

Choosing a sleeping mat for your overnight hiking adventures can be a confusing affair! There's a lot to consider: comfort, weight, size (both packed and inflated). Comparing all those details against price and your budget can positively make your head spin! Some lightweight mats carry a significantly steep price tag on account of all the new technologies and fabrics incorporated into their design. It's not easy to decide, and what works for one person won't necessarily work for another. Below, we've listed our top-selling lightweight hiking mats over the last 12 months. Before we get into the countdown, let's cover some of the common questions asked about lightweight hiking mats...

'Are hiking mats noisy to sleep on?'

Air-filled mats, such as the Thermarest NeoAir and the Sea to Summit air-filled mats, create more noise than self-inflating mats. The good news is that this noise is usually due to the fabric being new, so it will decrease over time and is a small trade-off for much more comfort.

When brand spanking new, some mats may make a little noise. Image: Thermarest

'What is a bonded sleeping mat?'

This question refers to the self-inflating mats, where the outer fabric layer is glued (bonded) to the inner foam. This creates a sturdier sleeping surface and allows the mat to be inflated tightly.

'How do I care for my sleeping mat?'

Wherever possible, always use something between your body and the mat such as a sleeping bag or liner. This reduces the amount of oil and sweat that soaks into the mat. Should your mat need cleaning, use a mild soap with warm water and a soft-bristled brush to gently clean the surface.

'How do I store my sleeping mat?'

Self-inflating mats (full of dense foam) are best stored inflated. This ensures the foams' memory is in an expanded state which shortens the time it takes at camp for the mat to inflate. Air-filled mats and air-filled insulated mats are much easier to care for. They are best stored loosely rolled, but if space is a premium, they can be rolled up and stored in their stuff sack once they're clean and dry.

Store your hiking mat properly so that it stays in good condition for many more adventures. Image: Thermarest

‘What size sleeping mat should I get?’

If you’re in the ultra-lightweight category, you’ll probably want to consider the shorter version of any mat. This reduces weight, but you may need to use something else to insulate your feet if the ground is cold. If weight is not a big concern and you just want comfort (or you’re a cold sleeper), choose a mat that is roughly the same length as you are in height. Width should also be considered, especially for users with larger frames. Women’s sleeping mats are usually shorter than the men’s equivalent, and often have increased insulation around the feet and hips.

Unless weight is an issue, go for the size that matches your height. Image: Sea to Summit

‘What is R-value?’

R-value is an indication of how well the mat resists the transfer of heat from one side to another. This applies to the heat or cold from under the mat, as well as the heat your body may lose into the mat.

The higher the value, the less likely it is you will feel cold from the ground and the more body heat you will retain. For those who want to understand R-value a little better, check out this article [here](#).

There is now a new industry standard for R-value called ASTM F3340-18. Whilst the concept of R-value remains the same, the actual testing methods for the value have been updated. This has been introduced in a bid to create a level playing field for R-value across brands and to help consumers make more informed choices when comparing the performance of sleeping pads.

The ASTM F3340-18 was introduced in 2020 and to date, not every manufacturer has tested their mats to this new standard. This makes things tricky as you can only really make a true comparison between mats that are both tested to the industry standard.

We’ll make sure we update information on our website as we receive the latest test data from our suppliers.

In cold conditions, a higher R-value will help prevent you from feeling the cold. Image: Thermarest

Mat Types

Closed-Cell Foam

These are made of dense [foam](#) with thousands of airtight bubbles inside. They do not compress down, don’t offer much comfort, but they insulate really well and are indestructible, lightweight and very affordable.

Air-Filled

These consist of chambers or cells that require inflation before use. Air-filled mats usually offer a lot of comfort for their relative weight and packed size. They are not self-inflating and should they get a puncture, will not offer any comfort at all. Insulated versions have chambers of synthetic fill or down to help trap warm air.



Air-filled mats are usually the choice for lightweight trekkers and adventurers. Image: Sea to Summit

Self-Inflating

These mats are slabs of open-cell foam, often with holes or cores cut out. Durable fabric is bonded to the foam at the surface and sealed on the edges to create an airtight mat. The expanding foam is what creates the *self-inflating* feature, but this also means they require a little more muscle to compress the foam when packing your mat away. The other benefit of these mats is that if a puncture does occur, they still offer some padding and insulation.



Filled with expanding foam, a self-inflating mat is a very comfy choice, though not as light. Image: Sea to Summit

Now that we've got those questions out of the way, let's have a look at Snowys best-selling sleeping mats for hiking over the last 12 months.

We'd like to note here that we choose the products we range based on value for money, feedback from our customers, as well as the quality and support from the manufacturer.



10. 360 Degrees Adventurer 2.5 SI

The Adventurer 2.5 Self Inflating Mat from 360 Degrees has popped into our best-sellers for the second time! With so many newbies giving camping and hiking a go over the past few years, it's great to see this entry-level mat having a turn in the limelight.

Its tapered mummy profile cuts unnecessary weight and keeps the design simple. Self-inflating and one of the most affordable hiking mats we have, 360 Degrees has built a solid reputation for balancing quality and price.

Why buy this mat?: An unbeatable starting point for young adventurers.



9. Thermarest ProLite Plus

A popular, 4-season choice - the Thermarest® ProLite™ Plus Self-Inflating mattress delivers a little more warmth, comfort, and durability than the ProLite™ mats.

Constructed to high standards in the USA, the use a quality die-cut polyurethane foam laminated with a soft-touch Polyester upper and base. Its tapered shape bodes for a highly packable product - perfect for lightweight adventurers.

Why buy this mat?: Ideal for lightweight adventures calling for a balance of durability, efficiency, and weight.



8. Exped Versa R5 LW

This sleeping mat blends durability with versatility.

Synmat technology with an industry-standard R5 value offers insulation that endures all-season weather. Its head-to-toe air chambers provides a level of durability only dreamed about, while a recycled polyester construction is crafted with less carbon, water, and energy. With an industry-leading Exped-pioneered FlatValve, you achieve no-fuss, reliable inflation. The Versa R5 LW Sleeping Mat will have you dreaming by dusk and backpacking by daybreak.

Why buy this mat?: Air-filled with outstanding warmth for winter adventures.



7. Thermarest Z Lite

Coming in at number 7 we have the accordion-design Z Lite from Thermarest. Some feedback has suggested this mat is slightly bulky, but its reduced weight and budget-friendly price tag make it worth the slightly larger packed size.

It's a closed-cell foam construction with heat-trapping dimples that provide just enough protection, and can also be used as an extra layer of thermal insulation underneath another mat. It may not dazzle you with a whole lot of specs - but it's a straight-up, no-nonsense, easy-to-pack-up option with a comfy base between you and the ground.

Why buy this mat?: An affordable, ultralight mat that's virtually indestructible.



6. Exped SIM 3.8 and 3.8 Lite

These mats are a dreamy blend of exceptionally high-quality and affordability.

Where the SIM 3.8 Lite has an R-value of 3.1, the SIM 3.8 boasts 4.6 for decent insulation and warmth - cushioned enough to keep you comfortable while you snooze. Inflate and deflate with just one valve, while its slip-resistant surface resists any rubbing against your skin.

The SIM 3.8 Lite is constructed with a lightweight PU foam, cored in two directions for a mat that provides reliable insulation and comfort. Unlike the SIM 3.8, the Lite features dual flat valves for efficient inflation and deflation, and packs down petite.

For compact packing, attaching to packs, and popping on top of a stretcher - the SIM 3.8 and 3.8 Lite are ideal for both lightweight and camping adventures.

Why buy these mats?: Provide lightweight and reliable insulation and comfort.



5. Thermarest NeoAir & NeoAir XLite

The [NeoAir](#) wins gold for lightweight performance and packability!

Providing stellar warmth-to-weight ratio, 6.4cm of thickness with an internal, supportive baffle structure, and an R-value of 4.2 for insulation across year-round expeditions – these mats are for the fast and light adventurer. Their tapered shape reduces bulk, while ultralight Nylon saves those extra grams. ThermaCapture™ technology and a Triangular Core Matrix™ construction work together to trap radiant heat and prevent heat loss – meanwhile keeping the pack size down. Featuring Thermarest's WingLock valve too, inflating is simple and 3-times faster thanks to one-way inflation and a large opening.

Complete with a pump sack for inflation, a field repair kit for patching up mid-adventure, and a compact stuff sack for storage – these mats are available in a range of sizes.

Why buy this mat?: Superior combination of a supportive structure, year-round performance, and packability.



4. Exped FlexMat

Be it added insulation for existing self-inflating mat, or simply a minimalist sleeping solution – [this mat](#) is the versatile choice.

Its closed-cell IXPE foam construction is DWR-free, while the fold-out design bodes for ease of use in outdoor environments. An R-value of 1.5 has been tested to the ASTM F3340-18 standard, both insulating from the cold and protecting from puncture-prone terrain. For the ultralight travellers seeking a minimalist sleeping option, this mat can also be used on its own.

Why buy this mat?: Versatile in offering added insulation, resistance to rough terrain, and a minimalist option for lightweight trips.



3. Sea to Summit Air Sprung Cell

With every one of these updates, year after year, these mats come in strong. Just like last time, we've decided to group them together according to their technology. Within this grouping, we have the Comfort Plus ASC range, the Comfort Light mats, and – leading the pack in sales – the Ultralights.

The best-selling Ultralights took the trophy last year, featuring a single layer of inflatable cells that conform to your body when you sleep. There are two models: [insulated](#) and [non-insulated](#). Each is available in various sizes. Lightweight hikers love these mats; the large version weighs less than 600g, and measures 5cm thick.

Moving on – over the years, [Sea to Summit](#) has refined the Comfort Light mats range, which now comprises the [insulated](#) version and the [insulated women's specific](#). These mats are probably the most versatile in the brand's inflatable range, made to provide warmth where it is needed and save weight where it is not. The Comfort Light range is made with two independent inflatable layers, and provides custom comfort and a level of redundancy in the

event of a puncture.

The Comfort Plus range has also seen some tailoring, including the 6.3cm thick insulated model and the 8cm XT. The XT weighs just over 1kg - but if that's not an issue, this plush rectangular mat will offer some serious comfort.

Why buy this mat?: Compact comfort and versatility.



2. Sea to Summit Self-Inflating

Here we are at number 2! Previously in first place, Sea to Summit's SI collection uses Delta Core to remove excess weight and bulk. These mats have been a consistent best-seller in past years, and with loads of variations it's easy to understand why. There's the Camp Mat range, the Camp Plus, the Comfort Plus SI mats, the Comfort Light SI's, and the Ultra-Light SI mats in both hiking and women's specific styles.

All have proven popular with our customers - but it's the entry-level Camp Mat SI, and the Comfort Plus SI in its tapered, rectangle, and women's specific options that have come out in front.

These have been closely followed by the Comfort Light SI mats which have moved from getting an 'honourable mention' in 2019, to sixth place in 2020. There are two styles, each offering a choice of sizes: the original or the women's specific version. With so many self-inflating choices from Sea to Summit, you're sure to find a balance of thickness, weight, and warmth to suit your needs.

Why buy this mat?: Versatile all-rounder for any adventure.



1. Sea to Summit Ether Light XT

We *knew* these mats were still a hit - a number 1 hit!

The Ether Light XT from Sea to Summit continues to give every other mat in this category a run for its money. Slightly quieter than the Ultralight mats due to the larger baffle design, Ether Light XT mats take it to another level with 10cm of comfort, 3 season insulation, and full-body support. With Insulated, Women's specific, and Non-insulated versions available, there's a model for every lightweight hiker.

For those wanting something for alpine or winter conditions, there are now also two expedition models in a choice of sizes and styles - the Extreme insulated and a Women's specific version. These both feature air-sprung cells and dual-density insulation which gives them an impressively high R-value. They weigh a bit more than the originals, but that's the trade-off for winter warmth.

Side-sleepers have been rejoicing over these mats, as their generous thickness lends itself to ongoing comfort no matter your position. It's the original Insulated model that's really smashed it out of the park with sales, but with so many versions available there's one for every lightweight hiker undergoing any adventure.

Why buy this mat?: Upgrade to more comfort without compromising weight.



What to look out for next year?

Well, usually it's brands like Sea to Summit and Exped that have been the ones to watch when it comes to lightweight mats... but we reckon Thermarest might continue to gain interest and move their way closer to pole position next year! Will they prove strong enough to push Sea to Summit out of the top 3? Stay tuned for next year's update...

What's the best hiking mat you've ever used?