

Osservatore Motoristico

Tutto Fuori Strada

4X4 • SUV • CROSSOVER



ROUTE GREEN
PROVA
JEEP
Wrangler
4xe



ANTEPRIME E NOVITÀ



TOYOTA LAND CRUISER



DACIA DUSTER



OPEL GRANDLAND



VOLVO C40 RECHARGE



» **Prova 4x2**
Citroen C3 Aircross
PureTech 130 EAT6



Al volante del nuovo Isuzu D-Max



Autohome production and quality are so appreciated that Italian tents are shipped all over the world, from the USA to New Zealand to Japan.

A STYLE FOR A HOLIDAY



They have been manufactured for over sixty years but never in history, before, there has been a similar boom of roof tents. Here are the suggestions for the purchase of made-in-Italy tents.

TEXT AND PHOTO BY EUGENIO MARTIGNANI

A life dedicated to designing and building roof tents, creating new models, and constantly improving the quality of materials and finishes. Giuseppe Fercodini is a co-founder and owner of Autohome, the company set up from a project that in 1958 led to the production of the first rigid shell tent, the legendary Maggiolina, still manufactured today. Since then, the range increased, evolved and manufactured in the warehouses of the Italian company, a world leader in roof tents, there are now over 100 models, sizes, and variants. The choice between the various options

becomes difficult and then what is better than following the advice of those who made their job a mission: make travel free!

So, we went to Rivarolo Mantovano, the production site of Autohome, and wandering from a department to another we listened...

"My brother Giacomo and I have always fought to make it clear that quality and experience are everything in our sector - so begins Giuseppe Fercodini - because they lead to practicality, livability and durability of the product".

That's one-track-mind Giuseppe: building the best tents so that, whatever the type of trip and





Giuseppe Fercodini in a meeting with Valentina Daina, marketing manager and authoritative voice of the style centre. Then the original design of the patent of the first Maggiolina tent.



From the production unit, roof tents are shipped to give free rides to off-road adventure lovers.

AY IN FREEDOM

at whatever latitude, the off-road vehicle can be transformed in a moment into your own home.

"Like your own home, your roof tent needs to be comfortable, easy-to-use and sturdy, so it's important to choose it well and look at the details." The first distinction to make is between the rigid shell tent and the fabric tent, which provide for the same use but in a completely different way.

"In the heroic years of off-road racing, those of Nino Cirani who covered the world with his Land Rover 109 and his tent on the roof, the favourite one was the Air-Camping fabric tent, which we still manufacture today with all its variants. It accounted for seventy percent of our production but today the percentages are reversed - explains Mr Fercodini - because now hard roof tents represent 70% of our sales."

The reason is easily explained: *"In the epic years the folding fabric tent cluttered only half the roof, leaving the other half free to load jerry cans, spare parts, spare wheels. Today even those who cross Africa or Iceland prefer speed of use and greater comfort of the Maggiolina rigid shell tent"*.

Also, because today - we add - the off-road

vehicles are more reliable, they need fewer spare parts and the spare jerry cans on the roof are replaced by the additional tanks hidden between the chassis lugs. So, let's look at the best-selling tents, the rigid shell tents. In the Autohome range there are three product lines: Maggiolina, Airtop and Columbus.

"Beyond the different lifting and the different type of opening, they are all united by their extreme strength, aerodynamics and silence during the journey. The shells are made of solid fiberglass, which it is insulated internally to protect from heat and cold. In the shell tent, you are better insulated from any weather condition, and what is more, they better withstand the wind".

Fercodini would like to point out that the tent must be of top quality, at the cost of spending even more at the time of purchase. *"There are shell tents which do not keep their shape, made of waterproof PVC fabrics that are cheap, but that makes you sweat and blocks perspiration from inside to outside the tent. We only use sturdy fiberglass for the shell, which is virtually eternal and made in Germany fabrics which are both water-*





proof and breathable at the same time. And then the most exposed hinges are waterproof and spiral-shaped, to resist over time and mistreatment." To be comfortable, the tent must be chosen of the size appropriate to the number of people and their height. So, there are three different tent widths from 130 to 160 centimetres, but you can also request X-Long, 230 instead of 210 centimetres in length, or X-Large, 230 in length by 180 centimetres in width. The fabric roof tent, although less in demand, still has its charm and its usefulness. As already mentioned, when it is closed it occupies only half the roof of a long wheelbase off-road vehicle, leaving room for a second tent or travel equipment. And then it can also be fitted to those compact SUVs that, due to the small size of the roof, are better aesthetically suitable to the fabric tent, that is smaller when closed. On the other hand, once opened, it offers consi-

THE PRODUCT RANGE

FIBERGLASS SHELL TENTS

>MAGGIOLINA - 7 MODELS

>AIRTOP - 3 MODELS

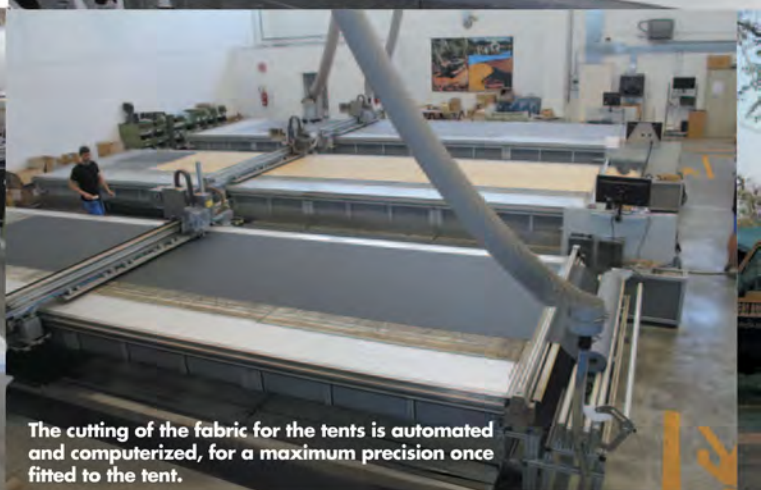
>COLUMBUS - 4 MODELS

FOLDING FABRIC TENTS

>NINO CIRANI RANGE - 4 MODELS



The assembly of the tent on the fiberglass shells, that comes from the molding is manual.



The cutting of the fabric for the tents is automated and computerized, for a maximum precision once fitted to the tent.

derable internal habitability. Giuseppe Fercodini perfectly masters the fabric curtains, and he wants the customer to be aware of some points before purchasing. "The fabric tent, that opens like the mythical Air-Camping by Nino Cirani, has its charm and smells of adventure, but be careful to choose it well so that it does not become a ...misfortune!"

"The fabric tent must be strictly made of heavy and waterproof cotton, just like ours. Nylon, PVC, and other materials which are lightweight that most of our competitors use, do not let breath and above all turn the tent into a sail at the first wind breeze.

Do not forget that we are two meters above the ground to sleep!" And then, he points out, "The double sheets supported by sticks and the pagoda shaped covers -so dear to the competitors- hit and shake the tent when it is windy, generate noise and turbulence and it becomes very difficult to sleep.

Our fabric tents are compact, they do not have any fluttering parts and they are made of heavy fabric

that won't let the wind in, creating a much more resilient and comfortable monolithic structure!" But that's not all, Fercodini points out another important aspect in the choice of a tent. "When you buy the folding fabric tent, don't even think

Quality and performance are certified and the warranty is 5 years!

about the material of the floor. We use waterproof and water-repellent melamine wood with high elasticity, which lasts over time without creating reliability problems". And he continues:

"Certain products of foreign competitors that come from distant countries instead exhibit polystyrene coated platforms! And I don't add anything else..."

No doubt on the critics about the cost of his products: "Quality raw materials like ours cost, but they pay for themselves with comfort and durability!"

And he continues with an anecdote: "A traveling friend said, when you go to a good restaurant and eat very well, you remember what you ate and not the bill!"



IF IT DOES NOT PROTRUDE, YOU SLEEP ON THE ROAD

With the tent on the roof, you can sleep also, in public areas where parking is allowed, provided that the open tent does not protrude from the vehicle on the ground. With shell tents you can then sleep on the street in the suitable parking areas, while it is not possible with fabric tents covering the public land when protruding from the vehicle. Unless the open tent only covers the roof of 4x4, positioning it as Nino Cirani did with its Air Camping.

