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THE VIEW FROM

INSIDE

06 | Dec/Jan 2014



**“We are all visitors to this time, this place.
We are just passing through.
Our purpose here is to observe, learn, to grow,
to love ... and then we return home”**

Australian Aboriginal Proverb

Pillar Point, Wilsons Promontory National Park, VIC. Photo Stella Potter

COVER Sportscruiser caravan and 1971 Ford Mustang Boss. Maroochydore QLD. Photo by Daniel Linnet. www.linnetfoto.com

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Getting the diet right over Christmas



Rod Bruem

A funny thing happened at Maroochydoore recently while shooting our latest cover photo.

We checked in at the Big 4 Maroochy Palms, conveniently located across the road from the river where photographer Daniel Linnet captured our sensational cover image.

I was chatting to locals while Daniel was working his magic and they were surprised to hear that we were actually staying at the local caravan park.

One bloke told me he was on holidays in WA recently where a presenter from one of the popular TV camping shows had reviewed a local caravan park, but made it quite clear he'd be spending the night at the five star hotel down the road!

At Time to Roam we prefer to stay at caravan parks whenever we travel.

In most cases we reckon they're better than a luxury hotel, but aside from that, we think it's important to support the industry that supports us.

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If you'd prefer to do the survey online, you'll find the link on our new re-launched website at www.timetoroam.com.au.

On behalf of the team, best wishes for a wonderful Christmas and festive season and thanks for your support in making Time to Roam Australia a success in 2013.

Rod Bruem
editor@timetoroam.com.au



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Senate power bloc backs action on shoddy imports



The new Senate power bloc set to hold the balance of power in Canberra has declared an open door and sympathetic ear to Australia's recreational vehicle industry.

Politicians have so far failed to act on complaints from manufacturers about non-compliant Chinese-made campers flooding the Australian market and even being falsely passed off as locally made.

Australian Motoring Enthusiasts Party (AMEP) Chairman Tony Standfield said he saw his party as being closely aligned to the interests of the recreational vehicle (RV) industry.

"A large proportion of our membership is made up of Four Wheel Drive owners" Mr Standfield said.

"We share many of the same concerns on key issues and would be very interested in hearing more about the (RV) industry's concerns."

Standfield is responsible for the AMEP deal with Clive Palmer that will see Victorian Senator-elect Ricky Muir vote with the Palmer United Party team when they take their seats from next July.

Clive Palmer says his party absolutely supports the AMEP policies and was also keen to see a focus on improving Australia's manufacturing capacity.

The cross-bench Senators will have strong bargaining power, effectively holding the balance of power in Parliament should Labor and Green Senators vote

together to block key legislation.

Mr Standfield said the push by the Australian Camper Trailer Guild for more accurate labelling and for non-compliant imported trailers to be taken off Australian roads was "perfectly legitimate".

"From a safety point of view, lives are being put at risk and this is not a situation that should be allowed to continue," he said.

Mr Standfield's comments come as the RV industry's disparate lobby groups, representing various states and sub-sections of the industry have reportedly held talks about trying to lobby the new government with a more united voice.



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Free camping debate rages along coast

A push by business and RV owners for more free camping sites at popular coastal holiday destinations continues to gain momentum.

While Australian inland centres have been quick to open up parks and showgrounds in an effort to be declared "RV Friendly", coastal communities have taken a more measured approach as they seek to protect the business of established caravan and tourist parks.

Evidence the tide is turning in the move by major regional NSW councils at Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie to make RV places available outside commercial caravan parks.



Coffs Harbour Council is debating introducing a permit system that would allow RVs to buy permits to camp at a designated area known as the North Wall for a limited stay of 48 hours. An existing council-owned caravan park is nearby.

There has been a concerted campaign by local businesses and RV owners in support of the move. They claim Coffs Harbour is missing out on tourism dollars from self-contained travellers who refused to pay to stay in caravan parks, although currently RV owners appear to park wherever they like along the foreshore.

Port Macquarie Hastings Council has taken a different approach, giving so-

called "primitive campsite" licenses to showgrounds at Wauchope and Camden Haven, both located well away from the popular Port Macquarie foreshore and in towns without caravan parks.

Bob Kennett, President of the Wauchope Show Society, said the allocation of just 16 sites would make a big difference to the showgrounds, helping bring in much needed revenue to maintain facilities and boost the Wauchope economy.

"The Wauchope Show Society has had a good relationship with the caravan industry over the years. Every August we host the Mid North Coast Caravan and Camping Show and at other times of the year, the showground is the venue for organisations, such as the Auswide Motor Home Club and others to meet."

Meanwhile in Far North Queensland, Cairns Council has announced on the spot fines of \$220 for campers and RV owners found parking in non-designated camping areas.

Pictured: RVs spotted recently having free rein along Coffs Harbour foreshores



Researchers identify cashed up nomadic sub-species

A university study has found grey nomads are not the big spenders once thought, with another sub-group of grey travellers actually responsible for the bulk of tourism investment in regional economies.

Caravan club members making short trips are Australia's real tourism dollar spinners according to the Queensland University School of Tourism researchers, Dr Shane Pegg and Associate Professor Ian Patterson.

Dr Pegg said the caravanning spotlight had shone for many years on grey nomads, overlooking the impact of the short-stayers, a sub-group the researchers have now dubbed the "grey caravanners"

"I began chatting with them at the Brisbane Caravan and Camping show and it became apparent that they were different from the grey nomads," Dr Pegg said.

Dr Pegg and Associate Professor Patterson began working on ways to identify grey caravanners and determine what set them apart from the more high-profile grey nomads.

Mr Patterson said the grey caravanners were more focused on short-stay trips including weekends away and were members of a caravan club.

"They generally travel in a group of about 30 caravans for a weekend away," he said.

"They don't go far, usually within 200km of their home town, and they try to go

somewhere new.

"They have formed very strong social networks, which have been virtually ignored in previous studies, even though this group contributes quite a lot economically and socially."

In 2012 alone, he estimates Combined Caravan Clubs of Queensland members contributed nearly \$3 million to Queensland rural and remote towns.

Dr Pegg said these caravanners also had a positive social impact on the communities they visited.

"They don't just arrive, spend money and leave. They connect with the communities and, in turn, the communities get an awful lot back," he said.

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Sunshine Coast push to ban Wicked

Tourist parks on Queensland's Sunshine Coast are being urged to turn away campervans displaying obscene language.

Campers owned by the Wicked rental chain have been described as offensive and accused of destroying the region's reputation as a family-friendly holiday destination.

The Sunshine Coast Daily newspaper has urged the local council to instruct caravan parks to refuse entry to any Wicked Camper displaying offensive messages.

"Just as any business operator can refuse service to someone behaving offensively, tell them the message on their vehicle is offensive and they're not welcome," the paper said in a recent editorial.

A survey of readers found more than 50 per cent believed the campers should be



banned, while a further 14 per cent wanted the company shut down altogether.

The campaign won support from Sunshine Coast Mayor Mark Jamieson, who told the paper that upholding moral standards was a priority.

"I agree that it's unnecessary - words like that shouldn't be on vehicles or anywhere for that matter - and as the mayor of the Sunshine Coast I'm behind him," he

reportedly said.

The Advertising Standards Bureau has also expressed frustration at continuing complaints it receives about the Wicked hire van slogans, some of which are seen as sexist, racist and homophobic.

Bureau chief Fiona Jolly has urged the Queensland Government to force the Brisbane-based firm to either have offensive vans repainted or taken off the road.

New home base for nomads

A caravan park giving travelling nomads the opportunity to have a permanent base has been launched central NSW.

The new concept is the brainchild of retirees Janet Kelly and Graeme Booker who moved to Coolah recently and purchased the town's picturesque riverside caravan park.

Now re-named the Coolah Home Base and Caravan Park, it has been set up as a cooperative, allowing buyers to take a share in the property.

This gives them exclusive rights to a particular site or cabin, which can be used as a home base and leased to others when they're not using it.

Most of the sites have already been sold and Ms Kelly said any remaining spots would go to members of caravan clubs by "invitation only".

She said the concept had been highly successful and expects the same model could be used to develop more caravan parks around Australia.

Ms Kelly said attractions and facilities in Coolah are well suited to Grey nomad travellers and the central location is ideal for interstate travellers.

"We've also introduced a Happy Hour every day at 4.30, which has proved extremely popular," she said.



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Tamworth Viscount upstages Danish Princess

Crown Princess Mary of Denmark may have been the official guest of honour for Sydney Opera House's 40th Birthday celebrations, but it was a colourful caravan called Lolo that took centre stage.

The 1978 Viscount, formerly used as a radio outside broadcast van in Tamworth, was destined for the local tip when it was rescued by Sarah Bedak who'd been dreaming of converting a caravan into a stage.

Sarah boasts Hungarian Roma heritage and she thought a caravan was the ideal performance space for her band. Lolo Lavina plays traditional Gypsy styles of music, at the same time positively promoting Roma culture.

"I feel very privileged in Australia to be able to do this. If I was in Hungary the caravan would have been burned by now. The racism, harassment and murders (of Roma people) there is quite terrifying."

"I wanted to play with the gypsy caravan stereotype, while at the same time make our music more accessible in a uniquely Australian way, given our passion for caravan holidays."

After a long search, Sarah found a builder



who cut open the left hand-side of the van then reattached it with a piano hinge, which lowers to become the stage.

"When I discussed my idea with tradesmen they thought I was mad, but one guy understood and agreed to take it on. He did a meticulous job."

The hardest part Sarah says was taking



Sarah Bedak and the band providing the entertainment at the Sydney Opera House's 40th Anniversary

a sledgehammer to the original interior. It's been replaced with a warm, kitschy re-design, complete with flock wallpaper and old family photos on the walls.

"I wanted it to be like a lounge room, so I could invite people into our home. People just love it, especially the kids, they want to move in."

After wooing the crowds at the Opera House's 40th, Lolo the Caravan and the band are in big demand with a trip planned to Melbourne in the New Year.

Info: www.facebook.com/pages/Lolo-The-Caravan-Stage

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Caravans from the past and future

German designers have gone back to the drawing board to try to entice more people to take caravan and camping holidays.

The sector has actually suffered a downturn in Europe, so manufacturer Knaus Tabbert decided to do something about it, designing a futuristic caravan from scratch to try to generate some excitement.

The "Caravisio" (pictured right and below) made its public debut at this year's Dusseldorf Caravan Show after two years of development involving more than 20 other European manufacturers.

This included extensive wind tunnel tests to prove its aerodynamic efficiency.

Tabbert says his aim was to bring the comforts found in big motorhomes into a much smaller package, towable by a European car.

Caravisio has a fold-out rear deck, a TV that projects on to the ceiling and the outside wall, as well as two electric bicycles that are recharged while the van is moving. All the systems are controlled by a smartphone app.

Tabbert says there are absolutely no plans to put the Caravisio into production, but certainly many of its ideas are likely to be taken up by forward-looking designers and manufacturers world-wide.



New home for UK's oldest caravan

One of the world's oldest caravans, built by the Bristol Wagon Works in 1885, has found a permanent retirement home.

128 years ago, Dr William Stables commissioned the 30 foot long 'Wanderer', Britain's first touring caravan. It weighs two tonnes and boasts a bookcase, china cabinet and musical instruments in its Edwardian interior.

The caravan remained on the road until 1960 and even paid a visit to the Queen at Buckingham Palace in 2007 (pictured above). It's now going on permanent display at the UK Caravan Club's site in the Cotswolds.

Although capable of being towed by a car, the caravan was initially pulled by Dr Stables' two horses - Captain Corn-flower and Polly Pea-blossom.

Gwilym Owen of the Cotswold Motor Museum said "It's had a little bit of modernisation over the years, such as new wheels and axle from a 1930s Austin and a more modern hitch but everything else is basically the same as it was when constructed."

Picture and story courtesy caravantimes.co.uk. Wanderer photo copyright the Caravan Club, UK.

What do you believe?

We had a lot of feedback from readers about the cover of our last issue, with the Jayco Starcraft teamed up with the classic HK Monaro.

Comments included more speculation about whether the 1968 Holden really could have been the same vehicle that won the Hardie Ferodo 500 at Bathurst that year with Bruce McPhee behind the wheel.

Bruce's signature is on the glove box of the car and we do know it was bought from Wyong Motors in 1971 – the same dealer that owned the Bathurst winner.

One reader asked, "If that's the winner, then what's the yellow Monaro sitting in the Motor Racing Museum at Mount Panorama?"

We contacted the Bathurst museum and it turns out its GTS Monaro is in fact a replica. But they also say it's not uncommon for avid collectors to have their cars signed by racing drivers in all sorts of places, so a signature doesn't really mean all that much.

The mystery remains.

We also heard from a major caravan salesman who took grave exception to the news story in our last issue

suggesting there's been a drop in demand for larger size caravans as younger buyers turned to more compact models.

According to this industry veteran, sales of vans in the 20 foot-plus category are stronger than they've ever been.

I pointed out the major sources for the story were accountants and industry "observers", who've never actually sold a caravan. Would they really know as much as someone who'd been selling caravans for more than 20 years?

As always, we welcome your comments and feedback.

Rod Bruem

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In support of safe towing

Firstly thanks for your magazine I feel it is one of the leaders in its field with so much information and great stories. We got hold of our first copy recently in the caravan park in Clarence Town NSW.

Your recent article regarding 'Licence to Tow' has a lot of merit. Some basic driver training would be a lot of help to some people, possibly endorsed by NRMA and similar organisations.

I hope you can clarify a rumour that is spreading fast amongst people we meet on the road, concerning caravan weights. It has been said that the authorities in NT and QLD have started weighing caravans on the road as they do for trucks. Could you clarify this for me in respect of weight of caravan to tow



vehicle allowance or the weight of the van on its wheels in regards to its compliance plate gross mass? Many recreational vehicle owners tend to load what they think they need, which often overloads the vehicle beyond what are the allowable limits. What are the authorities actually looking for?

**Hoping you can explain this to us all.
Charles & Zillah Williams.**

Charles and Zillah, we've checked with both Queensland and NT Transport and both say they're not mounting any special enforcement campaign on caravan weights, although random checks are sometimes carried out. NT Transport says caravan owners are welcome to run their vehicles over the weighbridges at truck checking stations in major centres to make sure they're within the registered limits. Above left is a photo sent to us by Colin Young of the Independent Caravan Council showing what can happen to a vehicle pushed beyond its towing limits. There is more useful technical information on safe towing on its website: www.caravancouncil.com.au
- Ed

Catching the Kombi bug

It was great to read the tribute to the VW Kombi, featured in the June/July Issue of Time to Roam.

I too have had a long interest in Volkswagens; my Dad bought one of the first Australian-sold 1954 models as a used car in 1957. I bought my first VW, a 1964 model in 1982, which I owned for 20 years, and now own a 1974 Kombi Campmobile (fully restored by me) and a 2002 VW Bora.

Ferdinand Porsche first designed flat-four air-cooled engines for Zeppelins in the 1910s, and air-cooled 'people's cars' for Zundapp, and later NSU, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, long before Hitler came along and financed the VW project. In any case, the Transporter did not start production until 1950, long after the war, and after the British Army had restarted the plant and handed it back to the Germans under new boss Heinz Nordhoff, formerly of Opel.

Your comment, "In Australia the Kombi had a terrible reputation for chugging up hills, overheating and dying" - what rubbish! Remind me again how well the contemporary 1960s Commer, DKW, Mazda Bongo or Tempo Matador vans performed?



Kombis gather at the recent Old Bar VW Festival in NSW 2103. Photo Andrew Barton

And as for reliability, how many of these other makes do you see on the road now or how many 1970s Japanese vans do you still see today?

During the Kombi's locally-built heyday from 1971 to 1976, Volkswagen sold 44,545 Transporters in Australia, an average of 7,424 a year. In 1975 VW sold 8,974, more than Toyota sells Hiaces or Hyundai sells iLoads today. VW would never have made those sales figures without the Kombi's remarkable record of strength and reliability in Australian conditions. The Kombi's much-loved persona today reflects the high esteem in which they've always been held.

Certainly in recent times you do sometimes see broken-down backpacker Kombis, most of them already well and truly

stuffed after 40+ years of hard work. In any case, if Kombis ever had such a terrible reputation you imagine, then there is no way they would be so collectable now and be worth the crazy money that some collectors are asking for, and paying.

I would also like to make the point that the Kombi is by no means dead just because the Brazilian factory is finally killing off their ancient 'T2c', albeit with a modern Polo-based alcohol engine. The T2 was followed by the more modern T3 here in 1982, rear engine and air-cooled initially but water-cooled after 1984, and the new front-engine front-drive T4 in 1992. Today you can buy a modern T5 Kombi by simply going to your

→ continued page 18



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YOUR ROAD TO FREEDOM



← from page 16

local Volkswagen dealer. They are still the same family - as your reporter Richard Robertson acknowledged in his review of the fantastic T5 Trakkadu.

The panel van was the biggest selling version of the VW van, sold in large numbers



to businesses, fleet and government buyers, followed by the 'Kombi', which was a window van with removable seats. The Campmobile (to use the proper name) was just a local conversion of the Kombi, while the Microbus was a relatively small seller due to its great cost; more than a 6-cylinder Kingswood or Falcon station wagon. And there were actually two 'utes' - the single-cab, and double-cab, pickups.

Kombis were made here, in VW's Clayton factory in Melbourne. From 1959 to 1968 the body panels were fully stamped here, using Australian steel, but then from 1968 to 1976 they were locally assembled from German 'CKD' kits but adding Australian components like glass, tyres, batteries, paint etc. Only from 1977 have all VWs been fully imported. Sopru was the official Campmobile converter, being owned by LNC Industries (who also owned Volkswagen Australia Ltd and their dealer chain Lanock Motors), while Swagman and Trakka were aftermarket converters. Trakka bought Sopru when LNC Industries was liquidated in 1987 and only then became the official converter under new VW importers Ateco.

Kombis were not imported here until 1954 and first went on sale in April, following



the first public showing at the 1954 Royal Easter Show. Kombi production only ended in Australia in 1976. Germany continued production until 1979, when the T3 was introduced (and we didn't get until 1982). The T3 Kombi (in expensive Caravelle versions) was the only new Volkswagen model available for sale in Australia from 1982 to 1990, when it was finally joined here by the Golf Cabriolet and Golf 2 GTI under new importers Ateco.

I am the editor of Club VW Sydney. You can see our webpage, featuring coming events, for-sales, photographs, magazine back issues, and VW history and technical pages at www.clubvw.org.au

Phil Matthews
Editor, Club Veedub Sydney
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Sunliners grow in popularity

At Home Hill on our return trip home to Cairns from Airlie Beach for a vintage caravan get together organised by the "SEQ Vintage Caravan mob", we were stopped at a pie shop and a fellow caravaner came over with a copy of your magazine with what he thought was our 1963 Sunliner on the cover. As he would not part with his copy of Time To Roam Australia, I looked for you on the web and here we are.



Our friends actually found the Sunliner about five years ago in a paddock a few hours west of Cairns, dragged it home and worked on it for a year. A new hood lining was made (vinyl as in the older cars with hood bows). Most of the Van has been rebuilt or repainted. The renovators already had Sunliners so on completion they put it up for sale and I snapped it up.

The purchase price was in line with other Sunliner sales at the time but the price for these vans has now shot up as demand has also climbed.

Pictured: Inside the Moore's Sunliner and on the return trip to Cairns, their 1960 Pontiac Catalina Safari and 1963 Sunliner along with a friend's 1977 Pontiac Bonneville & Wilson Wheel Works bondwood van.

We use the van regularly on trips all over the Far North and most years go 500km to the Charters Towers swap meet and also visit many beaches and inland destinations including many great places on the Atherton Tableland.

The Sunliner tows very well behind our full-size V8 American cars, weighing in at 600kg, you forget that it's there until you look in the mirror.

Kel and Coral Moore,
Cairns, QLD

Time to Roam Australia welcomes letters, photos & contributions from our readers on just about any subject that relates to caravanning and camping. editor@timetoroam.com.au



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05' Coromal Princeton 17'



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WHEN IT COMES TO VINTAGE CARAVANS, THERE ARE FEW AUSTRALIAN MAKES AS SOUGHT AFTER AS THE FABULOUS FIBREGLASS OLYMPIC.

Advertised as “the Aristocrats of the road”, they’re renowned for their durability and light-weight practical design. More than a thousand were built from 1961 through to the late 1980s.

These timeless classics owe their heritage to the Dimmack family, who can trace their links with caravan building as far back to the 1920s when the arrival of the Model T Ford made motor vehicle travel accessible to many for the first time.

Walter John (Jack) Dimmack started building bondwood and aluminium caravans in Queensland not long after he returned from the Second World War.

Olympic Caravan Industries was registered in 1961. The 16 foot Riviera was the debut model, initially available in a range of colours, with the 14 foot Debonair launched in 1966

priced at \$1600.

They were followed by another mid-size van called the Contessa, the luxury 19 and 21 foot Stardust launched in 1969 and an 11 foot six “Micro Styleleader” following in 1975.

As demand increased, Dimmack decided to simplify production by making every caravan the same colour. It’s why most you see on the road today are generally cream in colour unless they’ve been repainted by their owners.

Production peaked in the late 1960s around the same time Olympic found national fame thanks to two very well planned publicity stunts.

As media watched on, a Sydney dealer towed an Olympic caravan down the Parramatta River behind a boat, proving they were leak-proof and could go just about anywhere.

→ continued page 22



It's a perfect match

Margaret and Neville Green (pictured above) are proud owners of this beautifully restored 1968 Olympic Debonair, neatly teamed with a 1976 ZH Ford Fairlane.

They've had the car for 28 years, but the caravan is a more recent acquisition.

Neville set his sights on getting one and searched all over Australia, before finally finding one just a few miles from home near Yeppoon in Queensland.

"I picked up the local newspaper and it said 'fibreglass caravan for sale'. So I went

and had a look at it and sadly it had holes all through it. It was a wreck. I had to say no.

"So I went to have a beer with a mate who lived nearby, happened to look over his back fence and then I saw another one in the neighbour's yard."

Neville says it was another few months before he was finally able to buy the van which had been used as a kid's cubby house for many years and was in a bad state of repair.

→ continued page 25



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← from page 20

The same PR stunt was performed on the Swan River in Perth and was even more memorable thanks to the addition of some “damsels in distress”.

Beautiful women in swimsuits rode on the roof of the caravan, but it all came unstuck when the tow rope broke and the caravan started floating off. Fortunately one of the onlookers came to their rescue, diving in the river and re-attaching the tow rope.

As well as the watertight fully fiberglass vans, Olympic built other recreational vehicles including campers and a range of composite fiberglass caravans in the 1970s marketed as “Travel Trailers”

Factories were located at various Brisbane locations and as far away as Labrador on the Gold Coast, with final assembly at a site at Springwood/Slack Creek.

Bob Taylor, who hails from the Tweed region of northern NSW, is possibly Olympic’s biggest fan. He’s a collector, restorer, historian, archivist and even matchmaker.

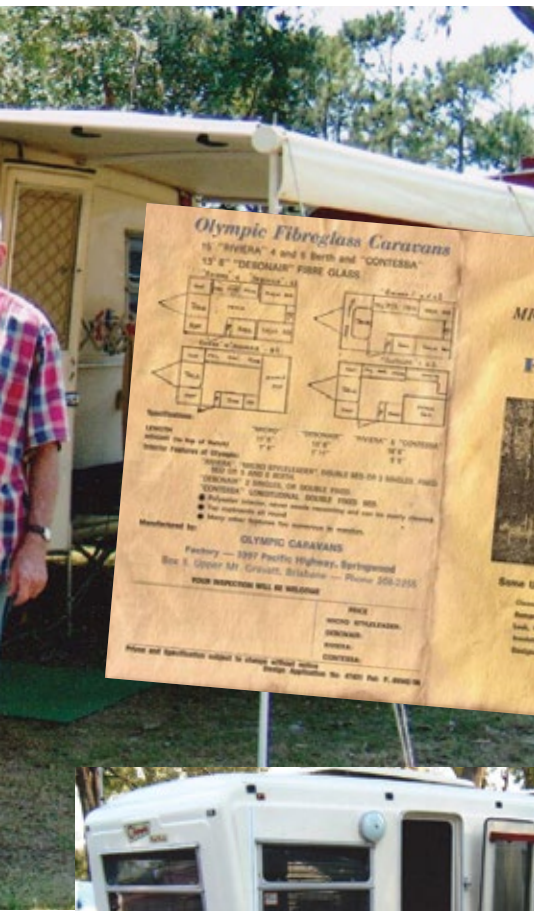
“I’m known for marrying up buyers and sellers. When people want an Olympic, they say, Bob will find me a van.”

Much sought after by collectors, Olympics in good condition have been known to fetch prices in excess of \$10,000.

“People like and respect them because of their dependability. They were well made, they’ll go just about anywhere and last,”

Bob says.

Bob Taylor has kept a register of Olympic caravans and their owners for the past decade. Of the estimated 1200 built he has just over 500 on his database, the most recent having a 1988 serial number on the chassis.



Bob Taylor (left) with one of the seven caravans he's restored, below, and Olympic brochure from the 1970s and a top of the range Stardust model.



Bob worked with the Dimmack family to organise a reunion of former Olympic employees in 2010 which also served as a 90th Birthday party for Jack Dimmack. It was a memorable day and fitting tribute to the caravan legend who passed away the following year.

As for Bob, he's not slowing down, despite having recently being diagnosed with cancer for the third time.

The 75-year old recently bought another Olympic caravan, a 1967 Debonair, which he plans to restore between visits to hospital for treatment. It will be the seventh fibreglass caravan he's restored.

"I know from previous experience that you've got to have a project to focus on to get you through the chemotherapy."

Time to Roam is grateful to Bob Taylor for his contribution to vintage caravan conservation and assistance with this article. We wish him all the best for his treatment and recovery. Bob is always keen to hear from Olympic caravan enthusiasts and owners and can be contacted at robertt@cn-newc.com.au or by calling 0428 850 666. 📍

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Above: On the road with the Fairlane, which Neville acquired by swapping a four cylinder car during the 1970s petrol crisis. Top left and bottom 'the Cubby House' before the restoration and (centre) the refurbished interior, complete with Margaret's late mum's curtains.

← from page 21

The restoration took just over 12 months to complete with Neville and Margaret doing all the work themselves, including the re-upholstery.

"We tried to keep it as original as possible. The curtains came from Mum's. I cut them up when she passed away a couple of years ago," Margaret says.

The only major modification made is the addition of an auxiliary power supply system so they can go camping where they like.

Since completing the restoration they've

travelled extensively including a major trip to Adelaide via the NSW Snowy Region and Victoria's The Great Ocean Road.

"It weighs just 910kgs and on that trip we averaged 15 litres to the 100km on that trip."

Neville and Margaret obviously adore their Olympic which they still refer to as "the Cubby House" and are looking forward to many more happy years travelling with it.

"It's got so much character and it gives us the freedom to go where we like and do our own thing." ♦



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Thinking outside the square

Review by **Rod Bruem**

COMBINING RETRO CURVES AND SLEEK MODERN FINISHES, SPORTSCRUISER STARS AMONG A NEW GENERATION OF LIGHTWEIGHT VANS

Fibreglass caravans are making a comeback as energy prices continue to climb and buyers look for alternatives that don't require a big four wheel drive.

Queensland's newest fibreglass van is the creation of John and Wendy Smallwood. Like so many other 'southerners', the couple moved to the Sunshine Coast a decade ago for a life of semi retirement. The plan was to relax and spend some time travelling Australia taking caravan holidays.

It was the caravan holiday part brought their initial plans unstuck.

After a lifetime of boating, the couple began to lament the fact they couldn't find a caravan with the same attributes of a well-built yacht.

As well as being a competitive sailor, John Smallwood had also had a successful career as an accountant and corporate bail-out

specialist. It wasn't long before he began to do the numbers on designing and building the caravan of their dreams, inspired by his yachting experience.

The aim was to produce a 15 foot van that was strong and comfortable with everything two adults would need. A "one size fits all" package that feels roomy and easy to maintain.

The result is the closest you'll get to 'caravan cool' and surprisingly great value.

It's a caravan that really does stand out. You get plenty of looks on the road and more than a few questions when you pull over for the night.

The SportsCruiser had an interesting evolution. Construction initially started inside a manufacturing facility at Maitland Jail in NSW, with inmates providing the labour. ("It did have its challenges," John says.)

Today the fibreglass shell and chassis are manufactured in China. John says it's not an issue for most buyers, who recognise some of the best manufactured goods today come from there including luxury yachts.

"It's no different to anywhere else, you pay for quality, set the right specifications and standards and maintain strict quality control and you will get a quality product.

"For us it's a continual improvement process and we will continue to add components from where we can source the best quality at the best price."

The walls are like a sandwich, with the high gloss fibreglass vacuum bonded to a high density, structural, fire resistant foam core that doesn't absorb water. An aluminium corner frame is bonded inside the sandwich to add strength and also provide a base for fittings.

To date just over 100 SportsCruisers have

been built, with plans to start ramping up production over the next 12 months now they're satisfied they have the right people and systems in place.

John says 60 percent of the job including interior fit out takes place at the firm's Kunda Park base, just west of Maroochydore.

He's assembled a specialist team to work on the interior. While the Sports cruiser looks pretty amazing from the outside, inside it is equally impressive.

The large Dometic windows and sleek cabinetry, also made of a hi-tech composite, combine to create a unique uncluttered minimalist feel. This is a caravan you really enjoy hanging out in.

The layout is neat and practical, with good storage areas.

The kitchen and bathroom are at the back – both easy to get to from the door at the rear end. As you'd expect in a van this size, the ensuite is not large, with the shower over

the toilet set-up, but this is one of the better units we've seen of this type. It's fitted as one piece into the van during construction, so there are no potential cracks, making it easy to clean and maintain.

Comfy seating is in the centre of the van and it doesn't have to be moved or folded away for bedding. It's great for relaxing and taking in the view from the panoramic windows at any time of day. The beds fit neatly up front with the heads fitting in under the curved ceiling. There's a choice of double, queen or two singles.

The standard van priced at \$39,950 comes with leaf suspension, 12 inch alloys, braked drums and 1900kg rated suspension, although it weighs in just under 1600kgs unpacked. The spare wheel is neatly stored under the front chassis, out of the way and very easy to get to when needed and there's great ground clearance all round.

Heavy duty off road suspension packs are available as extras. The particular van we

tested had top of the range Cruisemaster airbag suspension. As well as making the Sports cruiser equipped to take on the Tanami desert, it allows the van to be levelled out on sloping ground at the touch of a button. This particular suspension pack will set you back another \$4,500.

The Sports cruiser team has obviously worked very hard to keep the van below the \$40,000 price tag and some features considered standard on other vans are extras on the Sports cruiser, such as a TV aerial or microwave oven.

We were most impressed at the moulded polyurethane storage unit added to the front of our test van, which neatly concealed the two gas bottles as well as providing a sizeable space for tools and other essentials. Not only is it practical, but also compliments the curvaceous fibreglass front of the Sports cruiser – one of its stand out features. But the box is one of the extras, in this case costing \$500.

Dream come true – Sportcruiser creators Wendy and John Smallwood



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pros



- It's tough, stylish and affordable
- Spacious interior – if you love modern and minimalistic, this is for you

cons



- Limited sleeping capacity – two people only
- Combined shower toilet – admittedly one of the better units we've seen.



But there's no denying the drive-away package has all the equipment most buyers would be looking for including reverse cycle air conditioning and a roll out side awning.

Be prepared to set aside a little bit more for some bespoke extras to suit your particular needs. For example, you could get the front storage box, plus an upgraded off road suspension system, solar panels (it is wired ready), a drop down external table and a slightly larger fridge (106 litres is standard). You can get all this for under \$5,000, which still makes it a very attractive package.

In summary, this is a home one wheels we genuinely enjoyed hanging out in. It just doesn't feel like any other caravan – and in many ways it's not.

The tough composite fibreglass shell and metal frame make the Sports Cruiser virtually unbreakable and certainly hail resistant!

John and Wendy Smallwood set out to create something unique in just one model that's great value for money and they've achieved that.

If you're at a stage where you're thinking you wouldn't mind a caravan, but nothing you've seen quite appeals, Sports Cruiser could be the answer.

Price \$39,950
Full details and specifications
www.sportscruiser.com.au

Photos: Daniel Linnet



OR YOU MAY LIKE TO TRY



DESIGNER VANS CHEETAH

A fibreglass van/pop top with a development history to match that of Sports Cruiser. Planning started more than four years ago, with input from Monash University on the aerodynamics. It weighs in at 940kgs, meaning it can be towed by a Camry. Built in Wangaratta VIC and **priced from \$50,000.**



KARAKAMPA

More than matches Sports Cruiser when it comes to a well-designed fibreglass van with a sleek look and feel inside and out. It has a great front boot compartment and large skylight over the bed. The Melbourne-built van weighs 1400kg and is **priced from \$50,000.**

Top: inside the Sports Cruiser feels spacious, modern and incredibly roomy. Bottom: The light-weight plastic composite front storage unit, neatly holds the gas bottles with room for other essentials.

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Makings for a happy holiday

Tested **SUNLINER HOLIDAY G53** Review and images by Richard Robertson

SOMETIMES IT'S WORTH GOING BACK FOR A SECOND LOOK

When iMotorhome's contributing editor Malcolm Street first reviewed a Sunliner Holiday G53 on an Iveco chassis last year, he came away a little underwhelmed. He summed up by saying, "In a way the Sunliner Holiday looks a little downmarket from the usual Sunliner products."

Second time round however, a different test vehicle, option pack and an entirely different experience.

This time we reviewed a Classic-finished, Specification-Three, Holiday G53 on Fiat's popular Ducato cab-chassis. It's 7.3 m long, 3.4 m tall and in many ways appears chalk-and-cheese with Malcolm's earlier test vehicle.

Sunliner's Holiday range comes in 11 base layouts and more than 100 floor plan options. Lengths range from 7.3 to 8.2 m and depending on your choice a range of base vehicles are offered depending on the layout, Ford's Transit, Fiat's Ducato, Iveco's Daily and Mercedes' Sprinter.

Two finish levels are also offered – Classic and Modern – with the latter being the finish of Malcolm's test vehicle. Modern equates to cool and minimalist and is aimed at a younger market, while Classic is warmer, more 'traditional.' On top of that you can also choose three equipment specification levels for each vehicle. Got that?

The Specification Three pack adds niceties like cabin floor carpet, upgraded 56 cm LED TV/DVD, a second battery, solar panel, ceramic Thetford toilet, gas/electric hot water system, upgraded airconditioning and more.

Fiat Thoughts...

The Ducato is very much a drivers' machine. Remote central locking, power steering, electric windows and side mirrors, a trip computer, cab air conditioning, cruise control and a sophisticated sound system with integrated Bluetooth are all standard – along with a removable satnav system. On the safety front, dual front airbags, anti-lock brakes, traction control and range of other electric aides are all on hand to look after you.



Depending on your driving style and touring speeds you could realistically expect to see 10-12 L/100 km (28-23 mpg) fuel consumption for the Holiday G53 – not bad for a motorhome with a gross weight of 4490 kg. With a standard 120 L fuel tank it makes for easy long distance cruising, with the added ability of often being able to wait for better fuel prices in cities or larger towns.

Body Beautiful

Sunliner uses Seitz hopper windows to full advantage, whilst staying with the convenience of a Camec triple-lock security door. External body fittings consist of the nearside-wall-fitted Dometic wind-out awning and external wall light above the door, whilst the roof features a few items like a windup TV antenna and airconditioner. External storage, apart from the toilet cassette compartment and the gas cylinder bin, consists of the under-bed area that can be accessed from both the offside door and from the inside, by lifting the bed. It's certainly a convenient arrangement, but can be a problem in very dusty conditions.

Out of sight under the rear are corner stabilisers which are a standard

Sunliner feature. Whilst most caravans have them, most motorhomes do not. They're not essential, but it's surprising how much rock n' roll a heavy footed person going out the door can create.

Step Inside...

The Holiday G53 is probably best suited to couples and maybe an occasional grandchild (or two). The entry door is about halfway along the kerb side of the vehicle and when you step inside the kitchen is immediately to your left, while opposite is the dinette. Up front, both cab seats swivel and there is a secondary bed in the smallish over-cab roof moulding.

Wedged between the entry door and front cab is the main part of the rather compact kitchen. Well equipped, it lacks any bench space other than glass lid over the cooker or the sink's draining board. Fortunately, the dinette is immediately behind you when working in the kitchen and it would need to be used food preparation. The fridge and microwave are also across the aisle, between the dinette and bedroom.

Standard appliances comprise a Thetford three burner gas cooker with wok burner,



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grill and oven; a rangehood, single-bowl stainless steel sink with drainer and flick-mixer tap, two-door 175 L fridge/freezer and a microwave. There's decent kitchen storage space, with three drawers beneath the sink and one below the cooker, plus the usual run of overhead cupboards.

The dinette is quite spacious and the table is a good size, while right beside it is a large picture window for making the most of the view. Indeed, the whole vehicle has a spacious and airy feel thanks largely to generous window sizing. Storage space is good too, with space under the seats as well as three overhead cupboards.

In the rear the east-west bed, with its head against the offside wall, takes up a fair bit of space. Featuring a posture slat bed-base with inner spring mattress, the bed measures 1.75 m x 1.37 m unextended and 1.98 m [6 ft 6 in] extended. Although the longer length will be adequate for most people, it does cut down the walkway space considerably, while large windows on both sides ensure good cross flow ventilation.

Up front, the second bed, measuring 1.93 m x 0.97 m is certainly only for smaller couples or a single sleeper as it's not particularly wide, but does offer a large general storage area. To

give easier internal access to and from the front seats, the Luton bed can be lifted up out of the way if not needed.

Scrub-a-Dub!

One part of the Holiday G53's open and airy feel is no doubt due to the unusual bathroom design. Situated full-width across the rear, the bathroom has an interesting two-panel "moving wall" arrangement instead of a normal door.

The sizeable shower cubicle is in the driver's side rear corner and between it and the bedroom is a fixed timber-finish panel. Beside it is a sliding door the same size and finish that can be left retracted for maximum 'openness,' which allows you to look out the window in the bathroom's rear wall, or slid shut to close off two thirds of the bathroom. The final piece of the puzzle is a concertina door that extends from a kerbside-wall recess and joins up with the sliding solid panel, to provide total privacy.

The bathroom is nicely appointed, with a small hand basin and cupboard unit beneath the bathroom window and a mirrored medicine cabinet above it. The shower cubicle has a three-panel sliding glass door, while inside is a height-adjustable domestic style chrome shower and tap unit.

pros

- Easy driving
- Car licence
- Well equipped
- Nice finish
- Spacious feel
- Looks good

cons

- Small kitchen
- Bed extension fiddly
- Limited external storage

In Conclusion

I found the Sunliner Holiday G53 quite appealing. It's a modern, good looking motorhome that provides decent living space, and in Specification Level Three comes with most of the goodies you could ask for. Fiat's Ducato is a better choice than the Iveco for most people as it's more car like, comfortable and just plain nicer to drive. Fancy a Holiday? Best check it out...

Price driveway (Victoria) \$146,330
Full details and more specs at:
imotorhome.com.au 

OR YOU MAY LIKE TO TRY

TALVOR MURANA

Mercedes Sprinter powered. Has nearside kitchen bench, front offside lounge, mid offside bathroom and it's feature item, a club-style lounge in the rear, has an drop-down electric double bed above it. Advantages of this layout are the bed which is out of the way when not being used but can be left made-up during the day. **Priced from \$140,000**

AVIDA EYRE

Another Fiat Ducato-powered B-class motorhome with sleek styling. Snappy Euro-type layout inside with raised island bed or single beds in the rear. Offers great under bed storage, plus good external and internal storage. Driver's cab-seats swivel to form up front lounge/dining area. Island bed option is an issue for some because of height off the floor. **Priced from \$150,000**

AUTO TRAIL FB 23FT

Fully imported from Britain. Powered by Fiat Ducato, features a large front lounge/dining area that includes the cab seats; a double bed in nearside rear corner and a shower/toilet in the opposite corner. This is a spacious motorhome with a Euro look. Disadvantage for some might be the corner bed. **Priced from \$140,000**



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Tick the prizes you'd most like to win! →

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- Camec** Major prize 1 x **'RV Media Pack'** includes a 24" HD LED TV/DVD, a portable satellite dish, and internal and external speaker lights valued at **\$1600**
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- Australia Events** 1 x **\$500 Gift Voucher** and 20 family entry passes to any caravan and camping shows in 2014
- Macleay Valley Coastal Holiday Parks** 4 x night (off peak) cabin stay at either Stuarts Point, Grassy Head or Hat Head for up to 5 people valued at **\$500**
- Fusion Electronics** 1 x Bluetooth RV Entertainment unit valued at **\$400**
- Coast to Coast RV** 2 x Reclining camping chairs valued at **\$270**
- High & Dry Storage** Sydney 3 x 10 weeks caravan or camper storage valued at **\$370** each
- IRONMAN 4X4** 1 x Travel Master multi rod and a multi reel valued at **\$224**
- Blue Tongue Campers** 1 x camping swag valued at **\$199**
- Happy Camper Gourmet** 1 x prize pack of 18 assorted delicious meals valued at **\$190**
- All Natural Vet Care** 3 x Health and Wellbeing assessments valued at **\$165** each
- STICTLY BALLROOM The Musical** 2 x A Reserve double passes to see the 'World Preview' at The Sydney Lyric
- Calenluca** 5 x Soap & beauty travel packs valued at **\$40** each
- Barz Optics Sunglasses** 8 x pairs of Tofino Acetate Polarised valued at **\$60** each
- Rural Scene Promotions** 20 x Double passes (kids free) to any Rural Scene caravan & camping shows in 2014
- Time to Roam Australia** 10 x 12 month subscriptions





Roaming Australia

1. Do you own

(select any that apply)

- a. Caravan
- b. Motorhome
- c. Pop-top/camper
- d. Tent

Make/Model?

Or do you usually rent a caravan, camper or motorhome?

- yes no

2. If you own a caravan/motorhome/pop-top/camper, how many nights have you used it in the past 12 months?

- a. Less than one week
- b. 1 – 2 weeks
- c. 3 – 4 weeks
- d. 1 – 3 months
- e. 4 – 6 months
- f. 7 – 12 months

3. Over the next 18 months are you planning to purchase

- a. A new caravan or RV
- b. A new motor vehicle
- c. A second hand caravan, camper or RV?
- d. Camping equipment including a tent or accessories?
- e. A home or property
- f. Overseas travel
- g. New computer or laptop
- h. New tablet device
- i. New mobile phone
- j. New home
- k. Home improvements
- l. Overseas travel
- m. Superannuation or retirement financial products or services
- n. Shares in Australian listed companies
- o. None of the above

4. What is your favourite thing about caravanning and camping?

5. As a caravanner or camper, What is your favourite Australian tourist attraction or location, and why?

6. What is your favourite National Park or wilderness area?

7. What are your considerations when planning holidays?

(Please rate from 1 to 4, 1 being very important, 2: important, 3: somewhat important, 4: not relevant)

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Kids / family friendly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Pet friendly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | c. Value for money |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | d. Location |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | e. Comfort |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | f. Nature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | g. Restaurants |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | h. Shopping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | i. Nightlife |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | j. Local attractions e.g. water parks, museums |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | k. Safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | l. Getting away from it all |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | m. Revisiting a favourite spot |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> | n. Other |

8. How do you look for information when planning your holiday? (tick all that apply)

- a. Travel guide books
- b. Online travel guides or searches (e.g. Google)
- c. Travel agencies
- d. Recommendations from friends
- e. Travel articles in magazines or newspapers
- f. TV shows
- g. Caravan and Camping Shows or Travel Expos
- h. I find out information as I travel from others
- i. Visitor Information Centres
- j. Other

9. Do you attend caravan and camping shows? If so what shows do you usually attend and where?

10. What is your average daily holiday budget per person:

- a. Less than \$50
- b. \$50 - \$100
- c. \$101 - \$150
- d. \$151 - \$200
- e. More than \$200

Time to Roam

11. How did you hear about Time to Roam?

- a. A friend / word of mouth
- b. A fellow traveller
- c. I picked up a copy in a caravan park
- d. I picked up copy at a visitor information centre
- e. I picked up a copy at a caravan dealer or camping store
- f. I picked up a copy at a caravan show
- g. Facebook



COMPLETE THE SURVEY ONLINE.
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- h. Online
- i. Other

12. How often do you read Time to Roam?

- a. Whenever I am on holidays
- b. Every edition
- c. This is the first time I have read Time to Roam
- d. Other

13. Do you prefer to read Time to Roam?

- a. In the printed format (magazine)
- b. Online via the web
- c. On tablet or mobile device
- d. Online and in print
- e. I didn't know it was available online

14. When you travel what communication devices do you take? (tick all that apply)

- a. mobile phone or smartphone
- b. tablet device e.g. iPad
- c. laptop computer
- d. other (please specify)

15. What do you like or find interesting in Time to Roam?

(Please rank in order of preference from 1-14)

- a. Upfront news
- b. Letters and feedback
- c. Historical articles on caravans, their owners and makers
- d. New caravan, RV and camper reviews
- e. Environment and wildlife features
- f. celebrity camper interviews
- g. Social photo pages (at the shows and events)
- h. Business and Product reviews
- i. Kids & Fun Page
- j. What's On (National Events)
- k. Pets and animal stories

- l. Regional travel promotions
- m. Other people's travel stories and adventures?
- n. Other? Please state

16. Do you find the reviews and information relevant with regard to making a purchasing decision?

- yes no

17. Do our Travel features help you plan your future holiday destinations? ?

- yes no

18. Where else would you like to pick up a copy of Time to Roam? (e.g. newsagents, etc.) Please list any specific places or areas.

Demographics

19. Your age

- a. Under 18
- b. 18 - 25
- c. 26 - 35
- d. 36 - 45
- e. 46 - 55
- f. 56 - 65
- g. 66 - 75
- h. Over 75

20. Are you (select all that apply)

- a. Single
- b. Single with children (under 18)
- c. Married or in partnership
- d. Married / partnership with children (under 18)
- e. Not working
- f. Working
- g. Retired

21. Your household annual income

- a. Less than \$25,000
- b. \$25,000 - \$49,000
- c. \$50,000 - \$79,000
- d. \$80,000 - \$99,000

- e. \$100,000 - \$149,000
- f. Over \$150,000

22. What is your postcode?

To enter the prize draw, tell us in 25 words or less what you like, dislike or want to see more of in Time to Roam and provide your contact details. This survey is anonymous and your name will not be linked in any way to the information you have given. We will not hold or share your personal details without your permission.

Name: _____

Email: _____

Ph: _____

We'd like to keep in touch! Please check the boxes below if you'd like to too!

- Sign me up to Time to Roam's monthly e-newsletter
- Sign me up to special offers from carefully selected partners of Time to Roam
- Sign me up to take part in another Time to Roam survey

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Function and form come together

Tested Explorer Lawson Full Off Road Platinum Pack Story and photos by David Cook

AS DAVID COOK REPORTS, NSW CAMPER TRAILER MANUFACTURER EXPLORER IS BLAZING A TRAIL FOR INNOVATION



Explorer's Andrew Lynch and Scott Crichton

Lifting yourself above your competition is never easy, especially in a crowded marketplace where most buyers have a few fixed ideas on what they want. Whether it's caravans or camper trailers, lawn mowers or fridges, there are basic functional requirements that tend to dictate the physical outcome: function very definitely leads to form.

As for so many other camper trailer manufacturers, Explorer Campers and Canvas, newly formed in the NSW Central Coast city of Gosford in 2007, it was a very significant question. Their answer was to fine tune the standard ideas on the basic side-fold soft floor camper and to give the customer solutions to all those little problems which can sometimes take the edge off an otherwise pleasurable time away in the bush, before they became problems.

The company's founders had the background to achieve this. Working with his father, Scott Crichton had been building and designing campers since the early 1990s, under the brand Cobb & Co, when there weren't many other manufacturers around. His dad wanted to retire, so to share the pleasures and the pains Scott began looking around for somebody else with plenty of energy, a hands-on approach and a love of camping.

He didn't have to look far. He found the right bloke managing his sister's Camping World store. Andrew Lynch came from a

background in agriculture and had also trained as a chef. He'd drifted into managing the camping shop and had purchased one of Scott's old trailers, which he'd bought second hand.

The two got to talking one day and the result was the formation of a new camper trailer brand, Explorer Campers.

They started out manufacturing three different grades of the standard side-fold soft floor camper trailer, with on-road (the Blaxland), semi-offroad (the Flinders) and full offroad (the Lawson) formats, with two different sized tents. They attended regional shows and sold through word of mouth recommendations and were doing okay, then in 2011 they introduced a slide-on model. In 2012 they introduced a rear-fold soft floor model, under the name of the Leichardt.

Explorer founded its success on attention to detail, incorporating little extras, going that extra mile to satisfy customers and produce a very well crafted trailer. It makes a difference when you know somebody has already addressed the little nuisance issues

which can rattle.

Explorer came with a range of innovations, like a lot in this field, have now been taken up by others. These include such things deeper vinyl floors so the canvas wall starts well above ground and is less likely to get dirty. Or sewing webbing tabs onto the peak of the roof as a point against which you can pull so that opening the tent becomes much easier.

Initially, packaging basic soft floor campers sustained a steady business in a growing marketplace. This was a time when the market was booming and everyone wanted in. Market expectations were fairly basic and almost everyone was working on the same sort of cost structure. Then the Asian imports began to arrive.

These can be bought for around US\$1900-\$2000 each out of China, but usually come with a number of significant quality issues. However, for the average customer these aren't obvious unless you know what you're looking at. For many buyers, when

confronted with a soft floor camper trailer that's priced at \$6000 and another that that looks alike for \$15,000, the choice often falls with the former. This began to put significant pressure on all Australian camper manufacturers selling into that \$10,000 to \$15,000 market and for some it has been the death knell.

Explorer, like the rest, was feeling the pressure, but determined to maintain their high quality standards. About two years ago they came up with the idea of putting together one of their campers with all the bells and whistles options for show purposes, to demonstrate what they could do. This demo trailer was nearly finished in the workshop when a potential customer walked in, fell in love with it and bought it on the spot. In fact they had to keep him talking while one of the guys went off and worked out a price.

A new demonstration trailer was prepared and after being displayed at one show was



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taken camping by Andrew on his first holiday in several years. A couple of days after setting up a fellow camper came over and started asking questions about it and ended up buying it on the spot. It soon became evident that there was a market out there which they'd never tested previously.

The slide-ons have become increasingly significant in the Explorer spectrum, now forming about thirty per cent of the 20-30 camper trailers they build each year. A real testament to their quality, they recently sold one to a Queensland-based customer, sight unseen, simply by word-of-mouth.

"With the slide-ons we have been working to replicate that camper trailer experience with a camper on a tray back and that means

a big canvas footprint with awnings and all those features. We're just big on outdoor living," Andrew said.

"We've really been evolving with the market as the market itself evolves," Scott continued. "We aren't big on long term planning because it's still a very fluid market, but we just roll with the punches and try to respond to the market demands."

Predicting future development isn't a big feature of Scott and Andrew's business plan, but they have been tossing around the notion of maybe trying an all-Australian camper trailer aimed specifically at the budget market, as many buyers seek Australian content but would like to see it at more affordable levels.

pros

- Value for money
- Attention to detail
- All-Australian made product
- Big range of options
- User friendliness
- Good 620kg of carrying capacity

cons


- Shock absorbers as standard on the suspension
- A second gas cylinder would be good

Explorer continues to monitor the market's demands for function to dictate the form of their excellently finished camper trailers.

Warranty: Two years

Price: As displayed \$27,450

Full details and specifications at:

www.explorercampers.com.au 

YOU MIGHT LIKE TO CONSIDER



ALL-TERRAIN TOURER

All Terrain is a Sydney company that has been highly rated for a number of years for their tough, no nonsense softfloor campers. The company has won two Camper Trailer of the Year Awards in their price bracket over a 15 year history, and in pursuit of that bulletproof status had become a little overweight, so was put through a recent diet by altering build processes in certain areas, brining the tare weight down from 1200kg to a more manageable 850kg. These side fold softfloors still feature all the good points that have won them so many plaudits. **Prices start at \$26,950.**



CHALLENGE OUTBACK AND MERIDIAN

Challenge Camper Trailers is a South Australian company which has been manufacturing top line sidefold softfloor camper trailers since 2001. Available in both onroad and offroad formats, with three different sized tents, and with a wide range of options that make them very comparable with Explorer camper trailers and potentially very well equipped, Challenge Campers have proven themselves time and again. Challenge trailers are very well priced, ranging **from \$21,750** for the basic Walk-in Deluxe **to \$18,950** for their best selling Outback Deluxe.

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Reaching the finish line

EARLIER THIS YEAR WE MET UP WITH THE TRAVELLING POTTER FAMILY AS THEY REACHED THE 'HALF WAY MARK' ON THEIR DREAM JOURNEY AROUND AUSTRALIA

Steve, Stella and their children Darcy and Raine are now back home in WA, adjusting to life as normal. STEVE POTTER shares the family's tips for others contemplating doing "a lap" of Australia.

Gulls hover overhead and the kids run around catching hermit crabs as they scuttle around beneath our feet like tiny helmeted soldiers. It's the beginning of another balmy September evening as the sun slowly sinks into the Indian Ocean.

The rhythm of the day is punctuated by the coming and going of the king tides as the shoreline reveals its multiple personalities and the humpbacks and their newborn calves cruise silently south along the coast to cooler waters. We are camped directly on the beach of an isolated stretch of the Pilbara Coast in W.A. and this surely must be as close as you can get to Heaven on Earth.

We find ourselves here after a long eight-month journey that has taken us to every state, territory and capital city in Australia and covering over 30,000km.

As I sit and write in by boardies and thongs, it's hard to believe that in a few weeks time I will be back at my office desk, staring at a computer screen and wondering

if the trip was real, or whether it was just some sort of extraordinary dream.

We left home in Boyanup, WA in January in an old Commodore and 1962 vintage caravan. When we caught up with Time to Roam we were in Coffs Harbour NSW, having completed the southern portion of the trip. Since then we have zig-zagged our way up the east coast to northern Queensland, then travelled across to the Gulf of Carpentaria, into the red centre, back up to Darwin and then over to the west.

Life on the road has at times been challenging, however we've been rewarded many times over as we visited most of Australia's world-class sites. Along the way we discovered what, in some ways, could be considered the real Australia – the towns, back roads and places we'd never heard of and which do not normally appear in tourist brochures, but will never be forgotten by our family.

We've learned a lot about life on the road





Opposite page: Family campfire and Stella and Raine take in the view at Kakadu NT, left: Darcy at Rainbow Beach QLD, Above; Raine puts a foot in the water at Byron Bay NSW (top) and watches the sun go down at Cable Beach WA.

and we'd like to share our top ten tips for family road trips.

1. Leaving is the hardest bit

Right, you have made the big decision to head off and have told your family and friends. Now the excitement has worn off somewhat, it begins to dawn on you the magnitude of your decision as you realise the million and one things you need to do to get away. You will probably lay awake at night wondering what the hell you've done.

Don't stress, getting away is the hardest part. We didn't realise how entrenched we were in our own lives. To get away you need to unravel your life and put it aside for a while while you concentrate on something else. Once you have everything squared away and are on the road, you will no longer need to worry about this as much. However, be prepared to take a bit of a break as soon as you get away as you will probably be exhausted from actually getting out the door.

2. Children are more resilient than you think

When we left home we weren't sure how

the kids would manage with life on the road. If we have learnt one thing about our kids from the trip it is that they are pretty resilient when it comes to travel. Our kids can go for eight hours in the car no problem and we have taken them on numerous hikes all around Australia. We have walked as far as 11 kilometres in a day with them and have been regularly surprised with their stamina as we drag them from pillar to post, whether it be through crowded city streets, art galleries and museums, up a mountain or around Uluru.

3. Factor in chat time

You decide to get an early start and the caravan is hooked up, the kids are in the car and the engine is running. While checking the indicator lights on the van, it is inevitable that the bloke from a couple of sites down decides to have a chat, usually commencing with the comment; "Like your van, how old is it?" This is particularly common when you own a yellow 1962 vintage caravan. Although we are always happy to chat, the point is to factor in that sharing a yarn is part of life on the road and therefore don't be surprised if

you never seem to get away as planned.

4. Be prepared to change your plans

You have always wanted to go to a particular spot but the week you are due to get there the weather forecast is for rain. What do you do? An extended road trip can throw up all sorts of unexpected things and therefore you need to be prepared to change your plans. We have done this on a fairly regular basis on our trip: sometimes due to weather and sometimes as a result of hearing about a must-visit place from fellow travellers or locals. A vague itinerary is nice to have, however be open to change if the need or want arises.

5. Take the scenic route

You are driving down the road heading for your destination and you see a sign pointing you to the tourist drive. After reviewing your map you determine that the scenic route will take you an additional hour and an extra 100 kilometres. Our advice is to take it; it is amazing the interesting things that are not on the main road.



As Robert Frost once wrote;
**“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
 I took the one less traveled by, and that
 has made all the difference.”**

6. Get to know your neighbours

When travelling we found one of the best sources of information that was up-to-date, accurate and readily available could be found in one of the easiest places; the people camping next door. By chatting to your neighbours, (particularly those who had been in the spot for a few days), we were able to find out all sorts of interesting things about places to go and see, roads to avoid and the best camping spots. In addition, it always helps to have people that (sort of) know you keeping half an eye on your stuff while you are out and about, especially in free camping situations.

7. Take snacks

Kids love food and will do anything you want them to if it means there is a muesli bar waiting for them in the bottom of the backpack. By being prepared and taking along a variety of healthy (and not so healthy) snacks on the hike or day trip you will find that kids will be able to go for longer and be happier and therefore you get to see and do more as a result. Cheers Uncle Toby.

8. Get a bird book

We brought along an old bird identification book on our trip and it has been used to death as we have tried to work out what bird is which (or is it which bird is what?) on an almost daily basis. We have seen literally hundreds of birds ranging from penguins to bustards to cassowaries, depending on the environment in which we found ourselves. This is something the kids have loved and they can now identify a significant number of Aussie birds by sight.

9. Bush camping is fun for kids

One thing that we were a bit surprised about is how much fun a pair of kids can have in the bush with nothing but the gifts that nature provides in the form of sticks



Top: The 1962 plywood Raven caravan dwarfed by an outback road train
 Below: Paddling in Lawn Hill National Park QLD

(magic wands), logs (balancing beams), rocks (building blocks for fairy castles) and leaves (weaving materials). Add to that a heap of open space and the freedom to make as much noise as they want without annoying anybody and you have the perfect playground for creative minds. Quite often when we have been in the middle of nowhere in the bush, the toys have remained in the caravan while the kids have enjoyed the simple things in life.

10. Get a good camera and learn how to use it

You are going to spend thousands of dollars visiting places you may never see again, with your kids who will never be the same age again. It is well worth the money to purchase a good camera and learn how to use it in a variety of situations before you leave. There are heaps of good books out there to teach you how to get some pretty amazing shots and decent cameras these days are more user-friendly than ever before. You will thank yourself (and your

kids will thank you) a thousand times over for many years to come.

As our journey draws to a close, my wife Stella and I have spent much time reflecting on how this trip fits into the larger context of our lives. We understand that we need to face reality and return to a largely routine lifestyle back home.

However, it is hoped that by taking a chance at doing something out of the square, we have reinvigorated our lives and rediscovered a part of ourselves that was alive and well when we were younger, before kids, mortgages and careers, when we were just two young Aussie backpackers taking on the world. We now understand that the need to explore is something that is not only for the young. It is a lifelong yearning that never really goes away, and like a sleeping lion, once in a while needs to be fed. 🐾

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Mid North Coast	8, 9 & 10 August
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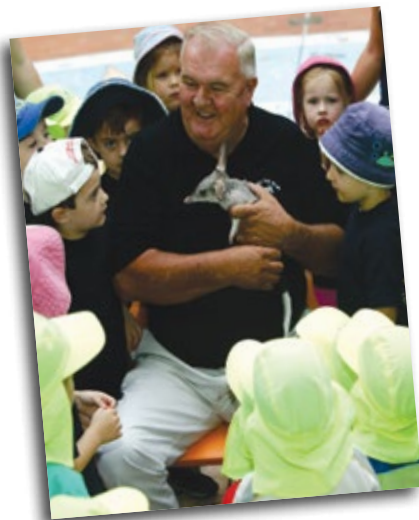




My Top Five: Frank Manthey

Frank, Blue and great granddaughter Peta. Bottom: Educating future generations at a Sydney shopping centre

CONSERVATIONIST **FRANK MANTHEY OAM** HAS THE RARE DISTINCTION OF HAVING HELPED BRING ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S NATIVE MARSUPIALS, THE BILBY, BACK FROM THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION. THE CO-FOUNDER OF THE SAVE THE BILBY FUND WRITES ABOUT HOW HE BEGAN THIS IMPORTANT WORK AND SHARES SOME OF HIS FAVOURITE AUSTRALIAN CAMPING LOCATIONS.



My first taste of outback life came back in 1964 when I boarded a train in Brisbane and travelled more than a thousand kilometres inland to remote Quilberry Station, south of Charleville.

Aged just 13, my ambition was to work on a sheep station, living the life of a cowboy like my hero John Wayne.

I organised for friend to tell my mother and was long gone by the time she found out. Her anguish was tempered by the fact I could send my wages home to help put food on the table for the rest of the family.

Initially I was disappointed to learn I would only be feeding chickens and working around the house yard. But it wasn't long though

before I did become a stockman and had the chance to see much of the unique landscape of Western Queensland. This adventure proved to be a life changing event, giving me a lifelong love of the bush and its people.

In 1958, I married Eva Branfield, a Kooma Aboriginal woman. We raised six children in Cunnamulla and each developed a love of camping in the outback. In those days if you went on holidays, you took a tarp to throw over a rope tied between 2 trees and slept in swags. This meant we could go anywhere and we all have many great memories. In the 1960s, I took my kids to a property called Currawinya to go fishing in a freshwater lake called Numulla. The lake is fed by the Paroo River and you could catch yellow belly on hand lines at any time of the day or night.



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Frank travels widely to make Australians more aware of the need to protect our unique wildlife including (top right) Grootte Eylandt NT



Thankfully, the property is now a National Park. I may be old fashioned, but I strongly believe it made our family stronger.

How my interest in bilbies began

My wife of 38 years passed away suddenly in 1996 and I desperately needed a distraction to help overcome my grief. At the time, I worked as a ranger for Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service at Charleville. A colleague, Peter McRae, offered to take me to Astrebla Downs National Park to observe that last wild population of bilbies in Queensland. Motivated by the tragedy that this species was on the brink of extinction, I spoke with Peter about fundraising opportunities. Together, we established Save the Bilby Fund in 1999. My role has been fundraising as well as community education including school visits. I started the bilby shows in Charleville in 1999 and a Bilby Fence was completed in 2003, creating a safe enclosure protected from predators such as foxes and cats.

We released our first bilbies into the enclosure in 2006 and continue our captive breeding work at Charleville and also at Dreamworld on the Gold Coast.

The Fund is working with the Queensland Government explore more release sites for bilbies. Save the Bilby Fund has also offered grants to other organisations which other assist endangered species including the

Bridled Nailtail Wallaby and the Northern Hairy-Nosed Wombat.

As a Co-Founder of Save the Bilby Fund, I urge everyone to join with our Fund and do what you can help save this very iconic Australian. It is the only Australian animal to have its own National Day, which is the second Sunday in September annually.

We are very quick to blame governments when things go wrong and a lot of the time they are to blame, but governments don't have any money, we entrust it to them to spend on important things like health, schools and to protect areas of national significance. We must look after what we have because it belongs to all of us.

Australia is lucky to be home to some of the world's most iconic species of mammals and yet many are in danger of extinction. Over the past 200 years 27 species of mammal have become extinct. Our work with the bilby is critical to its survival. Bilbies used to occupy more than 70 per cent of mainland Australia. Today the wild populations have been reduced to 600 in far western QLD and scattered populations in the NT and WA.

Bilbies are omnivores which eat insects, bulbs and seeds. They rarely drink in the wild, getting most of their moisture from what they eat. Most remarkably though, bilbies have the second fastest gestation

of any mammal in the world at just 12 – 14 days. With these attributes, bilbies should be everywhere, but predation by cats and foxes is the main cause of their demise. 🐾

You can help us in our work by:

- Buying Pink Lady chocolate bilbies at Easter. Pink Lady is a fully Australian owned company and their chocolates are made in Australia. Pink Lady makes a donation for the sale of each chocolate bilby to help us in our work.
- Making a donation or buying merchandise from our website at **www.savethebilbyfund.org**
- Talking with your kids and grandkids about bilbies. We have a great factsheet on our website and run a competition for kids each year to help educate them about the plight of the bilby.





Here are some of the unique Australian places which I think everyone should have the opportunity to see and experience.

1 Cradle Mountain Lake St Clair National Park, TAS

I have visited Cradle Mountain in Tasmania a few times and never fail to be in awe of its beauty. I am so grateful that this region has World Heritage listing.

2 The Kimberley, WA

It has been quite a while since I last visited the Kimberley in WA. I know there is a group of people who are trying to achieve World Heritage listing for the region - the sooner the better. When I was last there it was still virtually untouched. I would tell people that the Kimberley is one of the only places I know that we haven't wrecked with development, but I fear that this will change unless we look after it.

3 Currawinya National Park and Charleville's Bilby Program, QLD

Amongst many other beautiful aspects, the park has two lakes, Numalla with fresh water and 4kms away is a salt lake called Wyara. The park is very large at 154,870 hectares and is where Save the Bilby Fund built the predator-proof fence so that we could release bilbies into the park. Once visiting Currawinya, please travel the four hour trip through Cunnamulla to Charleville to see our bilby conservation work and live bilbies.

4 The drive from Port Lincoln to Streaky Bay, SA

There are many spectacular beaches along this drive, especially the ones at Coffin Bay. I also would strongly recommend the Barossa Valley - I would have liked to have spent more time there. There is so much history to be found there. I really enjoyed visiting the home of one of Australia's icons, Sir Sidney Kidman, at Kapunda.

5 Little Beach, Two People's Bay, WA

WA is the envy of the world with its wildflowers and beaches. One place I will always remember near Albany is Two Peoples Bay, especially a place called Little Beach. This region is home to one of Australia's most endangered mammals - the Gilbert's Potoroo. Visitors to this region should support the Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group to ensure the survival of this species.



Leisurfest VIC Sandown Racecourse 3-6 October

Photos Phill Terry



A great smile - Dave Berry



Dan Soeters



Andrew Mok



Barb and Scott



Boyd Kimpton



Colin Tobin & Ian Sadler



A Solo Affair



Deb Radford



Erica Pulvirenti



Jayco's - Michael, Scott & Lisa



Frank Norden Wellington Shire Tourism VIC



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The man himself Rob Lucas CCIA VIC



Fiona, Paul & Sharyn



Owen Bolwell

Museum of the Long Weekend October 19



1969 Franklin



Bron & Jessie



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Campsite



Harvey & his home built 1940's Van



Gary and Fran with their 1965 Coronet



Girls just wanna dress up. Jasmine, Brooke, Keely & Meg.



Classics on Lake Burley-Griffin



Ian & Robin Godding with their 1956 Chesney

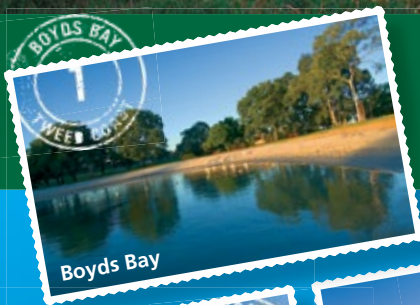


John & Julie & their 1962 Sunliner built in QLD.

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Museum of the Long Weekend October 19



Marion & Greg with 'Wanda'. Greg's parents had it custom built in 1962



The Potters Joshua, Linda & Richard



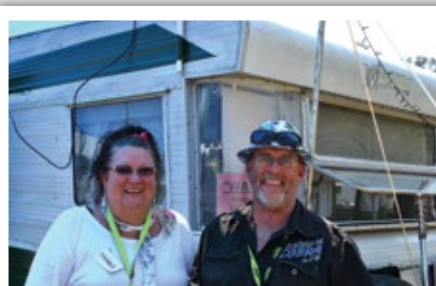
The man himself Jeff Jennison & his 1953 Pathfinder



Two Valiants



Judy & Ken Herne with their 69 Franklin



Maree & Steve from Parkes NSW Viscount 1966



Sue & Warwick (Tassie) & their 1964 Crusader



Ray & Sandy Green (NSW) & their 1965 Duralvan



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Watsons Caravans Coffs Harbour Jayco Owners social evening October 25th



Aldyth, Brian and Bronwyn



Bartenders Bruce & Damian



Chris, Sandra, Mal, Slab, Murray



Danny the Winner



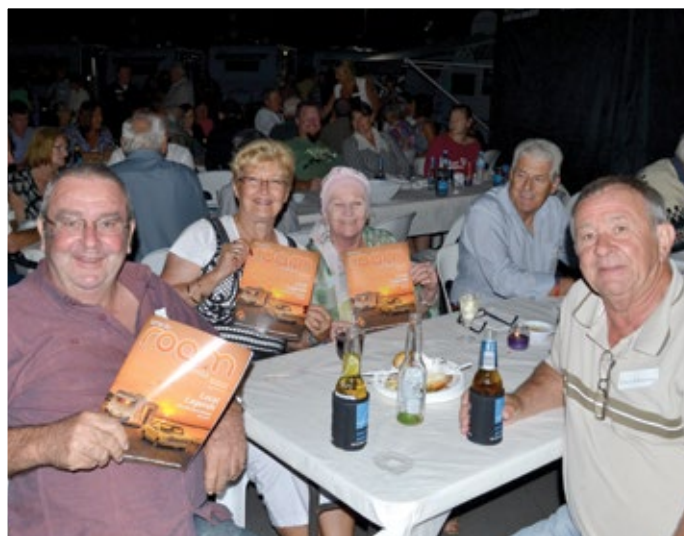
Sheree, Toby and Steve



Simone, Faye, Bronwyn, Peter & Lyn



Kris Watson drawing the winners



John, Jannie, Joy & Gary



Matilda, Adam Watson & Hannah

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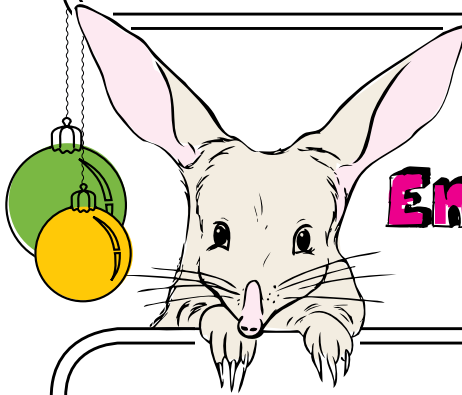
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Animal Word Search

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 W A M K A M T L P A D H G E P H X U G B T
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 M C E E V R Y I K R B L S K K C A U X U I
 W X R A Y N J W B F D I H P G L C I Z K L
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 L R Y N G C Z L Y K M A R N C P D M D G F
 T O O C I D N A B Y U N K V D G T T C C B

- Bandicoot
- Bilby
- Box Jellyfish
- Brown Snake
- Crocodile
- Dingo
- Echidna
- Emu
- Fairy Penguin
- Galah
- Goanna
- Great White Shark
- Humpack Whale
- Kangaroo
- Koala
- Kookaburra
- Maggie
- Numbat
- Pelican
- Platypus
- Possum
- Quokka
- Seal
- Sugar Glider
- Wallaby



Australian Endangered Animals



Fill in the blanks below with these words
Endangered, Extinct, decline, species, low, extremely,

When the numbers of a _____, or kind, of animals become very _____, they are facing a risk of becoming extinct.

_____ means there are no more left, none have been found for over 50 years.

Critically Endangered actually indicates that the species is facing an _____ high risk of being extinct very soon.

_____ means a species is in danger of becoming extinct very soon.

Vulnerable means that the species is not as yet classified as endangered, but numbers are continuing to _____.

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Boinka VIC 3490

Boinka is a situated on the Mallee Highway in North West Victoria between Ouyen and the South Australian border.

The name (pronounced bow-in-ka) means "flat black beetle" in the local indigenous language.



Toying with Caravans By Alan Stevens

In 1879 US retail entrepreneur Frank Woolworth opened his first Dime Store in New York, his chain eventually becoming an important outlet for American mass-manufactured merchandise.

The Dime (10 cents) stores lowered prices for everyday products so were popular with European migrants and rural Americans who'd moved to the cities. The stores sold cheap goods in incredible volumes, with toys one of the biggest sellers.

Woolworth closed its last Dime store in 1997, but many hundreds of inexpensive plastic Five and Dime toys survive today, including curvaceous caravans.

Alan Stevens is an avid caravan collector and historian and can be contacted at www.vintagecaravanhire.com.au



Here's hoping your park isn't this crowded over the holidays. From Con Terry's 1970s French postcard collection.



Left: Caravan mailbox spotted at Rockhampton QLD

Below: Don't leave the caravan without make-up! Vanity units were almost essential in luxury Australian caravans of the 1970s - these images from a Franklin brochure courtesy of Peter Coaldrake



**Have you seen a funny sign while roaming Australia?
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WHAT'S ON



Sandsculpting Australia, VIC

NSW

December 14

Carols in the Caves, Jenolan Caves, Blue Mountains.

Star performers sing traditional Christmas carols among the stalagmites and stalactites. With eleven show caverns, Australia's most impressive limestone caves provide a dramatic backdrop for the best-loved carols. Info: www.jenolancaves.org.au/event

December 29-31

Jindabyne's Snowy Mountains Muster.

Celebrating the high-country heritage, skilled stockmen and women battle it out for the stockman's challenge title. A street parade, poetry competition, live music, market stalls and Gilmore's family circus. Info: www.snowymountainmuster.com/

January 8-12

Parkes Elvis Festival.

Hundreds of Elvis impersonators and look-alikes celebrate the life and music of the King. Info: www.parkeselvisfestival.com.au

January 11-12

Tastes of the World Beer Festival, Newcastle.

See how Australia stacks up against the world with its range of outstanding craft beers, lagers and specialist ales. To be accompanied by delicious international cuisine and funky live entertainment. Info: www.tasteoftheworld.com.au

January 17-26

Tamworth Country Music festival.

This world-renowned festival speaks for itself, but a great event to take the caravan or tent to and soak up the music and friendly atmosphere. Info: www.tcmf.com.au

VICTORIA

December 7- January 31

Lavender Harvest, Wandin, Yarra Valley

With more than 10,000 Lavender plants, Warratina Lavender Farm begins harvesting at the start of Summer. Enjoy fields of Lavender in full bloom and watch pickers harvest using the traditional sickle method. Info: www.warratinalavender.com.au

December 26 - 31

Murray Marathon

This marathon is not what you think: it's a 404 km paddling event between Yarrawonga and Swan Hill, raising money for local causes. Info: www.murraymarathon.ymca.org.au

From December 25

Sandsculpting Australia, Frankston Waterfront

Australian and international sculptors will be carving some of the most intricate and unusual sandcastles. Watch the resident sculptor at work and learn how it's done at a sand-carving workshop. Info: www.sandsculpting.com.au

January 1

New Year's Day Races, Hanging Rock Reserve, Heskett

Hanging Rock's natural amphitheatre makes the New Year's Day races a unique event. Info: www.kyneton.countryracing.com.au

ACT

January 2-5

Summernats Car Festival

Renowned as Australia's premier Revhead event, Summernats celebrates the street machine lifestyle and automotive ingenuity. High octane entertainment as over 1500 street machines, hot rods, sport compacts and other vehicles burn into town. Info: www.summernats.com.au

February 7-9

National Multicultural Festival, Canberra

Eat your way around the world at the National Multicultural food and dance extravaganza. Performers from all parts of the world present comedy, circus-style acts, dance performances, live music and street parties. Info: www.multiculturalfestival.com.au

QUEENSLAND

January 28 - February 15

Chinese New Year, Chinatown, Cairns.

2014 is the Year of the Horse and Cairns' Chinese community is celebrating the new lunar year over a three-week period with first class dining, street festivals, art exhibitions and traditional entertainment.

January 24 - February 9

Hot air balloon festival, Cairns.

Hot Air Balloon Cairns is sending up around ten hot air balloons every day of the Chinese New year. These majestic baubles will float over the Atherton Tablelands and give a birds eye view of the spectacular landscape. Info: www.hotair.com.au/cairns



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Decemer 13-14

Manjimup Cherry Harmony Festival.

Take part in the cherry pit spitting challenge, the great cherry tart bake off, aluminium can sculpting and photography competitions. Info: www.cherryfestival.com.au

January 3-4

Southbound Festival, Busselton.

Now in it's 10th year, Western Australia's only major music and camping festival brings sizzling talent from overseas along with home-grown music and comedy acts, food and market stalls. Info: www.southboundfestival.com.au

February 14 - 16

Kitestock, South Beach, Port Denison.

Wave events and freestyle demonstrations on beautiful South Beach with a full programme of entertainment kicking off after sunset. Info: www.kitestock.com

February 15 - March 31

Taste Great Southern.

Australia's largest geographically-spread festival. WA's Great Southern Region spans Denmark, Albany, Frankland River Mount Barker and the Porongurups. Each showcase their food and wine specialties. Info: www.greatsoutherntastewa.com

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

December 8-31:

Lights of Lobethal, Adelaide Hills

It began in the 1950s when local businesses painted over their light-bulbs with coloured paint at Christmastime. Now Lobethal's Christmas decorations have become the largest community lights display in the southern hemisphere. Info: www.lightsoflobethal.com.au

January 4

Beachport Duck Race and Market Day

Purchase your duck at the Beachport Market

Day in the morning then watch it race against the others in the Pool of Siloam in the afternoon. Info: www.southaustralia.com

February 7-9

Taste the Limestone Coast Festival, Naracoorte.

An explosion of tastes from over 25 award winning wineries and gourmet food producers from the bountiful Limestone Coast Region. Entertainment includes a golf day, horseracing, open-air movie and live music. Info: www.thetastefestival.com.au

TASMANIA

January 17-18

Tamar Valley Beer Festival

Australia's oldest running brewery, J Boag and Son, turns on this festival in the heart of Launceston offering a mix of culture, heritage and live music. There are local wines for the non-beer drinkers. www.tamarvalleybeerfestival.com.au

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out the back / celebrity camper

Celebrity Camper Jessica Watson



JESSICA WATSON STOPPED THE NATION ON MAY 15 2010 WHEN SHE SAILED INTO SYDNEY HARBOUR AFTER SAILING UNASSISTED AROUND THE WORLD, BECOMING THE YOUNGEST PERSON TO DO SO.

Since that epic journey, Queensland born and raised Jessica has kept her polite and charming persona and settled back to everyday life as she maps out the next part of her life's journey.

According to her mum Julie, there was nothing "superhero like" about Jess before she sailed around the world. Three years later, at the age of 20, Jess has the maturity and grace of an elder but is still young at heart. She acknowledges how lucky we are to be in a country where we are free to explore but also a country that encourages its youth to embark on whatever goals they choose.

Of course still Jess loves sailing, although recently has been focussed on studying and writing and she's also an ambassador for the Save the Bilby Fund.

While she's right at home on water, Jess equally loves exploring the Australian bush and pitching a tent on solid ground.

Where did you go for camping holidays when you were young?

We went everywhere to various lakes, creeks, dams, hinterlands and beaches. I have great memories of camping at Elanda Point on Lake Cootharaba (near Noosa, QLD). We

camped around the edge of the lake which was incredible it was so big and safe. Mum and Dad just let us loose to do what we wanted.

What was your favourite place to camp and why?

At Elanda Point we had so much space to roam and places to explore both on the water and on the land. We had our favourites, but discovering new places is always part of the adventure whether it be the bush or beach, out somewhere quiet and remote or in the middle of a bustling town.

Did you camp in a caravan or tent?

We started out in tents and along the way got a caravan but the tents have always been there. We received a little tent each for Christmas one year and often used them even though we had a caravan.

Some of your favourite camping memories?

Being able to just do what we wanted, like mapping the lake at Elanda Point with my brother and sister. We explored the lake in little boats and we drew each part of the bay and the points and we gave them names. This was one of our big achievements!

Any not so favourite camping memories or experiences?

Rain, rain, rain. It can be pretty unpleasant.

Do you have any camping tips? Must do's and don't's

Don't leave chocolate in your raincoat pocket. The possums chewed their way into my tent and into the pocket! Lesson learnt...eat the chocolate! And hold your sausage close to you if there are any kookaburras nearby.

Do you still like to get out and explore Australia? If so, what's on your camping location wish list?

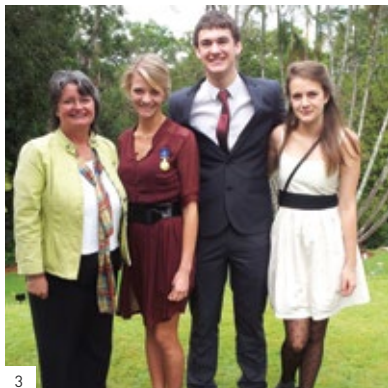
I've had a glimpse. We saw a little bit of Australia as a family when we went camping but there is so much more out there. I've spent so much time on the coast in recent years but I know there are so many more awesome places that I want to see. I would really like to see more of inland Australia, the deserts and the different landscapes.

Would you prefer to do this in a caravan or tent?

I'd probably go back to the tent.

Sailing the world you would have seen a lot out there. How would you compare sailing with camping?

I suppose there are some similarities like being at the mercy of the elements and being



Pictured: **1.** Jess and her best friend Pamela at Elanda Point in 2000 where the family camped in summer and winter. "Each time we camped there it was a different adventure. It is one of my favourite photos. We'd go off exploring, way beyond the eyes of our parents! After all, that's where all the best adventures start. We'd just come back from one of our many 'mapping the lake' expeditions." **2.** Jess and the family camping at Spicers Gap, Main Range National Park in 1998. "Waking up in the morning at a new camp site was always exciting when you have the site to yourself. It feels like you own it. We were so lucky to have such a pretty spot." **3.** The Watson family Julie, Jessica, Tom, & Hannah at the OAM Ceremony May 2012.

reliant on the weather. Also the fact that you are often by yourself and reliant on instinct, skills and also what you pack.


What are you up to with sailing? Any more enormous adventure plans?

No I am pretty happy at the moment but who knows. I don't want to put myself under too much pressure like that right now and get caught up in another big project. I am studying a communications/sociology degree and one my big goals is to finish. There are so many other things I'd like to do and that includes more down-time with mates and camping. My sister and I have a few great friends who enjoy camping, so we do have plans to do that.

How did you get involved with Save the Bilby organisation?

Mum had known Frank Manthey, one of the founders, for quite a long time as she used to take kids along to see the bilbies, so we had a connection with him.

He introduced himself to me and we knew he was an awesome guy so I agreed to help out and lend a hand.

It's been great. I've been along to quite a few publicity events to help promote the plight of the bilby and other endangered native animals and there's even a bilby named after me so I intend to go and meet her as soon as I can. As yet I haven't visited the safe bilby enclosure but that's something I would really like to do and that could be a good opportunity to camp out. 

Phill Terry

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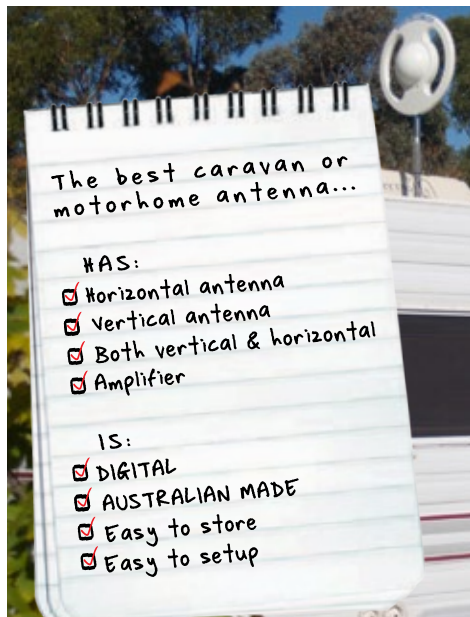
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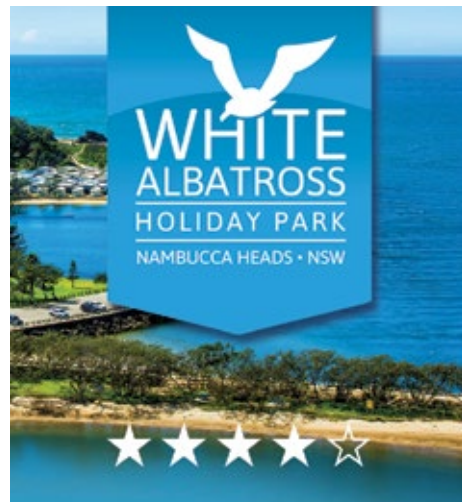


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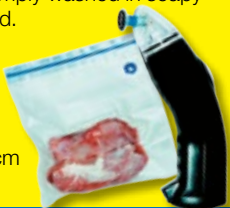


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Feeding your dog on the go

Story by Karen Goldrick

Diets tend to go out the window during the holiday season, even for dogs. KAREN GOLDRICK has good food some tips for those travelling with canines.

After a few camping trips with my dog, I am starting to work out the best way to organise feeding her. Usually she is on a home prepared diet, made up of fresh raw meat, ground vegetables, raw meaty bones, organ meat, oils and nutritional supplements. Although we are loaded up to the gills when camping, and do in fact have a (plastic) kitchen sink, there is definitely no space for a vegetable grinder, extra pills, and especially not enough fridge space to keep raw meat and bones fresh.

The first rule is to keep it simple. The food you carry with you has to keep fresh, store easily, and not take up too much space, or be too heavy.

Dry food is ideal because it can be stored in a sealed container. Many bags of dry food are self-sealing, or can be rolled and sealed with clip.

Because it is a concentrated source of calories, you don't need to bring a large volume of food with you. And it is usually easier to store and carry a packet of dry food than cans or packs of meat.

If your dog cannot eat dry food, then many good quality wet foods are sold in single serve sachets, which again are easy to store and do not require to be kept after opening. Another option, which helps reduce food waste, is to feed your dog some of your leftovers. Cooked meats and vegetables are OK for most dogs to eat. If your dog is used to homemade food this can work well, but there are some things to be aware of. Avoid the following: onions, excessive garlic, processed meats like ham, macadamia nuts, chocolate, sultanas or raisins, avocados, very spicy foods, cooked bones and excessively fatty foods which are more likely to cause tummy upsets.

If you prefer to feed raw meat, then you can purchase it in advance and package it in vacuum sealed packs for prolonged storage. Vacuum packs can be stored in the camp fridge, and take up less space. Your butcher can do this for you, and can advise as to the storage times and conditions for different types of meat. You can then combine the meat with vegetables you are cooking for yourself.

Do not leave uneaten dog food out, because it will be a magnet for scavengers, or insects. Food bowls once used should be cleaned, wrapped in newspaper and stored away.

Which ever way you decide to feed your pet while travelling, always change their diet slowly the week before you travel, to get



Mac is a mini dachshund, 18 months old. He's obsessed with his ball and is adored – equally obsessively – by his parents Doug and Crystal MacDougall of Sydney. Make your pet a star by sharing your holiday snap with Time to Roam: info@timetoroam.com.au

any "adjustment tummy upsets" out of the way and make sure your dog will actually eat the holiday food.

Carry Probiotics with you if you need to deal with bowel problems on the road. And make sure you include enough fresh drinking water for both you and your canine.

Karen Goldrick is a veterinarian at All Natural Pet Care, Russell Lea NSW www.naturalvet.com.au



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