



Achieving Proper Balance In Your Expedition Equipment

by Ken Romer

I love the outdoors. Especially going to places most people only see in photos. Some people do this with a good pair of hiking boots, a backpack and a \$40 tent. On the other hand, I have spent countless dollars in good restaurants working on my figure and long hikes up a mountain would not be as much fun as going in my Land Cruiser. Besides, how would I get my ARB fridge freezer filled with cold beverages to the campsite if I were backpacking?

ABOVE: The Jayco Baja popup deployed at Flat Nasty.

Photo by Ken Romer

Getting there is half the fun and adding the right accessories can make the experience more enjoyable—and more comfortable. Finding the correct accessories to balance comfort with adventure is a different puzzle for everyone. Finding the right balance is an iterative process in evaluating, buying, using and replacing with better accessories. It involves trying new things and upgrading based on what you like or dislike and what you learn from others via trips, forums and personal conversations. I have gone through a lot of equipment over the years and it has been very educational trying to find that certain accessory that will enhance my next outing.

How do you pick the right gear? Trail difficulty and general terrain are key factors, along with how many nights you will camp in the same spot. Through the years, I have progressed through many different sets of expedition gear and for me, there are plusses and minuses to every setup. Personal preference is a big factor so your views may be different from mine. A lot of people don't mind sleeping on the ground in ten-degree weather with no heat source other than the shelter of a good sleeping bag but that isn't my style. My preference is to be as comfortable as possible.

About ten years ago, the "Daughters of Romer" (Rachel and Sarah) wanted to go wheeling and camping with me. I needed to find the right gear to make this trip a success. I required a camping platform that would have heat, plenty of room to spread out, a small kitchen area for cooking (and to do homework) and could be towed by my Land Cruiser. I researched multiple options and selected the Jayco Baja trailer because it met my criteria and had higher clearance, bigger tires and was better structurally reinforced than the competition. A unique selling point was that I could stock the fridge and cupboards while the top was down. It was great for light trails, easy to get to off-road spots and excellent in campgrounds.

For young families, I highly recommend a pop-up. Families need room to spread out and it's great to have options to keep your kids occupied in the kitchen or separated via the beds or the couch available in some models. I used the Baja camper for four years and really enjoyed the flexibility it provided inside the camper. It became a great base camp when the girls both got their own built-up rigs and would join me while wheeling the Rockies, Moab, the Black Hills and other places. You may have seen the Romer caravan on the road and in the beginning, there was a pop-up in tow.

I also used it with a couple of fellow club members (Tim Nakari and Matt Farr) at the first annual Flat Nasty TLCA event in 2006. I remember the camper having a dozen people in it, hanging out, drinking beer and sharing stories because I had the only heater in the group. I was happy with the size and utility of the camper but disappointed with the workmanship. The furniture was particle board held together with staples and glue so it shouldn't surprise anyone that it didn't hold up well on washboard roads. After a couple of years, the skylight leaked and the whole canvas shifted so it was hard to get the door lined up. However, I would still recommend this setup for families. If I had owned it longer, I would have taken some time to strengthen the build and replace the glue and staples holding the interior boards together.

The Jayco comes closest to being in a home setting and is a great way to go with several people, especially children. The draw-back to this is you can't take it very far off-road, even though it's advertised as an off-road camper. This limits the use on expedition trips where you have to pull it through tough terrain or even on flat plains at speed.

When Rachel was twenty in 2008, we decided to join several other Rising Sun Club members at the 25th annual Rubicon event. The camper wasn't an option based on terrain and I was therefore considering a roof top tent. I was advised that a standard roof top tent would impact the center of gravity of the vehicle, making it a problem on the trail. With the weight concern in mind, I settled on the forty-five pound Oasis II roof top tent. This is very similar to a two person tent cot but larger and with a ladder. The base material is like what is used on trampolines, resulting in a comfortable and conforming sleeping platform. The tent is made of nylon, which I think wouldn't retain heat as well as canvas in cold weather. Getting in the tent, you have to watch for the metal bar in the middle and for a big guy, it's not the easiest thing to get in and out. My experience with more standard roof top tents (Eezi-Awn



Rachel Romer (right) with a friend outside the Jayco camper.

Photo by Ken Romer



The Oasis II roof top tent was a good solution for a tough trail like the Rubicon.

Photo by Rachel Romer



Setting up at Loon Lake on the Rubicon Trail.

Photo by Rachel Romer



Heading into Area BFE near Moab with the AT Horizon trailer and the Eezi-Awn Globetrotter roof top tent.

Photo by Ken Romer

and ARB) showed those to be easier to get in and out of but they are also much larger and heavier (with better ladders).

The Oasis II was a bit cramped and you had to climb over the other person to get to the wobbly ladder. However, when used on the ground, each occupant had a door, making it much easier to use. This was great little roof top tent, lightweight and flexible. A positive feature over other roof top tents was being able to take it off the truck by myself and use it on the ground. This roof top tent is easy to move on or off the vehicle with a quick and easy setup and teardown that really enhanced our trip to the Rubicon. The weight made it easy to maneuver and I could hang it on the garage wall at home. The only drawback is that for longer trips, there isn't a lot of room inside.

As the seasons changed and we moved into a new year, my girls had grown older and both were in college so it was just me again on these expeditions—or at least so I thought. The pop-up camper seemed too big for one person. I wanted to travel further off-road than it could handle and I needed something more durable. After a lot of research on various trailer options, I ended up getting a used Adventure Trailers Horizon. I picked the Adventure Trailers unit as it had lots of storage accessible when the trailer was closed and when the roof top tent was deployed. It had many features like a fridge slide, a built in kitchen and awning,

an eighteen-gallon water tank and two AGM batteries for power. Martyn and Mario from Adventure Trailers were awesome and helped me as I customized my new to me trailer. It came with the Overland large roof top tent but I didn't care for it. Specifically, I didn't like the door opening being exposed where you had to take your time going down the ladder. Again, this is a personal preference that wouldn't bother most people.

I then decided that I wanted a tent with an extra room or a changing room. The reason I liked the changing room is I wanted more than just the bed area—an area I could change in as well as sit in a chair and read a book or watch videos. I also envisioned being able to sleep additional people in the extra room. I ended up working with Paul May at Equipt Expedition Outfitters and got an Eezi-Awn Globetrotter. Due to the height of the trailer mounting rails, the side panels were a bit short so Paul helped me work directly with Eezi-Awn and we swapped out for longer side panels. Both are great companies with which to work.

The first time I used my new setup, it was cold at night and I missed the heater in the pop-up (I'm a wimp). I figured out that the temperature rating on a sleeping bag does not relate to comfort temperature, but rather is the "you can survive at that temperature" rating. I also learned to use shoes whenever you climb down the ladder as the ladder hurt my feet even in socks. For the next trip,

I brought a Little Buddy heater and a zero degree sleeping bag and I was set. On cold nights, I would turn on the Little Buddy before I got into the bag and then shut it off for the night. When I woke up, I would turn on the Little Buddy and let it warm the tent before I got out of the bag. What I really liked about this setup was that the mattress was awesome. This design doesn't fold the mattress when packed which allows it to be a bit thicker and more comfortable than other roof top tent mattresses. It was fairly easy to set up and tear down and towed pretty well behind the Land Cruiser. It was, however, harder to back up with this trailer as it was small and would react quickly to slight movements of the steering wheel.

When Rachel came with me to Area BFE, it seemed a bit cramped for two people. The bed area was small and you couldn't move much without bumping the other person. The second night, I put an air mattress on the ground inside the changing room and remembered why I hate sleeping on the ground. Also, it is really cramped for a person sleeping on the ground, as they have to be under the ladder. So the changing room was not as nice as I thought it would be for extending sleeping quarters. The trailer setup was fine for me and if it was my wife and I,

Achieving Proper Balance In Your Expedition Equipment
continues on page 31

In an effort to maintain current and correct records, TLCA requires an annual application from all members whether new or renewing. If you would complete each line, we can easily process your application.



I/We hereby apply for membership in the Toyota Land Cruiser Association for Toyota vehicle owners only. We will obey all rules and regulations set forth by the Board of Directors as allowed by the Association Bylaws.

I/We understand that/our name and other information may be given to other members for the express purpose of contacting fellow members in a given area. I/We also understand that this information may be given to Associate Members for use in membership verification or for marketing their products only. This information will NOT be sold to any outside companies.

**Make checks or money orders payable to:
TLCA, Inc.**

- In U.S. funds only -
(We are currently unable to accept non-US checks)

A service charge of \$15.00 will be assessed for all returned checks.

MAIL TO:
TLCA, Inc.
104 NW Pecan St.
Blue Springs, MO 64014
(800) 655-3810

Online membership submittal is supported on
TLCA's website:
www.tlca.org

For additional information or to apply by credit card over the phone, please call
(800) 655-3810

PLEASE PRINT

TLCA Membership Application

New Member _____ Renewal _____ If this is a renewal, write ID number here: _____

Name: _____ Birth Date M/D/YR: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone(s) Home () _____ Work () _____

Email Address: _____

Year of Toyota (only one required) Model: _____ Year: _____

Chapter Member: Yes No Chapter Name: _____

Are you affiliated in other 4WD organizations? Yes No Which? _____

If you are a new member, how did you find out about TLCA? _____

If referred by a member, who? _____ Their TLCA Member # _____

PLEASE ALLOW FOUR TO SIX WEEKS FOR MEMBERSHIP PROCESSING

TLCA Membership (includes: ID card, six issues of Toyota Trails via USPS bulk rate)

NOTE: USPS bulk mail takes two to seven weeks. First Class USPS arrives in three to 10 days.

Annual Dues \$28.00 (*Payment by credit card \$30.00*) \$ _____

International Membership, No Printed Copy of Toyota Trails \$25.00 \$ _____

First Class postage w/3-7 day delivery (US only) Add: \$15.00 \$ _____

Non-US postage surcharge: Canada \$15.00; Others \$30.00 \$ _____

Copy of current issue of Toyota Trails @ \$6.00 \$ _____

Voluntary Contribution (not tax deductible) \$ _____

Check	VISA	MasterCard	Discover	American Express	TOTAL	\$ _____
-------	------	------------	----------	------------------	-------	----------

Card Number: _____

Name as it appears on card: _____ Card Exp Date: _____

Credit Card Billing Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Yes! I want TLCA to automatically renew my membership every year.

By providing my credit card information and signing below I authorize the Toyota Land Cruiser Association, Inc., and/or its assigns to charge my credit card the amount of current TLCA membership every year in the month prior to my expiration date. I can cancel automatic renewal at any time by contacting the membership office at membership@tlca.org or by calling (800) 655-3810.

Comments to Staff: _____

TLCA is primarily a volunteer organization and as such, our response time may vary. Your membership will be processed as quickly as possible and you will receive your welcome packet shortly thereafter, including your ID card and stickers. You will receive a PayPal receipt after the transaction is complete. New ID numbers are not emailed. Once you receive your ID card, login credentials can be received by contacting our Webmaster at webmaster@tlca.org. If you need further assistance, please contact the TLCA Administrator at membership@tlca.org.

TLCA MERCHANDISE

Qty	Item	Price	Item Total
	Tank Top , Ash color <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> XL <input type="checkbox"/> 2XL	\$12.00	
	Hooded TLCA Sweatshirt , Ash color <input type="checkbox"/> M	\$25.00	
	Crewneck Sweatshirt , Ash color <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> XL <input type="checkbox"/> 2XL	\$25.00	
	Pocket T-shirt , w/ TLCA logo on back, white <input type="checkbox"/> M	\$15.00	
	Poster "Where Did Your Weekend Take You?" 39" x 27"	\$20.00	
	Legendary Land Cruisers DVD Isaac Elliot-Fisher's documentary on the Toyota Land Cruiser in North America	\$9.00	
	3" TLCA Decal Adhesive on Front	\$1.50	
	3" TLCA Patch	\$5.00	
	2005 Dash Plaque (contact TLCA for prior years)	\$3.00	
	Toyota Trails Collector's Sets <input type="checkbox"/> '98/'99 <input type="checkbox"/> '00 <input type="checkbox"/> '01 <input type="checkbox"/> '02 <input type="checkbox"/> '04 <input type="checkbox"/> '05 <input type="checkbox"/> '06 <input type="checkbox"/> '07 <input type="checkbox"/> '08 <input type="checkbox"/> '09	\$30.00	
	Toyota Trails Back Issues <input type="checkbox"/> Jul-Aug '97 (If it's not listed, we don't have it!) <input type="checkbox"/> Jan-Feb '99 <input type="checkbox"/> Mar-Apr '99 <input type="checkbox"/> May-Jun '99 <input type="checkbox"/> Jul-Aug '99 <input type="checkbox"/> Sep-Oct '98 <input type="checkbox"/> Nov-Dec '98 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan-Feb '00 <input type="checkbox"/> Mar-Apr '00 <input type="checkbox"/> May-Jun '00 <input type="checkbox"/> Jul-Aug '00 <input type="checkbox"/> Sep-Oct '99 <input type="checkbox"/> Nov-Dec '99 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan-Feb '01 <input type="checkbox"/> Mar-Apr '01 <input type="checkbox"/> May-Jun '01 <input type="checkbox"/> Jul-Aug '01 <input type="checkbox"/> Sep-Oct '00 <input type="checkbox"/> Nov-Dec '00 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan-Feb '02 <input type="checkbox"/> Mar-Apr '02 <input type="checkbox"/> May-Jun '02 <input type="checkbox"/> Jul-Aug '02 <input type="checkbox"/> Sep-Oct '01 <input type="checkbox"/> Nov-Dec '01 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan-Feb '03 <input type="checkbox"/> Mar-Apr '03 <input type="checkbox"/> May-Jun '03 <input type="checkbox"/> Jul-Aug '03 <input type="checkbox"/> Sep-Oct '02 <input type="checkbox"/> Nov-Dec '02 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan-Feb '04 <input type="checkbox"/> Mar-Apr '04 <input type="checkbox"/> May-Jun '04 <input type="checkbox"/> Jul-Aug '04 <input type="checkbox"/> Sep-Oct '04 <input type="checkbox"/> Nov-Dec '04 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan-Feb '05 <input type="checkbox"/> Mar-Apr '05 <input type="checkbox"/> May-Jun '05 <input type="checkbox"/> Jul-Aug '05 <input type="checkbox"/> Sep-Oct '05 <input type="checkbox"/> Nov-Dec '05 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan-Feb '06 <input type="checkbox"/> Mar-Apr '06 <input type="checkbox"/> May-Jun '06 <input type="checkbox"/> Jul-Aug '06 <input type="checkbox"/> Sep-Oct '06 <input type="checkbox"/> Nov-Dec '06 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan-Feb '07 <input type="checkbox"/> Mar-Apr '07 <input type="checkbox"/> May-Jun '07 <input type="checkbox"/> Jul-Aug '07 <input type="checkbox"/> Sep-Oct '07 <input type="checkbox"/> Nov-Dec '07 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan-Feb '08 <input type="checkbox"/> Mar-Apr '08 <input type="checkbox"/> May-Jun '08 <input type="checkbox"/> Jul-Aug '08 <input type="checkbox"/> Sep-Oct '08 <input type="checkbox"/> Nov-Dec '08 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan-Feb '09 <input type="checkbox"/> Mar-Apr '09 <input type="checkbox"/> May-Jun '09 <input type="checkbox"/> Jul-Aug '09 <input type="checkbox"/> Sep-Oct '09 <input type="checkbox"/> Nov-Dec '09 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan-Feb '10 <input type="checkbox"/> Mar-Apr '10 <input type="checkbox"/> May-Jun '10 <input type="checkbox"/> Jul-Aug '10 <input type="checkbox"/> Sep-Oct '10 <input type="checkbox"/> Nov-Dec '10 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan-Feb '11 <input type="checkbox"/> Mar-Apr '11 <input type="checkbox"/> May-Jun '11 <input type="checkbox"/> Jul-Aug '11 <input type="checkbox"/> Sep-Oct '11 <input type="checkbox"/> Nov-Dec '11 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan-Feb '12 <input type="checkbox"/> Mar-Apr '12 <input type="checkbox"/> May-Jun '12 <input type="checkbox"/> Jul-Aug '12 <input type="checkbox"/> Sep-Oct '12 <input type="checkbox"/> Nov-Dec '12 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan-Feb '13 <input type="checkbox"/> Mar-Apr '13 <input type="checkbox"/> May-Jun '13 <input type="checkbox"/> Jul-Aug '13 <input type="checkbox"/> Sep-Oct '13 <input type="checkbox"/> Nov-Dec '13 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan-Feb '14	\$5.00 each	
	Toyota Trails Current Issue Mar-Apr '14	\$7.00	
	Toyota Trails Gift Pack Two most recent issues	\$10.00	
Sales Tax is applicable to California residents only. Note: Sonoma county residents pay 7.5% Shipping and handling charges: Add \$4.50 for orders of up to \$10.00, \$5.50 for orders over \$10.00, and \$6.50 for orders over \$20.00. *Surcharge for selected items: Mugs, \$1.00 for each item over one. If you are ordering from outside the USA please indicate whether you would like the items shipped surface or airmail. In addition, do not complete the shipping charges section, this will be done by TLCA and added to your credit card charge. If you are not ordering with a credit card please contact TLCA merchandise office and specify what you intend to order at: merchandise@tlca.org to get exact shipping charges to your destination before placing your order. Order online using credit card or PayPal from TLCA's web site: www.tlca.org TLCA tries to keep all items in stock, however, from time to time an item may be temporarily out of stock. In this case you will be notified that the item is back-ordered and your order will be filled as soon as the item is in. Please Allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.			
Name & ID#		Phone ()	
Address			
City, State or Province, Zip			
<input type="checkbox"/> Cash <input type="checkbox"/> Check <input type="checkbox"/> VISA <input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard <input type="checkbox"/> AmEx <input type="checkbox"/> Discover		Card #	
Make check or money order payable in U.S. funds only to: TLCA. To pay with PayPal, visit www.tlca.org .			
Name as it appears on card:		Card Expiration Date:	
Signed		Date	
Mail to: TLCA, 104 NW Pecan St. Blue Springs, MO 64014			

Achieving Proper Balance In Your Expedition Equipment
continued from page 28

it probably would have been fine. However, it didn't have a lot of flexibility when additional people were included so flexibility became something I looked for in further progressions of my gear.

I next bought a 2002 Kimberley Kamper. This is an Australian clamshell style camper that is very popular Down Under but hard to find here. The U.S.-made Adrenaline Camper is similar, along with the smaller Kamparoo trailer. The Kimberley is just right for me—it's my Goldilocks camper. I can take it off-road or drive the flats at high speed without worrying about damage. The Jayco Baja took twenty minutes to set up; the Adventure Trailers took ten minutes. If I am just camping overnight, the Kimberley Kamper takes three minutes to set up and five minutes to pack up—and has lots of room. It has a pullout kitchen, enough power for five days, a queen bed with reading lights and a large hard floor where you can sleep two additional people or have an indoor sitting area.



First time set up for the Kimberley Kamper at Camp Hale in Colorado.

Photo by Ken Romer

The two things that this Kamper didn't have that the newer ones do are a fridge and a diesel heater. So I did what most of us do: I modified it. I installed in the front box an Engle fridge from Slee Offroad. I talked to Martyn at Adventure Trailers and bought a Heatsource 2000 propane kit, as I wanted propane over diesel. The diesel heaters tend

to suck battery power and I didn't want to have to carry another fuel type. It feeds off the main propane tank, has a temperature control and vents to the outside so I don't have to worry about fumes. I set it to a temperature I like and go to sleep and let it run all night if needed. It is an awesome product. They sell it in a small portable kit you

MARLIN CRAWLER, INC



**ALL NEW! FJ80
Low Range Gears**



**New & Improved
USA 4-Bar Sliders**



**Now Open
6a-6p PST
Call Toll Free
(888) 94-CRAWL**



**Land Cruiser & Pickup
USA Body Mount Kits**



**We build & install
Split Case Crawlers**



Visit us at <http://www.MarlinCrawler.com>



The Kimberley Kamper set up at Slickrock, near Moab, Utah.

Photo by Ken Romer

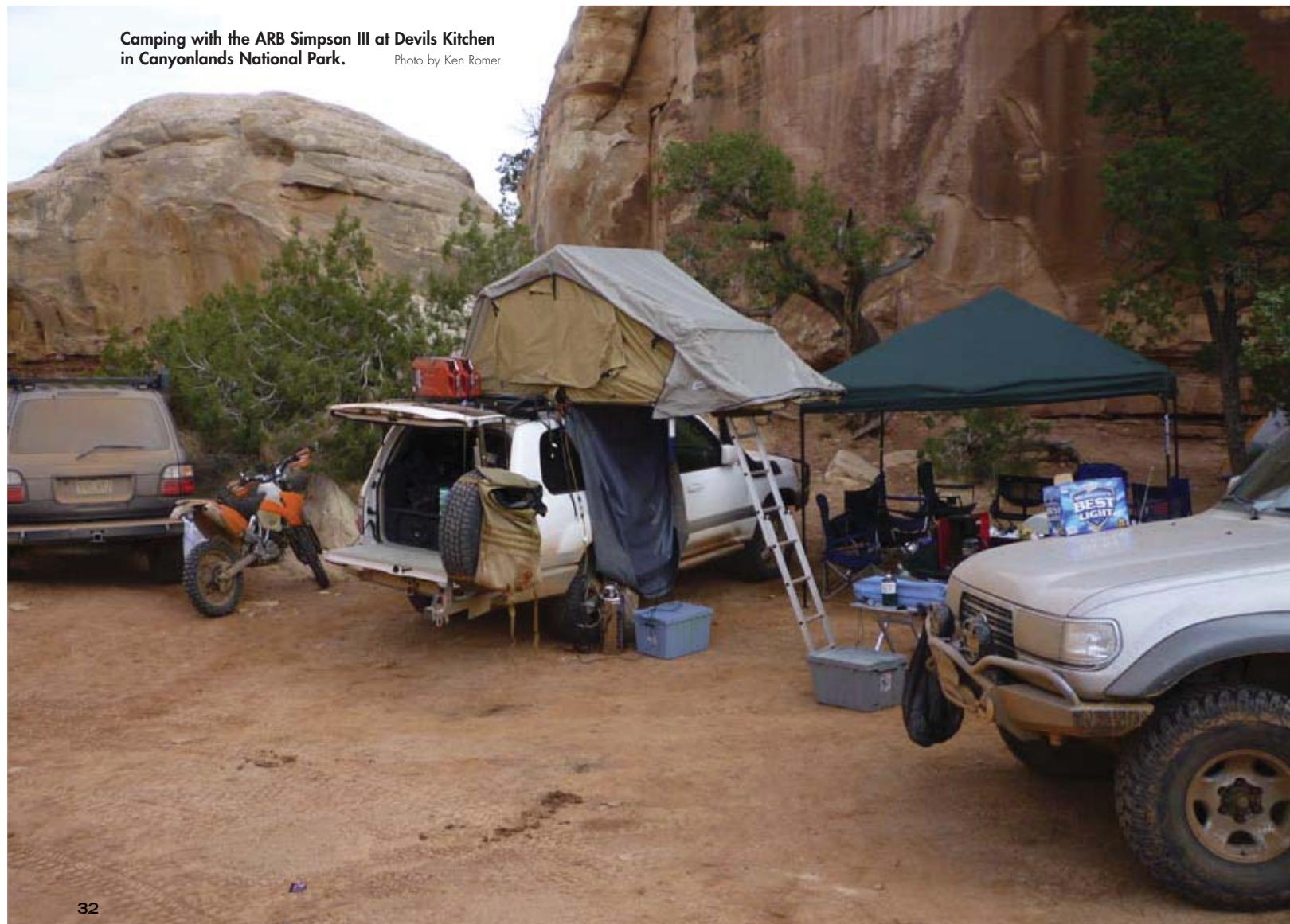
can use in a roof top tent or ground tent as well. Mine is permanently mounted.

The Kimberley Kamper has all kinds of options for expandability—and we all like options. I normally add the canopy to create a nice porch and cover for the kitchen. For a larger enclosed indoor area, I can add walls to the canopy and even add a zip on shower/bathroom. This does take time to set up but still goes up pretty easily.

The thing I like most about the Kimberley is it is well built. It is now eleven years old and still looks new with no rips or problems. It is built to go camping for months at a time so it is more than sturdy enough for me. It has a complete kitchen with lots of storage space, running water, stove and a broiler. There is also a second hand pump for water on the front that you can access even when the Kamper is closed up.

Camping with the ARB Simpson III at Devils Kitchen in Canyonlands National Park.

Photo by Ken Romer



I had the perfect setup and was good for anything, including off-road but.... Then there was the Maze trip and the group didn't want to bring a trailer along, thinking the backside of Elephant Hill would be a problem. On that trail, you have to drive backwards fifty feet and it was going to be dark. After researching options, I bought an ARB Simpson III roof top tent. It is quick to set up but once set up, you are stuck in camp. I really like the overhang that the ladder climbed up into and this was a key feature for me. The opening of the roof top tent is private and people don't have to watch while you back out the door and work your way down the ladder. Plus it shielded the opening from the weather. The fact that you can enclose that whole area with the optional changing room makes it even better. The interior is long enough that I can put my bag and shoes at the end near the door without impacting the area for my sleeping bag.

As the family expands and Rachel and Sarah both enjoy coming with me, I foresee many future trips with three or four—or even possibly five of us. The roof top tent would fit the others but then would need to be torn down each day when staying at a long camp-over like Moab or Ouray. Brian Swearingen had an Oztent at Cruise Moab and it intrigued me. It sets up and tears down in thirty seconds (for the basic tent) and you can stand in the larger models. Researching these further, the standard Oztent appealed to me over the Jet Tent (made by Oztent) or more standard type tents like the Kodiak or Springbar. The hardest part of picking a tent was deciding on size. I need room for two cots and I wanted to make this an expansion of my Kimberley, fitting in between the canopy poles at one end. I selected the Oztent RV4.

A big selection point for me is you can set up and tear down the basic tent very quickly. For longer camping periods, you can add the side panels to the canopy and the front panel and essentially have another eight foot by eight foot enclosed room. The Oztent has multiple ways to expand further, even connecting two setups with a 16x8 foot indoor area in between. I could also add another RV4 for the other side of the canopy, making it a three-bedroom setup.

The downside with the Oztent is its traveling dimensions. It is long at six feet, six inches packed up. Most people get a Thule box on



On the left, the extra room added to the Kimberley Kamper with an Oztent.

Photo by Ken Romer

a roof rack or just carry it on their roof rack. I was able to fit it inside the back of my Land Cruiser with the seat down.

The equipment I have used over the years has greatly enhanced my outdoor adventures. Some of the gear was more appropriate for a certain stage of life, for example, the pop-up camper for a family. Other options were more appropriate for the terrain, like the roof top tent on the Rubicon or the Maze. The Kimberley and even the Adventure Trailer are hybrids between the comforts of a pop-up camper and the expe-

dition style of the roof top tent. The Kimberley leans more toward the pop-up comfort and the trailer more to the ruggedness of the roof top tent. Finally, I have added the Oztent to be able to expand the roof top tent or Kimberley for larger family adventures—or just to use it on its own. It really comes down to finding your balance between comfort and ruggedness. It may take you several iterations to find your Goldilocks setup and I hope you enjoy your journey as much as I have enjoyed mine.

IT



A closer look at the additional room in the Kimberley Kamper with the Oztent.

Photo by Ken Romer