

CAMPING and GEAR

KATADYN WATER FILTER

We' hadn't travelled with a water filter before, but after one trip using a Katadyn unit we wouldn't go bush without one again.

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The filter thing started when we picked up a load of 'crook' water. No matter how much bi-carb soda and purifying tablets we dumped into the tank we were stuck with a nasty taste. So we looked around for a way to get rid of the taint.

We talked to camping specialist Paddy Pallin and were told that top-shelf Katadyn units would eradicate most or all of the taste, but would also ensure that the water we were drinking was free of bacteria, protozoa and chemicals.

There is a larger filter that is guaranteed to eradicate all taste, but fitting it would require a marine-style pressure system and we don't want to go to that extent.

We tried out a Katadyn Combi Microfilter and it's now standard equipment in our camping kit. It cleaned up the smelly stuff we had in the tank to the point where we could drink it without holding our noses. The Katadyn Combi Microfilter is a compact, 580-gram unit that packs into a bag that measures only 30 cm in length. The primary filter is a silver-impregnated ceramic element that has an effective 0.2 micron rating, meaning it won't allow through a particle that's one five millionth of a metre in size. The ceramic cylinder is complemented by a granular carbon filter. The ceramic element is designed to take out miniscule objects and the carbon granules reduce or eliminate tastes.

The Combi is a pump-action type that comes with a suction hose. The hose is fitted with a screen and a float, so that it can be set to skim the surface water out of a pond, rather than the gunky bottom stuff.

In operation the hose is dropped into the water source and the filter body sits on top of a water bottle – it screws onto PET, Nalgene and Sigg bottles. If filtering from a tank outlet the suction hose can be fitted with an adapter. The ceramic element comes with a cleaning pad that can be used to scrape off build-up on its surface and the element is said to be good for up to 50,000 litres life. The activated carbon needs to be replaced every 200 litres and sachets of carbon granules are readily available.

The Combi comes with easily-read instructions, spare carbon sachets, an element cleaning pad, spare O-rings and a tube of silicone lubricant for the pump piston.

The Katadyn Combi Microfilter isn't a cheap addition to a camp bag, but what price bush health?

Always smell and taste water before topping up your tank. Pack a food grade filling hose that is only used for topping up water. Carry a spare 10 litre cask of water for an emergency drinking and cooking supply.

