



Swags have been providing campers with restful sleep for years. They are simple, versatile, and can be used just about anywhere. With the introduction of dome swags and even swags with air poles, we thought we had seen about all the technological advances to swags there could be. I mean, it's a pretty simple concept, right?

Just when sliced bread was looking like it was still the greatest invention, along came the stretcher tent! The biggest flaw with the swag is that you have to get down on the ground, which isn't always possible, or comfortable. Many campers started putting their swag on top of a stretcher for extra height but this limits the ability to pitch the swag tight, which is vital for staying dry and warm. It also means you have to set up two sleeping apparatus rather than one. So, the stretcher tent was born.

With sales of stretcher tents almost equaling swags, what are the key differences and which is the best option for you?

The Swag

Accommodation in its simplest form, a mattress protected by a canvas exterior.



Dome swags are the most popular style of swag nowadays. Some traditionalists will argue that they're not swags at all, but they're swaggy enough for us to keep calling 'em swags.

Pros:

- Very warm



- Includes a mattress
- Completely waterproof
- Can leave all your bedding in it when packed
- Quick and easy to use without the poles
- Can be used inside a tent or house

Cons:

- Bulky to carry
- Can take as long as a small tent to set up all the poles
- No storage
- Needs to be placed on the ground
- Difficult to set up when placed on a stretcher
- Not much room to get changed in or use in wet weather
- Needs to be used on a flat surface

Conclusion:

The swag is a fantastic sleeping option as it houses your entire bed, just roll it out and get in. If it's hot or raining you'll want to set up all the poles which will compromise its speed and ease of use.

If you don't want to get up and down from the ground you can lay it on a stretcher, but then you may want extra shelter, like a 4WD awning or gazebo.

The swag will suit someone touring the outback in dry, fine weather conditions. Whether on the ground or on top of a stretcher, you know you're going to get a good night's sleep in a swag!

The stretcher tent

Add a one person tent to a standard stretcher, and you have yourself a stretcher tent.



Look like you imagined? It looks like a swag on top of a stretcher, right? This is the popular Oztent Jet Tent Bunker Stretcher.

Pros:

- Quicker to set up than a dome swag
- Keeps you off the ground
- Provides more headroom
- Allows you to sit at the edge to take shoes off
- Has a large storage vestibule and shelter below for gear
- Can be used as a mozzie shelter without the canvas fly
- Comfortable on uneven ground

Cons:

- Is quite heavy
- Can't be packed up with bedding inside
- Needs a mattress for extra comfort and insulation
- Is not easily available in a double (The Kamp-Rite tent cot is the exception)



Conclusion:

The camp stretcher, bunker, or tent cot share benefits and provide solutions to the shortcomings presented by the swag, in particular, the extra height.

The one downfall, in my opinion, is that it really does need a mattress of some sort (most people choose a self-inflating mattress), and you need to pack your sleeping bag away each time you fold it up.

A parting thought

At the end of the day both products do the same thing, but if you want to define the 2 options simply there is one major comparison to think about.

- Do you want a product that works fantastically and has loads of features, but takes a little while to add your bedding too?

OR

- Do you want the no fuss - roll out canvas bedroll that may not be so comfortable in the wet, the heat, or rocky ground?

Tell us what you think! What is your ultimate camp bed?