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5 Owls Solo Shelter

by Bret Tkacs

5 Owls is a name unfamiliar to most of us. In India if an owl hoots five times it's believed travel is imminent, so founder Roger Cohen named his company "5 Owls"—a great name for a maker of personal shelters and tents aimed at travelers seeking small, lightweight homes for the road.

The *5 Owls Solo Shelter* is a unique concept in portable sleeping accommodations. Before the *Solo Shelter*, choices ranged from Taj Mahal-sized tents such as the *Redverz*, where you can park your motorcycle next to you while you sleep, to the minimalist bivy sack, where you get both the pleasures and penalties of weathering the elements. The *Solo Shelter* offers a different way of looking at motorcycle camping by blending the freedom of sleeping under the stars in a bivy sack with a protective stand-up shelter to protect both body and gear from wind and rain.

5 Owls starts the *Solo Shelter* as a bivy sack made of 75D polyester taffeta to eliminate the need for a ground sheet, then to the head section of the bivy adds a small but surprisingly spacious "tent" made of 30D polyester ripstop and a 1,500mm polyurethane coating to shield from the worst weather conditions. What makes this shelter really unique is how the tent section works. Designed specifically for those who prefer to sleep under the stars, the tent covering the head of the bivy folds down like the top of a convertible, exposing the occupant to the wonderful outdoors. When shelter is desired, the user simply reaches out and pulls the top up, using two quick snap clips to secure it in the upright position.

Set-up is as simple as any compact, non-free standing tent, with ground stakes, two small poles and a rain fly. The shelter poles have a neat quick connector, eliminating the need to fish a pole through a sleeve. The whole thing is "stupid-proofed,"



with well thought-out quick clips to keep from putting the fly on backwards.

One of my favorite features of the *Solo Shelter* is that it packs short enough to fit any standard-sized hard pannier, dry sack or soft luggage. This is a big win for a shelter system used for occasional camping, emergency shelter or, better yet, the person who prefers to sleep in the open but wants the protection of a tent.

The tent portion of this shelter system is surprisingly spacious with room for a helmet, boots, jacket, pants and more, while still having space to sit up and play solitaire. Well-constructed with quality components such as *DAC* poles and *YKK* zippers, the *Solo Shelter* is worth looking at.

Specifications:

- Shelter area (canopy and sleeve): 28.4 sq. ft.
- Peak head height: 42"
- Minimum weight: 4 lbs. 8 oz.
- Packed weight: 4 lbs. 14 oz.
- Packed size: 6" x 15"

MSRP: \$339.99 **5Owls.net**



PROS

- ✓ Easily fits into your luggage
- ✓ You won't look like a cookie cutter traveler
- ✓ You can sleep under the stars and still stay dry when the weather changes
- ✓ No need for a ground sheet
- ✓ Low profile is easy to hide when you don't want to be visible
- ✓ Separate rain fly means you can enjoy the outdoors without mosquitos snacking on you

CONS

- ✗ Costs as much as some high-end ultra-compact backpacker tents
- ✗ Non-freestanding means you always need soft ground for staking
- ✗ Separate rain fly means a little extra effort to keep the inside dry