

LOOKING AFTER YOUR LOTUS BELLE TENT

Here is our current 'best practice' guidance on getting the most out of you Lotus Belle tent™ - we are always on the look out for new tips so if you try something and find it works well, please let us know and we'll add it to our list.

At 360gsm thickness Lotus Belle tents are thicker than most on the market, so they will last significantly longer if well cared for. They are also treated to be mould and rot resistant. However there is no guarantee that you won't have mould build up at sometime during the lifetime of your tent, if, for example it is packed away wet, or pitched under a tree in a damp spot for many months etc.

The first thing to realize is, that this is not the end of the world, it can be treated, and it's almost always possible to make the tent look new again from the outside – though it's not always possible to make it look pristine from the inside. Ideally you want to avoid getting mould in the first place, this is a guidance on the best precautions to take to get the most out of your tent and prevent mould or other types of degradation.

PART 1: PREVENTION

1. BREATHE!

Our canvas is a cotton and polyester mix. As its largely natural material its SUPER IMPORTANT you let your tent breathe. You know that smell your house gets, when its been locked up for weeks on end? Musty. The house needs a good old air out. Tents are no different, in fact they need more air as it's a much more confined space.

If all the doors and windows are shut and the tent is left sealed off, it will 'sweat' with condensation building up overnight. This moisture has to go somewhere. Most of the time it will evaporate, but it has to go somewhere.

Airing your tent daily (or at least every other day) is fundamental to mould prevention.

If you must leave it up when you go away, then stretch the window flaps out and prop them up on sticks or with bamboo so that the exterior blinds work as a flap. This will let the airflow a bit more. Never pack your tent away wet.

*Remember different climates will have a different effect to the weathering of your tent. So watch and observe how it's reacting to the natural climate. A good mould preventative is 1 parts clove oil to 5 parts pure mineral water sprayed onto the canvas

1. DON'T SPRAY!

We live in a world where everything is aerosol, from fake tan to sunscreen to cooking oils and deodorants. These aerosols damage the canvas's natural protections, so take it outside! Different chemicals in sunscreens are also very harmful to the natural fibres. It's not good for you to breathe these chemicals anyway so do your tent (and your lungs) a favour, take it outside.

2. SAP OFF!

Beware of the trees around you, camping under trees is unadvisable in case of falling branches and dripping, and also sap falling on your tent is a nightmare. A lot of saps are very harmful to the canvas. Some are pretty much impossible to get off. Trim your trees or research the trees and if they produce pollens or sap which could be harmful to the canvas then avoid, avoid, avoid.

If you experience issues with sap, then we advise using a patio cleaning algae remover mixed as per pack instructions, spray on to the canvas and rinse off with a hose. This process must be carried out regularly, as soon as you see the sap start to build up, as such it may reduce the lifespan of your canvas so ideally just avoid the trees!

4. CLEANLINESS IS KEY!

The cleaner your tent the less likely it is to get any issues. If people are doing yoga, sweating lots or bodywork like massage is being conducted in the tent on a regular basis wipe down the roof and walls with a nice natural solution like neem and water, to keep it clean and to avoid bacteria spreading. Smoking is also not advisable.

People inhabited spaces like the Lotus Belle tent for thousands of years. Certain things were part of the protocol: shoes off, toileting outside. Hygiene was important to these primitive cultures otherwise they'd never have survived. The tent is a "sacred space".

5. HOSE ME DOWN!

Hose down debris, your tent loves getting wet. If it's a nice day outside give it a good old bath and let it dry in the sunshine. Sunshine and fresh air is the best defence against mould. Lotus loves sunshine!

6. TOP UP THE ANTI MOULD PROOFING!

Spirit vinegar (or any clear/ white vinegar) is really effective in killing mould spores and prevents mould from growing or spreading. It won't harm your canvas so is safe to apply regularly - it is smelly though so you don't want to use it if you've got guests turning up to stay in the tent later that day, or even the next day – try to do it when you've got a couple of days clear and leave the doors open to release the odour.

If using your tent in winter you can use Astonish Anti Mould Spray (available online/ in stores, very cheap – around £3.50/ \$4 USD per bottle) and apply regularly to your canvas throughout the winter season (apx every 3 weeks), it also helps to spray on about every month or 6 weeks in the summer months, just to keep your mould proofing topped up. Pay particular attention to the areas beneath the roof and around the doorway which are particularly susceptible to mould. Be advised that this can diminish the waterproofing so it may be necessary to apply Fabsil Grangers universal protector after a few months.

7. UV PENETRATION

Your tent will fade, the coloured tents by 3 shades, maybe more if you are in Australia or NZ, which has the harshest UV in the world. We cannot guarantee against fading, but if you are concerned about fading or UV damage then a roof cover is a great way to extend the lifespan of your canvas. There are solar proofers on the market, we recommend Fabsil Grangers with UV protection for cotton canvas (UV is usually included in with the waterproofing solution) – if using other products then test on a small area before using and do your research.

PART 2: TREATMENT

MOULD REMOVAL

Mould is caused by environmental factors: Most common causes of mould are tree sap, bird poo, aerosol sprays, and insufficient airing of the tent, or indeed folding your tent away damp.

1. Prevention is better than cure so following all the guidance in this document should help to avoid getting mould in the first place. If you do experience mould, deal with it immediately – the longer it is left untreated, the worse it will become. If you do experience a mould problem, here are our suggestions for remedies:

2. Minor issues: For small spots of mould the least damaging product to use is vinegar. Spray undiluted vinegar directly on to your canvas, leave for a couple of days if possible, and then rinse off. If treated properly the mould will now be dead, however the black stains may remain – over time these will be bleached out by the sun.

3. Major issues: If your tent has become so mouldy that you're thinking it may be destined for the recycling there are more intensive solutions. However, these should be used as a last resort as they may reduce the lifespan of your canvas, NOTE this is a 2-part process:

Part 1: Spread your canvas over an outdoor table or similar clean surface, exterior side facing upwards. Spray the canvas liberally with a mixture of household bleach-based mould remover such as bathroom cleaner, (Astonish Anti Mould Spray works) and a mild household grease and stain remover (Ecover brand is environmentally friendly). Scrub the canvas using a coarse nylon brush. Rinse off using a hosepipe or watering can. This will remove 95% of mould and staining. If staining is still visible from inside when looking out, a cheaper solution than replacing the canvas is a cocoon lining – see accessories tab on our website. For more information or guidance on cleaning mould from your tent, see our video on youtube for guidance (search 'lotus belle mould').

Alternatively you can fill a paddling pool or bath with water, and a capful of bleach per litre of water (bleach strength varies so test first on a small patch of canvas such as the window flap where it won't matter too much if you have made the mixture a little too strong) and stomp around in the canvas to mimic the movement of a washing machine, like you are making wine from grapes the old fashioned way! And for the more stubborn parts of staining, you can use a washing up sponge and scrub out the dirt.

Part 2: You must now re-treat your tent with canvas waterproofer. Every country has different products for re-proofing canvas, searching 'Canvas water-proofer' online will provide suggestions for brands available in your area. Make sure to buy a product suitable for CANVAS as nylon waterproofing treatments will leave sticky residues on your tent. ALWAYS TEST PRODUCTS FIRST on a small patch of canvas. Our canvas is made from a polyester cotton blend, please check the product you buy is suitable for these materials. (in the UK and Europe we recommend Fabsil Grangers)

OR – ask us about our tubs of anti mould cleaning powder – it requires a bathtub full of almost boiling water, so it can be a little tricky, but reportedly very effective, and can be done at home.

OR – send off for professional cleaning.

Recently we have been recommending this more often as the price is cost effective (around £155 for a 5m tent in the UK) and there are some excellent canvas cleaning companies who will wash tents and revive even the mouldiest tent to looking almost new again, in the UK and Europe we recommend wild hare events – email polly@wildhareevents.com – it's worth posting your canvas even from overseas as these guys are the best, they are experts in Lotus Belle's, and they will not shrink your canvas. If further afield then web-search for canvas cleaning and make sure they are able to clean 360gsm polycotton canvas and can guarantee to not shrink your canvas as you will find that the doors don't close and poles don't fit if the canvas shrinks in the wash!

LIVE LONG AND PROSPER!

People ask us how long the tent will last. Our tents go all over the world and each climate is completely different, so there is no definitive answer, however, after a few years of running this company we reckon it's about 5 years in a rentable condition if left up full time from March to October in a temperate climate. For festival hire, being put up and down every weekend from May to September, roughly, they seem to last about 8 – 10 years. And for personal private use as a camper going on holiday a few weeks each summer... Well the company is only 10 years old so far, so we can't say with any certainty, but those tents will probably outlive us all.