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ON THE GRID *4 tents*

Guarantees

Before purchasing your roof tent, examine carefully the conditions of guarantee. If the salesperson is not able to supply a written version, run! If the conditions of guarantee are connected with a multitude of exceptions, run! The guarantees of the iKamper, Djebel and AirTop are fairly similar: in case of any problem you must send or take the tent back to the stockist. If you have to use a carrier, transport is at your expense even if the tent has a manufacturing defect. The return of the tent is paid by the manufacturer...except if it was deemed to be a problem which is not under guarantee! On these three tents, flaws in the appearance, premature wear of the fabric, defective stitching, broken or jammed zippers and the closures of the shell are not included in the guarantee. At James Baroud you have a 5 year guarantee and no exclusions. In the event of a problem you take the tent back to where you bought it and that's it. James Baroud pays the carrier costs and the repair, no questions asked...

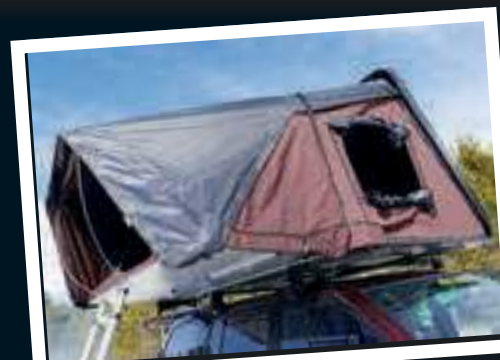
Confronted with the veritable avalanche of products on the internet or in accessories shops, it is not always easy to make the right choice. If you add aggressive marketing tactics to the mix, which can cleverly merge truth with untruth, then it can get very complicated. That is why we have carried out this comparative test to help you discern fact from fiction...

Tests

The products mentioned here have not been tested in a laboratory. The tests were carried out in the field, with new tents, during the winter. We have therefore been able to judge real performance in difficult conditions (snow, blizzards, torrential rain, strong winds). Ten people in total took part in these tests...



IKAMPER TENT



An Asian product reserved for limited use when there is no wind...

Of indeterminate origin! The materials come from China, but the product is probably assembled in South Korea. That said, three Chinese manufacturers sell similar tents on Alibaba.com. It is the largest hard shell tent on the market due to its lateral deployment concept. One drawback however, and it is not insignificant: it should not be used when the wind speed is greater than 32 kph!

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

- **Shell.** It is one of the thickest on the market, but does not excel in terms of originality or attractiveness.

The black gelcoat is relatively lackluster and the level of cover leaves something to be desired.

- **Closure systems.** Well-designed and practical to use in our view. Not having seen a second-hand model we can't comment on reliability over time.

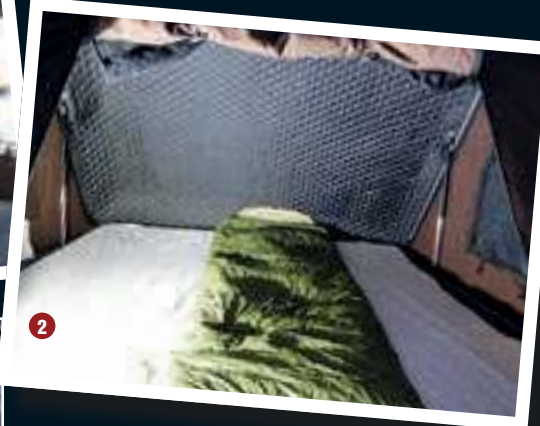
- **Set up and takedown.** The iKamper opens easily, but a certain time is necessary for optimal set-up: considering the lack of tension in the canvas and the considerable wind surface area of the tent, it is highly recommended to secure the tent with guylines.

One detail to add: it is better to be quite tall in height to operate the ladder which triggers the opening of the tent, particularly if you have a raised vehicle. The closing can be done solo, but a certain time is required to tidy the canvas inside the shell. It is not the fastest tent to open or close.

- Chamber. No problem with the finish and the stitching. The chamber is so spacious that it can accommodate 2 adults and 2 children or 3 adults. Questions could be raised concerning the skyview window which decorates the ceiling. It is very thin and in direct contact with the ladder when the tent is closed, and it is not sure how it will age over time with the vibrations endured while on the road. The aluminum poles meant to strengthen the chamber are very thin. One of them bent under the effect of the Mistral.

- Fabric. Nylon ripstop of very good quality. However on the model fresh out of the box we noted several perforations where the tent material had rubbed against the hinges.

- Mattress. The mattress pad is the thinnest on the market at 3 cm! Barely 2 cm more than a gym mat; it is suitable for one night, but not really for longer periods. In addition it has a polyester cover : in winter this does not



1 and 2) The most spacious tent of this test. And the least comfortable with its ridiculously thin mattress.

3) The closures on the shell inspire confidence.

4) The ladder is in direct contact with the roof skyview. Needs emergency protection!

5) The setting up is not as fast and easy as on the other tents.

6) The seal: no comment...

7) In light of the thinness of the roof skyview window, questions can be asked concerning its durability.

8) To be clear, this is a Chinese product.

9) The tent is new but the canvas is already starting to come away from its fixing rail.

10) Due to its design, the iKamper can only receive a 3 cm mattress.



pose a problem, but in summer it amounts to sleeping on a plastic sheet.

- Ladder. It is much too long. The incline of the ladder is going towards the horizontal if all the rungs are pulled out. Having said that, it is very solid with the tent and will not be blown away by the wind.

- Impermeability and condensation. The canvas is impermeable except where it is perforated. It stood up to a long and rainy night, unlike the Djebel. Over the course of two nights, where we slept in temperatures of -5° and -7°, no significant condensation was observed.

- Wind resistance. Catastrophic! Impossible to sleep: the non-taut canvas was buffeted in every direction, the upper shell creaks and twists with an unremarkable wind speed of 45 kph. In addition, depending on the direction of the wind, the upper shell closes in on its occupants due to the weakness of the struts! It should be pointed out that on its Facebook page it is clearly stated that the tent must not be used in conditions where the wind speed is greater than 20 mph which corresponds to 32 kph. In short, if you are going camping, take a back-up tent for nights when there is too much wind.

- Internal accessories. No accessory with this tent (no net or lamp).

CONCLUSION

This is the most expensive hard shell tent on the market (3,300 euros not including delivery charge). If we consider the structural weak points mentioned earlier, its lack of wind resistance meaning it can only be used on very limited occasions and its unclear guarantee, this Asian tent offers the worst value for money in our comparative test.



AIR TOP TENT

good-looking but with considerable design faults...

Straight out of the Autohome workshops, the Italian manufacturer of the Maggiolina, this tent with automatic opening is similar in construction and profile of its big sister. It is relatively well-finished, but sadly some recurrent defects of the brand still remain.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

-Shell. Both understated and nicely designed, the AirTop shell is covered with a beautiful smooth, shiny gelcoat. Unlike the Djebel, it is perfectly covered over the entire surface. That said, the thickness of the upper shell falls short. It is thin and lacking in rigidity like the Maggiolina. It quickly became misshapen on the sides and if care is not taken the upper part can be indented simply by pushing with the hand.

- Closure systems. Particularly irritating to handle, both during opening and closing, these "quick" fastenings age very badly as we have already observed on two second-hand Airtop tents. That said, they are not expensive and it would be wise to have a spare set if travelling long distances and for a long time.

-Set up and takedown. Even though the tent opens quickly and easily the same cannot be said for the closing. A single person can close it without difficulty leaving the side doors open and rolled. But in this case, if rolled up under the rain, expect that the two



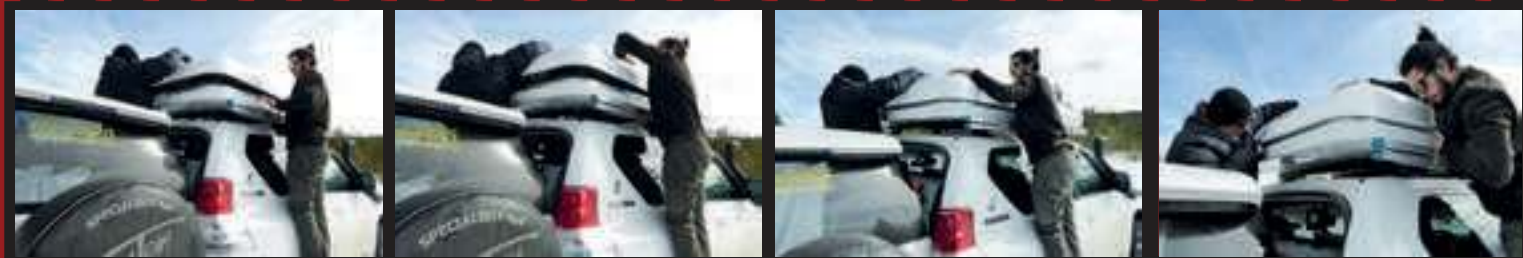
shells do not join perfectly which leads to leaks onto the mattress by the doors. If you want to close the doors to stop water (and dust) from entering, it is not possible to close the tent alone: one person is required at the rear to hold the upper shell down and one to pass on both sides to fold in the canopy. Considering the rear of the upper shell is rounded, with no grip point, it is not easy to close it correctly the first time. An annoying defect which could easily have been corrected by putting a handle or an indentation at the rear for gripping.

-Chamber. It has a good finish with a beautiful roof. The doors take up the concept of the Maggiolina with the double flap arrangement. One flap goes onto the lower shell when the door is closed (which is the cause of irritating noises in windy conditions). In order to close the door correctly, the second flap must go between the shell and the mattress which is not easy as there is no space between them. Lastly, if care is not taken, it is easy to cut fingers on the metal clips which hold the canvas on the inside shell.

-Fabric. It is Dralon as used in parasols and garden chairs, but is very rigid which gives a creased appearance even when new. This is far removed from the cotton of the old Maggiolina which had a tendency to attract mildew, but was very soft to the touch and perfectly supple. (see box).

-Mattress. The most comfortable on the market. The thickness and density is absolutely perfect.

-Ladder. It is lockable which, depending on the type of ground it is placed on, can be a good thing. On the other hand it is hooked on the inside of the tent which complicates the closing of the door.



If you want to prevent water filtering in by closing the lateral doors, it needs two people to close the tent.



11) Under the effect of condensation, when it is very cold the inside of the tent is covered in frozen droplets.

12) The mosquito net: a valuable addition in summer.

13) Impractical and badly designed, the doors would benefit from being improved in particular by removing this useless flap.

14 and 15) The ladder hook hanging on by a single thread is not great!

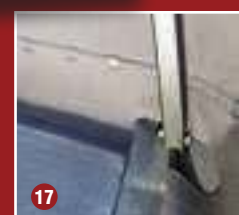
16) The stitching is not great either! The tent is brand new but this defect is not under guarantee.

17) The sharp clips that go around the tent. Perfect for cutting your finger when making your bed...

18) The shell is very thin and becomes deformed easily. Watch out for low branches.

CONCLUSION

Considering its price one could have expected a better designed tent. Unfortunately on the Maggiolina many failings remain that we have already highlighted in the past: the thin shell which becomes easily distorted, the archaic design of the openings, the outdated parasol material, the metallic clips which can cut your fingers when you fit a sheet, the water infiltration and condensation problems when the temperature is low. It is an attractive product but its price is not justified.



-Impermeability and condensation. The canvas is impermeable. Unfortunately the walls of the AirTop go INSIDE the shell. After a night under the rain, the water streamed down the outside walls of the chamber and penetrated the inside of the tent by capillary action. As on the Djebel, the mattress becomes a damp sponge and it is necessary to find somewhere else to sleep. This is a recurrent problem that was pointed out to the manufacturer a long time ago. Instead of correcting this issue, which they appear to be aware of, Autohome preferred to add an "anti-condensation" mattress (180 euros as an optional extra) that is positioned on the original mattress to limit the sponge effect when water comes into the tent.

Over two nights, sleeping in temperatures of -5° and -7°, the interior of the chamber walls were covered with frost. Not to the same extent as on the Djebel, but enough to dampen pillows and personal belongings.

-Internal accessories. An LED lamp is fixed on the ceiling at the rear of the tent and a net for storing clothes is fitted at the front.

-Wind resistance. The AirTop can withstand violent gusts with no problem. It is not particularly noisy in the wind: the taut canvas does not generate a lot of noise and even if the zipper slides rattle slightly, the noise level is acceptable.

Rapid fasteners. Not easy to handle, particularly in the cold.



DJEBEL LINE TENT

Hard to do worse...

Sold by RLC diffusion, this tent appeared on the Chinese website Alibaba.com slightly more than five years ago.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

-Shell. With its very simple, basic design, along with its thickness reduced to the absolute minimum, the shell of the Djebel can in no way compete with the Explorer or the Airtop. The gelcoat which covers it was applied irregularly leaving zones of glass fiber visible.

- Closure systems. When removed from the box (which was not damaged), 3 out of 4 fastenings were nonfunctional. The manufacturer must be aware of this type of problem as it supplied "reserve" straps to keep the tent closed.

-Set up and take down. A positive point: the tent opens very quickly and closes easily.

-Chamber. It is reduced to a bare minimum. We appreciated the two ceiling nets, but that was not enough to make us forget the general lack of finish or the metal clips which cut your fingers when the mattress is lifted to fit a sheet. Fresh out of the box, one of the side door zippers was broken half-way up. It was therefore impossible to close the door completely. On the rear door, two zipper slides were missing...

-Fabric. It is very, very thin! It is Nylon ripstop but its resistance is virtually nil. In addition, the material was ripped in two places in the lower shell area.

-Mattress. Relatively comfortable, both thickness and density are fairly good.

-Ladder. It takes up little space due to its telescopic rung system.

-Impermeability and condensation. Extremely thin; after 3 hours under heavy



rain the canvas was no longer waterproof and the tent was flooded. Water streamed down the walls INSIDE the chamber and the lower shell was transformed into a pool. In this case, the mattress absorbs water and becomes a sponge on which it is impossible to sleep. We slept two nights in conditions of -5° and -7°. The interior walls of the chamber were covered in frost. During the night the sleeping bag and the pillow were soaked with condensation; by early morning they became partly hardened by the frost and they had to be dried off in the car.

-Accessories. A lamp, two roof nets and an awning... that should not be used in windy conditions as the wind tends to pull out the tension rods.

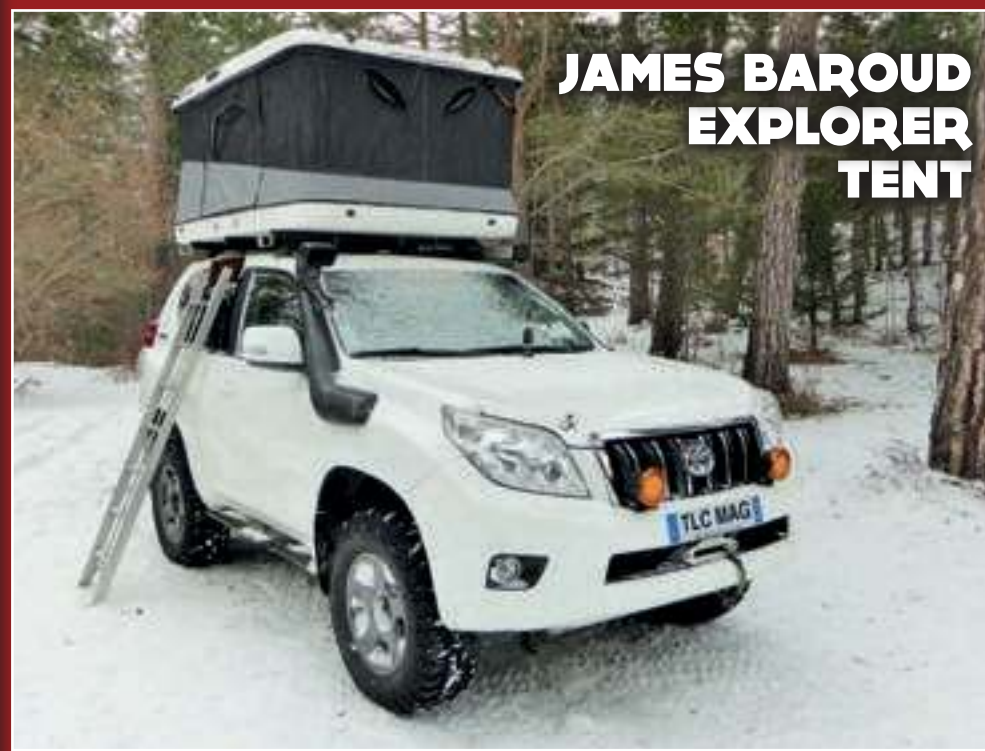
-Wind resistance. Relatively noisy when the wind blows hard, the Djebel is nonetheless able to withstand strong gusts.

CONCLUSION

If the weather is clement, if you are on the coast or in a hot country, then the Djebel will always be better than a ground tent. But this is an expensive way to sleep off the ground. Considering its general minimalist construction along with the numerous defects observed when removed from the box, one can only doubt its durability over time...



- 19) The Chinese faithfully copied all the defects of Italian tents: we find here the razor clips of the AirTop.
- 20) The zipper slides. When they are not broken or missing, they make a lot of noise even in the slightest wind.
- 21) The lateral window adds to the appearance of the tent.
- 22) The anchoring system of the ladder is much more efficient than the one on the Air-Top.



Hard to beat...

Made in Portugal, this tent has the latest innovations in terms of design, composite materials and fabric. Conceived, developed and tested in the field by people who really sleep in their product, it is the most sophisticated tent on the market. However not the most expensive...

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

-Shell. It is the thickest and the most rigid encountered in this test. The upper shell is covered with ribs for reinforcement and its attractive design gives it equal place with the AirTop in terms of appearance. The gelcoat is perfectly uniform and glossy over all surfaces on both shells.

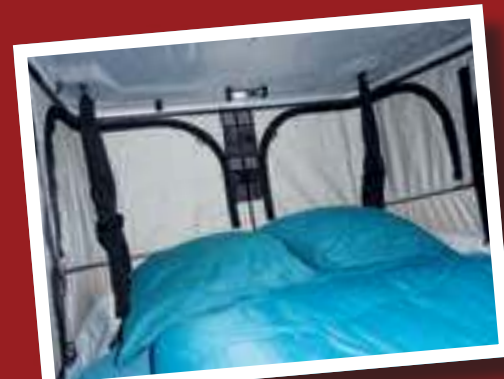
-Closure systems. They are a little hard initially when new, but they age well and are the most reliable of this selection.

-Set up and take down. The tent opens quickly and easily with an automatic locking system of the struts which is unique to James Baroud. Closing requires no strength or special skill provided the manufacturer's instructions are closely followed.

-Chamber. A very good finish, with no visible rivets, no "sharp clips", solid stitching and good sized zippers. All good, but the real strength of this tent is the walls lined with a mosquito net. A great concept which means a vast wall surface can be opened allowing air, but not mosquitoes, in. Vital for those travelling in hot areas in summer.

This is exclusive to James Baroud along with the zippers fitted with "silent-running" slides. Totally silent even when the tent is buffeted by the wind.

-Fabric. It is a technical fabric made by TenCate, the global number 2 in textile technology (see box).



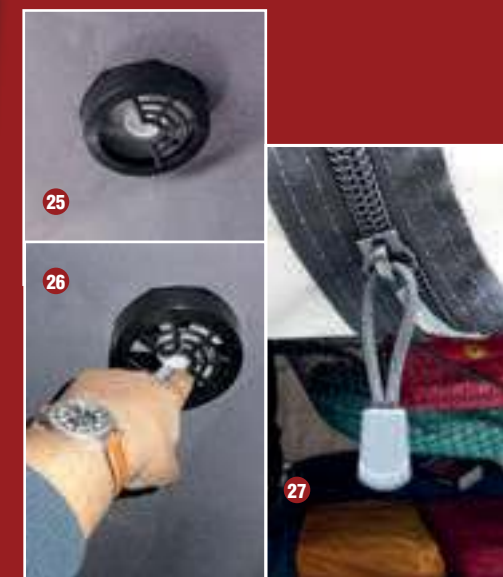
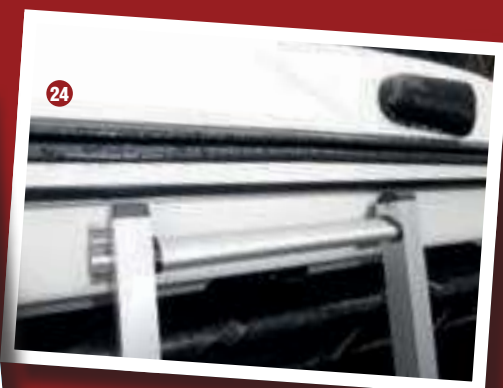
-Mattress. Less comfortable than the AirTop, it is however 7 cm thick. The cover is GENUINELY removable and washable unlike that on the AirTop.

-Ladder. It is fixed on one or other side of the exterior of the tent by its safety system which is also unique to the brand. There is no risk of it falling even during violent gusts.

-Impermeability and condensation. The canvas is impermeable. No risk of infiltration because the canvas goes over the lower shell. Over two nights, where the temperature was -5° and -7°, no trace of condensation was noted even though the tent was totally closed. Of course we took care to operate the fan; a sort of marine CMV (Controlled Mechanical Ventilation), an ultra-powerful, totally silent fan. Unique to James Baroud.

-Options. Net and lamp are present here, but in terms of options it is the bag holder / wheel holder that takes precedence. An option that becomes very important when travelling in countries where one is not sure to find a spare tire. This is also exclusive to the brand.

-Wind resistance. The Explorer can withstand violent gusts with no problem. It is not noisy in the wind: the ultra-taut canvas and the paracord zipper slides generate hardly any noise.



23) With its interior volume and highly particular design, the Explorer can also be used as a roof box for transporting personal effects.

24) The ladder fixes on the exterior of the tent thanks to its ultra-safe system.

25 and 26) The ultimate solution to fight against condensation: the fan. This CMV is normally used on pleasure boats. It is designed to ventilate a volume 7 times greater than the one on the Explorer... The fan is usually totally silent, however sometimes it can make a slight noise if the ventilator blades are not positioned correctly. In this case it is sufficient to press on the blades to put them back in position to eradicate the noise.

27 and 28) The totally silent paracord zipper slides and the protective panels above the openings that we would like to see on the other tents.

CONCLUSION

It is the most qualitative and accomplished... before it is copied in the slightest detail at any rate! It is the only tent on the market which comes with a real guarantee. Despite these qualities, it is not the most expensive...



RANKING :
 1 - EXPLORER - recommended retail price : 2 500 €
 2 - AIRTOP - recommended retail price : 2700 €
 3 - IKAMPER - recommended retail price : 3 300 €
 4 - DJEBEL LINE - recommended retail price : 1 800 €

	appearance and finish	impermeability	reaction to condensation	set up	take down	wind resistance	quality of materials	original accessories *	reliability *	guarantee	value for money
AIRTOP	4/5	4/5	1/5	5/5	3/5	4/5	3/5	1/5	3/5	2/5	3/5
DJEBEL	1/5	0/5	0/5	4/5	3/5	3/5	1/5	1/5	1/5	1/5	1/5
IKAMPER	2/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	0/5	2/5	1/5	2/5	1/5	1/5
EXPLORER	4/5	5/5	5/5	4/5	4/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	4/5	5/5	5/5