

our vehicles

ROOM ON TOP

John splashes out on a luxury penthouse, guaranteeing classy accommodation wherever the 110 fetches up

2002 EX-G4 DEFENDER 110



Engine 2.5-litre, five-cylinder turbodiesel
Fuel consumption 25mpg

Over the years, my partner Pat and I have had regular debates over roof tents versus ground tents. We've had both in the past and know their advantages and disadvantages; so, when the time came to equip our 110 with a new tent, we struggled to make a decision.

To help us decide, we wrote out a list of all the various tents available and scored them in categories of suitability for our requirements. The Oztent ended up as the highest-scoring ground tent, but it was narrowly beaten by the Maggiolina carbon fibre roof tent.

The roof tent provides less sleeping space than the ground tent, and you obviously can't stand up inside for changing clothes etc – but it won through its sheer convenience. At the end of a long day's travelling, it's so good to be able to open the Maggiolina with your bedding already in there and climb in.

And, since having the tent fitted, I've adapted the Hannibal awning I used when I had my 90 with its Hannibal roof tent (I've ordered one of Maggiolina's own tent awnings), so we now have a changing room and shelter from sun and rain.

Why opt for the Maggiolina rather than a conventional roof tent such as the Hannibal and the many others that are available from LRO advertisers?

One of the influencing factors was the G4 110's roof rack. To have one of these other tents, which are folded out to use, I'd have to cut the side or rear bars from the as-used-in-the-G4-Challenge rack, and that simply wasn't an option. So, we went for one that fitted inside the rack. The other influence was

And there we have it. Boab's TJ van Linge demonstrates how quickly the Maggiolina tent is wound up and ready for use



the carbon fibre Maggiolina's relatively light weight. Extra weight means reduced mpg. Talking of extra weight, one thing I did take off before having the tent fitted was the G4 rack's alloy platform. It can be refitted easily should I ever remove the tent, so there's no problem with G4 authenticity.

The roof tent would fill a lot of the rack area, anyway, and I figured there would be a weight saving – always worth having.

Just how *much* of a saving was quite a surprise, though. It was really quite heavy as Pat and I lifted the platform off, so we decided to check it on the bathroom scales. It came in at a hefty 31.8kg; so, bearing in mind that the roof tent weighs 42kg, the Land Rover is only about 10kg heavier than it was before we fitted it.

Chris Simons, MD of UK Maggiolina importer Boab, pulled a face when I told him that I wanted to fit a tent to my G4 roof rack. 'Are you sure you wouldn't prefer to fit a couple of nice and light roof bars instead?'

He was joking, but there was still a hint of pleading in his voice, even so: Chris knows that

attaching a roof tent on to bars and bolting it to a vehicle takes a matter of minutes, whereas fixing one on to my G4 rack is a time-consuming job.

There's not enough room to bolt the tent on in situ, so the rack has to come off – and that's definitely not a task that can be done in a matter of minutes, or



1 TJ removes the Defender's rear ladder before moving round to the front of the vehicle to disconnect the roof rack lights.

2 Meanwhile, Chris Simons works his way around the perimeter of the roof rack, undoing all the fixings with a 5mm allen key.

3 When everything has been safely disconnected, the rack is winched up



and the Defender driven away from underneath. TJ's on hand to make sure it doesn't catch.

4 The Maggiolina carbon fibre tent tips the scales at just 42kg; that's not a lot heavier than the alloy platform that was on the roof rack, so the net weight gain is negligible. **5** Just look at how neatly it fits inside the G4 roof rack: the rack's



by one person. It's a substantial chunk of metal, with a number of fixings around the roof gutter. Also, the rear ladder has to come off and the lights must be disconnected.

Fortunately, Boab's workshop is equipped with an electric winch suspended from an iron girder in the roof, which makes lifting off the rack considerably easier than trying to manhandle the cumbersome item.

Chris and his right-hand man TJ van Linge, whom I've known for many years (he used to work for our local specialist Nene Overland) set to work, with help from Johnny Walker.

After disconnecting the roof lights, removing the rear ladder and undoing all of the rack-securing fixings, they attached straps to the rack and hoisted it upwards while I drove the now naked-looking Defender out from underneath.

With the rack down on supports, we then had to decide exactly where to mount the new tent. I decided to have it off-centre to the right, which will allow easier access and leave some space to the left should I wish to carry any long items on the rack. It also means that the rear tent clip doesn't foul on the

central rack tube. We also positioned it sufficiently far forward to allow me to fit some jerry can holders or carry some luggage behind the tent when on long overland adventures.

The tent is secured to the roof rack by four clamps, and Chris supported it on rubber strips to prevent any possible damage during use.

With the tent fixings all tightened, the rack was then winched upwards and the Defender positioned underneath ready for refitting. This needs to be done gently to avoid scratching the paintwork, and to make sure the supports fit correctly on to the gutter.

Then the fixings go back on, along with the ladder, and the lamps reconnected. The tent is a quality piece of kit that should last me a long time – and I can't wait to use it on a big adventure.

The carbon fibre top and bottom shells are very tough-looking and the canvas sections look to be very durable. There are two door flaps with sturdy zips plus two windows, and all are protected by mozzie netting. It's supplied complete with mattress and two pillows, and there are a number of usefully sized interior storage pockets.

PRODUCT ON TEST MAPLINS 4-WAY CIGARETTE SOCKET ADAPTOR £7.99

With just one cigarette lighter socket in the rear of my Defender, and usually lots of things to plug into it, I needed an adaptor. Costing just £7.99, this one can be screwed or stuck in position with a supplied two-sided sticky pad. I screwed it to one of the window guard fixings.

Now I can plug in my inverter for camera battery charging, and still have three spare sockets for other stuff. In fact, it's so handy that I've bought one for the front of the Defender as well. maplin.co.uk.



Its top is raised by inserting and winding a handle at the rear offside, after which it's a simple matter of climbing aboard using the adjustable ladder supplied. This can be stored inside the tent, separately on the rack or in the vehicle itself.

Since fitting the tent I've done some greenlaning trips and found that the G4 rack protects it really well from attack by overgrown foliage.

The Defender doesn't seem to notice the slight weight increase on top, and I'm convinced that the tent's shape helps make the vehicle more aerodynamic: it really does seem to cruise at a

slightly higher speed than before. I'm monitoring consumption and will let you know how this works out.

The Maggiolina carbon fibre tent retails at £2400, with heavier but cheaper glassfibre versions costing from about £1200, depending upon size and spec. The supplier is Boab Ltd of Longdon Heath near Upon-upon-Severn, Worcestershire. For more information, email rooftents@boab.biz or call 01684 591154. john@lro.com

NEXT ISSUE

John shows how a Mantec spare wheel carrier is fitted to his T10



front and sides protect it from foliage when greenlaning.
6 We installed the tent off-centre – to allow better access from the offside, but also so that this rear clip doesn't foul on the tube.
7 We also mounted it far enough forward to allow fuel and water containers or other luggage to be stowed behind it.

8 Fixings were tightened only when we were sure we had the tent in the correct place. It sits on protective rubber strips.
9 Then we're ready for refitting, so the rack and tent are hoisted skywards by this handy roof winch.
10 Refitting rack to vehicle requires some manipulation to get the supports in exactly the right place.



ANXIOUS MOMENTS

Mark's Series I passes its MoT but collects its first-ever advisory

Mark Saville

He's added that extra 'I' to his surname, so that it's even more different to Jimmy Savile



1957 SERIES I 88-INCH



Engine: 2.0-litre, 4cyl petrol
Mileage: 8555 since engine rebuild

Who actually enjoys taking their Land Rover to the MoT station?

Not me, anyway. At least the chaps at Fengate MoT Station in Peterborough know about old cars and what to expect, so I can be sure of a fair assessment of the roadworthiness of Plimsoll, my Series I. But it still doesn't stop me from being as anxious as an MP waiting for next day's Telegraph to hit the streets.

Not that I've got anything to hide; it's just that there's always the possibility that Plimsoll may let me down: last year, a front tyre developed a puncture just as I arrived at the same station. I had to change the wheel before the test could proceed.

This year's performance was the usual tense mixture of swelling pride as the examiner made appreciative noises about Plimsoll's oily regions, combined with uncertainty about the slightly inconsistent performance of the brakes, which I'd experienced on the journey there.

Much to my relief, the collection of almost original parts impersonating a feasible mode of transport actually passed the test. This euphoria carried me over the slightly disconcerting experience of being handed the advisory notice, which warns of potential failure areas next year.



'The swivel seals are both leaking a bit and the front brake flexible hoses are showing signs of rust,' said the MoT man.

I was aware that the seals were a bit oozy but the hoses came as a surprise; they're only two or three years old. Neither fault is particularly hard or expensive to fix if you do it yourself.

Anyway, I had that vital ticket just in time for the LRO Spring Adventure at Driffeld.

The only problem I had over that weekend was when the overdrive lever snapped off, causing me a few worrying moments. The overdrive has an amusing habit of dropping out of gear when not selected, completely removing drive to the wheels. As soon as I could, I whipped out the seatbox panel and manually selected overdrive, hoping it wouldn't drop out. Fortunately, I made it home without any more problems.

A couple of weekends after Driffeld, I found the time to fix both MoT problems and fit a replacement overdrive lever made by a mate, Steve Teeson.

I'd bought swivel seals and brake hoses from Dunsfold DLR.

In the past, I've carried out this job by the book, stripping the hubs, and removing the stub axles, halfshafts and swivel spheres to fit new seals, but this time I tried Plan B – remove the entire hub assembly in one go.

It worked really well and saved quite a lot of time.

Even bleeding the brakes wasn't a hassle – boy, I was on fire! The last time I used my Eezibleed kit, I ended up with Plimsoll's reservoir overflowing everywhere. This time, I didn't put any fluid in the Eezibleed bottle but kept checking the vehicle reservoir after bleeding each wheel. Result: good pedal pressure and no spillage.

The icing on the cake for the spanner-fest weekend came courtesy of the Little Green Land Rover Co (01799 599003), in the shape of a pair of shiny new passenger grab handles to go on the back of the load bed.

These are now very hard to find, so Julian Shoolheifer has started his own company to re-manufacture these and other Series I bits such as 80-inch fuel tanks, trafficator brackets and replica perspex side windows.

I wonder if he makes fuel tanks for 88-inch Series Is?

mark@lro.com

PRODUCT ON TEST GALVANISED GRAB HANDLES ESS PAIR

Small and beautifully formed, these even have the correct-size nuts and washers. They're still a bit new and shiny but, once they've weathered down for a couple of years, they'll be indistinguishable from the real thing. They come from The Little Green Land Rover Co (see main text).

