

## Look for tent features that fit your camping needs

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Somewhere between climate-controlled showroom and rain-whipped campsite, reality seeps in.

It may seep in through the seams and unprotected walls. It may pool under the tent floor. It may manifest itself in a sweltering dome that refuses to catch the breeze or release condensation. Mark Hauck has seen the evidence: Sopping sleeping bags draped over the bushes the morning after a hard rain.

He's noticed that campers are willing to withstand more discomfort when they're purchasing a tent than when they're pitching one in less-than-ideal conditions.

"You can survive. It's just a matter of how comfortable you will be. Tents will protect you from the inconveniences," said Hauck, a community assistance specialist at the Department of Natural Resources in Sauk Rapids. "Obviously, there are limits. It'll keep you comfortable but it's not going to provide much in the way of protection."

Three experienced campers offered advice about what to consider before buying a tent.

Hauck grew up camping with his family in Minnesota's state parks. He and wife, Joanie, honeymooned in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, a place they've returned most years since 1989. They've also continued to camp in state parks with their three children.

Fred Rupp usually fields questions about canoes. But the founder of Les Voyageurs, a program that sends high school students on monthlong wilderness canoe trips, grew up camping with his family and with the Boy Scouts. He selects the tents used by Les Voyageurs.

Ivan Bartha is coordinator for experiential programs at St. Cloud State University's Outdoor Endeavors program, which rents camping equipment including tents. Bartha owns a collection of tents; his recent favorite for backcountry trips is a pared-down, single pole model.

### Starting point

Before you begin perusing tents, decide what kind of camping you want to do, where you'll go and with whom. Know how much you want to spend.

If your camping expeditions are of the fair-weather and infrequent variety, you probably can get by with a tent from any big-box store for \$100 or less. That's especially true if you plan to pitch a tent in a state park, where well-designed and maintained sites feature raised, graveled pads conducive to drainage.

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