



mKettle

DESCRIPTION

The mKettle is a small, UK manufactured, solid fuel burning kettle weighing in at 422 grams and capable of boiling half a litre of water. It consists of an aluminium cylinder and a small aluminium 'firebase'. As opposed to a pot, the cylinder is actually a hollow-walled tube. The tube, shaped like an inverted funnel (wide at the bottom, tapering to a narrow opening at the top), acts as a chimney when the mKettle is placed on its solid-fuel burning firebase.

Water is poured into the hollow walls through a small hole at the top and the mKettle placed on its base, which contains a round opening into which solid fuel (twigs, solid fuel blocks, etc.) are placed and lit. This opening then allows air to fan the fire and draw the flames up the chimney, thus heating the water contained in the hollow walls. The firebase can also be used with meths burners such as those used in a Trangia (this would obviously increase the packed weight).

When in transit, the firebase (which is tapered to match the funnel shape of the chimney) is turned upside down and inserted into the mKettle with fire-starting kit stored inside it. A bung is placed in the water spout and the compact unit is stored in a nylon drawstring sack (supplied).

IN USE

The mKettle is very lightweight and a nice compact size, which means carrying the unit is easy and it disappears into any hatch without any trouble. However, a few extra items are required as explained below. It was tested with both wood and a Trangia burner as fuel sources, and tended to boil a capacity load in somewhere between 7.5 and 9 minutes.

Burning wood effectively relied on finding small twigs and debris that could be easily inserted into the opening on the firebase, or longer thin twigs that could be dropped down the chimney. When conditions were not windy I needed to get down to ground level to blow into the firebase and kick start the fire. Once established, however, there was something really enjoyable and romantic about tending the fire, bringing back childhood memories of campfire cookouts at the bottom of the garden!

The Trangia burner fits the firebase perfectly and burns equally well, but requires less attention while boiling up the mKettle.

The neoprene sleeve does its job and the mKettle could be safely handled even when boiling hot.

However, the mKettle does require an additional cup to make or drink a brew in or a bowl or pot for a dehydrated meal, so this has to be factored into packing space and weight (unlike something like the Jetboil system, which integrates a 1 litre pot/mug with a gas canister burner that fits inside the pot during transit).

If you utilise the top of the chimney as a route to adding twigs and other fuel, take care to avoid dropping debris into the spout and adding extra ingredients to your water.

I found the mKettle to be nice and stable despite a relatively small base area. It is also possible to add extra support by surrounding most of the firebase with stones or other materials without affecting performance.

CONCLUSION

To be honest, the mKettle has left me perplexed. There are some definite positives in its design, functionality and use, but also some issues when compared to alternative options.

Its ability to burn wood means, in many paddling locations, a limitless supply of extra fuel. It also makes the mKettle a lot of fun to use. If you already carry a Trangia as your stove, it makes a nice addition to this set-up; if wood is available, it could be used at the same time as the Trangia.

Although boil times are a little on the slow side compared to other gas-powered stoves, the mKettle is reliable and lacks small, fiddly components that could break or require servicing. The whole system is incredibly well made, in fact.

However, the mKettle does require you to carry extra kit to drink from and, unless using an eat-in-the-bag-style dehydrated meal, cannot be used to prepare food. While the mKettle is not designed or marketed as a stove, there are similarly sized single-pot systems that can be used not only to boil water but also to drink from and cook in without the need for extra kit, making them a bit more versatile.

I think the mKettle will appeal to certain paddlers and I would recommend those interested to take a look at the mKettle website. If this system does appeal to you and fulfils a need in the kit you carry, rest assured that it is extremely well made, reasonably priced, reliable and also fun to use. ■

For more information visit: www.mkettle.com

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