



[NEW-TECH DOWN HOODY]

Sierra Designs Tov

Testers found DriDown, SD's version of water-resistant down, as equally effective as L.L. Bean's DownTek in side-by-side field tests in the Rockies and Scotland. The Tov won us over for its more winter-friendly fit and features, which include a longer, butt-protecting cut, helmet-compatible hood, thumbholes for preventing wrist gaps, and big, glove-friendly zipper pulls. **\$259;** sierradesigns.com



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“ Enough cargo capacity for a multiday hut trip. ”

[MULTIDAY SKI TOURING]

Sierra Designs Ymir 55

Finally! A weekend-size pack tailored for skiing. The Ymir 55 pairs day-tour features (like a dedicated safety-tools compartment, helmet sling, and goggle pocket) with enough cargo capacity for a multi-day hut trip. Best of all, the Ymir hauls it all comfortably. **\$200; 4 lbs.**

6 oz.; 55 liters; sierradesigns.com

» See our full review in the November issue.





[BIG AND LIGHT]

Sierra Designs Mountain Guide Tarp

This lightweight shelter served as a basecamper, a day shelter for a climbing party, and a winter mess tent. But the most impressive thing it did was help save a life: One tester used it as a command center during a search-and-rescue operation in Joshua Tree National Park. "I was able to fit four rangers and their gear inside with enough room to move and place maps around," he says. The single-pole pitch is quick and simple (though the material can easily catch wind before it's taut). The towering 89-inch maximum height and 109-square-foot floor let personnel move in and out easily, while roof vents circling the spire kept condensation from accumulating. After riding out a rain-storm, our tester said, "The stiff perimeter material on the umbrella cover over the vents kept rain (even when it was whipping sideways) from getting inside." On winter trips, it's best to put something under the central pole to keep it from sinking into the snow while under tension. Snow perimeter flaps keep out most of the blowing stuff, and a low vent serves as a perfect opening for cooking when the shelter is used as a mess tent on group trips. The 70-denier canopy showed no signs of wear, and the guyout points are reinforced with extra-burly material. \$300; 5 lbs. 13 oz.; sierradesigns.com

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Sleeping Bags

All-Conditions Down

Will water-repellent down bags make synthetic insulation obsolete?

Hikers love fluffy, lightweight, packable down—when it's dry. But no one likes wet, wilted down, which loses its power to insulate. That's just one reason synthetic-fill bags have long had a place in a backpacker's gear closet (the other is affordable pricing). But a new generation of water-repellent down promises to change the way manufacturers make—and hikers use—sleeping bags. Two companies, Sierra Designs and Down Decor, have devised ways to coat individual feathers with a molecular-level polymer that creates a hydrophobic finish on each plume. We spent several months testing these new fills (Sierra Designs' is DriDown and Down Decor's is DownTek) in a variety of products, and the improvement over untreated down is remarkable. Even in soggy Scotland, the treated down held its loft in conditions that saturated untreated down. Testers detected no difference between the two competitive brands in the field.

Backpackers going on long trips will appreciate treated down's advantages (in bags) the most. It's rare that a bag gets totally soaked. But on extended trips, especially in cold conditions, body moisture migrates into the down, reducing loft over time. The treated stuff will hold up much better than standard feathers, and there is virtually no difference in feel, loft, compressibility, or durability. The best part? New-school down doesn't cost much more (up to \$30) than the untreated version. You should still consider synthetic fill if price is a big concern and packability is not. But whether you want a light bag for long treks or for wet conditions (or you just want the peace of mind of knowing your bag won't wilt in an accidental dunking), you should

consider an upgrade.

Bonus: Water-resistant down is also available in puffy jackets, and in this application the advantage is obvious, even to the casual user. There's no need to pull on a shell in wet furries—and potentially sweat-soak the down from the inside as you heat up. That's why we gave Editors' Choice Snow Awards to the Sierra Designs Tov and the L.L. Bean Ultralight 850 (see page 46).



DriDown



Normal down



[BARGAIN] Sierra Designs Zissou 15

Fact: Backpackers in Scotland do not carry down sleeping bags. "It's damp, dank, and humid here almost all year," says our man in Scotland. "It's practically suicide to carry a down bag. Until now." Our tester and his friend took the Zissou, stuffed with 600-fill DriDown (SD's proprietary version of water-resistant down) and a traditional down bag to Cairngorm National Park, and after just three days of relentlessly soggy weather, the traditional bag had gone limp, while the Zissou never lost its loft. "I was very impressed," he reports. "And other than that huge benefit, there was literally no difference between the DriDown and traditional down in terms of packability, weight, or any other performance factor." The cut

is a standard mummy shape, and the minimal draft collar worked well enough to keep testers comfortable into the teens. The shell is made from durable 30-denier, micro-ripstop polyester with DWR. The downside? The 600-fill down is less expensive than premier 800-fill, but it's also heavier and bulkier to pack (the Zissou packs down to 8 by 16 inches in its included, noncompression stuffsack). \$260; 2 lbs. 11 oz.; reg. and long: sierradesigns.com

[ULTRALIGHT] Sea to Summit Talus Ts I

This featherweight was a hit with warm and cold sleepers alike. According to one tester who "sweats like I'm in a hot yoga class when I sleep," the Talus ably handled his excessive moisture generation, even in the perennially wet conditions of the Pacific Northwest. Credit the combination of water-resistant 750-fill Ultra-Dry Down (STS's name for DownTek) and the 30-denier nylon shell fabric, which is highly breathable. As body moisture passes through the lining, the water-resistant coating on the down facilitates the vapor's flow out through the shell instead of trapping it in the plumes, as standard feathers would. And the 750-fill duck down (which is less expensive than goose down) also managed to keep a cold sleeper happy right down to the bag's 23°F rating. "I can finally stay warm in subfreezing conditions without resorting to a 0°F bag!" he says. Our broad-shouldered testers appreciated the relaxed mummy cut, but some felt the hood was too voluminous and hard to keep warm. The whole package compresses down to honeydew melon-size in the included compression stuffsack. \$349; 1 lb. 13 oz.; short, reg., and long: seatosummit.com



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Photo: Merril McCauley; Joel Nyquist; Will Ruchardt; Tracy Ross; Crystal Lucas; Thays; Morgan Tilton; Angela Tomczak; Bill Velasquez; Allison All weights for size regular (unless noted) on BACKPACKER scales.