for one and is a plain rectangle of fabric. It has no seams, and the single feature is a reinforced patch in the centre where a webbing loop is attached as a guy or rigging point. The outside edge is a simple folded hem where more webbing loops are attached – five down each side – to allow for varied pitching options. A small logo is stitched onto one corner, it's light at 246g and it will fit in a jacket pocket in its tiny stuffsack with drawcord. It is indeed the very definition of minimalist. Integral Designs intends the Siltarp to be used with a bivy bag as a stand-alone shelter, but also as a lightweight extension to a tent.

On the hill

When I think of a tarp, Integral Designs'

Siltarp is the closest model in the test to what pops into my imagination, being plain, minimalist and light. The Siltarp is the very opposite of what a tent is (camping being easy with your home complete in a bag, ready to build and slip into); but using a basic tarp requires much more input from the user. When pitching the Siltarp I placed the trekking pole supports and attached the guy lines to suit the terrain. With that flexibility you can pitch anywhere you can lie down – between rocks, against crags or next to a fallen tree. The smaller size and extra guy points of the Siltarp allow endless possibilities. The smaller size also means that you often have to concentrate how much shelter is available around your head area and make that your gear storage, cooking and living area, leaving your legs 'outside' with your sleeping bag protected by the bivy bag. It feels odd at first (you wouldn't necessarily sleep in a tent with your legs still outside), but it's part of that closer-to-nature feel that's a big part of sleeping under a tarp. Despite its low weight, the Siltarp has proved strong, the fabric

resisting rocks and tree branches alike. The small packs size means you could carry this anywhere and not notice it, and if you're a trekking pole user this could be a lunch-stop shelter all year round. It's also lighter than the big poly bags if you want to carry it as your emergency shelter.

The Siltarp is small but almost endlessly versatile.

JARGON BUSTER

Guy lines

Your guy lines are what tie you in to your surroundings and give your tarp its shape. They're also an important area in regards to performance and weight: quality guy lines and adjusters will keep your pitch tight, meaning less adjustment, and keep that pack weight down.



VERDICT

The lightest and most basic tarp in the test, but also one of the most flexible models and the most classically styled.