

## ADVANCEDFRAME CONVERTIBLE



Loch Lomond

We are two of those folk who enjoy multiple activities – we walk, we cycle, we sail, we paddle and we generally enjoy travelling and being out of doors. A few years ago we also invested in a camping van – some might argue that this is a sign of decadence or wimpishness in old age, but we don't care. We have lots of T-shirts (now mostly dirty, soggy & generally well worn) to remind us of more austere times.

But one problem with a camping van is fitting a canoe into it. For various reasons a roof rack is not an option on our model, so I tried

to resolve the problem by building a sectional canoe (ply & epoxy) which could be unbolted and fitted inside the van. The canoe worked well, but we overlooked one fairly basic consideration – either the canoe could go inside, or we could go inside, but not both together, or at least not with any degree of comfort. And so we came round to thinking about an inflatable model. There were several possibilities which we looked at, some were cheaper, some were lighter, some were more compact – and as often happens in life, a compromise had to be reached. There were two factors which really swung us in favour of the **Advanced Frame Convertible**. Firstly it seemed more robust than its competitors – and as we intend to use it mainly on the Scottish west coast, we thought that robustness was a prime consideration. Secondly the UK importer, Nick at Vortex seemed a very helpful bloke from whom we could easily seek advice if we encountered any issues or problems. So the decision was made one Sunday evening and by Tuesday morning we were eagerly tearing at the wrappings of our new toy.

The first couple of outings were on Loch Ard, our local water and confirmed to us that we had made a good decision. The boat was both easy and quick to inflate and once in the water felt comfortable, was reassuring stable and handled well. We were also pleased to note that it didn't take too long to dry - dry



Loch Roag, Lewis

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enough to transport without dripping everywhere that is, though it was a couple of days before we felt it was dry enough to pack away for storage (it was January, after all).

The next significant outing was to Loch Lomond to photograph the profusion of bluebells on Inchcailloch. It was rigged as a solo boat this time - the versatility to use it as either a single or a double is yet another of the attractions of this model and confirmed that it can be handled by one person as easily as by two. Again it proved ideal for the job and after a quick



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wipe down with a towel could be carried home without creating puddle in the back of the car – an important consideration if it was going to travel inside the camping van.

But the main reason for buying the boat this year was for a planned trip the Outer Hebrides and I've got to say that it proved absolutely perfect for the job. We weren't purely canoeing – we also had boots & bikes with us, but the ability to, for example, paddle across, rather than drive around, the loch to visit the stone circle as Callinish (Scotland's answer to Stonehenge) was exactly what we wanted. Or, to explore some of the east coast of the Uists with its multitude of sea lochs, islands & skerries - watching seals diving under us & the gannets diving from above. No long epic trips, but great for mixing in with other activities ..... and the thought of paddling it the length of the Uists is one to ponder for future years. It would be more than up to the job.

All in all a great addition to our selection of outdoor equipment.

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