

DOWN BAGS

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TOP GEAR

1. Valandre Mirage

(-5°C; 1.4 lbs, 635 g; \$415)

WHY IT MADE THE CUT Straight from Europe, the Mirage is the crème de la crème of lightweight down bags. The no-frills design leaves out non-essentials such as a draft collar, a full-length zip or peripheral pockets. What you get instead is an ultralight Pertex nylon shell stuffed with high-grade 800-plus goose down. The mummy cut is snug and efficient, yet sleeps well thanks to Valandre's unique ergonomic foot box and anatomically formed baffles, which eliminate claustrophobia. A differential cut—the inside of the bag is smaller than the outside—leaves plenty of room for the down to achieve its full loft. **KEEP IN MIND** The short side zip—just over a foot long—means there's little hope for venting on warmer nights. **BEST SUITED TO** Adventure racers and other ultralight fanatics willing to shell out to shave ounces.

2. Sierra Designs Cloudripper

(-9°C; 3.2 lbs, 1.45 kg; \$340)

WHY IT MADE THE CUT Down, as we all know, is useless when wet, but the Cloudripper is equipped to deal with that problem. It has a waterproof/breathable shell that repels condensation while letting your body moisture escape. The result is a lightweight down bag that actually stays warm through even the dampest night. Like all Sierra Designs bags it comes with a fitted ergonomic hood and sleeping-pad keeper straps that stop you from sliding onto the cold earth in the middle of the night. **KEEP IN MIND** While the Cloudripper is lightweight and super packable, it's a little on the expensive side for a 600-fill down bag. **BEST SUITED TO** Backpackers and climbers heading for higher ground and colder temps.

3. Bask Trekking Down

(-5°C; 2.9 lbs, 1.3 kg; \$270)

WHY IT MADE THE CUT Bask is a Russian company, recently arrived on Canadian shores, that is known for its superior down goods. Case in point: the Trekking bag. For less than three bills, you get a mummy bag stuffed with 600-plus fill Russian goose down—some of the best in the world. And you won't have to sacrifice features. Witness the overstuffed draft collar and draft tube, no-sag zipper and water-resistant Pertex shell. Bonus: the black shell fabric dries quickly in the sun, so you don't have to pack a soggy bag. **KEEP IN MIND** The only drawback with the bag is the small hood—it barely covers the average cranium. **BEST SUITED TO** Backpackers looking for a simple down bag that will last for years of travels and trails.

LOWDOWN: TEMPERATURE RATINGS

HOW WARM IS WARM ENOUGH? The obvious answer is that it depends on where and how you sleep. But that doesn't help much when it comes time to buy a bag, so here are some basic guidelines:

- **TEMPERATURE RATINGS** are far from hard and fast. It's best to err on the warmer side. Think about how cold it gets where you like to camp and then subtract about 5°C (i.e., if it rarely drops below zero at night, a -5°C bag will be perfect).
- **IF YOU CAMP IN THE MOUNTAINS**—where temps are more unpredictable—or if you tend to sleep cold, subtract another 5°C. Just make sure the bag has a full zip for ventilating when the mercury rises.
- **IF YOU REALLY WANT TO LIGHTEN** your load and don't mind wearing some clothing to bed, a bag in the 5°C range will get you through almost any summer night. Just don't expect to be toasty.

FOR WOMEN ONLY



Sierra Designs Rosa (-7°C; 2.8 lbs, 1.28 kg; \$140)

Compared to the average sleeping bag, Sierra Designs' women's bags are cut narrower at the shoulders, wider at the hips and shorter overall. In other words, they are cut to fit the female form, which means less wasted space to heat. They are also equipped with other added features that, quite frankly, would appeal to both sexes, such as a cozy fleece-lined foot box and a pillow pocket that accepts an extra jacket to create a no-slip head rest. The Rosa offers all these features in a very well-priced synthetic bag. Insulation is provided by industry-leading Polarguard 3D, laid out in a shingle construction. A well-stuffed draft tube and ergo hood add coziness on frigid nights.