



READER APPROVED Best for Big Guys Cabela's Boundary Waters

"A solid value for the money." That's how Jim Robinson rated this 650-fill, 20°F down bag after a few windy, wet weekends at Matthiessen State Park in Illinois. A zippered footbox vent let him air his feet on warmer nights, and he had no problem with cold spots or drafts, even while sleeping tentless in stiff breezes. He was especially impressed with the tough ripstop nylon shell. "It's great against wind, and sheds dew and condensation easily. I literally dragged it around, and the fabric still looks new," he said. The large size had plenty of length for his 6-foot frame, plus lots of roll-around room. The zipper is snag-free, but this bag's most surprising feature is an external pocket so big it could hold an encyclopedia; it's near the top of the zipper, so you can easily reach your Britannica at night. Bonus: The bag comes with a seam-taped, fully waterproof stuff sack with a burp valve that lets you squeeze out air. Quibble: The cordlock on the hood drawstring is attached to the bag, so you can tighten it—but not loosen it—one-handed. *As tested: \$150; 2 lbs. 15 oz.; 2 unisex sizes*

Jim Robinson got hooked on backpacking 10 years ago on a rainy trip through Michigan's Porcupine Mountains. You'll never find him on the trail without cayenne pepper and a camp pillow.



model in the company's new Flite shell fabric, which proved to be light and ultra-windproof, and durable enough to show negligible wear even after 3 weeks of continual hard use. It doesn't have the water repellency of Pertex, but it beaded off tent condensation reasonably well. This is an excellent bag for ultralighters who need three-season warmth. Best of all, the 850-fill still puffs like new. *As tested: \$349; 1 lb. 12 oz.*

L.L. Bean Goose Down Bag 20

A three-season down bag usually sets you back a couple of Benjamins, and even at that price, some are still chilly. We're happy to report that's not the case with this well-stuffed 650-fill sack, which kept cold-sleeping testers plenty warm on subfreezing nights in Utah's Wasatch Range. Despite its low price, this Bean bag offers a full draft collar and a nicely scooped hood; the latter has an efficient face muff that seals snugly without a lot of cinching. Comfort is this bag's strong suit. There's plenty of elbowroom for sprawling, and the nylon taffeta liner fabric has a luxury cotton feel. During a week of testing, users noted that the down shifted around a bit, but there was so much of it that the resulting gaps mattered little. Webbing on the draft tube makes



L.L. Bean Goose Down Bag 20



Mammut Future 3-Season

for snag-free zipping. Bottom line: There are lighter and more compact bags out there, but few as warm and comfortable for such meager coin. *\$169; 2 lbs. 9 oz.; 2 men's sizes, 1 women's size*

Mammut Future 3-Season

During sloppy, blustery late-fall campouts on 11,000-foot Boulder Mountain, this industrial-strength synthetic bag kept our easily chilled Rocky Mountain editor warm down to its 25°F rating. Credit goes to a proprietary synthetic insulation laminated (not stitched) directly to the bag's liner and outer shells—a construction that cuts weight and eliminates cold spots. The hood cinches easily and seals well, and the full-circle draft collar with a hook-and-loop closure opens quickly with a webbing tab. The draft collar's drawstring toggle sits centered on the chest, where it's easy to find for midnight exits. "This bag's clearly made for hard use," he reported. "The cover fabric's tough, and well-placed waterproof-breathable sections on the hood and footbox repel condensation from breath and tent walls." He also liked the wide-throated compression stuff sack. Bottom line: It's a great, economical choice for nasty weather, but it ain't light. *\$169; 3 lbs. 4 oz.; 2 unisex sizes*

three-season

Gear School



Watch and learn at backpacker.com/video

wash your sleeping bag

Follow these tips to keep your investment looking high.

- 1 Read the label or seek advice on the company's website. If those directions contradict any of our tips below, follow the manufacturer's guidelines.
- 2 Batten down the hatches Close all zippers and fasteners, then turn the bag inside out, so body oils on the interior will come off.
- 3 Use the right soap For down, go with a cleaning product that won't strip essential oils from the feathers, such as Nikwax Down Wash or ReviveX Down Cleaner. For synthetics, try Granger's Extreme Cleaner Plus (which also works on down).
- 4 Wash it Hand-wash in a tub, or use a front-loader; the agitator in a top-loader can tear baffles. Always opt for the gentle cycle with cold water. After one complete cycle, run an extra rinse or two to remove the soap.
- 5 Remove carefully Support the bag from underneath to keep waterlogged insulation from ripping out stitches.
- 6 Hang it lengthwise on a laundry line until most of the water weight is gone. Dry it Place the damp bag in a large commercial dryer. Dry on low heat, and check frequently. Remove down bags every 30 minutes to de-clump the feathers. Back home, leave your bag unstuffed for a few days.