

Camping ... one storey up!

Autohome Overcamp rooftop tent

Words and photos by Mark Samuel



No matter your choice of vehicle, heading out camping just became a whole lot simpler – assuming you're equipped with a new Overcamp rooftop tent, that is. And then there's also the view ...

Let's start with the nitty-gritty about this tent. First, it takes up no space inside your car, trailer or caravan, while still providing room for two adults to sleep in complete comfort. And the reason it takes up no space is because it's mounted on your roof rack.

Second, and probably most important, you don't have to head out to buy a large SUV, double-cab – or any 4x4, for that matter – to put under your Autohome; this tent is as much at home on top of a compact hatch, mid-sized sedan or estate as it is above the roof of a hulking off-roader. All you require is a sturdy roof rack system of the kind that you'd ordinarily use to transport surfboards, a canoe, bicycles, a roof carrier box or fishing rods.

Then there's the bulk factor – or, I should say, lack-of-bulk factor. The Overcamp is designed to occupy half of your roof rack when it's folded away, leaving the other half free for your surfboard or other items.

Even when deployed it still only takes up half the roof, as it unfolds away from the car. This means you can fit two Overcamp rooftop tents to your roof rack, allowing four people to sleep on your vehicle's roof. So if you're on a southern African safari, mom and dad will be in one, and two children in the other: that's everyone safely off the ground at night, away from scorpions, hyenas, lions – you name it.

If two couples head away together, I suppose the only factor to consider with this arrangement is that sound travels

Set-up



relatively easily through tent fabric ... Perhaps the only truly negative aspect to this rooftop tent – one that's not unique to this item, but typical of roof-mounted products – is that when folded away for road travel it's somewhat box-like on the roof. Its profile isn't very aerodynamic, so you might notice the slightest increase in your car's fuel consumption. But it will be nowhere near as much as towing a trailer or caravan.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

Included as standard with every Autohome Overcamp purchase are four universal clamps for attaching the tent to your roofrack crossbars. The tent itself has two small windows and two large doors,

in addition you can accessorise this tent with a long list of additions, including a veranda section, which provides a large sheltered living space at ground level next to the rooftop tent and car, a large side awning, feet for the tent base which enable you to remove the tent from your vehicle's roofrack and set it up just off the ground, and a solar reflective and winter hood to give added protection against the cold and wind. ▶

Left (set-up sequence): The Overcamp rooftop tent takes about two minutes to erect. A few simple steps and you're ready to make the braai fire!

Below: When folded away the Overcamp takes up relatively little space, and you're still able to use the other half of your roofrack to transport your big boys' toys.

Below right: The extendable ladder is included, which provides access to the tent and supports its floor platform.



all fitted with mosquito netting. Inside is a double-bed sized mattress with two camping pillows. The two support poles hold open the door flaps to create a small awning. The height-adjustable steel ladder hooks in place, making the tent easily accessible, no matter whether your vehicle is a Chevy Aveo or a Land Cruiser with raised suspension. There's also the weatherproof PVC travel cover that fits over the folded-away tent while it's on your roof or stored in your garage.

Optional extras include an attachment to fit the tent to larger roof bars and an extended ladder, should this be required. In



MATERIALS AND FEATURES

The tent fabric is 50% cotton and 50% acrylic. It's waterproof, it's tear- and mould-resistant, and it has excellent ventilation properties.

The multi-layer base is made from long-fibre wood that's plastic-coated on both sides to make it waterproof, resistant to mould and able to maintain its shape.

The foam mattress has a removable cover that's washable.

Cleverly installed guy ropes let you open the small exterior window flaps from the inside, and a water diversion system is incorporated into the design to prevent water from getting in too easily.

Odds and ends like torches and cellphones can be stored in the two interior storage pockets.

The quality of workmanship is plain to see upon close inspection of this tent. Seams are tightly sealed, the

mechanical joint operating the fold-out floor is solidly constructed, and the zippers, guy rope attachment points, mesh blinds and fabric are all of a high quality.

So perhaps it's a bit of a paradox seeing an elegant Mercedes-Benz estate fitted with a rooftop tent. But with rooftop products like the Autohome range, this is now a reality, and should become a much more common sight.

Our test unit, the smallest model, weighs 50 kg, so with another person's assistance you can mount and fit it in place quite easily, and then remove it again to store in your garage once you've returned from your trip. The 'medium' weighs 54 kg. We photographed the demo unit; a shipment of new stock is destined for our shores, which should be here by the time you read this.

SPECIFICATIONS

Model	Overcamp grey (small)
Price	R11 347
Dimensions (closed)	650 mm (w) x 2000 mm (l) x 300 mm (h)
Dimensions (open)	1300 mm (w) x 2000 mm (l) x 1000 mm (h)
Weight	50 kg

Autohome products are available at www.parasolsa.co.za or through Motorhome-World. Call 011 395 6900/1/2 (Johannesburg) or 021 577 3863 (Cape Town).



Left: The floor platform is hinged in the middle. **Right:** You secure the waterproof cover by pulling the elastic cord over the clips.
Below: The small rectangular window flaps (seen on the right) can be opened or closed from inside the tent.

