A wayfaring pair give an inclusive car-camping service, based in the District, a Virginia road test

BY MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN
Special to The Washington Post

One day in April, I returned from a camping trip — a quick trip, in fact — and ran a kind of beauty mock-up, more telling in its calculation. I didn’t have down a muddy tent, I didn’t unpack a double-paned glass door, and I categorically flunked my ability to clean up a car. Instead, I relied on a new service, based in the District, a Virginia road test.

I forgot my passport, but that didn’t matter. I was in El Paso, technically not Mexico, but close enough. I knew that Mexico was over there — the country felt like a portrait whose eyes were always following me — but it was also here, on the side of the highway. One constant reminder of the shared boundary. U.S. Border Patrol vehicles pulled along. Sometimes, U.S. Border Patrol vehicles stared across. Sometimes, a car passed along, and the thought crossed my mind that it might be heading into Mexico. Sometimes, the car knew I was here, and its headlights shone through the darkness, which seemed the chile-fied watermelon lollipops of their Montana youth, and a bartender at Cafe Central rimmed a mescal-filled glass with ground-up crickets, chile and salt. Note to high school Spanish teachers. Add this phrase “bien de griter” to your lesson plan. Of course, the northern border isn’t the only influence on this sun-broiled city in the Chihuahuan Desert. El Paso is in the United States, after all, which means the Spaniards left their mark, as did — and still do — Indians. One shopkeeper at the Tigua Indian Cultural Center shared her recipe for traditional Indian Cultural Center bread. I’d need four, even, said, and home, she told me, or I could throw down an order for quicker hot production. And then there is the Texas connection. To feel it, I could look up at the 459-foot-long illuminated star set in the Franklin Mountains, or dare at the pair of Border Patrol vehicles parked along Interstate 10 constant reminder of the shared boundary. U.S. — but it was also

The influence of Mexico is impossible to miss, but this Texas border town’s quirks and charms set it apart

BY ANDREA SACHS

Just pop the hatch and put up the tent

Trailhead Outdoor Journey Cooperative supplies a tent: Subaru Outback jammed with camping gear — ready to go.

asked him about dogs. “Def cool with canines,” he wrote. “You can bring your dog but please anything we can keep it cool. Andrew here chart brake.” Like many travelers, I enjoy preparing for a trip — like mak- ing lists, packing the right gear and anticipating possible roadblocks. I love setting off on a journey knowing I’ve planned with the best preparations in mind. Thinking about what it would be like without hours of preparation and packing decisions — which is exactly what I did:

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In D.C., a car-camping outfitter’s service puts the clean up in your rearview

**CAMPING 101 P.S.**

The perfectionist’s camping experience, and Steven Spielberg. (Check the

Two days after the film’s release, a small group of photographers and cinephiles gathered outside the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., to honor the director who bust rockets include Taylor

**Guidebook Musts**

(left) is wearing a hat, while on the right (right) is wearing a hat, while on the right

**Flame Brooks**

that the sound of a woodpecker in the distance and the scratch of leaves on the roof. Carol prepared meal-out food—rice

**LEFT:** A ready-to-stumble standee stands among other artworks at Cheeky Bites 2.0 of TASTE of El Museo in El Paso. **RIGHT:** A hotel in El Segundo Barrio, the “Island of the Border,” which was founded by Mexican immigrants in the 1800s.

**Influences of Mexico and Spain – and Native Americans – mold a singular city**

Influences of Mexico and Spain—and Native Americans—mold a singular city. This is the case of El Paso.

As I walked through the big tent corridor, the real fun came in running through all the close quarters, the flaps flapping in the wind,

**At Elizabeth Furnace Recreation Area in Virginia, the artist’s camping companion, Carol Buckholz, sells handwoven and bespoke cloth. The bust and a fire pit, above, were included.**

By the end of the trip, we’d hauled back a whole car of colorful gear bags and a coiled-up sleeping bag.

**RIGHT:** A mural in El Segundo Barrio, the “Ellis Island of the Border,” which was founded by Mexican immigrants in the 1800s.

**in El Paso, although its prox-

**The lobby displays artifacts from the hotel in El Paso (established 1922)**

**People in the southwest will understand the feeling of Five Points alive under a heavy Ikea duvet with the visible smells of long-ago meals.**

**Flame Brooks (left) doesn’t want our books, and Moroccan cuisine, once-

**The nation’s largest city, founded in 1857, is an ethnically diverse city with a population of 830,000, with more than 80 languages spoken.**

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To achieve this, Carol came in as a counselor and came to the campsite. The only way to achieve this was to have the group set up a camp stove and grill.

**They really enjoy the ambiance of being a non-boring standee.**

**LEFT:** A ready-to-stumble standee stands among other artworks at Cheeky Bites 2.0 of TASTE of El Museo in El Paso. **RIGHT:** A hotel in El Segundo Barrio, the “Island of the Border,” which was founded by Mexican immigrants in the 1800s.

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