

# The Yurt Buyers Guide



Going to extremes in yurt inspection!

A comprehensive guide to purchasing a quality Yurt.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

With the huge increase in interest and production of Yurts over the last few years I have been repeatedly asked how you tell the difference between them all. So it was suggested I produced a buyer's guide. I have done my best to produce an impartial guide to all the things to look for when buying a Yurt. Please remember, a well made Yurt takes time and a lot of skill to produce, and is therefore unlikely to be cheap, but it will give many years of priceless pleasure.

## **TERMINOLOGY**

A lot of people use different words for all the elements of the Yurt, Khana for the trellis wall on Mongolian Gers etc, but I prefer to keep to simple English descriptions. I feel it makes for easier conversations and quicker understanding, plus there are several styles of yurt all using different languages. We build Kyrgyz style Yurts and my Kyrgyz pronunciation leaves a lot to be desired!

The only designations I use regularly are Ger for Mongolian style tents and Yurt for bentwood style yurts.

## **STYLES**

There are three main styles available, all structurally the same but with regional and ideological differences. All these are available UK made or imported.

1/ The Mongolian Ger. This is a heavily framed Yurt often requiring internal supports for the roof. The identifying feature is the straight roof rib, giving a very angular profile. Price wise the Ger is slightly easier to produce than the bentwood Yurts so usually fits into the middle price bracket.

2/ Bentwood Yurt. This version covers a large geographical area and is often referred to by region, usually Kyrgyz, Turkmenistan or Uzbek. However they all have the curved roof rib, giving a softer rounded profile. The bentwood Yurts have more headroom than the Mongolian Ger. These Yurts are the most labour intensive so are usually the higher priced of the Yurts.

3/ The American Yurt. This often looks much like the Mongolian Ger but has been modernised. Features like Plexiglas domes, nylon or aluminium rivets and aircraft steel cable replacing the traditional tied trellis and webbing tension band. They are usually framed in Douglas or other similar softwoods. The frames have been simplified a great deal and are quicker to make so these Yurts tend to be the cheapest in the range. The trellis has much more of a diamond shape to it when constructed; this is so the trellis doesn't have to be steam bent.

Both the Mongolian Ger and bentwood Yurts are available as machined wood or coppice wood framed, usually in British hardwood, usually Ash. Imported frames are usually willow.

The American style Yurts are usually made in production softwood, like Douglas, but not always.



### THE WOOD

The best wood for Yurts is Ash. It has been used for years for tool handles, aircraft and car frames, bows etc. for its shock absorbing properties. It is relatively light for a hardwood but very strong.

Hazel is often seen in Yurt frames but it has a tendency to go brittle very quickly, I would avoid it.

Willow is OK but if fast grown is not very strong; the roof rib tips often break off.

Sweet Chestnut is a good second to Ash and gives a dark coloured frame. It resists rot well, but if the cover and groundsheet have been made well this should not be an issue.

Oak is simply too heavy and expensive, but still makes a great Yurt as long as you don't want to move it too often!

### COPPICED OR PLANKED TIMBER?

This choice is mainly down to taste but here are a few pointers to look out for.

Coppiced timber gives a 'rustic' looking Yurt, all the timber will be round in section and will have natural 'wiggles' in the length. This can make it a little more difficult to transport as it doesn't pack down too neatly. It is usually guaranteed to be British grown, and is a very sustainable production method for timber.

Planked wood makes for a very smart clean lined Yurt and it does pack down well, useful if you move around a lot with your Yurt. Check where the timber is from if you are concerned about sustainability.

## FRAME

With all Yurts look at the roof wheel (or crown as it's sometimes called) first. The look of the wheel is a good pointer to the overall quality of the Yurt; it's the hardest piece to make well.

The roof wheel needs to be reasonably round; badly misshapen wheels will allow roof ribs to drop out. Check that the two sections of the wheel have been properly joined, either with several angled wooden pegs and glue, or copper clouts and washers and glue. Look for good finish to the wheel, no gouges splits or loose cross bars, and certainly no filler! The cross bars should be neatly tied at the centre point. Mongolian Ger style wheels are often made from laminated sections or blocks of timber. Check all the joints and glue for a neat tight finish.

## COPPICED FRAMES

Look for a clean smooth finish to the timber. The trellis sections should fold up reasonably neatly, if the poles in the trellis are too irregular the trellis won't pack down well. Also check the regularity of the knotting, if it's not accurate and regular the trellis won't fold up at all. Look for a well finished knot tied tightly to the frame. Loosely tied frames flop all over the place and lose their structural integrity. Poorly tied or finished knots can come undone. Avoid any frames that have bolts or any metal fittings in the trellis, they catch on clothing and wear the trellis joints until they break. Nylon rivets in American style yurts are fine.



The trellis should also have been steam bent. When folded up the trellis should have a pronounced curve like a bracket - ( . If it doesn't and is flat, when set up the Yurt will look like this - ) ( This is what I call a *waisted* Yurt, it has a *waist* and it *wastes* internal space, it is also structurally weaker than a properly steam bent trellis. Overly bent trellis can give the yurt a belly, making the canvas a poor fit. Larger yurts need less curve in the trellis due to the larger radius.

Ideally when set up you will have a vertical wall to your yurt. This not only looks the best it is structurally the strongest.

The roof ribs need to be reasonably regular, with a good curve to the bottom of the rib, if it's a bent wood Yurt. If they are very misshapen the Yurt can be difficult to erect and even be unstable. Check the tip that fits into the wheel, it should be sturdy and pass through the wheel a good couple of inches. It should also fit the hole in the wheel well, and be square if the Yurt is a bentwood Yurt; round is fine on a Mongolian style. The square fitting prevents the roof rib from twisting.

Imported 'original' Yurts are made with a lot more roof ribs and the trellis is much closer set so giving a heavier overall frame. The trellis sections are tied with rawhide, which if they get damp become loose and can drop out.

### PLANKED WOOD FRAMES

Again look for a clean smooth finish to the timber. The trellis sections should fold up very neatly, check the regularity of the knotting, if it's not accurate and regular the trellis won't fold up. Look for a well finished knot tied tightly to the frame. Loosely tied frames flop all over the place and lose their structural integrity. Poorly tied or finished knots can come undone. Avoid any frames that have used bolts or any metal fittings in the trellis, they catch on clothing and wear the trellis joints until they break.

The trellis should also have been steam bent. When folded up the trellis should have a pronounced curve like a bracket - ( . If it doesn't and is flat, when set up the Yurt will look like this - ) ( This is what I call a wasted Yurt, it has a *waist* and it *wastes* internal space, it is also structurally weaker than a properly steam bent trellis. American style Yurts don't usually have steam bent trellis, they rely on the framework being more upright forming diamonds rather than squares so the poles don't bisect the circle so steeply.



*American Style Yurt trellis*



*UK style Yurt trellis*



*Original Kyrgyz Yurt*

*Note the 'floating' roof ribs, sitting on the steel cable in the American Yurt compared to the UK and original Yurts, which are tied to the trellis. Also note the pronounced diamond shape in the American trellis.*

The roof ribs need to be reasonably regular, with a good curve to the bottom of the rib, if it's a bent wood Yurt. Check the tip that fits into the wheel, it should be sturdy and pass through the wheel a good couple of inches. It should also fit the hole in the wheel well, and be square if the Yurt is a bentwood Yurt; round is fine on a Mongolian style. The square fitting prevents the roof rib from twisting.

Overall you should look for attention to detail and finish, if the frame is poorly finished with sharp edges and splinters give it a miss. A good frame will have

smoothed edges, either finished by hand with a drawknife or rounded with plane or router. The timber will be pleasant to handle and shouldn't have lots of knots which will weaken the frame.

Of course you can't get round all the Yurt makers to view first hand, but a good maker will always be happy to send you a few detailed photographs of their work.

### **THE DOORFRAME**

The doorframe is the linchpin of the whole Yurt, everything hangs off it and it is the first part of the frame any visitor will see. It's the last thing most frame makers make and it can let the whole Yurt down, literally, if it isn't done well.

A good doorframe will be sturdily made, and if it packs down will have good solid joints so the doorframe won't flex too much. It has to take the full weight of the Yurt through the tension or wall band so it can't be flimsy.

Personally I like to see a doorframe made from planked timber whatever the frame is made from. It should hold the trellis in place and not allow it to protrude into the door space. If the trellis sticks out into the door space it can catch clothes and jackets and is at small children's face height.

The top of the door frame should be designed to hold the roof ribs in place over the door, so they don't protrude beyond the face of the door and interfere with the cover fit.

### **FRAME FINISH**

The final finish to the frame can be either oiled showing the natural grain in the timber or painted. Either is fine, but look carefully at painted frames to make sure the paint isn't hiding timber with a lot of knots or fast grown timber with wide grain spacing. With painted frames, check the provenance of the paint; ensure it has no lead or other unwanted additives.

### **THE COVERS**

The canvas covers are often overlooked as secondary to the frame, which simply comes from the fact that most Yurt makers come at it from the woodwork side and have to learn about canvas afterwards. Albion Canvas however are the only yurt company to come at it the other way round and has unparalleled experience with tents and canvas.

So let's start with the basics – canvas. There's a lot of canvas out there varying widely in quality, proofing finish and weight.

Standard covers should be in 393gsm (grams per square metre) or 12oz per square yard. Lighter canvas than that is really only suitable for small tents. Heavier covers are fine – 490gsm/15oz etc, but are unnecessarily heavy if you are only using your Yurt in the garden or camping etc. Heavy covers are for semi permanent Yurts.

The canvas can either be 100% cotton or a polyester cotton mix.

### **SHRINKAGE**

Don't forget the covers will shrink, so if the cover fits dead tight, check that it has been pre-shrunk, if it hasn't you may find it won't fit after a good downpour. Canvas

will shrink 3 – 5%, but it also stretches! Canvas also shrinks in different directions different amounts. All fabric has a WARP and a WEFT; the WARP runs the length of the fabric roll and shrinks 3 –5% on average. The WEFT runs across the width of the fabric (from WEFT to WIGHT is how it's remembered!) and shrinks hardly at all. Different manufacturer's canvas shrinks different amounts so it should never be mixed in a cover, although different batches are fine and can be seen in a subtle colour change in the fabric. So as you can see, getting a good fit is a real art requiring first class patterning skills and experience.



16ft Albion Canvas Yurt

The canvas should be professionally proofed to get the longest life from your canvas. It should have a waterproof coating with a rot inhibitor. The rot inhibitor slows down the formation of mildew and mould, it can't stop it but it does help. The proofing should also contain a fire retardant; this will protect you and your investment! It won't stop the canvas burning but it will slow it and will extinguish when the source of ignition is removed. I have heard too many stories of tipi and Yurt fires through non-use of fire retardant canvas just to save a few pence per metre on the canvas!

If you are going to use your Yurt for a commercial venture at events you will be required to have fire retardant canvas and be able to prove it! Ask your maker for a fireproofing certificate and keep it safe with your receipt for the Yurt.

**Mould and Mildew** – This is one of the biggest problems with canvas, and causes the most heated conversations. Cotton is a natural material and left to its own devices will naturally break down, rot and return to the earth. This process begins with fungus otherwise known as mould or mildew growing on the canvas. Mould and mildew loves damp warm atmospheres. All good quality canvas has a rot

inhibitor/fungicide applied along with the waterproofing but it can only do so much and eventually the mould and mildew will persevere. The only way to prevent this happening is to keep the canvas dry and aired by constant use of the yurt. Wood burners help a great deal because of the warmth but also because they draw air through the yurt. Placement of the yurt can also be a contributing factor, see below. Mould and Mildew spores are different across the world, so ensure your canvas has been proofed in the UK for the British environment.

Mould and mildew growth is not the responsibility of the cover maker as it is beyond their control. If you get mould starting, don't ignore it, deal with it immediately! Albion Canvas can supply a mould and mildew stain remover and a re-proofing solution to halt the situation. You must then assess your situation to prevent recurrence of the mould, if you are unsure of a solution contact your supplier for sound advice, which is another reason to always purchase from an experienced well established supplier.

**Coloured canvas** can make for a dark Yurt and the colour often rubs off onto the frame and hands. The colour can also fade due to ultraviolet light; particularly in the red end of the spectrum (yellow often goes grey very quickly). Dark coloured Yurts also get very hot in the summer; white ones stay cool and light.

**Waterproofing** – canvas is not 100% waterproof; it is a natural breathable fabric, which is what makes it pleasant to spend time in a canvas tent. However with a good proofing you shouldn't have any problems with keeping the water out.

## STITCHING

The stitching should be neat and regular with a moderate sized thread. Yurts are frame tents and don't need heavy thick thread like you would see in a marquee. Ideally the thread should be a poly-cotton; this is for strength and durability. A lot of imported tents I have come across are sewn in a pure cotton thread, which rots and the tent then falls apart. The polyester gives the thread its strength and long life whilst the cotton helps to fill the stitch hole and seal it.

## SEAMS

The two most common seams you will see are the lapped seam and the cut and fell. The lapped seam is a seam mostly used in traditional marquee manufacture and isn't suitable for use in Yurt covers. It looks like it sounds, one edge of a sheet of canvas is simply lapped over another and they are sewn together. There is no barrier to the movement of water into the seam with a lapped seam and it leaves the woven coloured seam guide visible.

Cut and fell seams are where the canvas is sewn together face to face then opened out. One half of the seam is then trimmed off and the other half is rolled over the first half and sewn down. There should be no raw edges visible. This seam locks the edges of the canvas together and excludes water.

There should not be any cut edges of canvas visible anywhere on a Yurt cover, it is poor workmanship and the canvas will fray and eventually come apart.

## **ROOF CONSTRUCTION**

Again there are two main types of cover you will come across.

1/ The trimmed tarpaulin.

2/ The tailored cover.

The trimmed tarpaulin is the simplest of covers. First a square of canvas is made up, large enough to cover the Yurt roof. It is then placed on the roof, the wheel hole is marked and a large dart cut and sewn in the tarpaulin to make it a cone. It is put back on the Yurt to check the fit and then the tarpaulin is trimmed around the roof edge before being hemmed. The shrinkage on this type of cover will be uneven, as the warp runs across the Yurt in one direction (see SHRINKAGE above).

The tailored cover is a roof made up of identically patterned truncated triangles. The pattern has been calculated from the roof dimensions to give an accurate fit first time and a neat tailored fit is achieved. Often these covers are not pre-shrunk and will be a little large to begin with, however because of the tailored fit the shrinkage is predictable and will have been calculated into the pattern.

The canvas should be fitted neatly around the doorframe not obstructing the doorway, and be secured to the frame.

A good quality cover will have a double flap system running around the roof edge. This will have an attachment system for the walls, so that the walls are easily removed. The double flap system is to exclude drafts. The securing system will vary but should be well thought through and work!

## **THE ROOF CAP OR STAR**

This is the cover for the roof wheel and often has a clear central skylight panel, but this is not necessary. The cap should be tailored to fit the roof well; if it is a poor fit it will catch the wind and flap. The star cap has many different names, but usually the wheel cover or crown cover or simply the cap.

There should be a good width of canvas (40 – 50 cm) in the body of the cap to prevent wind and rain blowing up under it, and there should be sufficient guy points to keep the cap secure but without overcrowding the roof with ropes. In smaller Yurts of 16ft diameter and smaller 5 points is the minimum. A well-tailored cap will look good as well as being practical and a feature can be made of it.

Like the roof wheel, the star cap is a good indicator of the competence and knowledge of the cover maker. See the neat curves and close fit of the cap photographed below.



### **THE WALLS**

These can vary a lot according to the maker's style but here are a couple of pointers to look for.

1/ Made in at least two sections. This makes the walls easier to fit and gives you flexibility in ventilation.

2/ Sod cloth or mud flaps. This is the vinyl base to the walls that helps to prevent the canvas touching the ground and rotting out. Look for a good deep sod cloth in a strong material.

### **CANVAS DOOR**

These again are made in a variety of ways, but simply look for a good seal all round the door, and ease of operation from inside and outside the Yurt.

### **GROUNDSHEETS**

Groundsheets need to be tough and well sealed. They also need to be made from a totally waterproof material, canvas won't do. I use a heavy duty PVC with all seams welded not sewn. Sewn seams let the water in so check for this, a dry bottom is more important than a dry head, so a good groundsheet is worth its weight in gold!

The best groundsheets also have a low wall welded all round. This helps to exclude running surface water and works as a draft excluder. Ideally this wall will have a draw cord or other system to help hold it up. This wall system also keeps the Yurt frame on the groundsheet and prevents any likelihood of rot in the trellis base.

## **DECKING**

One of the favourite ways of sighting a yurt is on a deck, but there can be problems with decks if not constructed correctly. The deck should be either made to the same size as the Yurt or if a large deck is required you will need to use a groundsheet on the deck to prevent water running into the yurt.

The deck really needs to be sealed completely from the ground. If not and it is a boarded deck, the deck can open up in hot weather and then moisture is drawn up into the Yurt causing mould and mildew problems. I have had several calls from puzzled Yurt owners about this problem. Ideally build the deck from marine grade ply to prevent movement and then add your floor boards on top of this.

From experience I have also found that decks are ideal homes for rats and mice and this has been confirmed by the pest control services recently. So ensure no food is left around and that the space below the deck is well sealed to discourage them.

Another alternative to the deck is a simple sand base that the groundsheet can be laid straight onto. A simple layer of 2 – 3 inches of builder's sand levelled out. This will prevent any vegetation rotting beneath the groundsheet, and will freely drain. You could even run under floor heating through it!

## **SIGHTING YOUR YURT**

Where you place your yurt is extremely important and can affect the life of the canvas. Remember you are trying to avoid damp places where the canvas will have little opportunity to dry out. A badly built deck (see above) can also add to your problems. The basic advice is to avoid being under trees or in a small clearing amongst trees. Hollows are bad places as they are also naturally damp and don't receive the drying winds. Don't site the yurt close to rivers or streams, again because of the constant damp in the air. Don't build too close to hedges, walls or fences because the walls will struggle to dry out in damp weather.

Remember its not the rain or wet that's the problem but persistent damp, so look closely at your intended site and check to see if there are any likely causes for damp to hang around.

To add to that you don't want to site the yurt in too exposed a situation either. Yurts are pretty good at resisting high winds, but they still can be blown over if not securely attached to the ground.

## **A WORD ON IMPORTED YURTS**

If you are thinking of purchasing an imported Yurt from Central Asia (Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan etc) there are a few extra points you must take into consideration and need to be carefully checked. The climate in central Asia is completely different to the UK, and cultural differences also need to be understood. The climate is very cold but dry with little rainfall although there is snow and it can be very windy.

1/ Felt covers. Felt covers are to provide insulation and are **NOT** waterproof, without a properly proofed canvas cover the felt becomes waterlogged, extremely heavy and begins to rot. The frame will also begin to rot under the felt, and can collapse under the extreme weight. Ideally speak to customers who have bought from your intended supplier and used their Yurt in the UK. I have come across several people who have been supplied with 'waterproof' canvas covers that have turned out not to be.

2/ Trellis knots/joins. These are usually made in rawhide and if they get damp will loosen and undo. Replacing these ties is a long and sometimes painful job.

3/ Wood. The wood used in these Yurts is usually willow which is susceptible to rot. The framework is painted and its worth checking that the paint has no lead in it.

4/ Frame design. It is desirable to have a very tightly set trellis and a lot of roof ribs in Central Asia to show your wealth. This makes for a heavy Yurt and may not be suitable if you intend to move your Yurt regularly. To give an example of a Kyrgyz Yurt Albion Canvas was involved in renovating; it has a diameter of around 5m, so it is comparable to an Albion Canvas No 16 Yurt at 4.8m. The Albion Canvas No 16 has 36 roof ribs, the Kyrgyz has 80! This effectively doubles the build time.

### **PLANNING PERMISSION**

Many people believe in the UK that you don't need planning permission to put up a yurt as it is a temporary structure. This is a bit of a grey area and it will all depend on where you are in the UK and what you are planning on using your yurt for.

Planners tend to fall back on the 28 day rule; which means you can not put a temporary structure up for more than 28 days in a year. However most garden placed yurts of moderate size shouldn't have a problem if they are only erected for the summer months.

I would suggest you always consult your local planning department, making assumptions can be expensive!

More and more councils are becoming aware of yurts and several planning applications have been granted around the UK, particularly with regards to campsites.

Albion Canvas has assisted several campsites in their planning applications. We are not planning experts, but we have learnt from experience what planners like to see. If you would like help with your application do get in touch.

***Check List Frame***

<b>Item</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Smooth finish to wood work		
Tightly knotted trellis		
Ash frame		
Reasonably straight trellis poles		
Steam bent trellis		
Reasonably straight roof ribs		
Reasonably circular wheel		
Well tied bracers on the wheel		
Well finished joints on the roof wheel		
Square roof rib ends and roof wheel holes		
Well made solid door frame		
Good fitting door		

***Check List Cover***

<b>Item</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Fire retardant canvas		
Water proof canvas		
Rot inhibitor		
Cut and Fell seams		
Allowance made for shrinkage		
Poly-cotton thread		
Tailored cover		
Double flaps at joins		
Good deep sod cloth on wall base		
Well fitted star cap		
Good depth of canvas around wheel on cap		
Well fitting canvas door		
Welded groundsheet		
Wall on groundsheet		

Well I hope all that helps in your search for your ideal Yurt. There is a lot to take into consideration, and I probably haven't covered everything but there is a lot of work and detailing in a well made Yurt.

As I said before, take your time, consider what you are using your Yurt for and get the right bit of kit for the job. If it's for commercial use make sure it comes up to all the health and safety regulations.

## **Designing Your Albion Yurt**

The idea is to talk through the various ideas, adaptations and add-ons we can offer you to design your yurt to suit you.

Let's start from the ground up and go from there.

### **Where and how are you going to use your yurt?**

Yurts can be permanently sited, completely mobile for camping or used as exhibition stands stalls, mobile theatres and many other things so you need to work out how you want to use your yurt and design it accordingly.

If permanently sited, its position needs to be carefully thought out. Under trees it's always damp and reduces the life of the canvas. Continuing with the damp theme, avoid siteing your yurt too close to rivers and streams or even hedges, even dips in the ground can hold the damp.

Exposure to the full elements can be a problem, on the sea front for instance or the crest of a hill. Yurts are very stable but still can be blown over in very strong winds without additional guying. Decks work best in exposed situations, with the stanchions concreted in and the yurt securely attached to the deck, keep the deck low in these situations too.

### **Deck or Groundsheet?**

Decks can be expensive to build correctly, but are very worthwhile. Groundsheets are an instant easy to transport, relatively cheap flooring system.

You can make a deck to the size of your yurt or larger to give a seating area. If you make a large deck you will need some way to prevent rain water running into the yurt, the simplest way to do this is to use a groundsheet with a welded wall. This means you can also take your yurt away with you if you wish.

Decks made to size need to be sealed from the ground to prevent boards opening up and allowing warm damp air to be drawn up into the yurt. Its best to use marine grade ply for this and perhaps insulate the floor as well – the old camping principle of more insulation under you than over you equally applies here.

### **Size of Yurt?**

Think carefully about the size you would like, and remember that going up in size from 12ft diameter to 14ft diameter say is not simply an additional 2ft, but another *40 square feet* of area. See the chart below to compare some common sizes; this chart is based on Albion yurt dimensions which are fairly standard British Yurt dimensions.

It's also worth considering purchasing the next size of yurt up from the one you think you could manage with, there's nothing worse than wishing you had just a little bit more space!

Yurt	Diameter		Area	
No 10	3.2 m	10ft 6"	8 m <sup>2</sup>	86 ft <sup>2</sup>
No 12	3.74 m	12ft 3"	11 m <sup>2</sup>	115 ft <sup>2</sup>
No 14	4.27 m	14ft	14.31 m <sup>2</sup>	154 ft <sup>2</sup>
No 16	4.8 m	15ft 10"	18 m <sup>2</sup>	200 ft <sup>2</sup>
No 18	5.35 m	17ft 6"	22.5 m <sup>2</sup>	240 ft <sup>2</sup>
No 20	6.14 m	20ft 2"	29.6 m <sup>2</sup>	315 ft <sup>2</sup>
No 21	6.3 m	20ft 8"	32 m <sup>2</sup>	340 ft <sup>2</sup>
No 22	6.67 m	21ft 11"	35m <sup>2</sup>	380 ft <sup>2</sup>
No 24	7.32 m	24ft	42 m <sup>2</sup>	452 ft <sup>2</sup>
No 24 6	7.47 m	24ft 6"	44 m <sup>2</sup>	472 ft <sup>2</sup>
No 26	8 m	26ft 3"	50 m <sup>2</sup>	541 ft <sup>2</sup>
No 28	8.55 m	28 ft	57.4 m <sup>2</sup>	616 ft <sup>2</sup>
No 30	9.1 m	29ft 10"	65 m <sup>2</sup>	700 ft <sup>2</sup>

### **Height and Headroom**

Most people are going to be happy with a standard height yurt, giving about 5ft 8 inch clearance across the space (1.725m) and a similar door height. For commercial yurts its worth upgrading to a higher walled yurt. A simple 8 inch (200mm) increase in wall height gives 6ft 2 inch (1.88m) clearance for door and headspace, a further 8 inches (200mm) gives a huge 6ft 10 inches (2.08m) clearance, obviously the overall heights will increase accordingly. The reason for the 8inch (200mm) increments is down to the setting of the trellis which is based on our standard 16.5 inch (420mm) frequency trellis. Closer set trellis can be made for stronger, heavier yurts, which will also increase the amount of roof ribs.

### **Doors**

Albion Canvas supply a variety of doors and doorways to suit your needs. Standard doors are 2 trellis widths wide (16.5 inches x 2 = 33 inches) and 5ft 6" high (clearance). Higher doors need to have a higher trellis to prevent too much distortion in the roof line.

Door width can be increased to a 3 x 16.5 inch = 49.5 inch wide door. The wider doors are great for commercial use, allowing two people to pass in the doorway. An even wider door frame can be produced, but hanging doors on this frame can be too bulky, if you need more door space, add more doors.

Additional doors are useful for traffic flow and as fire exits. We recently designed a yurt for Hugh Fearnly-Whittingstall which was for use as a stall. It had a single rear door access and then twin wide doors at the front set about 3 metres apart. This was to allow for a flow of customers through the space with a central dividing counter. The 3 metre width of wall also had a large window as a shop window (high walled yurt).

The door frames can be simply covered with a zipped canvas door, or have wooden doors and locks fitted. We usually advise twin leaf doors, but single doors are fine in standard width door frames. The canvas doors are simple and light to transport, but the wood doors add a real feeling of security. Wide door frames can only have twin leaf doors fitted.

Some people like to have stable doors, but I find this puts too much strain on the doorframe and can push it out of true making closing the door difficult.

Most of our doors are fitted to open internally, although we can make them externally opening if you wish, but you will need to make some provision for securing the door when open to prevent the wind banging the doors about.

### **Joining Yurts**

We have joined many yurts together over the years to give additional rooms without breaking up the beautiful circular space. Having an additional smaller yurt joined to a main yurt gives you an extra room ideal as a bedroom for children if you are renting your yurts out. This means Mum and Dad can put the kids to bed and sit up enjoying a quiet evening with friends without disturbing the children - a big seller if you're on a fixed site.

We have joined yurts as bedrooms, bathrooms, and even built an entire yurt 'house', with bathroom, kitchen, two bedrooms and a living room.

Any sized yurt can be joined to any other sized yurt, and can be joined directly or with a corridor

### **Type and colour of canvas cover**

Standard colour is 'natural' an unbleached white and has a number of advantages over the coloured canvas. In short the white canvas allows more light to pass through, is cooler in the hot weather and can be easily decorated. The negatives of the white canvas is it does show the dirt, but there are various cleaning products that work extremely well and are canvas and environmentally safe.

The next most popular colour is 'sand', a mid brown canvas, and then there is the 'olive' canvas. Both the olive and the sand tone the appearance of the yurt down but do make the inside very dark and hot in the sun. The heating can be reduced by the use of insulation and the light can be improved with a white liner and additional windows. Other colours are available to special order subject to a minimum run of 1000 metres – so you need to order a few yurts to achieve this!

The canvas is available in two types - pure cotton and 50/50 polyester cotton. The colours sand and olive are only usually available in polycotton, but olive is occasionally available in pure cotton and we do have the sand made up in cotton if there is a large enough order.

The cotton is softer and easier to handle and 'seals' quicker than the polyester cotton. When we make up a canvas cover we pierce it with thousands of little stitch holes. These seal up when the tent has been wetted and then dried but may cause an initial leak. In cotton this happens after one wetting, with polycotton this can take several wettings to achieve. This can be speeded along by painting the seams with Nikwax Cotton Proof to seal them.

The advantage of the polycotton is that it is stronger for its weight than cotton is, so useful in larger yurts.

The cotton is also available in two weights – standard 12oz (393gsm) or 15oz (509gsm). All prices are for standard 12oz canvas which is a good all round canvas. However for longer term use the 15oz is stronger and more durable and less likely to 'wick' when used in conjunction with liners. More on this under 'liners'.

All our canvas is sold with a 3 part proof as standard. Water resistant proofing, rot inhibitor and fire retardant. The fire retardant is there for your safety and to protect your investment. Non fire retardant canvas will burn at 3 mph on a dry day, that may not seem very fast but that's a 6 metre yurt in about 3 minutes!

## **Windows**

We can fit various styles of window in your yurt. The simplest is a straightforward clear PVC window material sewn into the canvas. Curtains can be hung on the inside. Any shape or size you like – we've done round windows, long rectangular picture windows, heart and moon shapes, and even gothic arches!

Then there is the opening netted window. This has a mosquito net sewn into the canvas, with a zip down outer flap. The flap can be rolled up or pegged out to allow airflow on a wet day without letting in the weather. This flap can be plain canvas or can have a clear PVC section sewn in so that it still works as a window when closed.

The fanciest window is a framed opening timber window. This has a wooden frame and fits into the trellis wall the same as a door, but it has a twin opening window with acrylic glazing.

## **Porch**

The addition of a porch makes a real difference to the whole door area and warmth and use of the yurt. Even the simplest porch protects the door area in wet weather and means you can leave the door open if it's warm and wet and get no rain in (provided it's not blowing straight into the door). They also help prevent turning the area in front of the door into a quagmire in wet weather. Simple rough timber duckboards are also a big help.

Complete box style porches give you somewhere to store your wet gear and boots, and have a zipped door into them.

All porches are easily fitted and removed with zipped roof attachments, which are angled and shingled to shed the rain.

## **Liners**

The beauty of the yurt is the ability to insulate and line the structure to give added colour and warmth.

We offer a number of liner options from simple coloured cotton liners through to full felt liners.

Before talking about the different types of liner I want to go back to the issue mentioned earlier about the 'wicking' of canvas. If an absorbent non proofed fabric is against an outer proofed fabric and the inner fabric becomes damp, it will 'wick' water straight through the outer layer despite the proofing. This is why it's important to check your liners regularly particularly in long term poor weather. To help prevent this happening I recommend using the heavier 15oz canvas with liners. Its extra thickness reduces the chance of wicking enormously. I also recommend you re-proof your canvas yearly with a permanently sited yurt, and consider a 'winter cover'.

Felt Liners are a thick 'felted' wool fabric that give amazing insulation and are the traditional covering of yurts in Central Asia. Our felt is British wool and manufactured in the UK using a machine process called needle felting. This gives a beautiful even thickness creamy white wool fabric which we cut and sew to fit each individual yurt. The felt is about 12 – 15mm thick (½ inch) and is very bulky so not for use with a very mobile yurt. I recently fitted some felt to a yurt and with the temperature outside of about – 5 degrees we were snug inside with a temperature of around 23 degrees (wood burner heated). Each liner is made in separate overlapping sections to make it easier to handle.

The felt can be a little fluffy and dusty for some people so we also offer lightweight cotton liners to place inside the felt and keep the wool fibres out (this isn't a big problem). The cotton liners are available in 30 different colours and we can also offer an organic cotton liner.

Serge liners are a woven wool liner, thinner than the felt (about 2 mm thick) but lighter and more portable than the felt. The serge is available in 22 colours from 'natural' through to gorgeous deep blues and crimson. The beauty of the serge, other than the colour, is its portability, so you can take it away with your yurt. It's mainly used to reduce the light passing through the white canvas but without making the yurt too dark. This can be backed up with modern reflective silverised bubble wrap style building insulation between the serge and the canvas for added insulation with long term sited yurts.

## **Winter Covers**

The good old British winter can really take the toll out of a canvas tent so we have come up with a protective layer for the winter months. Albion Canvas are the only

yurt company to offer this innovation (as far as I am aware!). In short the winter cover is a simple one piece lightweight pull over cover. It is a man made fabric dark green in colour and breathable. We make it over large to allow air to circulate between the layers and recommend you check regularly for no build up of damp. The fabric is extremely water resistant and easy to fit – about 10 minutes to put on and 10 to take off, and can be made as a simple bag cover or with access doors. This cover when used correctly will extend the life of you main canvas considerably. Windows can be fitted to line up with existing windows in your yurt.

### **Wood Burning Stoves**

Probably the single greatest selling point and attraction of the yurt is the wood burning stove. To be able to spend time in your yurt whatever the weather with your feet up in front of the fire, a good book and cup of tea (or something stronger!) well it's hard to beat.

There are all sorts of types and prices of stove available but you need to make sure you get the right size and type for your yurt.

If you are mobile with your yurt you want an efficient but lightweight stove, and our stoves fit the bill. Made by hand locally from new and recycled steel they are relatively light and will stay in overnight (except the mini box and twig stove which are too small to stay in).

In a fixed situation we offer the same quality of stove but with the addition of a brick lining. This makes the stove heavier but more efficient and longer and steadier burning.

The position of the stove in your yurt needs to be considered carefully with regard to the way you intend to use your space.

A centrally placed stove is the simplest, safest and easiest to do. This is because the flue (or chimney) needs to be higher than the yurt to prevent down drafts blowing smoke back into your yurt. With the stove positioned centrally the yurt itself can support that long length of pipe, the heat will be radiated evenly and the stove is the maximum distance away from your frame.

The problem with the centrally placed stove for some people is it breaks up the central space, so they want the stove over to one side. We can do this with a specially angled flue collar to take the flue out through the yurt roof closer to the wall. You will need to either guy the flue out externally or screw the flue to the stove and the stove to the floor slab. This is to prevent the long external section of flue acting as a lever in high winds and pushing the stove over. You will also need a protective backing for the stove to prevent heat damage to your yurt. This can be done simply with a steel plate or fire proof board, which you can then paint or tile decoratively. This will also help reflect heat back into the space.

## **Carpeting**

We can offer two options on carpeting at the moment, either our lightweight jute camping carpets or the heavier coir matting.

The jute is relatively light, folds up easily and is very portable, giving a quick finish to your yurt. The jute can be tucked under the trellis to fix it into place.

The coir is only really for permanent situations, it is heavy bulky and very tough but does look fantastic on the floor, although it can be a little difficult to clean.

Well thats about all for now that I can think of. I hope you find this article useful. If you would like to talk to someone about your yurt plans, do please give us a call on 01364 649101 for advice or to discuss a potential order. No pressure sales, just lots of enthusiasm and knowledge from 15 years of trading and a lifetime of camping.

*Alan Wenham*

[www.albioncanvas.co.uk](http://www.albioncanvas.co.uk)



30ft Albion Canvas Yurt with olive green canvas

## **MINI GLOSSARY**

<b>English</b>	<b>Mongolian</b>	<b>Kyrgyz</b>	<b>Turkoman</b>
Yurt	Ger	Boz uy	Qara úy
trellis	khana	kerege	Kirk-alti baş
Roof wheel	toono	tyunduk	Ca

Please do not take this as gospel, regional variations are very common and even among the style differences there are different names for different sized Yurts!



Interior of an 18ft Albion Canvas Yurt

Albion Canvas has supplied Yurts and other tents to:-

Imperial War Museum North  
Rohan  
Royal Medical Corps Museum  
London Wetlands Centre  
Marwell Zoo  
Elsham Hall  
Bristol Royal Theatre  
The film 'Driving Lessons'  
TV series 'River Cottage'  
Royal Edinburgh Botanical Gardens

The Globe Theatre London  
The Otter Brewery  
Pathways – Spirit in Business  
Channel 4  
Northcott Theatre  
BBC  
TV series 'Extreme Archaeology'  
British Library  
Forestry Commission  
New Forest National Park

Albion Canvas specialises in producing commissioned tents and special builds. We can also design and build Yurts to meet a wide range of criteria, for exhibitions, theatre and workshop use.

Albion Canvas can be contacted through the website

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