

Poorman's Gear Review

I examined many, many camp stoves before finally settling on the perfect one. I wanted a stove that would perform well in any weather, simple to assemble in the field, low maintenance with few replacement parts to worry with, inexpensive efficient fuel, and most importantly inexpensive.

The stove I settled on did not, however, come from a camp store. Instead it came from Wal-Mart. I purchased a Coleman single-burner propane stove. It simply screws onto a mini propane cannister and it is ready to cook. While my other friends in SAR are busily putting their MSG's and Whisperlite's together and pumping their fuel.

I'm cooking away on my Coleman. At \$17.88 for the stove, and \$2.18 for the propane cannisters (which provide about 12-16 hours of cook time) this stove is a real bargain. It has performed admirably at 20 degrees Celsius and in 25 mph winds. The rain is also no match for this stove. Contrary to popular belief, this stove will not weigh down your pack, one cannister and the stove are all you will need, and best of all no parts to hassle with.

In Search and Rescue, we spend a lot of precious time in the field. We can't be weighed down by a huge, uncomfortable backpack, which effectively does nothing more than tire the wearer out. Most searchers have found that fanny packs are the most efficient.

These packs are comfortable to wear, and still have enough room to carry the essential equipment for wilderness survival. Many of my friends use packs from Mountainsmith. These are very nice packs, however they aren't extremely roomy, and are kind of expensive. My personal preference is the Super Waist Belt Pack from ISIS

International.

The pack is inexpensive, \$44.00 plus shipping, and easily hold every thing I need for the field, and more. The pack is of heavy-duty construction and is very comfortable on the hips. It offers five exterior pockets, two are on the belt, one large main compartment with three removable dividers, and one internal mesh pocket. Padded and durable, this pack is a definite plus.</p>

I have a few recommendations in this department. The fire starter I use by choice comes from those stores in which everything is only \$1.00. The package contains approximately 20 bricks and is manufactured by Flango. They are quick and efficient, easy to light and relatively safe. What more can you ask for a buck. If you are an extremely tight budget, try the lint from the lint screen in your dryer. There is a reason they tell you to remove it before use, it burns well. Best of all, it is free.

I went a little eccentric here, and purchased a good bag. I use a Kelty NBS-15 15 degree bag. I paid around \$115 for it, and it has never let me down.

It is extremely comfortable mummy, and has some spare room for keeping gear warm, too. I want to take this opportunity to make a recommendation, though. No matter what bag you use, be it a box-bag from Wal-Mart to a Marmot, sometimes you find yourself in weather not suited for your bag.

When I first started SAR I used a cheap 30 degree bag from A department store. On searches, though, I sometimes found myself in much colder temperature. I purchased an Emergency Space Bag, by Space brand. Used on the outside of your bag, it could lower your bag rating by as much as 10-15 degrees. Used on the inside... well let's just say you'll be toasty.

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