

Backpacking Stoves

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Basic Considerations: Before purchasing any stove, first decide how it will be used. If you are a backpacker, you should be very concerned with weight. Every pound you put in your pack will feel like ten pounds on the trail. If you are inclined to go to high altitudes (over 10,000 feet) or low temperatures you will want a stove that works well under those conditions. As we become more environmentally conscious, we should consider the effects of non-refillable fuel containers.

Fuel: Before deciding on the stove that's right for you, you should look at the types of fuel that are available in your area. There are three types of fuel available: White Gas; Pressurized Gas (Propane or Butane); and Kerosene.

White Gas is by far the hottest burning fuel and is available at most outdoor equipment stores. It burns hot and efficiently in cold weather and at high altitudes. Additionally it is environmentally more sound than pressurized fuel in canisters that cannot be refilled.

Propane/Butane is easier to use since you don't have to pump (pressurize) the stove to get it started. It's lightweight and there is no fuel to handle.

Kerosene is the cheapest, most common fuel around. It doesn't burn as hot as white gas or propane/butane, so cooking time is increased. Kerosene has a very disagreeable odor when it burns. It also burns dirtier, so you will be cleaning the stove more frequently

Stoves: Generally stoves fall into one of two categories. The pressurized gas cans are usually twist and light, where you twist the canister onto the stove, turn on the gas and light the burner in accordance with the manufacturer'

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instructions. White gas and Kerosene stoves usually require a bit of pumping to build up pressure in the fuel tank. These stoves seem to be more reliable in cold temperatures as well as being a better choice environmentally (no empty canister to discard).

Pump Stoves: MSR WhisperLite: White Gas - This is one of the best stoves around and is my personal favorite. It features a separate fuel tank that allows you to isolate the burner with a windscreen for greater fuel efficiency and a hotter-burning stove. Its low center of gravity provides a stable base for your cooking pot. Easy to prime, light and quiet, the WhisperLite has a reputation for being one of the easiest stoves to repair in the field. (12 oz. without fuel) Cost: \$49.

MSR WhisperLite Internationale: Same as above but this stove will also burn White Gas, commercial grade jet fuel or kerosene. (12 oz without fuel) Cost \$57.

MSR XGKII: Same features as above but will burn White Gas, kerosene, diesel or gasoline. It was designed for high altitudes and sub-zero conditions. (14 oz without fuel) Cost \$80.

Optimus Climber 123: White Gas - This stove is also very reliable. The fuel tank is very small and it is prudent to carry additional fuel. Use an eyedropper for priming or purchase the optional pump. (19.5 oz without fuel) Cost \$75.

Pressurized Canister Stoves: EPIgas: Propane/Butane Mix - This mixed gas stove ensures high performance at altitude and low temperatures. The canisters come in different sizes and are interchangeable between stove models. The Micro stove is very light (11 oz with canister) Cost \$37 and the backpacking stove with windscreen weighs only 20 oz with canister. Cost \$34.

Gaz Bluet: Propane or Butane - The multi-use model 206 stove weighs 16.7 oz with canister. Cost \$32. The high performance 470 weighs 30 oz with canister. Cost \$34. The Ultra S470 features Piezo automatic ignition for fast starts. It weighs 31 oz with canister. Cost \$43.

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Coleman Peak 1 Multi-Fuel: White Gas, Coleman fuel or kerosene. This stove pressurizes well, using the Coleman classic pump system and has one of the shortest pre-heating times of any white gas stove. It requires no priming and is self-cleaning. 27.5 oz with fuel. Cost \$79

I hope that the foregoing has helped you decide the type of stove that is best for you. If you need any advice or counsel, please feel free to contact me.

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