Written by Marianne Hyland
Thursday, 15 November 2012 08:36

Choosing a tent is a personal decision and there are many things to consider: cost, type, make, model, durability, weight, level of comfort, and quality, among others.

We have used our Springbar Family Camper 7 for four years now. It is 10'x14' and sleeps up to eight people. There are five in our family. Our boys were six, seven and eight when we bought the Springbar and we already had our two German Shepherds, each taking about the floor space of a small human. So make that seven in our family. Our prior tent was one we picked up at a department store in Singapore two days before we set out on a trip in our Land Rover Defender. We used it extensively for a couple of years in the Malaysian jungle but we were never really happy with it and were always worried that "this" would be the camping trip the tent would fail, so we treated it with kid gloves on every trip.

The decision to purchase a new tent was long overdue and I decided to inaugurate our first big overland trip in North America with the purchase of a new tent. I spent weeks reviewing every option, from heavy canvas to lightweight nylon, and everything in between.

In the end, given our needs and how rough we are on gear, I chose the Springbar. I love our Springbar. Every time I use it, I am happy that I spent the money and bought it. It is well-made, well-designed and uses material and hardware of high quality. In a nutshell, it has everything I look for in a product. It is strong and sturdy. It has seen us through baking heat, howling wind, monsoon rain, blowing snow, and worse than all of those, my boys' rough-housing.I did not once worry if the Springbar could handle it all. It is easy to set up with 2 people who know what they are doing, and once you do it once or twice, it is intuitive. The structural parts come together easily and well. You only need to execute an action once. There is no fiddling with sticks that slip out or clips that come off on their own accord when they were meant to stay on. It is little things like that that make a difference, especially at the end of a long

day.

The light-coloured, heavy cotton breathes so well that it is not an issue to be in the tent in the height of summer. I love the huge windows on the front and back of the tent that provide amazing cross-flow ventilation when you need it. The view from the big floor-to-ceiling windows also ensures you don't feel claustrophobic. The zips slide open and closed so smoothly they never fail to impress me - none of that fiddling with two hands to unstick a zip. The canvas is amazingly soft and pliable for material that does as good job as it does repelling rain and snow. So it rolls easily, be it packing the tent away or rolling down the window and tying it up. It has a heavy rubberized floor so you can put it on wet ground without worrying if the moisture will soak through. Its awning attached easily with a big zipper, and the angle of the side flaps can be adjusted depending on the direction of rain or sunlight. Insanely strong tent stakes are paired with giant metal loops to put them through. Those reasons are more than enough to make the Springbar a great choice but every one has a criterion that makes or breaks a purchase for them. For our family, the roominess of the Springbar is premium. It just doesn't work for us to feel cramped when camping, and in the Springbar, one has more than ample headroom. An adult can be standing completely upright and walk about every square inch of the tent. Hence, the tent is more than just a place for us to rest our weary heads at night. It is a place where we can relax and unwind somewhat at the end of a long day, a place where we can comfortably get changed for bed, do a bit of reading and chat, laugh and smile about the day. And on those days when the weather is against us, we can spend the day in big sheltering space, without tripping over each other. Ahh...but the price is high for such comfort and some might say, luxury. The biggest setbacks of the Springbar, for us, are its bulk and weight. The tent (and awning) fit in a large canvas stuff sack, about 2' high, and 1.5' across. The poles fit in a separate canvas bag and are about 5' long. Total package weight: about 75-80 pounds. This is probably not a tent that you would strap to the top of a Subaru.

[illegible] Tent, including technical specifications and