Listen to the full episode here:

Or watch the video version here:

Remember a few weeks ago when Ben and Lauren spoke for thirty whole minutes about *tent pegs*?

Same.
Remember how impressed, albeit *surprised*, you were?
Same.
Could you handle any more peg-talk?
Neither.
Hear us out, though – what if there was an entirely new conversation to be had on the humble, handy, unpretentious tent peg? Would you spare another thirty minutes? ‘*YES,*’ we hear you shout into your smartphone while your hiking tent bellies into itself and the guy ropes start to sag?
Great – because this week’s episode of the Snowys Camping Show has been written, recorded, reviewed, and released. Ben and Lauren discuss the tent pegs suited specifically to hiking – from the styles that are no-fuss and straightforward, to those more tightly wound (so you can loosen up).

Shortcuts

Mentioned in this Episode

Podcasts:
Ep54 – Talkin’ Tent Pegs
Ep18 – Camping, Waste, & Leaving No Trace
Products:
OZtrail Nomad 2 Hiking Tent
Outdoor Connection Howqua 2 Hiking Tent
Vaude Campo Compact 2P Tent

OZtrail Hiker Fly
Explore Planet Earth Spartan 2 Hiking Tent
Hiking tent pegs
MSR Hook Tent Stakes 6-Pack
Supa Peg Polycarbonate Sang Pegs
Zempire Guy Rope Set Adventure – 5-Piece
MSR Groundhog Tent Stakes 6-Pack
Sea to Summit Ground Control Peg
Hampton Aluminium Angle Peg 17cm
Zempire Aluminium Tri Pegs 4-Pack
MSR Stake Hammer
Other:
Ologies Podcast
YouTube | Kate Grarock: *Big Rock Little Rock*

Hiking Edition

Much to their amazement, Ben and Lauren discovered how easy it is to talk about tent pegs for half an hour during Ep54 – Talkin' Tent Pegs.
Nonetheless – can the same be done on a topic specific to hiking pegs?

The Right Pegs for the Right Tents

Within the outdoor community, there will always be different opinions on which hiking pegs work best for certain setups. In this episode, Ben and Lauren detail the range of hiking pegs available, where materials, shape, and overall design differ from one to the next.
For the most part, hiking pegs aren't constructed with heavy materials like steel. This is due to weight considerations, where most hiking pegs will appear lighter, smaller, and differently shaped, designed to deliver more holding power and strength.
That said, the right hiking peg will depend on the tent itself. For example, a lightweight, 2-3 season tent is unlikely to require the same pegs as a 4-season expedition tent pitched in heavier winds. With this in mind, the appropriate style of peg is often determined by the nature of the environment in which you'll set up camp.
A 2-3 season tunnel tent – if pitched in the more favourable direction – withstands wind well, while a dome-style tent will require more pegs. This is because the latter design typically isn't freestanding, therefore relying more on pegs to remain secure. For example, Ben's dome tent features two vestibules, each benefitting from two strong pegs on the outside, lighter-weight pegs in the four corners, and an additional four heavier pegs for the guy ropes. While tunnel-style tents require less pegs in windy weather, those used should nonetheless be more robust and steadfast.
Given the tent's fly connects directly to a peg point via a clip or attachment, it can be argued that pegging isn't required in the corners of both the hiking tent and its fly. During fair weather or platform camping/hiking adventures, a two-person tent housing two people – plus gear – guarantees enough weight to forgo pegging in the corners too. The essential purpose of hiking tent pegs is to maintain stability, and keep the tent taut to avoid bellying or rain

pooling in wet weather.

Included Pegs

In the case of most top-quality hiking tents, the included pegs are equally as good – so a customer will get what they pay for. That said, these tents only include one style of peg; it's often recommended to keep a variety of different designs to suit soft, hard, and snowy surfaces. There are many great-value and affordable hiking tents on the market too, though their pegs lack quality. Often lightweight, they're constructed with either alloy or aluminium – and in Lauren's Customer Service experience, their weight tends to be compensated with a lack of strength and a likelihood to bend or snap.
The pegs discussed throughout this episode are mostly made from aluminium, titanium, or other lightweight materials. Their construction is so that applying a mash hammer will only cause damage, instead requiring either pushing with your hands or tapping gently with a small rock. Keep in mind that the anodized coating on some aluminium designs (minimising corrosion) can often scratch away over time.

Peg Styles

Hiking pegs with hooked tops are often prone to bending if hammered too hard and too often. Most styles feature a more pronounced shepherd's crook with a large loop and, coupled with their softer material, are more likely to change shape with too much force than camping-style pegs. In softer grounds, they're sufficient – though not so much on solid surfaces. While they don't manufacture hiking pegs, one of Supa Peg's designs feature a head that allows for the force of the hammer to travel directly through the centre. This bodes better for tougher surfaces.
In the case of lightweight aluminium pegs, Ben and Lauren suggest those with a straight shaft, often referred to as 'needles' or 'pins'. These promote a more direct and downward force through the centre of the peg. Some have small cut-outs for securing guy ropes – and while these technically create a weakness point, they're vital in ensuring the guy ropes are fastened in place.
With some 'pins' cylindrical in shape and others square, Lauren is curious as to which of the two is the stronger option – understandably assuming the square-shaped. Some cylindrical pins have a head that mimics that of a nail, while those with a square shaft (as by MSR and Zempire) have a crochet hook. Ben clarifies that their strength ultimately depends on their weight, material, and thickness. For example, carbon fibre pegs with a plastic cap aren't designed to be belted into the ground, as both the plastic head and carbon fibre shaft are likely to shatter.

Peg Shapes

With many variants of the 'needle' peg designs, there are models applied more like a stake. Usually, straight or stake-like pegs are designed as a V-, X- or Y-shape, identifiable on the base. These can be considered like mini star-droppers, offering more surface area for greater holding power in the ground. While constructed with aluminium and lightweight, these pegs

are often stronger than their 'needle' counterparts due to their shape.
That said, Ben comments that their one failure is a result of the notch protruding from the top which, if hit hard enough, can bend or kink over time. On the other hand, Lauren likes that stake-style pegs don't often spin or rotate within their position in the ground. This is most typical of the Y- and X-shaped pegs, less likely to move once fixed into the ground – while 'pin' or 'needle' pegs on a windy night could spin and tangle the guy ropes as a result.
Ben points out that this is only relevant if the keeper on the head of the peg is dependent on a certain direction to securely hold a guy rope. For example: while rounded pegs with a notch at the top may rotate in the ground, a square peg with a crochet head likely won't – and most pegs feature an enlarged head to prevent them from doing so anyway. MSR Groundhog stakes are Y-shaped, where each 'arm' is kinked for further traction and holding power in the ground.

MSR Groundhog stakes are Y-shaped, where each 'arm' is kinked for further holding power in the ground. Credit: MSR

Removing a rounded peg from the ground simply requires a couple of twists and a single pull. On the contrary, those with a cyclone-esque / spiralled shaft tend to turn simultaneously as they're inserted into the ground, and are harder to remove on account of their twisted ridges. Nowadays, pegs feature a pull-loop to assist in removing from the earth – though it's still recommended to only use cyclone-shaft pegs in soft ground, or when securing a tarp to aid in handling stronger winds. In that, they're a great alternative to heavy steel pegs when assembling a more central tarp for a large group on an outdoor getaway.
Ben recommends the Sea to Summit Ground Control pegs, Y-shaped with a pull string.
Another sturdy design is the Hampton V-shaped peg, which is essentially a mini aluminium version of the Supa Peg angle iron model but with a welded hook. If hit hard enough, the

hook can bend or curl back like the lid of a sardine can – and for this reason, Ben finds the Y-shaped pegs more useful in most ground types that aren't rock-solid. The wider V-shaped models bode better for the too-soft surfaces – and usually, one would benefit from fixing guy ropes to at least two V-shaped pegs on the side of the tent that receives the most force from the wind.
Overall, there are many different variants of V-, X-, and Y-shaped pegs, with MSR manufacturing a large portion. Instead of the hooked-top pegs included with a tent, Ben and Lauren ultimately recommend investing in pegs with a straight shaft – like Sea to Summit's Ground Control model, Hampton's V-shaped angle pegs, or a longer design still. Pegs can often be purchased as either a single or in a pack of six – and while not cheap, are worthwhile. Lauren recommends first buying a single to trial, before committing to a full set.

Sand and Snow Pegs

Pegs for sandy, snowy grounds are both broad and flat. This provides more surface area for pulling against softer surfaces, preventing the peg from coming loose.
In the case of hiking, sand and snow pegs are often of an aluminium construction with holes. They're usually buried and hammered into the snow on an angle with a guy rope attached, like a snow anchor. This method bodes well for beach camping too.
Lauren also learned they can be used exclusive from every other peg style when camping on platforms, just by wedging them between the wooden boards!

Peg Materials

The most common material for pegs is steel or aluminium – though steel models are often thin to keep the weight down, more likely to bend as a result.
Nowadays, Y-shaped aluminium pegs with a hooked top are becoming more general. From what Ben has noticed, aluminium is more broadly used for hiking tent pegs, apparent in both the MSR Ground Hog and Sea to Summit Ground Control models.
There are different 'grades' of aluminium too, typically stamped on the product. Each grade indicates a different strength and makes an ever-so-slight difference to the product's weight. Commonly, aluminium is also used in conjunction with an anodized coating. For those who like to delve further into the science sphere during discussions like this, Lauren recommends a podcast called Ologies.
Aluminium's setback, however, is how it responds to excessive bending – eventually reaching a state called 'metal fatigue'. When a piece of aluminium bends, it creates a weak point; in the case of a peg, it's recommended to replace it before your next outdoor adventure. The more aluminium bends, the closer it becomes to snapping completely.
An alternative material is titanium which, while more expensive, is both stronger and more malleable. Applying force to a titanium peg may have it more likely to bend, but not fatigue as much or as soon – thus remaining stronger. While titanium is heavier than aluminium, its greater strength means less material is required, having it appear smaller nonetheless. These pegs are often hard to come by, given how specific they are for a customer to seek out; if you've decided on titanium tent pegs, chances are you've reached the point of counting down to the very last gram.

As mentioned, with less material comes a smaller size – but with a smaller size comes less holding power. *Sigh*. Every peg has its pitfalls.
Carbon fibre is another material found in hiking tent pegs. Often straight and rounded, both their top cap and the bottom tip are a different material from the carbon fibre shaft. Usually, the tip that drives into the ground is aluminium, as one of carbon fibre would be less likely to hold its form. Carbon fibre doesn't sharpen as effectively, so a metal or aluminium tip protects it.
The cap of a carbon fibre peg is usually plastic, given these models are designed to be lightly tapped as opposed to hammered into the ground.
The main benefit of carbon fibre pegs are their extraordinarily light weight, at only six grams per unit! Despite that, they're an expensive investment, costing roughly $20 each. Often, these pegs are sought after by the community of ultra-light hikers, where some will go as far as making their own to avoid paying the higher price. Carbon fibre pegs are also known to be the only type to safely pass through airport security measures, boding well for the hikers who frequently travel abroad for their adventures.
Lastly, plastic is not often a material used for hiking peg manufacturing. That said, they are available in nail-like designs, ideal for sand-based surfaces.

Summary

So – what is the superior peg? Have you ever made your own? We want to know your thoughts.
To wrap up, Ben and Lauren suggest marking your hiking pegs with brightly coloured tape; amid the rough, tumble, and tangle of the outdoors, pegs can very easily become lost! Most pegs will also feature a pull-loop – but on those that don't, our gear gurus recommend fastening your own.
Lastly, for the ultra-lightweight hikers who see even the most lightweight pegs as a space-waster – check out wildlife ecologist and adventure enthusiast Dr. Kate Grarock's YouTube video on how to pitch a tent using the environment around you: Big Rock Little Rock. Given its freestanding design, Kate must peg out her tent when it comes time to pitch securely. She does so by tying the guy rope around a small rock and placing a large rock in front of it (i.e. on the side closest to the tent), on top of the rope. The smaller rock simply acts as an anchor. A friendly reminder though that in using the environment around you, be sure not to cause any damage!

Thanks for listening, tune in again for next week's episode!

Thanks for tuning in to this week's episode of the Snowys Camping Show Podcast. Don't forget to subscribe to us on YouTube, Spotify, iTunes, Amazon Music, iHeartRadio, Pocket Casts, Podcast Addict, or Stitcher so you never miss an upload.
If you have any questions for Ben and Lauren, make sure you head over to our Facebook group and let us know as we'd love to hear from you.
Catch you out there!