



Photo: Robby Spanning



Pros & cons
 + Lightweight and affordable
 + Well designed
 – Some condensation

Alpkit Elan hooped bivy bag

A bivy bag with tent-like weather protection

£129.99 alpkit.com

When does a bivy bag become a tent? That's not a question I'm willing to risk answering, but it is one posed by Alpkit's hooped bivy bag, which features two short poles to create more head space than a traditional bivy. The Elan therefore offers an affordable and lightweight camping option for bikepacking weekenders where weight is key and space is tight. I tested it on two overnights in Wales, where it endured both driving rain and clear, starry skies.

Weighing just 900g and with a packed size of 39x11cm, it's certainly both small and light. I carried it easily in a standard bottle cage (with an extra strap to keep it stable), freeing up valuable bag space.

It's immaculately designed by folk who have clearly spent plenty of time camping, with an array of smart little features that make a real difference. The

almost full-length zip enables easy entry and exit, and ensures you can brew a cup of tea still tucked in. Mesh sections keep the stars visible on clear nights.

The bag includes a well-positioned loop to lift the fabric off your feet (easy to attach to your bike's handlebar with any strap), plus pockets to store valuables. The fabric feels durable, and a three-year warranty gives peace of mind.

Once inside, although it's obviously cosy, the raised 'headbox' provides just enough space to read your book with it all zipped up if the rain is hammering down. Speaking of which, the Elan did a good job of keeping the rain out on a wet and windy night.

That sadly doesn't mean you'll stay completely dry. On both nights, I did experience fairly significant condensation build-up, to the extent that the outside of my sleeping bag became quite

damp. But internal condensation is pretty much just a reality of bivvying in the UK's humid climate, and if you're not keen on that, you'd likely prefer a tent. Synthetic or hydrophobic down sleeping bags should retain their warmth when damp, although carrying wet kit, or waiting for it to dry, can still be a pain.

It's worth noting that you can find lightweight tents with a similar pack size and weight to the Elan, albeit at about four times the cost. The Elan's lower price makes it a perfect entry point for those keen to try bikepacking. ●

Keir Gallagher

Verdict

Well designed and boasting a reasonable price tag, the Elan is a fantastic option for those keen to try out bikepacking – provided you don't mind a bit of condensation.

Other options



MSR HUBBA NX
£477

A lightweight, compact one-person tent for those who are happy to spend a lot more for extra space.

msrgear.com



BRITISH ARMY SURPLUS GORETEX BIVVY
£49.99

A traditional pole-less bivvy at a very decent price.

goarmy.co.uk