



THERM-A-REST NEOAIR XTHERM NXT SLEEPING PAD

Out with the old, in with the new ...

By Phil Caira

The Therm-a-Rest name needs no introduction – it's been part of the hunting, hiking and backpacking landscape in NZ and around the world since the late 1970s.

I remember buying my first Therm-a-Rest pad in the '90s – back when the closed cell foam usually sourced from Para Rubber was the go-to sleep mat for many on camping/hiking trips! Busting out the Therm-a-Rest around camp, I remember feeling special that I owned one! Back then, they were a mere 2cm thick and my model was a flash self-inflating version. I still own that mat today, and my kids use it during the summer months.

Over the years, technology has come a long way, with Therm-a-Rest utilising things like ThermaCapture, which are layers that reflect radiant heat back to the sleeper – similar to how an emergency blanket works.

In this review, I'll be testing Therm-a-Rest's ultra-lightweight backpacking model, the NeoAir

XTherm NXT (Regular size) from their 'Fast & Light' range. This is the 'extreme conditions' model with an impressive 7.3 R-value!

INSULATION

For those unfamiliar with what and how the R-value works, basically, the higher the R-value, the more resistant your sleeping pad is to heat loss and the better it will insulate you from any cold ground temperatures.

Granted, I didn't get to use it in extreme conditions like in the Southern Alps, but mid-winter in the Central Plateau can get damn cold at night – it was well below zero for testing.

The extra R rating was certainly welcome on those cool nights. Therm-a-Rest rate the XTherm NXT as a 4-season pad, so yes, you can

ABOVE:

The Regular size NeoAir Xtherm NXT, with a thickness of 7.6cm, provided plenty of cushion for side sleepers like me.



LEFT:

The WingLock valve is a good upgrade in both size and functionality compared to the previous air valve and allowed for easy adjustability of firmness.

RIGHT:

Using the pump sack to inflate saves time and is an improvement on the standard valve.

The WingLock valve also makes it easy to adjust the air fill as you lie on the pad, enabling you to find that perfect comfort level.



still way faster than sticking my mouth on the valve and blowing. My best effort was six full pump bags to inflate to a good comfort level.

The WingLock valve also makes it easy to adjust the air fill as you lie on the pad, enabling you to find that perfect comfort level.

SIZE AND WEIGHT

Being a side sleeper, I would've preferred to test the 'Large' size model, which is 196cm long and 64cm wide, as it offers a bit more room for someone my size (6'4" and 96kg) to move their legs around when lying on their side. But there wasn't a Large in stock at the time I was doing this review, so I made do with the Regular size.

The thickness at 7.6cm was noticeable when compared to the earlier model sleeping pad that I still have (an old NeoAir XLite), which is 6.3cm thick. It's amazing what that extra centimetre or so of thickness can offer in comfort; it helped minimise the inevitable tossing and turning to get comfy.

Once packaged ready for travel, the XTherm NXT was noticeably bigger than my old NeoAir XLite - no doubt due to the extra thickness.

Weighing in at a respectable 439 grams, the XTherm well and truly sits in the lightweight category of sleep pads. For that extra R-value, you're only compromising on 85g of difference between the XLite NXT and the XTherm NXT!

CONCLUSION

Overall, I was quite impressed with the XTherm NXT; the upgraded features of the WingLock valve and the inclusion of the pump sack were both winners ... as was the quieter nature of the material.

Combined with the fact that it weighs in at well under half a kilo, this Thermo-a-Rest sleep pad is a real contender for those seeking warmth-to-weight ratio when venturing into the Southern Alps and cooler climates. ■

of course use it in summer also. The XTherm NXT model, in my mind though, is definitely a winter or 3-season sleep pad - winter, spring, autumn. If you want to purchase one as an all-rounder for sleeping on in summer, several factors need to be considered ... like nighttime temps, what sleeping bag you use, whether you're fly camping under a tarp and whether you're a hot or cool sleeper, etc. My advice would be to either purchase a secondary sleep pad for summer conditions or go for the next model down in R-value, the new NeoAir XLite NXT, which has a lower R-value of 4.50.

IMPROVEMENTS

One feature I was interested to compare was the noise factor. My old NeoAir XLite is quite noisy when you move around on it. The new model NeoAirs are noticeably quieter, and I'm sure any hut/tentmates would appreciate that!

Another improvement was the new WingLock valve, which offers one-way inflation. Compared to the size of the old valve, it's substantially bigger and allowed for much more airflow when inflating and deflating. The pump sack, which simply clips into the WingLock valve, makes for quick inflation; this stayed in place well and had a nice positive click-and-remove seal. It did take a couple of attempts to get the maximum amount of air transferred as the satiny surface of the pump-sack material slipped in my hands and allowed some air to escape out the ends, but it was

SPECIFICATIONS

- Thickness: 7.6cm
- Weight: 439g
- Size: 51cm x 183cm (Regular)
- R-value: 7.3

RIGHT:

The NeoAir XTherm NXT offers an excellent weight-to-insulation ratio with an R-value of 7.3.

