

GO CAMPING

October - November 2012 Issue 81 Aus \$6.95 NZ \$8.95 **AUSTRALIA**

REAL ROAD TESTS

COMPLETE CAMPSITE ULURU
+ THE ESPACE EVOLUTION

Discover

THE BEAUTY OF

Lake Maraboon, QLD

Lake Eyre, SA

Lake Hattah, VIC

Lake Cathie, NSW

Lake Gairdner, SA

PLUS:

Craig's Hut, VIC - Gympie Muster, QLD
The Bass to Barra Trail and more...

Top 10 Lakeside Camps around Oz

ISSN 1320-5706



FISHING

MALLACOOTA INLET

WILDLIFE WATCH

BIRDS ON THE WING

DINE

CAN DO QUICK

TOP NEW GEAR

IT'S WHAT'S HOT



Stairway to Heaven

Words and photos: Brett Straughan

Brett Straughan needed a fuss-free instant campsite for a trip from one side of the country to the other. He found the perfect solution in the Espace Evolution.

Faced with the prospect of setting up a campsite in a new spot every night on a month-long journey, I knew there had to be a better way.

I've tried them all: slept in the car, chucked a swag on the ground, pitched the tent, set up the camper trailer, unrolled a swag on a camp stretcher under an awning, and, on the odd occasion, I may have slept where I fell next to the fire.

Sure they all work, but when I had to plan a trip from the most easterly to the most westerly point on the Australian mainland, I knew the time had come to find a better solution. Covering the distance I had to travel each day to fit in everything I had to do on the trip meant I'd be spending more time on the road than normal. The thought of going through the process of putting a tent up or any other option after a long day on and off road was less and less appealing the closer I got to departure day. The time had come to find the most efficient camp set-up for my type of touring. Enter the roof-top tent.

I'd been aware of the concept of a roof-mounted tent but, for whatever reason, I hadn't taken the time to investigate it fully. I suppose, like all things in the world of camping, it's an evolutionary process: the more you gain experience



2



3

the more you realise what works for you. Eventually you establish a kit of essentials to suit your needs.

Up until this point I'd been happy with a variety of camp set-ups and they'd served me well, but after being prodded to take a good look at the roof-top system I had a 'light bulb' moment.

An internet search shows an impressive variety of options. While they all appear to offer a suitable solution, after delving a bit deeper, I came to realise that not all roof-top tents are equal.

The first point of difference is construction. The choice is either all-canvas or a fibreglass 'clamshell' in which the canvas part of the tent is attached to and stored within an expanding base and top.

It was the fibreglass style that appealed to me because it not only offered an aerodynamic benefit but also enabled a faster set-up and pull down time and an excellent method of dust sealing and protection. With the decision made it was time to narrow the choice to a particular style and brand.

There are really only three options. First is a box-style that uses a hand crank to open the roof to a point where the ceiling is parallel to the base. My issue with this is that there is limited head room and tall people may have trouble sitting up comfortably.

The second type hinges at the front edge and the rear section lifts up and is supported by gas struts; a triangular side-on profile that allows greater head room at the rear. The set-up time is quick but the one downfall of this style is that there's virtually no room at the hinged end when you are inside due to the wedge shape.

All problems were solved for me by the new Espace Evolution from James Baroud where the front and rear sections lift by gas struts to give an amazing amount of headroom and plenty of space at the other end. It's such an effective and obvious solution that I wonder why it took so long to make it to the market.

The first impression of the Espace Evolution is the quality of finish. The standard of workmanship and materials used are absolutely second to none, but it's also the thought put into the little extras that made this particular brand a stand-out for me. The internal storage is well designed and includes nice touches like a rechargeable interior light and solar powered fan. The mattress is the equal of any that I've slept on whilst in the great outdoors and the interior can only be described as cavernous.

The ventilation on three sides with full insect protection confirmed this model was perfect for me. Perhaps one of the best features that I didn't take that much notice of during my research (and should have) was how much a roof-

-
- 1: Espace Evolution—the ultimate roof-top camper.
 - 2: Perfect for a quick overnight stop.
 - 3: Erected in eight seconds.

1



1: No fuss camping—more time to enjoy the sunset.

2: Just as well the Espace was dust proof!

3: Plenty of window and ventilation to enjoy the view.

top tent weighs. Clearly the implications of weight can't be overstated—it has an effect on the vehicle dynamics and determines how easy it is to install and remove from the car. As it turns out the Espace Evolution was close to half the weight of one of the other brands I considered.

So the big question is: how did it perform under the pressure of an extended trip? One simple answer: flawlessly! Set-up is literally measured in seconds; just unclip the four catches that let the gas struts raise the roof and the job's done! Packing up is just as straight forward and, to be honest, two people would speed up the process, but even on my own it was very quick. Surprisingly, after thousands of kilometres on dirt roads there was virtually no dust ingress nor was there a problem with condensation at any stage. It survived sub-zero temperatures and some extremely high winds without problem, to the point that I was only too happy to scurry off and climb the ladder to the comfort of the Espace Evolution at the first sign of the temperature dropping or the wind blowing.

To say I was impressed would be a massive understatement. The James Baroud products are quality, but more than that they're practical and well designed and I know that, while there's still a place for a swag or tent, the Espace will always be my first choice as home away from home.

2



3



Features

- Erect in 8 seconds and stow in 25 seconds by one person.
- Room for 3 people.
- Automatic, solar-powered, silent ventilation fan.
- Top quality double stitched, aluminized polyester fabric.
- Six fabric coatings; sun reflection, anti-UV, non-perishable, 100% waterproof and breathable.
- High density foam mattress with zipped cover.
- Three storage pockets and one ceiling storage net.
- Mosquito netting, quality zippers and Velcro fasteners on doors.
- Aluminium ladder.
- Removable and rechargeable LED torch.
- Five-year guarantee on fabric, hull and mechanism.

Technical Specifications – ISO Certified

- Wind resistance: 120 km/h.
- 4 X ALKO supporting gas struts.
- 4 X adjustable safety catches.
- 6 X roof mounting brackets.
- 2 X dust proof air inlets.
- Unit Internal dimensions: 140 X 198 X 145.
- Unit Weight: 59 kg.

The Espace Evolution is distributed throughout Australia by AutoBIVOUAC.
Telephone: 02 6646 1012 or
visit www.jamesbaroud.com.au