



Getting a good night's sleep is one of the most important things when heading out on holidays. But it can be hard to understand which bedding option works best for you when camping. In this article, we'll look at a range of different sleeping options, to give you a better idea of what you should take when you go on your next camping or outdoor trip.

It doesn't matter where you are or who you're with, if you don't get some good sleep the chances are you're not going to have as good time as you might have if you do get a good sleep.

But what bedding options are there? And what are the differences? And most importantly, which is going to give me the best night's sleep?

Let's take a look at a few of the different sleeping options available to help give you a good start when looking for bedding for your holiday.

Inflatable mattress

Everyone's slept on an inflatable mattress before to which some have had good experiences and some bad. An inflatable mattress relies solely on air to hold it up. It needs to be pumped full of air which supports you when you sleep on it.



Pros of inflatable mattresses:

- These mattresses are very much on the cheaper side of the budget as they are quite basic.
- They come in a range of sizes and can even come with a pillow built in.
- In my opinion, they are quite comfortable as they are quite deep. This means that your hips stay away from the ground or any other firm surface. They also conform to the shape of your body similar to a water bed.
- You can pump them up tight for a more firm feel or you can let a little air out to make it a bit softer.

Cons of inflatable mattresses:

- The biggest problem with these mattresses is that they can be quite easily punctured.
- If you do get a hole in the mattress and it goes down slowly overnight, you end up on the floor and are usually not sleeping anymore.
- Small holes can be very difficult to find and patch, especially at 2 o'clock in the morning.
- Inflatable mattresses can be quite cold. They offer no insulation from the ground and are best used with a blanket over the top in cold conditions.
- They can be quite bouncy and if sleeping on a double or queen, you are likely to feel every wiggle from your partner.
- You will need some sort of pump to blow these mattresses up which is another expense



and something else to carry with you.

- Using a hand or foot pump can be quite tiring and electric pumps are quite noisy, and require power.

Self-inflating mattresses

Self-inflating mattresses are similar to an inflatable mattress in the way that they are an airtight bag that, when sealed with air, will support your body. Inside the airtight bag is foam that is squashed when it's rolled up. But when you unroll the mattress and open the valves, the foam expands back to its original size, sucking air into the bag as it does.

When the foam is back to its full size and the bag is full of air, the valves are closed holding all the air in. When it's time to roll it up open the valves and compress the foam, forcing the air out as you roll it. By closing the valves at the end no air will be allowed to get in, preventing the foam expanding.



Pros of self-inflating mats:

- As the name suggests, these mattresses will inflate on their own so you don't have to pump them up.
- Simply roll it out, undo the valves and walk away – just remember to do the valves back up afterwards.
- They are very comfortable, particularly in the larger sizes. They will also insulate you from the ground keeping you much warmer.
- If you do happen to get a hole in it, you will still be sleeping on foam rather than ending up completely on the ground.

Cons of self-inflating mats:

- These mattresses can take up a lot of room.
- If you want something thick and comfortable, the compromise will be the space it takes up when packed away, as the larger mattresses will have more foam in them.
- There are self-inflating mats available that are quite thick when rolled out but pack down quite small. These mattresses will have more air than foam in them. They're often a lot more expensive than the thicker ones.
- Mattresses can run into troubles over time with the edges coming apart. This will depend on the quality of the item purchased.
- If you do end up with a small hole, it can be a lot harder to find on these mattresses than the inflatable mattresses. And the hole will mean the mattress will inflate in its bag when rolled up which can sometimes make them stuck in the bag.



Camp Stretchers

A camp stretcher is a fold out frame with a canvas, or similar material stretched out over the frame pulling nice and tight to support your body.



Pros of stretchers:

- Stretchers get you up off the ground, making it much easier to get in and out of bed.
- They're also quick and easy to assemble and provide extra storage space as you can put your bags etc under the bed.
- Stretchers don't take up much room to store and transport. They can also be quite cool in warm weather as they keep you well off the ground.

Cons of stretchers:

- Stretchers can be quite heavy, some weighing up to 10 – 12kg.
- When new, and depending on the type of stretcher, they can be a little tight. And whilst their design is easy to assemble, they tight canvas can be difficult to stretch into place.
- Stretchers do not insulate you from the ground and can be very cold overnight, especially during the winter months.
- Some stretchers will come padded however these will be larger and bulkier to pack away.
- You may find stretchers quite firm to sleep on and are often partnered with a foam mattress or self-inflating mattress to offer a little more comfort.
- Some stretcher frames can be quite rocky and creak loudly when moving around on them.

Swags

A Swag is a canvas bedroll that will protect you from wind, rain, dirt, sand and bugs. It can be used on its own outside or used inside as a roll out bed inside a tent, caravan or on the living room floor. Swags are usually made from canvas and come in all shapes, sizes and designs. They're most commonly found with a foam mattress inside to sleep on.



Pros of swags:

- Swags are possibly the quickest source of a bed. Most only need to be rolled out and they are ready to go.
- You can keep your sleeping bag or other bedding such as sheets and blankets inside, even when rolled up. So there is no setup required (depending on the type of swag and how it is



used).

- Most swag mattresses are made from dense foam that comes in different thicknesses and is usually very comfortable.
- Swags will keep you warm as they insulate you and protect you from the ground. They also protect you from the cold air outside as you can be completely covered by the canvas.

Cons of swags:

- Swags are possibly the largest form of bedding to pack away and transport.
- They often need to be carried in a trailer, or on roof racks.
- They are also quite heavy depending on the size and canvas weight purchased.
- Swags can be uncomfortable in warm and humid conditions. If there are a lot of bugs around you will need to be zipped into your swag and completely covered. But this can create very hot and sticky conditions inside your swag which can lead to quite an uncomfortable sleep.

Whichever sleeping arrangement you decide, I recommend that you first consider how you will be able to transport your chosen bedding to your destination. Then think that how much space will you have to set it up, once you've arrived at your destination.

Check out our range of sleeping gear to find the right bedding that will ensure you get a good night's sleep on your next camping holiday!