



A luxury rooftop for around £20 – 8 easy upgrades for your roof tent.

Rooftents are well established on expedition vehicles in the UK and are a great solution to sleeping in many situations. However they tend to have some drawbacks for our damp climates, having been designed for use in hot South African savannahs. Polycanvas is used for the main tent, often with a nylon flysheet, both excellent rot proof fabrics but once soaked through, are slow to dry, heavy and need drying before storage. Polycanvas and nylon both benefit from occasional re-proofing with a silicone based water-proofer like Fabsil. As well as adding waterproofing and UV resistance we also find it adds flexibility making the tent easier to fold away. We tend to give our tent and flysheet 2 generous coats every 2 years or so on a hot dry day. It's worth paying particular attention to seams and the joining rail that clamps the tent material to the wooden base to make sure of good penetration. Any drips or runs onto vehicle paintwork can be wiped off before it dries. Its smelly stuff, full of solvents designed to wet and penetrate fabrics, probably does the same on skin so use gloves and a 3 inch paint brush to apply. I find the brush better than a spray as you can work it into seams. You need to allow around 6 hours in good conditions for it to dry before sleeping in it. 5 litres seems to be enough for a 1.4 m Hannibal



There are a few other things you can do to make life easier. Ever lain awake listening to jingling zips on windy nights ? well, with a pair of side cutters and paracord you can create a silent night very easily. I have seen people add paracord to zips to make them easier to grasp but often they don't cut off the actual tag of the zip. The photo makes this clear.

Another source of noise is the actual flysheet so its worth retensioning this. One simple way of doing this is to keep the support sticks bent correctly. On our Hannibal tent I find the sticks start to bow a little over time and a simple bend in the opposite direction helps but by bending the last 1 inch section you get a much better effect. The further to straight it is the stronger the effect



Its also worth running a 5mm drill bit up the holes in the base that the sticks push into as often swarf get left in and the sticks don't seat fully home. Usually ends in a loud twang as the stick jumps out as the wind gets up and then a clang as it falls onto your car. Followed by 6 hours of loud flapping

I then normally spray all the zips (teeth and cloth surround) with a silicone lubricant, helps waterproof and lubricate the zip. I know some people use furniture polish but I have found this to attract grit and dust – a quick way to ruin your zips and an expensive repair.

A quick check on the waterproof cover for cuts and abrasions and the application of patches to damaged areas will keep the tent dry at home if you leave it on the vehicle. Adding 12-18" of paracord to the zips on a Hannibal bag makes life a lot easier when closing the bag, by pulling the zip along the same axis as the zip teeth, it helps stop zip failure and mis-meshing.

Want to add a bit more luxury then add a LED lighting system. Easily done with a switch and a waterproof connector. Our LED lamps are undercupboard strip lamps from IKEA, come in about 3 x 25cm sections that clip together and conveniently run on 12volts – just cut off the 240/12 volt converter and wire them in. We also use the same strips around the car for both internal and external lighting.

We often hear complaints about condensation in the tents. It can be an issue with cold nights and hot days but opening internal zips to vent the hot, respired air will normally cure it. Many people close up the tent to keep warm – a colourful fleece blanket from a Moroccan market will keep you snugly warm and the increased ventilation will keep you dry.

We use 70mm of high grade dense upholstery foam for a mattress, the standard foam is good for a year before it collapses. With both you can still get some condensation underneath the actual mattress and this has been a problem, often leaving the mattress base damp, even during the day. A recent solution to this has been a material used on ocean going yachts to prevent the same problem in berths, DRY-mat (www.shipshapebedding.co.uk). Simply cut to size and lay under the mattress, its mesh design allows air to circulate and remove moisture. A plaster friend says he used a product called Kontakt 20 under his caravan seats and it also works well (www.basementliving.co.uk), looks cheaper than DRYmat but possibly thicker.

Expedition update

We still have some spaces available on our 2015 expeditions to Spain and Portugal

[Pyrenees Explorer](#) 27 July to 7 August, 12 days

The Spanish Pyrenees are the least visited part of the dramatic Pyrenean Mountains, guarding the border between France and Spain. The whole region is immensely beautiful - thickly forested foothills, secret plunging valleys and soaring snow capped mountains make for some of the best mountain driving in Europe. Check out Land Rovers Owners editor John Pearson's account of the trip here



"A superb expedition ... driven some of best mountain tracks and trails I've ever experienced"

[Portugal Explorer](#) 4 – 15 May 12 days

May is the best time to visit Portugal, its still green but the days are warm. This is your chance to explore beyond the Algarve, as we'll travel from Cap Sao Vicente, Europe's most SW point, to its most NW point, near Braganca in the mountains against the Spanish border. This journey must be Europe's longest green lane, our recce trip clocked up 1200km with 90% of it off tarmac!

STOP PRESS

We also have two vehicle spaces due to a group cancellation on our [Draa Valley Explorer](#) to Morocco for Easter. Dates are 29 March to 11 April – give us a call if you'd like to join us, we can offer a discount of £400 per person for these places so don't miss out on some Easter sunshine.

Can I use my standard 4x4 for expeditions ?

This is probably one of the commonest questions we get asked, along with what do I need to take. When looking at expedition web sites its easy to come away disillusioned that you need to spend 50K preparing your car with all the latest accessories, gadgets, bells and whistles. That may well be the case for round the world and Trans Saharan expeditions but for most of the trips OneLife runs, then a standard car is fine, certainly for our European trips. Many of our guests use ground tents quite satisfactorily and simply by spending around £100 on basic DIY fitted protection for the 4x4 you can enjoy a worry free holiday.



For Land Rovers then TerraFirma make a range of underbody protection, if you're not sure what you or your vehicle needs please contact us

TerraFirma
Serious 4x4 Accessories

For many people these European trips are often their first experience of vehicle expeditions and possibly camping and we understand this can make you nervous. We work hard to ensure your expeditions are fun experiences for everyone, here's Natasha's review of our 2014 Pyrenees Explorer that she shared with her husband and 3 kids.

I would like to say what a pleasure it was to meet you and have the opportunity to spend some time getting to know you. As I get back to my reality and settle back at work I find myself reflecting on our travels - I realise what we did was something that is so far removed from the way I have been brought up and what I do day to day travelling on the train to London to work each day - camping and our travels gave me so much freedom not only to explore mountains and enjoy the beauty around us but freedom from the chaos, stress and rush of mine and my family's daily lives. Whilst I have to admit I was a reluctant camper at first, and it was at times hard work (sorry I forgot it was an expedition, not holiday!) it really was a special memorable trip that was different from anything I have ever done before. It was fabulous to meet people with such different backgrounds and careers - an explosives expert - really?? - and yet find things in common even when religion, and politics were banned! The kids had a ball too - great to see them all bond so well together - how many games of Uno can you have in 2 weeks? Paul, you were amazing - your calmness, humour and quick thinking made it all seem very easy - I know that's not the case and I am in awe of the passion and energy you display. Thank you for your patience and support throughout.

So with a standard 4x4, some very basic protection and some well thought out camping equipment you and your family could be joining us this year on your first expedition.

