

## Trekking is made easy

For a growing population of “overland” travelers, many of the comforts of home are long forgotten. Month-long trips across country and borders means living with the bare minimum, but one local company is working to make life easier on the road.

Claremont resident Mario Donovan’s passion for the outdoors led him to a thriving business that tries to address some of the most basic concerns that traditional campers have. His company, Adventure Trailers, is making waves in the overland traveler community after sponsoring some high-profile cross-country treks.

One such trip will see a group of 4 friends travel from Newport Beach to the southern tip of Chile and back up the eastern coast of South America. The group calls themselves the Feral Green Project because their Ford truck runs on bio-fuel, and they plan to do various charity projects along the way.

The travelers are scheduled to work on emergency housing projects through Un Techo Para Mi Pais and help convert land for national park use with Patagonia Land Trust. They also packed hundreds of copies of Joel Harper’s *All the Way to the Ocean* to distribute along the way.

“The Joel Harper book was translated into Spanish and provides a collateral vehicle for us to teach children about preserving one of Earth’s precious resources, and one that we derive constant enjoyment from - the ocean,” said Eric Paine, whose group began their adventure on Saturday.

Another high-profile group sponsored by the company traveled from Canada to the Arctic by way of a frozen river. The trekkers from Expedition West slept in Adventure Trailer’s weather-resistant tent while camping in subzero temperatures.

Both traveling groups hauled Mr. Donovan’s custom-made trailers, which are becoming a hot commodity in the overland travel industry. The trailers attach to

traditional off-road vehicles and are suited for weekend camping trip or months-long overland excursions. When fully equipped, the specialty trailers include a refrigerator/freezer, a solar panel, electric outlets, a shade awning, stove burners as well as significant extra storage space for fuel, water and camping gear.

The trailers also feature a 4-man, all-weather tent with built-in cushions that takes mere seconds to assemble.

When set up, the tent rests on a flat surface several feet above the ground. The elevated sleeping area puts campers in a much safer spot when camping in isolated environments populated by dangerous animals and insects.

Most of the parts for the trailers are purchased from various local businesses around southern California and delivered to Adventure Trailers’ warehouse in Upland. There, the team assembles the pieces based on customer’s requests and ships them off around the world.

Mr. Donovan’s company began more as an after thought, he said. His original plan was to organize African safari-like tours in the United States, but while searching high and low for the appropriate vehicle and trailers needed for his startup business, he said there was just nothing appropriate on the market.

“I just couldn’t find anything in the US that was made the way that I wanted it,” Mr. Donovan said.

*(story continues)*



COURIER photo/Gabriel Fenoy

**Matt Strachan sets up a Horizon Model Adventure Trailer inside the Adventure Trailer shop and warehouse in Upland.**

He turned to a South African company and quickly started up a partnership to bring the special trailers to the American market. Eventually, market forces and fluctuating exchange rates split up the partnership, and Adventure Trailers took off on its own.

For now, the trailers come in two models, the larger Horizon model and the more compact Chaser. Depending on what amenities the customer is looking for, the prices range from \$4000 to \$16,000.

Customers will take the trailers on weekend trips out in the desert to 6-month surfing adventures in Baja, said Scott Lacey, shop manager for Adventure Trailers. One customer began his overland trip in the United Kingdom, retracing the Silk Road from Europe and east to Beijing.

“We got guys who go out for several weeks at a time, and up to several months,” Mr. Lacey said. “And they’re going all over the place, all over the world.”

Mr. Donovan and his crew appear quite satisfied with the direction of the company. Adventure Trailers are set to sell up to 80 trailers this year, double of what they sold one year ago.

“Our philosophy is ‘Our journey is our destination,’” Mr. Donovan explained. “We’re not out looking for obstacles on the road, the obstacles will come. That’s what makes us different ...”

—Tony Krickl



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**Mario Donovan, owner of Adventure Trailers in Upland, demonstrates how to use the refrigerator built into one of his state-of-the-art campers. The trailers, which currently come in two models, also feature amenities like a stove and a weather-resistant tent.**