Camping stoves

Nights out are nicer when bookended by hot food and a cuppa. Sam Jones tests compact stoves

Touring cyclists and bikepackers travel on their stomachs: after a long day in the saddle it’s essential to refuel. To do so while camping you’ll want a stove – unless you’re willing to eat cold food or dine out. The best choice of stove depends on where you’re heading (domestic or international?), what sort of cook you are (boil in the bag or camp chef?), and, of course, weight and space limitations.

There’s an array of different fuels you can burn, from alcohol-based ones such as methylated spirits through to aviation fuel. Most stoves are either multi-fuel (petroleum varieties), gas (canisters) or liquid fuel (alcohol). In the UK, canisters are popular and easy to find but not cheap. These stoves are much lighter, cleaner and easier to use than their more versatile multi-fuel brethren. They’re great for trips in the Western hemisphere – but finding fuel in far-flung places can be a struggle!

## Details

**WHAT TO LOOK FOR**

1. **Weight**
   - Travelling light is important for cyclists just as it is for backpackers. You’ll easily find stoves under 100g, so if you’re the sort that packs half a toothbrush on your trips you should be well catered for. Multi-fuel stoves usually weigh more but offer greater versatility.

2. **Packability**
   - Lightweight means small, with most of the bulk likely to be taken up by your fuel and pan. If space is an issue, try finding a pan that fits both stove and canister inside it.

3. **Cooking control**
   - Think about what you want to cook on the go. Are noodles fine or do you want a risotto? Stoves are not all equal when it comes to cooking!

4. **Fuel**
   - Canisters are convenient but disposal is difficult. They don’t work well in the cold and are expensive if you’re planning on regular use. Liquid fuel takes longer to cook with but is cheaper to buy and more readily available. Think about what’s most important to you.

5. **Stability**
   - Stable stoves make happy (and unscorched!) campers. If you’re going for a canister-based stove, consider investing in a canister stand.

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Verdict
While there’s not much between the PocketRocket and Amicus in terms of weight and performance, the MSR stove feels more robust. Self-igniters are great until they break, and the arms of the Amicus didn’t feel as solid as the PocketRocket. On a bikepacking trip, where I’m less fussed about what I cook and more concerned with ease of use, I’d pack the PocketRocket.

Alpkit’s Koro is a great little cooker but feels slow compared to its gas-guzzling cousins. My favourite is the Trangia: it’s a versatile cooker that can’t go wrong so long as you have fuel. For a stove and cookset at £30, it’s a bargain. Meths is cheap too.

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