

Making a "tunnel of love" an el cheapo boom tent and a Queen Size bed (extract from Careel News)

Mark Cherrington and Nic Hoskin outline a simple design for a DIY boom tent for a Careel 18.



We recently decided to work together on a boom tent based around flexible fibreglass tent poles and standard camping store tarpaulins.

The cost for this came to under \$150 (Nic managed it for under \$60), plus a bit of machine sewing and fiddling/experimenting.

If you have an existing "dome" tent which uses the fibreglass poles, you may well find these will be the correct length, and will save you having to buy them.

An off-the-shelf 10 ft by 12 ft (actually slightly less than this, with the hemming) tarpaulin formed the basis for the tent. It's almost exactly the right length to cover the entire boom and, with the poles inserted, give gunwale-to-gunwale coverage with the boom at the highest spot on the mast gooseneck.

You'll actually need two, because one needs to be cannibalised to form sleeves for the fibreglass poles. They are about \$18 apiece from Kangaroo Tent City in Camperdown.

Getting the right fibreglass pole length is best done with the mast up and the boom attached (and held at the right height using the topping lift).

Mark bought a couple of really cheap mosquito net "tents" from Kangaroo Tent city (about \$40 each on sale), which gave him four lengths of pole. He then removed one segment from each length to give the optimum pole length.

Nic used the poles from an existing dome tent, and didn't remove any segments.

We both sewed in full-width sleeves at each end of the tarp, along the 12 ft length.

For the poles in the middle of the tarp, Nic opted for a single pole in the centre, Mark for two a quarter way down. Full sleeves are not necessary for these; instead open "patches" (sewn each side so the poles can thread through them) were sewn on at each side and in the middle.

It's quite tricky inserting/removing the poles into/from the full length sleeves at each end of the tarp; best if you can do it on dry land then unroll the tarp along the boom. This could be tricky if you were setting up on water. The poles for the centre slots are a lot easier to insert/remove.

The tarp is pulled tight along the boom using the existing eye holes; tie it off at the stern end as close as you can, then pull it tight at the mast end (it won't quite go all the way).

The poles are attached under the gunwales using small fairlead V cleats; we tied about 1 m lengths of 4mm shock cord on to the ends of each pole using running hitches (the nice thing about shock cord is that a running hitch can be tightened right up so it won't slip).

It's then a matter of running the shock cord through the eyes in the V cleats and cleating it off. Loosening off the shock cord on the cleats along one or both sides lets the edge of the tarp lift up so you can talk to your neighbours over dinner/breakfast.

Secure the tarp along the edges with some small eye screws under the gunwales to line up with the eyes along the edges of the tarp.

Mark also opted to add flaps at the stern end so that the cockpit is more fully waterproofed against rain blowing in. As these were done in a bit of a rush before the Lake Macquarie cruise, they are a little untidy and need a bit more work.

The offcut from the cannibalised tarp just happens to wrap nicely around the front of the mast and back to the baby stays using a length of shock cord, to provide front protection against wind-blown rain.

Comments

The tarpaulin material is easy to sew and completely waterproof. However, it tears easily, and we don't have lot of faith in how waterproof the seams are. Longer term, a boom tent of nylon or canvas might be better -- but more expensive.

After Lake Macquarie, we reckoned we could probably omit the poles up at the mast end; instead angling the tent straight over the boom, and fastening it to the cleats under the gunwales.

Nic opted for slightly longer poles than Mark. His tent looked neater, but didn't go all the way to the gunwales, while Mark's did (which would improve water protection).

The tent has NOT been tested in any kind of rain, so we can't guarantee how good a job it would do.

We THINK the fibreglass tent poles would withstand reasonably strong winds. They are very flexible, and are given additional support by going over the boom.

We also think the fibreglass poles may be able to form the basis of a sunshade that could be used while sailing (ie, fit *under* the boom). More on this if and when we get a chance to try it.

NOTE: I've since found out that fibreglass poles of a similar diameter are also used for electric fences, and apparently are a bit cheaper. Presumably you'd get them from a rural supplies outlet. Single continuous lengths (that don't come apart like tent poles) would also make setting up/dismantling your tent a lot easier. When not in use, just slide the poles down under your cockpit floor, alongside your whisker pole.

A queen-size bed for your Careel!



Our main reason for making a boom tent was to allow us to have a protected, dry sleeping area in the cockpit.

Mark has adapted an idea spotted in the US-published *Handbook of Trailer Sailing*. This gives you a full-width "bed" in your cockpit; a lot roomier and more comfortable than the V-berth up the front!

For the "base model" you'll need three strips of timber the length of your cockpit floor, plus a sheet of marine ply to fit there.

For the strips of timber, I used three leftover lengths of turpentine from a deck we'd had built; they'll need to be strong enough to support the sheet of ply and however many of you are sleeping on it.

On the ply, I bolted a strip of timber (again, some leftover turpentine) down the centre, supported on shorter lengths of 25 mm square cypress; this also acts as a bracing strip to get the jib sheets in good and tight when racing.

The lengths of cypress have gaps strategically placed.

When sailing, the strips of timber lie parallel fore and aft (two on each side and one in the middle) on the floor of the cockpit, with the ply sheet on top of them, bracing strip side up.

Don't forget, you'll also need a small hole cut out up near the front to give you access to your keel lockdown.

For sleeping, lift up the sheet of ply so you can get access to the strips of timber. Now lay them ACROSS the cockpit, resting on the seats. This gives you a support for your ply "bed base".



Then flip the sheet of ply over, so the bracing strip is on the bottom. Those gaps "strategically placed" in the lengths of cypress allow you to feed the support strips through, so they won't slide around (though this shouldn't be a problem). Note that this process is a bit awkward. If you didn't want the bracing strip, you would avoid having to flip the ply sheet.

The resulting "bed base" is slightly larger than a single bed; taking it up to double/queen-size is simply a matter of adding a second sheet of ply (which you can store under the main piece).

Push the main piece of ply all the way over to the port side of the cockpit and drop the second sheet on top of the support strips next to it. This piece will have to be slightly shorter to make room for the engine when it's tilted.

With this set up, you still have access to the cabin (slightly restricted, unless you have a sliding hatch).

I haven't gotten around to painting/varnishing these components as yet. The sheet of ply on the cockpit floor when sailing is a lot easier on the feet, and seems to stay tidier than the fibreglass floor. If it gets damp, it seems to dry fairly quickly.

Once painted, it would be a simple matter of wiping it down with a cloth or towel before setting out the sleeping gear.

Any improvements or variations on this idea would be welcomed.