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THE VIEW FROM

INSIDE

02 | April/May 2013

**"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

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COVER 1968 Sunliner caravan shot at Coledale Beach NSW. Photo by Daniel Linnet www.linnetfoto.com

Sunliner from Richard Potter collection.
Kia Sorento courtesy Kia Motors Australia

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HERE COMES THE SUN

The story behind the rise and fall of the Sunliner – Australia's first fibreglass caravan, designed and built in the small NSW town of Forster in the 1960s. They were ahead of their time back then – and now the curvaceous beauty may be making a comeback

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FINDING A HIDDEN GEM

George Ladas has spent a lifetime working with caravans, but it was only recently that he discovered his dream van hidden away in a farm shed. He traces some of the history of the iconic Millard brand

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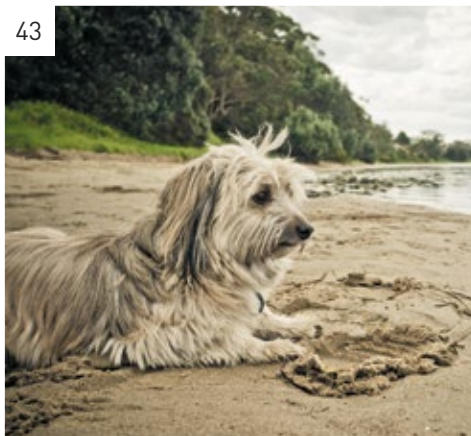
She's one Australia's most successful communicators: a journalist, author, presenter and comedian. She's also an 'accidental nomad', passionate about touring Australia and the rights of RV users



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Rod Bruem

A tale of two industries: Car versus Caravan

Thanks for all the great feedback and support for the first issue of Time to Roam Australia.

You told us you loved the nostalgic 'roam' down memory lane, so we're back with features on two Australian industry greats from the 1960s, Millard and Sunliner.

Once again we also review the best of what's new, with a look at family vans, compact motorhomes and rugged off road campers.

The Sunliner cover story is an interesting trip back to the fledgling days of the Australian caravan industry.

Retired car salesman Bert Tickner designed and built Australia's first production fibreglass caravan from the isolated beachside town of Forster NSW.

He overcame various setbacks to leave behind a legacy of one of the most sought after classic caravans from that era.

Visiting Australia's biggest caravan and camping show in Melbourne recently and marvelling at all the Aussie innovation, I wondered how proud Bert would be if he could see the thriving industry today.

Victoria, the heartland state, is home to over 100 manufacturers, employing more than 5,000 people and earning nearly 1.5 billion in annual revenue.

Victoria is also home to the bulk of Australia's motor vehicle manufacturers and as a taxpayer it's hard not to make comparisons between the two industries.

As RV makers quietly get on with business, we now know the big car companies received subsidies totalling \$4.5 billion over the past decade.

I've done the math and it works out Australia's RV industry has received less than 0.001 percent of the level of taxpayer support that

has propped up the motor companies.

That tiny percentage represents a small grant given by the Victorian Government to the Caravan Industry Association to complete a strategic blueprint.

The success of Australia's RV manufacturing sector is proof you don't actually need to throw buckets of taxpayers' dollars at an industry to make it successful.

But that's not to say more couldn't be done to support RV manufacturers.

Many times we hear the complaint local firms face unfair competition from imports that aren't subject to the same compliance and safety standards as the Aussie-built product.

Issues like this should be addressed as a matter of urgency, especially in an election year.

The VIC strategic blueprint will propel the industry to further success if it's followed through properly on a national scale.

It's worth noting however that a call for 'improved policy and research' comes in at Item 9 on the plan, two points behind a call for better trade shows.

It makes you wonder if the industry's strategic priorities are really in the right order.

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"It's just so good to get away from it all"

Australia comes third in caravan sales

A survey of international RV sales has ranked Australia as the third biggest caravan market in the world, worth \$7 billion annually.

The 2012 Global Caravanning Profile reported 21,500 new caravan registrations were made in Australia in 2011, a figure surpassed only by North America (212,900) and Europe (81,000).

Stuart Lamont, Chief Executive Officer of Caravan, RV & Accommodation Industry of Australia (CRVA) said caravan and campervan registrations rose by 14.7 per cent in Australia between 2008 and 2011.

"There are now over 474,000 registered RVs throughout Australia, approximately

20,000 new units were built in 2012," Mr Lamont said.

"The Australian market wasn't deeply impacted by the GFC, and after a one-year dip in production, the industry bounced back quickly."

AUSTRALIAN CARAVAN INDUSTRY STATS:

- Australians spent 67.8 million nights camping and caravanning last year, 90 per cent of those stays were in places outside capital cities.
- The caravanning market generates \$7 billion annually, and accounts for 11.3 per

cent of all overnight stays

- Most of the market is driven by domestic travellers, but nearly 1 in 10 is international traveller touring Australia by RV. Of the international travellers, 67 per cent come from Europe, 9 per cent from New Zealand, 6 per cent from the United States and 8 per cent from Asia.
- Australia has 1,638 caravan holiday parks with more than 40 sites, and they supply more than 170,000 individual campsites.
- The largest industry user group is the 35-49 year olds, with equal usage among 25-34 and 50-64 age brackets.

Bunks are back

Top 5 Caravan trends for 2013

Australia's caravan and RV industry has had a bumper start to 2013, with huge crowds turning out to annual trade shows around the country. We caught up with Jayco sales manager Scott Jones at Australia's biggest annual event - the massive Melbourne Caravan and Camping Expo for a look at some of the top trends for the industry this year:

1 It's a family affair
evidenced by the number of buyers looking for bunks. Apparently kids love bunk beds and they're a great space saver in the caravan. Scott Jones says they're in demand - a sign families are getting back into caravanning in a big way.

2 Space is everything
slide outs and pop tops - you name it, if it can make a box bigger it's on most buyers' shopping lists as they seek to get away from it all and enjoy a bit more living space at the same time.

3 Outback ensuites
walking to the communal ablution block in the middle of the night is no fun, especially as you get older. Seems everyone wants an on-board toilet and shower these days and they like the idea of a bathroom located at the rear of the van. Throw in a washing machine - even better.

4 It's getting personal
why go for a plain caravan when you can customise it in a way that really suits your personality? More customers are wanting to individualise their purchases. Even mass manufacturer Jayco has installed a custom paint booth to give buyers more options.



Above Scott Jones, Jayco.
Left Jayco's big expanding 5th wheeler at the Melbourne Show



5 Watch out for the 5th Wheelers they're big, they're luxurious -and according to their owners, easier to tow than a caravan and more versatile than a RV. Jayco has now entered the 5th Wheeler market too and there were more on show at the Caulfield Caravan Expo this year than ever before - a trend expected to continue.

Check out our photo spread from the 2013 Caravan shows from **page 44**

Winnebago no more

As reported first in Issue 1 of Time to Roam, Winnebago Australia has been using the 2013 show circuit to introduce buyers to its new name, 'Avida'.

The company was unsuccessful in a Federal Court dispute last year in which the US trademark owner sought to stop the Aussie manufacturer using the name after 35 years. CEO Ben Binns insists he will appeal the case, but is taking the prudent approach with a dual branding.

According to Avida, the new name was chosen for various attributes, including being easy to spell, starting with 'a' and because people who made up the firm were 'avid' campaigners for the motorhome lifestyle.

Social media comments haven't all been kind with various comments on the Time to Roam Facebook page suggesting Avida sounded like either a dishcloth, a shipping container company or a pharmaceutical cream.

However global marketing expert Penny Couchman told Time to Roam the company had handled a difficult situation very well.

COMMENT:

This is an expensive and difficult challenge for Winnebago Australia – rebrandings always are.

The company has a 40 percent share of the RV market and some of that would



AVIDA's Benn Binns & Max Mayo

be due to the fact they are using a name synonymous with the product they are selling – that is an incredible asset.

The rebranding also opens up opportunities for their competitors, whose brands may be equally if not better known than the word Avida – at least at this early stage.

However from every calamity comes opportunity. This in some ways lets the company make a fresh start and become better known for other things than just the brand – including their all-Australian

design and heritage. Not to mention quality – which is what you want to be best known for in this high-end market where you want to charge a premium.

The transition approach they are taking, 'Avida, the Australian makers of the Winnebago' is the right one. The Avida name itself is clean and fresh but more importantly, one that the company can truly own longer term.

PENNY COUCHMAN

is CEO of da Vinci Marketing

Pakenham packs 'em in

Pakenham has emerged as one of Victoria's leading centres for caravan builders, with Jurgens Caravans recently opening a new \$5 million complex.

Jurgens employs 50 people and joins existing Pakenham-based businesses Goldstream RV and Av'an Caravans. Jurgens relocated from Tooradin where it established in 2008.

Explosion in speed cameras

Speeding NSW drivers are now more likely to be snapped by a speed camera with the State Government increasing the number of roadside cameras from six to 45.

Camera operating hours are also increasing from 930 hours a month to 7000 hours per month.

Roads Minister Duncan Gay says the cameras will focus on high accident zones as well as "areas where the community have asked us to put one".

The increase comes despite a promise before the last election by Premier Barry O'Farrell that his government would not erect more cameras to raise revenue.

Reports suggest over half of all speeding fines issued in NSW are for offences in the lowest category; 0-10 km/h over the speed limit. A list of speed camera locations can be found at www.rta.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety



HAVE YOU SEEN THIS VAN?

Just after the Second World War my Father, an Anglican Priest, built a 14 foot caravan to sleep our family of four. He had been taught carpentry by his Father and built and designed many things in his life including furniture and churches. The van was designed and built at Paterson in 1946. The chassis was Oregon, the tow-bar Tasmanian Oak, the frame a mixture of Tasmanian Oak and Oregon and the sheathing was 1/16th Canadian Spruce ply. The Canadian Spruce was surplus material used to make mosquito planes. Everything was built on site in the garage including the water pump and tank, adjustable height drop centre axle, air brakes and tow hitch. While he worked, he entertained me, a tot of two, with my own hammer and nails.

From 1946 we used the caravan for the family's annual holidays to Laurieton, NSW. We always stayed in a friend's backyard and used her facilities. It was always an ordeal to cross the Bulahdelah Mountains as the road was long and winding and cars heated badly on the climb. The photograph shows the family at a friend's home at Nabiac Rectory where we always stopped for rest and refreshment for both the car and ourselves.

I remember the double bed in the front converted to a dining nook in the daytime and the sink and stove were opposite the door with a wardrobe just inside the door. Our bunks were on opposite sides of the van at the back, with a small chest of drawers between them. We all enjoyed catching up with friends, especially my Mother who had previously taught in the town, and Dad enjoyed fishing for blackfish, and we enjoyed the water and sun. The van was sold in 1953 (to whom I do not know as I was only nine) after my second brother was born and it became too small for five. I think I did see it in a museum in Forster in the 1990s, but was not able to enter and verify this. Unfortunately the Museum is not there now.

My parents names were Norman and Jean Pullin, my brothers are Christopher and baby Stephen. The photos were in the family album and my Father's Book of Works.

I would like to wish Time to Roam all the best in this new venture and look forward to many hours of interesting reading.

Carolyn Wulff.

Mount Colah NSW

GLAMPING IT UP

In early March, 12 gorgeous gals from Victoria, Sydney and the USA descended upon Echuca and Moama for the most recent "Glamper Gals Caravan And Camping "Glampout". The first ever issue of Time to Roam magazine was passed around by the girls and it was an absolute hit!

We are so excited about his new 'one of a kind' publication, dedicated to our favourite pastime; caravanning, camping and travelling our beautiful country.

We are pictured (below) on one of the paddle-steamers the 'Canberra'. We stayed in a caravan park in Moama, right on the river, in glamorously decorated tents, caravans and cabins and had an amazingly fun time! We spent our time, swimming, chatting, thrift shopping, exploring the Port precinct of Echuca and making wonderful new friendships. We also had a St Patrick's Day themed dress up, meet and greet, on Friday night and a "Big Fat Gypsy Wedding" themed get together on Saturday night

This was the third trip away for our group that my good friend Vikki and I started just 12 months ago.

We are set to do it all again on a trip to Halls Gap in June and we also look forward to the next instalment of Time To Roam.

All girls, of any age group, are welcome in our group, most actively based on our Facebook profile www.facebook.com/glampergals or via our website www.glampergals.com

Trish Martin

Sandford VIC



THANKS FOR COMING

Congratulations on a fantastic magazine, being a caravanner I love it. Having the magazines at tourist parks is a fantastic idea, very inspiring and informative.

It is also great to reminisce through the years of my own journey, something you contemplate when you are away relaxing and seeing Australia.

Looking forward to your next issue. Well done!

Yvonne Moore

Victoria

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

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Message in a plastic bottle

‘Two Hands Project’ is a global movement that started in Australia aiming to stop plastic pollution in our oceans. Co-founder Paul Sharp takes up the story:

When I was a kid it was exciting to see a bottle on a beach, we used to race to see who could get to it first, hoping it contained a message from a marooned sailor!

Now with the advent of throwaway culture and the PET bottle, today’s kids will never know that thrill. Where children once decorated their sandcastle with sea-shells, now they use discarded bottle caps.

Plastic pollution is an ever growing problem we’ve created in the last 50 years and it’s showing itself to be a threat to ocean health rivalling over-fishing and climate change.

Approximately 80 per cent of all human made materials we remove from the ocean are made of plastic.

Seeing evidence of plastic being ingested by sea animals and rescuing marine life impacted by plastic brought this to our attention.

Two Hands Project is one of the first organisations to recognise plastic in the environment as a pollution issue, rather than a litter problem.

Two Hands Project is a collaborative approach to dealing with plastic pollution: take 30 Minutes and Two Hands to clean up your world anytime, anywhere.

We embody the spirit of the huge national/international clean up days, only we ask, what you can do with your two hands in 30 minutes, at a location near you, on any day of the year?

Our aim is to get people to care for the places that are near or important to them and do their bit to help at a time that suits.

We’re also harnessing the power of social media to help kick start a movement. We want to hear the results of all Two Hands activities and see what plastic pollution

people remove from our beaches and parks.

We have a lot of fun with people sharing the clean ups they do while travelling, sometimes it’s a quick few pieces of plastic or a mornings blitz on a trashed beach.

In Australia alone our volunteers have moved and documented over 500,000 pieces of marine litter since we kicked off two years ago. We’ve had clean ups in over 40 countries and now have 28,000 fans on Facebook.

By presenting this information to the broader community we plan to educate, prevent, recover and dispose of marine debris and beach litter.

Make sure you like our Facebook Page Two Hands Project or tweet @2handsproject your pics and updates using the #twohands (or #2hands) hashtag. You can also share your ideas and stories on refusing plastic and how to end plastic pollution.

Website: www.twohandsproject.org



Pictured: Some of the rubbish and some of our volunteers, cleaning up Australia's beaches and coastline.

This includes a recent trip to Albany to assist seabird scientist Jennifer Lavers studying flesh footed shearwaters. These birds are heavily affected by plastic pollution, particularly on Lord Howe Island off NSW. Much of the plastic impacting them including bottle lids is coming from the Australian mainland -more than 500km away.

This experience has prompted us to renew efforts to get a national 10c refund on empty bottles to try stopping plastic being littered on our roadsides and then washed to sea via stormwater.

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Here comes the sun

IT'S POSSIBLY AUSTRALIA'S MOST ICONIC VAN FROM THE 1950s AND 1960s. THE STORY OF THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SUNLINER IS ALSO A CLASSIC.

Bert Tickner was barely a teenager when he left school, so it's hard to believe he went on to design and manufacture one of the most sophisticated and stylish Australian caravans of its era.

Curvaceous, lightweight and economical, it's equally hard to understand why this beauty ever went out of production or indeed, why Bert Tickner's business isn't still around today.

Why isn't the Sunliner held up as Australia's answer to say the classic American Airstream?

The story of the rise and fall of the Sunliner is in itself an Australian classic.

It's also a great story of Australian country ingenuity and one man's belief in regional development – before it became a catch phrase with bush politicians.

Bert Tickner was determined to manufacture the Sunliner from the small coastal NSW town



Bert Tickner – Sunliner Founder

of Forster to help create jobs and boost the local economy.

This community spirit was inherited by his son Robert Tickner, CEO of the Australian Red Cross and former long-serving Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

Growing up in Forster in the late 1950s, Robert recalls the population was about 2,000 and it was an arduous drive of 8 hours or more to Sydney – making it expensive to bring materials in and get caravans out.

But his father was of a generation renowned for not letting minor setbacks get in the way of their dreams.

“Dad was a passionate advocate for decentralisation and lived out these values through the businesses he had,” Robert Tickner says.

“He grew up in the little town of Tallong

near Goulburn and left school at about 13, was caught up in the Depression and he went selling door to door.

“Later in the 1940s my parents ‘retired’ to Forster then I came into their lives as their adopted son in 1951. My father was a very community focussed person but never sought glory.”

Robert recalls when the good burghers of Foster decided they needed a golf course, his father jumped on his tractor and shaped the greens and fairways himself.

And when local school children needed a swim coach, Bert volunteered and went on to teach a generation of kids over a decade. It’s doubtful many knew Mr Tickner couldn’t actually swim a stroke himself.

After operating a Volkswagen dealership in Taree, Bert started selling fibreglass swimming

pools in the late 1950s and dabbling in minor inventions.

Robert remembers them as being great innovations.

“I’m not sure if he ever patented anything, but he was always creating clever devices such as an electric pool cleaner made from old washing machine parts and a scrubbing brush!”

Ticker’s dream was to build a fibreglass van so lightweight it could be towed by the Beetles he’d been selling. It was a big ask, because the VWs had a reputation for overheating without towing anything.

→ continued page 17



Photo Daniel Linnet

SON OF SUNLINER: FAB 1950s FIBREGLASS ICON TO RISE AGAIN

Beerwah on Queensland's Sunshine Coast is famous as the home of Steve Irwin's Australia Zoo, but it may well have a new claim to fame.

Local Ken Bannister is channelling the spirit of Bert Tickner and working to bring back the Sunliner.

He admits to having fallen for the curves of the original at a very early age and was finally able to buy one in near perfect condition from a farmer in Gippsland in the late 1990s.

His five sons loved Dad's van so much, he realised he faced a real dilemma in deciding which one to leave it to when it came time for final drinks.

So he came up with the idea of using the original as a mould and recreating Bert's masterpiece.

Facing many of the same challenges Tickner himself faced, Bannister is now moving to set up a production line at Beerwah after successfully building three prototypes.

He's calling his new van the "Suncoast Sunnie", with Sunliner trademarked by the established Victoria-based RV manufacturer which has been building great RVs under the name since 1974.

"The Son of Sunliner" (as we dubbed it) is different from the Tickner original in that the fibreglass will be moulded in a single unit,

whereas the original was moulded in halves and then joined in the centre.

Bannister also hopes to resurrect Tickner's original dream of building a fully fibreglass van, including the interior fit-out.

There's also a new suspension system plus one or two mod cons.

Unlike the original where a couple of windows were sealed shut panes, every window in the Sunnie will open and close.

Best of all, Ken says the reborn fibreglass beauty achieves the same outstanding fuel economy as the original.

It may not have been as important in 1969, but it's sure to be a great selling point today.



Above: July 1965 – Bert's proudest day as one of the biggest Sunliner orders is towed through Forster.
Below: Fibreglass interiors were dropped on later models to cut costs.

← from page 15

Success finally came with the Sunliner, the first Australian lightweight Fibreglass van.

It was so light, salesmen at the time boasted "even a woman" could manoeuvre it into place on its dolly wheel.

To demonstrate its toughness, the sales brochure pictured three of the factory staff all standing on top of a caravan door, balanced end-to-end between two work benches. To prove its lightness, a female member at the same time holds up a second door with just one hand.

The interiors, including cupboards, were also fibreglass. The light tubular steel frame and independent spring shock absorbers completed a package ahead of its time, even though the manufacturing facilities were not.

An oven at the local bakery was put into use after hours, helping to set the Sunliner's Perspex windows.

There were three caravan models to choose from, ranging from the 13ft 'Victory' which sold for £695 through to the 16ft 'Sunliner Super 16', selling for £1095.

The vans received a rave review from the Open Road magazine following a gruelling test over a hundred miles to Wollongong:

"The towing vehicle was a 1958 Holden FC sedan. The course included the descent of Mount Ousely which was accomplished in top gear. The ascent of Bulli Pass, which is generally avoided by caravaners, was attained at an average speed of 25 m.p.h.

"Sometimes high speeds were maintained for several miles to test the caravan's trailing characteristics.

"Complete lack of tail sway and the tenacity of its road holding on bends indicate the chassis, trailing equipment and superstructure have been combined with craftsmen skills to produce a caravan with exceptional road manners. Fuel consumption overall, despite a number of steep climbs and high speeds was 20.57 m.p.g."

But the high manufacturing costs saw the Sunliner priced at more than the annual salary of an average worker – just as competitors were ramping up cheaper, mass production.

As competition intensified in the early 1960s, Tickner dropped the interior fibreglass for the cheaper plywood and fabric finishes used by other van builders.



Photo Daniel Linnet

The independent spring suspension had already given way to a standard leaf system, while the Perspex windows were swapped for aluminium-framed glass as Bert Tickner persevered with his dream and did what he had to in order to stay viable.

Possibly his proudest day came in July 1965 when a mining company took delivery of one of the biggest single orders ever to come out of the Foster factory.

Heads were turned as six gleaming Sunliners made their way through Forster towed by

gleaming new Land Rovers.

But after years of struggling, the crunch finally came for the Sunliner in 1969, with Forster's biggest employer unable to continue and closing down abruptly.

"At the end of the day running the factory in Forster proved an unwinnable battle," Robert says.

"My Dad died in 1984 but lived long enough to see me elected to the House of Representatives as an ALP member which was challenging – as he was a card carrying

member of the then Country Party, but resigned because it was too left wing for him.

"We did have the occasional political stoush as you can imagine!"

Robert Tickner says he is proud to see how his Dad's caravans have become so admired and sought after by today's collectors.

"After all these years I still get excited when I see one of the Sunliner vans.

"I am so pleased that people recognise the achievements of my father."

Story by ROD BRUEM



Photo Daniel Linnet

ABOUT OUR TOW VEHICLE

KIA Sorento Active AWD

Given they were designed to be towed by a VW Beetle, when you put a Sunliner behind a powerful SUV you almost need to remind yourself it's actually there. That's certainly the case with the Kia Sorento, the 2.2 litre manual diesel felt like a zippy car when it wasn't towing.

Driving in city conditions without the van it performed so well we kept asking, is this really a diesel?

Likewise the six-speed manual gearbox was so smooth it was a pleasure to use, even if you only ever drive an auto.

KIA have refined the mechanics in 2013, but made only subtle changes the exterior which we reckon was a good match for the curves of the Sunliner. Gone are the days when you'd expect less of a Korean vehicle. The 2012 is as stylish and well put together as anything in its class.

pros



- > Smooth handling, powerful engine
- > Price – \$38,990 as tested
- > Loads of inclusions and safety features
- > 5 year unlimited warranty

cons



- > Interior look and feel hasn't come as far as the exterior design.
- > Reverse sensors and cameras are there, but not the best in their class
- > Electric adjustable seats would be a good inclusion to the array of standard accessories



Photo Daniel Linnet



Photo: Daniel Linnet

The caravan collector

WITH 14 CARAVANS IN HIS SHED INCLUDING THE SUNLINER, RICHARD POTTER HAS ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S MOST EXTENSIVE COLLECTIONS.

As with many Australians, the Wollongong home builder's passion for caravans goes back to childhood and fond recollections of family vacations.

Richard's earliest memory is of a holiday in a 1968 hired Viscount.

"It was a 14 footer and Mum, Dad and all four of us kids would cram in – and Grandad as well. They were fun times.

"Finally in the 1970s Dad was able to buy a Chesney. They were the height of style back then.

"Mum and Dad were members of the Chesney Caravan Club. They were such a popular caravan, there were four or five different clubs back then."

The vintage vehicle enthusiast who's closely observed Australia's growing

interest for restoring caravans predicts the Chesney will become a hit once again.

"They haven't really come back into favour yet, but I'm sure they will."

Richard Potter's hobby for collecting came much later, when the family received some sad news.

"In 1991 my mum was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and she and Dad seemed to be stuck at home all the time. My brother Malcolm and I wanted to find a way to help get them out and enjoy themselves more.

"So we both bought vintage cars. Malcolm got a 1936 Chevy and I bought a 1955 FJ Holden ute."

The first caravan came soon after and as is often the case, rather than looking for it, it came to him.

Richard was on holidays in Coffs Harbour when he noticed the smart yellow 1950s

van sitting on the lawn across from his motel with For Sale sign attached.

The holiday came to an abrupt end and Richard was soon towing it home to Wollongong.

Christened “Jabiru”, it’s a superb piece of work of single 3/8” ply, including a tubular steel chassis and other advanced features.

“It was built by a panel beater in town of Urunga, just south of Coffs, in 1958. He’d built it in a mad rush to get away for the Christmas holidays that year.”

In a surprise turn of fate, Richard was able to get the whole history on the van with its original owner contacting with him after he appeared on the ABC TV show *Collectors*.

A few years ago Richard purchased a warehouse in the Wollongong suburb of Corrimal to house his collection. It’s so vast he had to stop and tally them up when we asked exactly how many.

There are 14 in all. Approximately half are restored and road-worthy and the rest are works in progress.

In addition to the “Jabiru” and the Sunliner, there are two Dons, two

Caraparks, an English Coventry Knight, a South Australian-built Rowvan, a Cargill Caravanette from the mid-1960s, another home-built van and a 1950s camper trailer.

Also of note are two folding Properit caravans built in a factory in the well-heeled Sydney suburb of Vacluse up until 1970.

It’s believed there are now about 40 Properits in existence and Richard may well have one of the first and one of the last of those still around – judging by the numbers stamped on the A frames – numbers 39 and 370.

Richard bought the Sunliner used in our cover shoot from a fellow vintage car club mate eight years ago.

“It’s one of the last three to come out of the Forster factory and it sat in a warehouse in Sydney for many years.”

Then there are the cars – four early Holdens – a 1950 FX Taxi, FJ Ute, Panel van and Special Sedan.

The collection has actually outgrown the warehouse, forcing Richard to house some in other people’s garages.

The first question that comes to mind is, how does the ‘other half’ cope with all this?

“My wife Linda and I married in 2007, but we’d been going out for 10 years so she had plenty of time to get used to the idea.

“We’re a family of collectors. Linda is a keen photographer and has over 200 Kodak cameras of various vintages.”

Richard regularly takes visitors though his collection now evolving into a museum. He’s already set up a website to share information; www.ourtouringpast.com.

He admits to having slowed down in his collecting somewhat since his son Joshua was born last year.

“I’ve made a promise to try to limit the collection just to the warehouse, so I won’t be buying anything more unless I swap it for something there already,” he said.

“Although I really would like to get my hands on a pre-1935 caravan. It would be a great addition to Australia’s only Caravan Museum.”

There is a Time to Roam feature in every one of Richard Potter’s caravans and we will look forward to visiting again soon. 📍





Finding a hidden gem

CARAVAN EXPERT GEORGE LADAS TRACES THE HISTORY OF MILLARD AND HOW HE FOUND THE VAN OF HIS DREAMS TUCKED AWAY IN A FARM SHED.



By **George Ladas**

In the caravan world, the names Viscount and Millard are as synonymous as Ford and Holden is to our car industry.

They're the names people know and trust and for many years looked out for when buying their first caravan.

When one of our greatest cricketers, Glen McGrath, gets nicknamed Millard because he lived in one for a while, it simply must be iconic.

The Millard history has its origins way back in 1947, when an enterprising Jim Darlington looked at the American "trailer" lifestyle and thought it may have a future here.

Jim started building caravans in a small factory in Mortlake, a southern suburb of Sydney.

Jim had two sons, John and younger brother Peter. John would help his father build the caravans in those early years, Peter followed when he was older.

Around 1954, the business moved to

a bigger premises at North Ryde where construction of the caravans became a little more professional than the relatively small and basic operation at Mortlake.

John became the new owner, with father Jim on hand for guidance. Peter started as a carpenter and progressed up to the executive team.

John's wife Mary also came into the business where she became involved in the interior decorating of the vans.

Her choice of colours in curtains and other furnishings was a step forward from the very bland basic look all vans had in that era.

Some of Millard's success can most definitely be attributed to new ideas and innovations that paved the way for the future of the Australian caravan industry.

The brand name Millard was first introduced by John Darlington, using his middle name Millerd (with an 'e').

A check of family history websites confirms this Irish name to be interchangeable with the name Millard, so the origin of the Millard brand seems





Pictured: After 45 years in the farm shed, the Millard Florida was in amazing condition. Stepping inside like a trip back to the 1960s.

to have been derived by John himself.

By the mid 1960s the Millard business had grown so big that a new factory was established at Smithfield in the outer west of Sydney.

By 1969, the factory employed 250 and what records are available only show a monthly output of approximately 100 units. This equates to 1200 vans per year, which doesn't seem correct.

Viscount records show they were making 5000 vans in 1970 and Millard were not far behind this figure in production or sales, selling through a strong and growing network of dealers Australia wide, marketing a range of 60 models, from 13ft to 40 ft. A more realistic figure for Millard would be 4000 vans per year, a bit over 330 per month.

The Viscount empire though, after competing for many years with its main rival, finally bought the Millard company around 1980, and continued to build the iconic Millard vans in their massive factory complex at Liverpool with the introduction of the very popular and successful Series 80 model Millard.

The rest is history, but let's concentrate on a particular Millard model which is of particular interest to me. We can find in The Sydney Morning Herald archives, advertisements of the new model Safari by Millard in August 1963.

The advert boasted, "The Safari 12ft 6in caravan is the lowest priced, top quality aluminium caravan in Australia today." The more deluxe model was the Millard Florida a slightly longer version at 14ft 6ins with a few added options. The Safari model carried through to early 1966, when adverts for the new Capri model started appearing. When the new Capri came out to market by May 1966, it was a 15ft Deluxe model, with a 13ft basic Capri at budget prices. So it seems the Safari was then discontinued, but the Florida continued on and gets a mention in July 1967 as a new release Florida 15ft model.

Why the interest in these models you ask? It just so happens that yours truly, as a caravan dealer based in the NSW town of Taree for the last 22 years, had been on a hunt, crusade you might say, looking for an old gem to display in a showroom. Finally

after much searching, the gem found me.

Out of the blue one morning we received a call from a local fellow who had recently inherited his father's farm. A very large farm it was, with many paddocks and hills and some very old sheds a top of these hills. One of these sheds was home to an old caravan. Having no need of an old van, the farmer phoned the nearest caravan dealer (me!) asking if I would be interested in looking to buy this old van. The call had me travelling at the maximum legal speed until I got to some very rugged country tracks, eventually leading up a hill to a very old shed.

Inside to my amazement stood a Millard Florida approx 1963 model (discovered later, by firstly measuring van at 14ft 6in and then by checking chassis number with Millard records).

The farmer had bought it new, in fact the Florida had been used only a few times in its first few years, after which time it appears was locked in this shed and there remained for some 45 years. Needless to say it was an instant sale and the start of a peculiar love affair.



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Original features of the era were not only there, but they were all in near perfect order. No fridge in those days, it had an icebox, complete with chest-type lever handle, and the stove, not electric, not gas, but good ol' metho stove and still working.

A stainless steel sink (made in Australia) with a 50 year lustre that would out shine some new ones today. Original upholstery was still in excellent condition, the only sign of their age being the fact they are much heavier than those made with lighter filling today.

Being stored in the shed had also protected the exterior which was without even a single stone chip. All the rubber mouldings around windows and door also showed no sign of wear and were soon proved. I accidentally left the van out during a heavy rain storm one day and found not a single drop had leaked into the Florida, but ironically enough some of the new and near new vans around it at the time leaked like a sieve.

It was a real testimony to the precision and quality of workmanship of that era when things were built to a standard by tradesmen and not to an assembly line quota. Everything still worked – windows open, close and lock perfectly, as does roof hatch. All doors are precision cut and fit perfectly and so are their catches.

The electric wiring to my surprise still worked, even the globes! And this being the deluxe model it also had the alternate 12 volt wiring installed.

But the best was underneath. The chassis and all the running gear was in amazing condition, brakes and cables, bearings, springs, bushes, chassis, coupling were still in very good working order.

The only parts needing replacing were the tyres which had cracked with age, although still had plenty of wear on them, along with some faded light lenses.

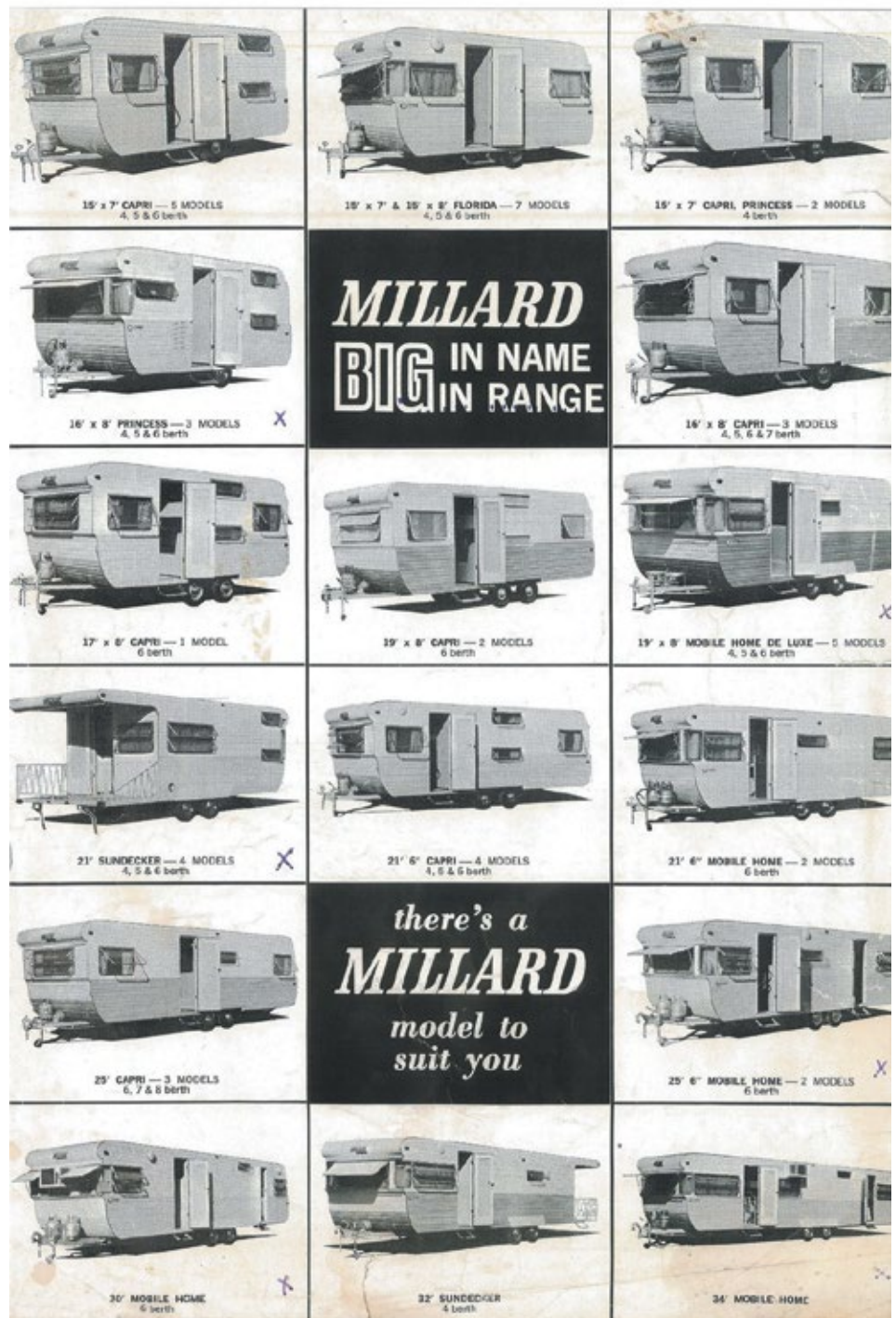
The Florida proudly passed a blue slip inspection for registration with flying colours. The inspector even commented on the incredible condition of the original bearings, the 13 inch Holden hubs and the chassis, all showing next to no sign of any rust. Not bad for something nearly 50

years old ! It was certainly the centre of attention whilst at the inspection station.

Today, after many exchanges of company ownerships, the Millard name is still proudly being affixed to new caravans from the

company's Sydney Ingleburn factory.

Now an entirely new company, Millard Australia, has revitalised the well known name and brought stability and strength back to this much loved brand. 



The Millard range from the late 1960s were famous for being the longest in Australia. There were 20 models longer than 20 feet – including the first 'sundeck' rear veranda.



Classic Coronet still reigns supreme

Tested **Coronet Carrington**

Coronet Caravans was founded in Ballarat by Ian Farren in back 1959. Even then Victoria was leading the way in meeting the Australia's growing demand for homes on wheels.

Coronet has been owned since 1991 by the Phillips family, industry veterans with extensive experience in repairing, reconstruction, renovation and maintenance, as well as accessories and parts.

It's on busy Canterbury Road in Bayswater North, a magnet for caravan lovers in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, where I caught up with owner Andrew Phillips.

At the front of the large block, prospective buyers were wandering through a wide range of Carrington caravan designs – I was struck by one of the brand's classic vans on display, a restored 1978 Coronet Prince that was nestling alongside a Bondwood

van from the 1950s. In 1966 Coronet had the distinction of manufacturing the state's largest ever caravan at 36 feet long.

The company's latest fully-featured touring van, the Carrington comes in 15 layouts with queen sized beds and two to four bunks in longer versions.

Every van has a toilet and shower, hot water service, two big gas bottles, quality innerspring mattress, air conditioning, 12-volt LCD TV with DVD and Winegard antenna, on-board battery and charger as standard features.

Coronet's manufacturing plants in Melbourne and Ballarat have established a solid reputation for building to exacting specifications while meeting customer expectations for all the latest fittings.

As Andrew Phillips explained: "We've increasingly fitted a lot more accessories in the past 20 years. Things like a microwave oven or wind-out windows, for example, are now standard."

Coronet has been renowned for annual

model changes and in the past the company has tweaked the features of its caravans upon a customer's request. Recently, Andrew Phillips has taken the plunge into customised manufacturing and finishing with Coronet's Glenora range.

"The industry's heading that way," he said. "A lot of people have been doing it for years. A customised van is drawn up on the CAD system and can go through ten or 15 changes in its design. If the Carrington van is like a Falcon or Commodore, the Glenora is a BMW."

The Carrington is a comfortable van suitable for extensive travel. It sits well on a Supergal chassis with tandem-axle suspension offering sound handling under tow.

A Dometic awning gives plenty of shelter and there are protector shades on front and rear windows. The rig is clad with aluminium and the walls and roof are insulated.

The 4 inch A-frame carries two 9kg gas cylinders and it comes with two 80 litre

EXTERNAL FEATURES

- Battery Pack
- Lockable Water Filler
- Camec triple lock door
- Tinted acrylic windows
- Wind-out windows (powder coated)
- Winegard antenna
- 12 volt external annex light
- LED 12 volt running lights

INTERNAL FEATURES

- Gas/electric 21 litre hot water service
- Flick mixer system and fan/hatch system in the ensuite
- Lift up boxed queen size bed on struts
- Queen inner spring mattress and bedspread/duona cover
- Reading lamps and corner dressing tables in the bedroom
- Microwave oven
- Three burner gas stove/grill, one electric stove/grill
- Large deep bowl sink
- 12 volt stainless steel rangehood
- Dometic three-way fridge 150 litres (larger is optional)
- Mains water pressure and 12 volt water pump
- Water tank gauge
- Push button catches on all cupboards
- Leather trim and lounge pillow upholstery are optional.

Prices start at \$52,000

pros



- › Reliability and comfort
- › Flexible to buyers' customised needs
- › Choice of layouts
- › Well equipped for distance touring
- › Great under bed storage

cons



- › Access to dealers
- › Standard dining table difficult to negotiate

water tanks.

It has 15 inch chrome alloy rims, wheel spats and a pebble guard to the top of the boot. The spare wheel can be in the boot or located on the rear bumper bar.

Step inside a Carrington and you get a feeling of space and a place to relax. These are impressive full ensuite vans with the lot.

One thing you can be sure of with a Coronet is an understanding of customer needs. Andrew Phillips' own family trips in Coronet caravans and his more than 30 years in the industry gives him that perspective.

Coronet is flexible and if a customer wants to move things around. Deposit down, your van is made to order – options that meet your needs and your budget and today's demand for personalisation.

Inside, it's full meranti timber framing with polyply and craftsman built furniture and trimming.

The pop-top has an easy lift roof system with struts and four detachable flyscreen openings.

Air conditioning, polyester wall finish, coloured timber pelmets, 12 volt fluorescent

lighting in the roof and a choice of interior colours are standard features.

So are the entertainment options of CD radio unit and LCD 12 volt/240 volt flat screen TV with DVD.

Most of the Carrington models I saw had the queen sized bed up the front but they can be replaced by single. In the larger models, bunks or a club lounge come as additions to the queen sized bed.

Mirror-doored robes, drawers beside each side of the bed and cabinets above the bed add up to plenty of storage space.

The kitchen has loads of room for meal preparation, with a full sized sink, grill, hot plates, range hood and microwave oven. A pull out pantry and pot drawer are among other features. The timber edge bench tops are an example of the Carrington's smart finish.

The dining area opposite comes in a variety of seating combinations. I preferred the face-to-face seating with drop down/extendable table to the e-shaped, slide-around-the fixed-table option.

The ensuite is neat and compact with shower cubicle, cassette toilet, basin and washing machine.



THE CARRINGTON – A GOLDEN CHOICE

It was on a trip to Melbourne for the 2006 Australian Grand Prix when Sydney couple Bill and Anne Thomas got serious about buying a caravan.

They'd had holidays in tents all their lives. Heading towards the nomad stage, Bill recalled: "Our aim was to trip around Australia, to see our own country. We were not really interested in going overseas, except Tasmania. I was heading to 60 and we decided caravanning was our style."

Bill and Anne did a lot of study and spent a week in Melbourne looking at the choice of caravans and how they were built.

"I'm a house-builder by trade so you like to think you know a little bit about building. We looked at lots and we had it down to half a dozen designs. We're certainly not millionaires so we had to work within a budget. But we wanted to travel comfortably, so we wanted a full ensuite," Bill said.

They met Coronet Caravans owner Andrew Phillips and ordered a van from the Coronet range. In 2009 they took off



Bill and Anne Thomas

around Australia, or as Bill says, "We went right round the perimeter of the block."

From Sydney to the top of Queensland across through Katherine and Kakadu to Wyndham and Broome and Derby and back home, they were 12 months on the road.

"We didn't have an ounce of trouble. In 33,000 kilometres I had one flat tyre in Exmouth and that was on the car in a caravan park," he said.

On a later trip they spent three months touring Tasmania but Bill says: "I'd recommend four months, there's so much to see."

Bill and Anne Thomas returned to

Coronet and Andrew Phillips and last year picked up a Coronet Carrington that was modelled to their personal specifications.

Internal changes increased storage space and external changes upgraded the suspension so the van was capable of carrying 3.5 tonnes (more water, for example). It was longer than their previous model, at 20 foot six inches, and is easily pulled by their Nissan Patrol 3 litre turbo diesel wagon.

As a man who knows craftsmanship, Bill stayed in nearby Wantirna caravan park while the van was being built, visiting twice a day to see its progress.

It's something that Coronet encourages – visiting the factory to watch your van being built to make sure it matches what owners have in mind.

Sitting inside their pride and joy at their home in Wilberforce, north-west of Sydney, Bill and Anne remain very pleased with the purchase.

"The finish is terrific. It really is a home away from home. What is not in here is not in our home," Bill says. 

OR YOU MAY LIKE TO TRY THESE OUT



GALAXY ODYSSEY

This is an entry-level caravan with some great inclusions and lavish interior. They include a battery charging system, checker plate sides, a gas bayonette for a BBQ, picnic table and a heavy duty looped bumper bar.

Galaxy has been building vans in outer Melbourne only since 2000, but has established a good reputation for quality and value in a short space of time.

Price \$51,950



CONCEPT INNOVATION

Concept is another newish Melbourne manufacturer – they've already made more than 4000 vans since setting up in 2004 – proof they must be getting it right.

The Innovation is a neat little package including a 150 litre fridge, 19" LED TV, reverse cycle aircon, picnic table, Dometic roll-out awning, electric brakes and there's a spare wheel attached to the bumper.

Price \$49,990



BAILEY ORION

And now for something completely different – What you can get for the same money by going for fully imported. The plastic fantastic Bailey Orion.

Lightweight, stylish, with all the features of the Aussie classic vans but under \$50,000. They offer a 10 year warranty on the build in the UK, but not here. You'd have to ask yourself why.

Price \$48,390



No shades of grey on the Horizon

Tested **Horizon Motorhomes Banksia**

Review and images by **Richard Robertson of iMotorhome**

When Henry Ford built the Model T he did so without consulting his customers. In fact he was famously quoted as saying, “If I’d asked them what they wanted they would have said, ‘A faster horse’.”

The same thing can be applied to motorhome interiors: wood panelling and timber hues rule the design world, but is it what customers want or just what they expect? So I was intrigued when Horizon Motorhomes Managing Director, Clayton Kearney, called to say he was releasing a Limited Edition model with a black and white interior.

“Good Lord man,” I thought. “A non-timber finished interior in a motorhome? Surely it can’t be done!” But done it he did and the result looks, well, bloody fantastic.

Horizon Motorhomes specialises in converting large Fiat, Volkswagen and Mercedes vans into motorhomes. It is well established and has an excellent reputation for quality products and thoughtful design.

Horizon’s bread-and-butter van is Fiat’s popular Ducato, which accounts for around 75 per cent of all sales. Compared to the more expensive VW Crafter/Mercedes Sprinter doppelgänger, the Ducato is about an inch wider, has less rear overhang and carries about an extra half-tonne. Price and dimensions aside, the Ducato is also built to be a motorhome. This means things like a long range fuel tank of 125 litres capacity – 50 litres more than the Germans.

Like all Italian vehicles the Ducato loves to be driven. The comfortable, multi-adjustable driver’s seat provides a panoramic view through the deep windscreen. A thick,

leather-wrapped steering wheel, with slightly confusing multi-stalk controls for lights, wipers and cruise, is typically Italian. The wheel itself is dotted with buttons that control the audio system and Fiat’s proprietary Blue & Me Bluetooth system. Like most technology, Blue & Me is really useful once you get the hang of it, allowing you to send/receive hands-free phone calls, operate the USB-connected media player and give voice commands for a variety of functions.

Power comes from Fiat’s lusty 3.0-litre turbo-diesel, which produces 132 kW and 400 Nm. It drives through a standard 6-speed automated manual transmission – or AMT. This self-shifting gearbox is actually a manual without a clutch pedal, in which a computer changes gear for you. So it still pauses slightly between shifts,



unlike a normal automatic, but the benefit is manual-like fuel economy and lower greenhouse gas emissions than a full auto.

The 3.0-litre engine delivers open road performance in spades and 100 km/h is just 2000 rpm in sixth gear, but with 400 Nm on tap and the engine sitting right in the middle of its maximum torque range, rolling acceleration is strong.

Ducatos are front-wheel drive and electronic traction control is standard, along with stability control, anti-lock brakes, dual air bags and so on; all of which make them a capable and safe vehicle. Coupled with a wide track, long wheelbase and low overall height, it's also a safe and confident handler at speed – aided in no small part by Michelin's excellent Agilis Camping radial light truck tyres.

Remote central locking, heated electric side mirrors, electric cab windows with one-touch up/down for the driver, power steering, cab air-conditioning and electrically adjustable headlights are all included.

I'm sure it's not politically correct to call anyone or anything sexy these days, but if a van can be sexy then the Fiat Ducato is. Horizon buys its Ducatos without windows and installs double-glazed, acrylic Seitz windows with built-in blinds and insect screens. Just a note of caution here: Don't use the kitchen window if you're likely to slide the side door open or the two will connect, and the window will lose.

FANCY DRESS

Horizon's Banksia design makes the most of the Ducato ELWB's length and boxy dimensions. Both cab seats swivel 180 degrees and there is a single, forward-facing dinette seat on the driver's side, opposite the large sliding side entry door. The bathroom is immediately behind the single dinette seat, while between it and the east-west bed at the very back are two slim wardrobes, one of which would make a great slide-out pantry (note to designers!). The kitchen takes up the space between the sliding side door and the bed.

"We call it the Back in Black Pack," said Clayton. It's an experiment for us, but so far response has been overwhelmingly positive.

"The pack consists of black leather seats with white stitching, special black and silver alloy wheels, black and white cabinets, wall linings and floor vinyl, plus an external gas outlet and customised decals.

"The dinette seat has also been upgraded to an individual automotive seat with integrated seatbelt, making it not only safer if you have a third person travelling with you, but much more comfortable for after hours relaxing," Clayton enthused.

"The Pack adds \$9000 to the drive-away price, making this Banksia \$119,000 on the road in NSW, but we feel it transforms the vehicle into something very special."

I think he's right.

INSIDE OUT

The black and white interior has been tastefully executed. It's neither gaudy nor overwhelming, yet compared to the standard interior takes the Banksia to a whole new level. Outside, snazzy alloy wheels lift the look of the vehicle and I can only wonder how great (and possibly in-your-face) a Back in Black-equipped Banksia finished in metallic red or bronze would look.

Inside, the leather trim of all three seats has been meticulously applied and I especially liked the embroidered Horizon Motorhomes logo on each seat (plus on the leather-trimmed magazine holder on the outside of the bathroom wall).

Internal storage is excellent, especially considering the size limitations of the vehicle. The kitchen works well and is both generously sized and equipped. I also liked the simplicity and accessibility of the electrical switches, battery and water gauges, etc, all neatly in a row at eye height, above the kitchen bench.

The bathroom is compact and has only a light and fan/hatch for illumination, but features a china-bowled Dometic SOG cassette toilet that is odourless yet doesn't use chemicals, breaking down waste using an oxygen-based method. Fresh water capacity is a healthy 150 litres, while grey is a rather more modest 55 litres, and hot water is supplied by a quality Truma system.

Interior lighting is 12 V LED throughout, with beautifully engineered reading lights above both cab seats and over each corner

of the bed (so you can choose which way to sleep as conditions suit). External LED lighting is also used, while an electric step and Fiamm wind-out awning are both standard inclusions.

The bed itself is reasonably long at 1.85 m (6 ft 2 in), but a bit narrow for big people, at 1.3 m, at least on paper. In reality it feels wider than the numbers suggest because there is a significant gap between it and the

rear doors. Mrs iMotorhome and I found it more spacious than we thought it would be.

THE VERDICT IS BLACK AND WHITE

There is no doubt this specially equipped Horizon Motorhomes' Banksia raises the bar in this class of van-conversion motorhomes. It is well thought out, well engineered and well executed.

Fiat's Ducato remains a pleasure to drive, is very well equipped and the combination of its Italian nature and Horizon's out-there interior makes this vehicle something truly special. It's also surprisingly economical.

If you're looking for a practical and affordable motorhome that's a little bit fancy, this is it. And if you don't have a bow tie or tiara don't worry, Clayton is sure to throw them in. 🎩

Manufacturer	Horizon Motorhomes	Cooktop	Dometic 3 burner
Model	Banksia	Fridge	Waeco 12V 110 litre
Base Vehicle	Fiat Ducato 180 Multijet ELWB	Microwave Oven	Sharp Carousel
Engine	3.0-litre 4-cylinder turbo-diesel	Lighting	12V LED
Power	132 kW @ 3600 rpm	Batteries	200 amp hour AGM
Torque	400 Nm @ 1500-2300 rpm	Solar panels	Optional
Gearbox	AMT – 6 speed	Air conditioner	Optional
Brakes	Disc ABS	Diesel Heater	Optional
Tare weight	3000 kg (approx)	Toilet	Dometic S06 cassette
GVM	4005 kg	Shower	Flexible hose, variable height
Licence	Car	Hot water heater	Truma 14-litres
Passengers	3	Water tank	150-litres
External length	6.36 m (20 ft 11 in)	Grey tank	55-litres
External width	2.05 m (6 ft 9 in)	Gas cylinders	2 x 4.0 kg
External height	2.63 m (8 ft 8 in)	Price – Drive-away	\$119,000
Internal height	1.9 m (6 ft 3 in)		
Rear bed size	1.85 m x 1.3 m (6 ft 2 in x 4 ft 3 in)		

pros 👍

- > Stylish!
- > Compact
- > Manoeuvrable
- > Well equipped
- > Good storage
- > Economical

cons 👎

- > Back in Black pack adds \$9000
- > Side door/kitchen window
- > Bed tight for taller people

OR YOU MAY LIKE TO TRY



AVIDA ESCAPE

Avida (once-was Winnebago) does an entry-level Fiat Ducato van conversion that can sleep four: the Escape. It's a neat, family orientated conversion that could also double as a family daily driver – just mind any underground car parks! Priced from **\$109,900** drive away.



TRAKKA TORINO XTRA

Trakka takes the Ducato to the next level in the Torino Xtra in terms of fit-out and price. Seating for four but only sleeping two, it has a clever bathroom with a retractable loo to maximise space. Priced around **\$125,500** drive away.



PARADISE OASIS DELUXE

Moving right upmarket; take a longer Mercedes Benz Sprinter van, add a slide-out bedroom and sprinkle it with Gold Coast glitz and glamour and you have the Paradise Ovation Deluxe. Priced around **\$145,000** drive away.



One for the stargazers

Tested All Terrain Campers Walk up Deluxe

FALLING ASLEEP UNDER THE SOUTHERN SKY AT NIGHT WOULD HAVE TO RATE AS ONE THE GREAT JOYS OF AUSSIE BUSH CAMPING.

It's that experience – as well as a long-established reputation for off-road dependability that is giving All Terrain Campers their edge in the highly competitive camper trailer market.

Any first time camper buyer could tell you you're in for a bit of a shock when you start looking because of the sheer number of brands and models on offer.

The usual industry count is somewhere above 300. They range from multi-national companies who fully import, through to blokes who've devised their own dream camper in the backyard shed and have now

gone commercial.

Ian and Danielle Roberts fall somewhere in the middle in terms of size. They are actually the second-generation of owners of the business with a 15 year history of manufacturing in Sydney's north west.

They pride themselves in the level of Australian content and are one of just a few companies to target the extreme off road end of the market with light-weight soft floor campers.

The Roberts bought the business just over a year ago, their decision swayed by its good long reputation for off-roaders.

They've completely refreshed the range, while sticking to the goal of keeping the

campers as all Aussie as possible.

They see this as giving them a quality edge at a time when the budget end of the market is being squeezed by mass-produced imports from China.

Ian says of all the major components, only the PVC is imported, because there is no longer anyone making it here.

The canvas comes from the Hunter Valley and assembled by long-time employee Greg Kay, a sail maker by trade. His three decades of experience is evident in the workmanship.

Each camper sold is made to order and can therefore accommodate a range of option according to the



individual buyers' needs.

The Walk Up Deluxe is light and breezy with seven windows in total, built to either zip up or down, depending where the breeze or the sun is coming.

They're all screened with midge proof mesh – and there are canopies or annexes above all the major windows that open up outside, providing protection from sun and showers – and a virtual all-round veranda rather like a country homestead.

The annexe at the back measures 4.3 by 2.4 m and with the kitchen at one end would serve well as the main living area. Best of all, you have a choice of how you want to configure the zip up wall and whether you want PVC, canvas, mesh or a combination of all.

There's a further two under floor vents that zip open along the underside of the trailer to let cool air in from beneath. On the hot day we set up camp, the interior temperature dropped five degrees when we opened up these little beauties.

Then there's the All Terrain 'pièce de résistance' – or at least it is for those who like star gazing.

Over the bed is window number seven, a sky roof to let you fall asleep under the stars – and catch a great breeze in a tropical night.

They don't claim to have the only one in the industry, but thanks to Greg's aforementioned stitching skills, they do claim to have the only one that doesn't actually leak in heavy rain.

As well as a full queen-side bed over the trailer itself, there's plenty

of room in the adjoining fold-out room for two more singles.

Since taking over the company, Danielle takes pride in offering a few of what she describes as "women's touches" in an industry full of products designed by blokes for blokes in mind.

These include simple but thoughtful accessories like hooks to tidily hang away jackets, towels or lights, a laundry bag that conveniently hangs inside the trailer and a bedside shelf that can double as a cutting board.

It's easy to overlook such touches, but they're obviously important in a competitive market when women often have the final say on a purchase.

It was demonstrated on the day we visited as a young Sydney couple took delivery of their camper – the fourth to go out the doors that week in the pre-dry season rush.

For the Curtis family it was their second such purchase. They'd covered many miles with their first camper trailer and were in the market for something better that could go further.

They were attracted to All Terrain by its reputation for durability and the fact they could make changes – in their case, a rack to accommodate four family bikes.

They made no bones about the fact it was mum Barbara who was driving the purchasing decision.

"Coming from South Africa originally I have more of a background in camping, so I was into it more to start with, but the whole family love it now," Barbara said.

Chatting to us about how she was swayed by the quality canvas and off-road durability, Barbara didn't even bother to mention the kitchen, which is equally impressive.

It boasts a commercial grade stainless steel with Thetford 4 burner gas cooktop, sink with electric pump and mixer tap.

The unit slides out the rear and safely hinges to the left, so you can pull up while travelling, keep well off to the safe side of the road and cook up a lunch.

It's yet another feature that shows the level of thought and care that goes into the design and build of All Terrain Campers, which is comforting to know when you're making an investment of this size in an outback adventure package. 🏠

pros 👍

- › Solid and dependable
- › Heaps of storage
- › Established off road reputation
- › Adaptable to buyers' needs

cons 👎

- › Height means you need a full 4WD to tow it
- › Takes a while to set up and best suited to a well bodied bloke

All Terrain Campers Walk up Deluxe

Trailer Specifications

Length: 2900mm plus drawbar – total of 4600mm
 Width: 1900mm
 Height: 1300mm or 1700mm when fully packed under road cover
 Weight: 1200kg

Tent Dimensions

Length: 4300mm (2400mm on the floor)
 Width: 2900mm
 Height: 2700mm to the peak of the tent

- Electrical**
- 2 flexible L.E.D. bed lights, removable L.E.D. strip light plus fixed L.E.D. light in the aisle area
 - 12 volt wiring, 5 x 12 volt outlets, voltmeter and 2 x batteries
 - Dual charger with solar regulator

- Water**
- Duoetto hot water service 12v/240v, 4.3lt/min and shower.
 - 2 x 76lt All Terrain water tanks, accessible pump tap

Mechanical

- 2 Tonne off road trig coupling
- 9 leaf eye to eye suspension with super rebound springs
- 100mm x 50mm x 3mm one piece drawbar and chassis
- 2.1mm checker plate floor, guards and gussets with 2mm strong steel sides
- 50mm body lift for extra clearance
- heavy duty automotive rubber seals for doors
- three off road 6 stud wheels and tyres @ 245/70 R16
- upright spare wheel holder mounted to the drawbar
- 2 steel utility boxes
- 3 sealed and fully lockable lockers outside
- Large 2.0mm thick aluminium tool box
- 7 x standard jerry can holders
- 2 x 9kg gas bottle holders
- stone guards
- two towing safety chains
- rear recovery point
- primed and painted in enamel hammertone

Warranty

5 years for the canvas and 12 months for the trailer

All Terrain Campers

Price

www.allterraincampers.com.au
\$39,990

OR YOU MAY LIKE TO TRY



KAKADU COMPLETE CAMPSITE

Complete Campsite has a similar heritage to All Terrain Campers. Based on the NSW Central Coast, they've been in the game for 20 years. They also strive to be all Australian in their input components. The Kakadu is the Rolls Royce of soft floor rugged campers, complete with underfloor heating, diesel fired hot water system and a 80 litre fridge. The extras list is equally impressive and includes a quad bike carrier. **Price: \$41,250**



MOUNTAIN TRAIL CAMPERS EVOLUTION

Yet another luxury camper designed to be towed just about anywhere with confidence. With 24 separate storage components, you can also pack enough to stay as long as you desire. The Albury-based manufacturer has a reputation for precision computer design of the highest standards. Features include advanced suspension system, insulated roof and ducted heating. Their confidence in the quality is backed by a two year warranty. **Price: \$42,996**



IRONMAN 4X4

Ironman 4X4 Accessories are designed in Australia and distributed throughout the world. Originally established in 1958, as a Melbourne based suspension parts manufacturer, named Jacob Spring Works. The company in 1982 took shape as JSW Parts, (short for Jacob Spring Works) to design and supply leaf and coil springs for cars, trucks, buses and 4X4 vehicles. JSW Parts soon became well known and the company today supplies suspension parts and accessories to over 120 countries. On road or off the beaten track, Australia's first choice for 4x4 Suspension and Accessories is Ironman 4x4. Whether you use your 4x4 as a family vehicle or as an off road explorer, Ironman 4x4 has the products that will deliver the comfort and safety you need.

Ironman 4X4 have over 1200 distributors around Australia.

**Call for your nearest supplier Australia Wide
(Local Call) 1300 731 137**

**For Ironman 4X4's full products range visit:
www.ironman4x4.com.au**



Jack & Jane Glasshouse

These great Aussie Made 'Glasshouses' allow you to enjoy wine or champagne from your favourite wine glass while travelling. The Glasshouses come in two sizes and three colours. Glasshouses are the perfect solution for keeping any glass safe whilst you're travelling and they'll save you wrapping and unwrapping glassware at every stop. Perfect also for glasses, bottles, tumblers, coffee cups, glass jars, salt and pepper grinders. They fit easily into your caravan or motorhome cupboards and in the fridge door. No more rattling and breakages!

Jack & Jane are giving away three large and three small Glasshouses to the 5th and 10th reader who emails us. info@timetoroam.com.au tell us why you'd like to have Glasshouses in your van. See the full range at www.jackandjane.com.au or phone 0429 013 451 to order.



AL-KO

AL-KO is pleased to announce that AL-KO Electronic Stability Control (ESC) is now available for installation on older caravans with AL-KO brakes and approved suspensions. A revolutionary breakthrough in towing safety, AL-KO ESC uses sophisticated electronics to automatically monitor and control the stability of your caravan in the event of an emergency avoidance manoeuvre.

For more information about AL-KO ESC or to book a fitment, visit www.alko.com.au/ESC

Barz Optics Straddie Sunnies

Barz Optics are based in Burleigh Heads in QLD. They are one of the most innovative optical companies offering multiple lens material types and 2 floating frame styles. Barz is currently exporting to 16 countries around the world.

The 'Straddie' sunnies are a larger wrap style frame with side protection windows – maximum protection – great for driving the motorhome or caravan. Available with grey or amber polarised lenses.

The Straddie polarised or non-polarised bi-focals are ideal for reading digital instrumentation like GPS's, mobile phones, fish finders, watches, reading maps or tying fishing tackle. Usually digital screens black out when viewed through polarised lenses – i.e. car stereo / car clock. The non- polarised bi-focals

allow for all digital screens to be read and they eliminate the need for swapping glasses to tie fishing tackle or read in the sun.

For more info on the great range of Barz Optics sunglasses visit www.barzoptics.com or email admin@barzoptics.com Enquiries 07 55 764 365.

FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN
one of six pairs of 'Straddie's simply
subscribe to Time to Roam magazine.
The subscription coupon is online at
www.timetoroam.com.au or on page
49 of this edition.





Temperate Tweed beckons

Autumn and winter is the ideal time to visit NSW's most northern coastal gem, the Tweed region. The days are still long, the weather warm and the crowds of summer have left.

While the bright lights of the Gold Coast are right next door, the Tweed combines old world charm and country hospitality in quaint cafes and local pubs where you can enjoy a leisurely lunch with a bushman's vibe.

It's easy to get away from the hustle and bustle with many miles of scenic riverbanks and winding creeks, perfect for a picnic lunch or throwing in a line.

The Tweed Coast offers a choice of seaside towns, where safe, patrolled swimming beaches are lined with vibrant retail precincts offering boutique

shopping, sun-drenched cafes and restaurants.

For surfers there are 37 kilometers of unspoilt beaches with some of the best breaks in the world.

Visitors will also find majestic national parks and rainforests, including several World-Heritage listed areas.

If you're looking for a place to set up your tent, caravan or campervan there's no shortage of options. The Tweed region boasts a range of beachfront, riverfront, creekfront, and rainforest caravan and camping parks to suit all styles of travelers and budgets. Tweed Coast Holiday Parks have seven stunning locations on the coast and rivers. If a rainforest getaway is more to your liking, Mount Warning Rainforest Park is situated at the entrance to the World-Heritage listed Wollumbin Mount Warning National Park. It's the perfect base for keen bush walkers to explore the surrounding National Parks.

Your daydreams can take a wander down memory lane at Cooly Rocks On - Australia's biggest rock 'n' roll nostalgia festival held in Coolangatta and Tweed Heads from 31 May – 10 June, 2013. Wander the streets where Rock 'n' Roll, Rockabilly and Swing music fills the air. Hundreds of retro stalls and food stands will transport you back to the 1950s and 1960s while thousands of hot rods, custom cars and classic cars line the beachfront. This nostalgic festival attracts over 70 000 revelers each year. For your chance to get among the action, enter our competition to win a Nostalgic Tweed Getaway – see over the page for details.



While today the Tweed boasts some of the most modern and well-equipped holiday parks, the waterfront locations have a long-heritage. They go back to the very early days of camping holidays last century and later catered to the boom in caravan ownership from the 1950s.



To book your accommodation, tours and attractions free call 1800 674 414 or visit www.tweedtourism.com.au

then...



The Tweed Heads camping area on the Qld/NSW border, c.1950. Postcard by Murray Views. Courtesy of Tweed River Regional Museum

Tweed Coast Holiday Parks

The spectacular subtropical region of the Tweed Coast is the idyllic location for summer family holidays, weekend getaways or weekend winter warmers for those who aren't fortunate enough to enjoy a temperate climate all year round.

To top it all off, the Tweed also boasts some of Australia's best holiday parks.

Pottsville South Holiday Park

Relax in the shade of your annexe while watching the children splash in the year-round calm waters of Mooball Creek. Surf beaches and the village shops are just a short stroll away. You are perfectly located for family day-trips to the surrounding attractions including some of Australia's most magnificent natural wonders. A wide range of accommodation types is available, including absolute waterfront sites as well as luxury cabins. Pottsville South is the ideal place for swimming, fishing and family fun.

Fingal Holiday Park

Get away from it all and relax in total seclusion at Fingal Holiday Park with the Pacific Ocean and kilometres of white sandy beaches at your front door. Mild winters and warm waters mean that every day's a beach day at Fingal, and the beaches are patrolled all summer long. Accommodation ranges from large well-grassed tent and caravan sites to luxury cabins and villas situated overlooking a patrolled surf beach. Just 10 minutes from central Tweed Heads by car.

Pottsville North Holiday Park

Pottsville North Holiday Park will keep the whole family occupied. The high standard of park facilities and nearby village shops ensures a stress free holiday. Two fenced swimming pools on site are suitable for children of all ages. The rolling surf meets the golden sands just 200 metres away with further fishing and swimming opportunities in the nearby creek. Pottsville Beach offers easy access to all the attractions of the Tweed Coast. National parks and a range of other activities are all just a short drive away.

Boyd's Bay Holiday Park

Ideally located on a protected stretch of the Tweed River, Boyd's Bay Holiday Park is within walking distance of Tweed Heads. The safe waters of the Tweed make it the natural choice for water sports. Why not take a swim in our temperature controlled pool; heated during winter and cooled during summer, before heading off to one of the many clubs for which the area is famous. Boyd's Bay park offers onsite cabins and large sites for tents and caravans.





Kingscliff Beach Holiday Park

Forget the car and relax! Kingscliff Beach Holiday Park is located on a magnificent stretch of beautiful beachfront in the heart of this seaside village. Everything you need is within walking distance. A summer patrolled surfing beach is literally metres away. Shops, clubs and restaurants are all within a leisurely stroll. Pitch a tent, bring your caravan or relax in our limited number of luxury cabins. Kingscliff Beach Holiday Park takes you back in time to when a beach holiday was far removed from the hustle and bustle.

Hastings Point Holiday Park

If you like to fish, you'll love Hastings Point Holiday Park, with a unique twin water location. This secluded holiday park overlooks a long sandy beach as well as Cudgera Creek – a great combination for year-round swimming and surfing as well as fishing. Hastings Point is the ideal place to really get away from it all. Hastings Point Holiday Park is located just 25 kilometres south of Tweed Heads. The park offers a great selection of large caravan and tent sites with spectacular beachfront or riverside views as well as a limited number of on-site Surfari Tents.

The team at Destination Tweed are giving you the chance to win a Nostalgic Tweed Getaway valued at over \$500. Just visit www.tweedtourism.com.au and complete an entry form.

You can win a seven night stay at Boyds Bay Holiday Park, a family pass to Tropical Fruit World and a Cooly Rocks On prize pack including tickets to the Grand Final show and festival merchandise.

LTPS-13-02320

Kingscliff North Holiday Park

Small and friendly, Kingscliff North Holiday Park is the perfect destination for everyone who yearns for an absolute beachfront holiday, without breaking the budget. Located just 2km from the centre of Kingscliff, peace and quiet are assured with less than 60 sites including grassed tent sites, powered van sites and on-site Surfari tents and Villas. To the north and south, the seemingly endless beach is free from holiday crowds, are patrolled in the summer time.



Further details on all the Tweed Coast Holiday Parks are at www.tchp.com.au



Are we there yet?

MANY FAMILIES DREAM OF A ROUND-AUSTRALIA CAMPING TRIP. HERE'S THE STORY OF ONE MELBOURNE FAMILY THAT DID IT, LOVED IT AND WOULD RECOMMEND IT.

Pictured: Declan and Louie make it to the west coast, Shark Bay WA. Opposite page: The boys first taste of big game fishing off Darwin, Litchfield National Park NT and the trusty Prado. Top Right, The author Rosie Mullaly in Mullalyup WA – not her ancestral home, it's an indigenous (Noongar) word meaning "nose place" where nose-piercing initiations were traditionally carried out on young men.

By Rosemary Mullaly

It all started with Allison Lester's delightful and enormously popular book chronicling her family's year long trip around Australia. 'Are We there Yet' is the story of Mum, Dad, three kids, a watermelon styled sunhat plus an old fashioned pop-top.

For us, Mum, Dad, Louie, 9 and Declan, 7, our many readings of this 32-page picture book ended 25,278 kms and many thousands of dollars' worth of diesel later – no longer the suburban family dreaming through Allison Lester's eyes, but now the kind of people who 'do that sort of thing'.

On reflection, it is making the choice to actually do the big trip that is the Mt

Everest moment. Once you say those magic words: "we're going around Australia" everything that follows is little more than logistics. You're going, so get on with it.

That would be all okay to say if we had some pedigree....if in fact we were "über campers"; people who have it in their DNA to reverse a 24-footer into the spot in one go without a single cross word and who cook a perfect leg of lamb with nothing more than a rock, a piece of foil and a few coals.

Let me put that thinking to bed. We'd only begun camping about 18 months before the big adventure (the man of the story having given it up in his early 20s). And I had never even been in a tent at all before that mid-40s milestone.

Admittedly I loved it with a passion from



the very first night, but before we headed off in April 2011, I would barely have had 14 nights in the great outdoors and almost all of them with experienced camping families. We also became famous among our friends for never once taking a dry tent home; always having to put it up again in the back yard to ward off the mould.

As for the love of my life, well I am determined to be kind because I want him to keep travelling with me, so perhaps I can put it this way. He doesn't actually like camping. He doesn't have a handy bone, in his finely tuned body. He does not care one whit for cars or what makes them work. Unless I took it on, towing, reversing and chocking was pretty much out of the question.

THE SOLUTION WAS EASY: BUY A TENT.

We did, and travelled the length and breadth of the nation with one happy commandment: if it doesn't fit in the car, it doesn't go. We never regretted the decision not to take a van or trailer; although I know my beloved hankered for the nights and places I would

agree to a cabin or other solid accommodation.

Our tent was a Coleman Montana 12. With three huge rooms it measures 6.5 metres long and 3 metres wide (when we realised we had a Taj Mahal we learned to call ahead and check sites were big enough). At over 2 metres high (1.8 metres at the low ends), you could comfortably 'live' in it. We bent and split poles, bickered and sulked, but it always went up and it always went back in the bag when we moved on... I am delighted to report, never even once was it wet when we needed to pack, even after a famous cyclonic day and night in Onslow.

Not only would we need a 4WD, we would need to know what a 4WD actually was and did. We asked around, grilled our 4 Wheel Driving mates, did a little reading, and decided on a 2005 Prado with about 250,000 on the dial. It was one of the best decisions we made. We did a good detailed 4WD course (Oh, that's how it works!) and I then made friends with the local ARB adding a bull bar, snorkel, cage rack on the roof, some serious shock absorbers, a UHF radio and a second battery with new wiring to run the 40 litre Engel fridge we'd bought

(one of the other best decisions we made).

We also invested in some safety and recovery gear that thankfully went unused, including an Accusat personal EPIRB that sat in the glove box and sold on eBay after the trip for not much less than we paid for it new.

SO WHERE DID ALL THIS GEAR TAKE US?

Months before we left, a big laminated map of Australia went up on the dining room wall and with the help of some maps, guidebooks, the internet and our imaginations, it was gradually peppered with bright little labels on places we hoped to see. Being Melbourne people, a breakthrough moment was figuring out not to head west and risk getting too caught up in South Australia. It is close enough to 'do' in smaller trips and this trip was not to be small. Similarly, we decided to ignore the east coast; Victorians spend half our lives doing Sydney, Byron and Surfers and there'd be time for that.

We wanted distance quickly, so set ourselves the task of reaching one of our favourite towns in Australia, Port Douglas, for Easter



Making the crossing to the Top End from Queensland

which was two weeks away. Seymour, Wagga Wagga, Dubbo, we were on our way. Charleville, Longreach and beautiful long days of driving gave me my first inkling of what would be my favourite memory of the trip.

It was the Australian landscape. Just the thought of it even now makes me feel like a bigger, better person. It never once disappointed and often made me gasp as we would crest a hill and some new horizon appeared.

Vast and indescribably beautiful are the long, long days and hundreds and thousands of kilometres of outback NSW and Queensland's grass and scrublands; the brash rich sandy reds of the Kimberley; the corals and colourful fish of Ningaloo (Australia's best kept secret); the burning beauty of the Northern Territories pandanus country; and the perfect pink and pale green pastels stretching across the Pilbara – quite possibly the most beautiful landscape on earth made even more so as its wildflower season gets started.

Eagles and hawks were our constant companions and emus, wallabies, dingoes, monitors and 'roos never failed to turn up and delight.

WE WERE LUCKY, THE NATION HAD HAD SOME RAIN AND THE LAND WAS RESPONDING.

Part of our luck was that roads closed through the wet seemed to open again just as we headed their way with the exception of the very top of Cape York (we only made it to Cooktown).

One of the magically open roads was the Plenty Highway (Highway being the technical term for what is a rutted dirt goat track). It took us into Alice Springs. Albeit circuitously. We'd headed from Port Douglas to Karumba on the Gulf of Carpentaria via Mt Surprise (one of our top five caravan parks) via the Savannah Way. The plan was ludicrous but brilliant: get from there to Alice and then back up toward Darwin without driving the same 'roads'.

This took us from Karumba (sensational) down to Mt Isa and then onto the Northern Territory Queensland border to a tiny one amenity town called Urandangi where we camped deep in the bush on the banks of the Georgina River. The boys played with the local indigenous kids after school. It doesn't really get more remote than Urandangi but if you ever get a chance and it's not in flood, it's a fantastic experience.

We were also lucky to have the time to go up north, head to the centre, and then up the Stuart Highway to enjoy Litchfield National Park, Darwin and Kakadu before heading for weeks on the west coast.

DOING THE CALCULATIONS

Everyone who makes these trips has to calculate the very personal algorithm that puts together where they want to go, how long they have, what time of year it is, how much they have to spend, and what can and cannot give. Among the maths we learned as we went was: time is not elastic and that means you have to keep moving and planning ahead;

also almost everyone on the road wishes they had roughly twice the amount of time they actually have no matter how little or long their journey.

While the so-called Grey Nomads are probably the best known of the long haul Aussie travellers, there are two other common species out there on the road: the young foreign tourists in their rented Wicked, Apollo and Britz campers, and my type, the families with young kids.

The families can be broken down into two groups, those taking a term off school, and those taking a year or more. While we were closer to the school term crowd, we had decided for the sake of a few additional weeks and adventures not to worry too much about it. We met families like ours the length and breadth and one particular family everywhere.

One question the travelling families get used to hearing is about school on the road.

My answer was they were in school every day; they just had to look out the car window for a lesson.

There was also plenty of maths in measuring the magnificent miles, and no-one ever asked: "Are we there yet?" But I often ask now: "When can we go again?" ♦

Family road test

CAN A STANDARD RV RENTAL SATISFY EVERY MEMBER OF THE FAMILY? **THE KEKICS**; MUM FIONA, DAD MURAT AND SON ARLEY REVIEW AN APOLLO MOTORHOME.

FIONA'S VERDICT:

I'm used to sleeping in a tent. So I was always going to be impressed by a camping holiday that separated me from flies, heat and dirt.

For me, just sleeping off the ground passes for luxury. Throw in air conditioning and I think I'm at Palazzo Versace.

Even so, this is no frills stuff compared to some RVs on the market. The Apollo Euro Deluxe is functional rather than fancy. Furnishings have been selected for their durability and not their good looks. There wasn't even a wine glass in the cupboard.

But for me, camping – whether under canvas or on wheels is supposed to be a back to

basics experience. I didn't want any more than the Euro Deluxe provided. And I'm sure most campers would feel the same way.

The Euro Deluxe also features a shower and toilet. I gave the shower a go. The water was lukewarm and washing in such a small space requires a mastery of yoga that I do not possess. But I'm not convinced you need a shower anyway. Most campgrounds have large and well-appointed amenities blocks. So that didn't worry me. But it's something to consider if having a private shower is a priority for you.

As for the kitchen, I'm of the opinion that fathers should BBQ all meals during camping trips while mothers kick back with a glass of wine and a good book. But for the purposes of

this review, I can report that the kitchen area is perfectly adequate and easy to use. In fact the stove was no different to my cook top at home.

Setting up the beds was a little confusing at first. But once you solve the puzzle, it's easy. You can be curled up asleep in less than five minutes. It was comfortable too. I slept as solidly as if I was in my own bed.

The brochure suggests the Euro Deluxe can accommodate six adults. I think two adults and two or three children is a more realistic number. But even at maximum capacity, this motor home beats a tent every time.

Our Apollo experience was an absolute winner... from the friendly staff at the Mascot



pros



- > Luxurious and spacious
- > Easy to pick up and use
- > Fuel economy surprisingly good for such a large vehicle and very close to the suggested 14L/100Km)

cons



- > Beds were very comfy, but hard to organize.
- > Some of the internal fittings are a bit cumbersome
- > The shower was lukewarm and poky

depot to our spotless and well maintained motor home.

I am never ever, ever putting a tent back together... I mean like never!

MURAT'S VERDICT

Picking the vehicle up from Apollo Sydney was a breeze. It would have been even faster if we'd pre-registered online. We finalised our paperwork then a very knowledgeable staff member (Laura) introduced us to our motor home, a six berth Euro Deluxe powered by VW.

Before handing us the keys, Laura carefully explained all the intricacies of our accommodation for the next couple of days. The Euro Deluxe is pretty much a two bedroom apartment on wheels. It has so many bells and whistles, it's hard to take it all in.

However, there is one feature you do take in straight away – especially if you're used to driving an average family sedan. This thing is huge (7.7m long, 2.3m wide and 3.3m high). So forget the Maccas drive thru!

I was daunted at the prospect of driving this behemoth at first, but Laura reassured me I'd be fine. And she was right.

On the Road

Fortunately, the Euro Deluxe is fitted with an automatic transmission which took one variable out of the equation. Your seating position is quite high and the vehicle has excellent visibility with good mirrors and a rear view camera. So keeping the Euro Deluxe correctly on the road wasn't as difficult as you might think.

Throttle response and a transmission with a mind of its own takes some getting used to. But once I got the hang of it, negotiating Sydney traffic was reasonably straight forward.

The suspension is quite soft and you do notice a fair amount of body roll - particularly when heading down a stretch of road like the notorious Bulli Pass.

But, with some common sense and careful braking, you can keep up with normal traffic flow quite easily.

On the open road, it's actually quite pleasant to drive, although overtaking does require a lot of careful planning. Let's face it, you're not going to win Bathurst with this rig. Then again you won't be accommodating 6 people in absolute luxury in a V8 Supercar either!

Setting up

Having been a tent based camper all my life, I loved this part! Pull into your allocated camping site, turn the engine off, put the handbrake on, plug yourself into the 240V power supply then open the fridge and crack open your first beer. Simple as that.

Would I do it again? You bet I would!

ARLEY'S VERDICT

I was amazed when I jumped into the back and realised I'd be sitting in a booth with a table. And that wasn't the best bit. There was a working TV, with a remote control. It was really comfortable at first. But the table was loose on its bracket so whenever we stopped or went fast it would hit me. But I didn't mind because my eyes were glued to the TV!! I am never going back to a camp stretcher after that experience! :-P

About where we stayed:

WOLLONGONG SURF LEISURE RESORT

This was a weekend trip so we didn't want to stray too far from Sydney. The Wollongong Surf Leisure Resort came up on an internet search, so we decided to give it a go. And we're glad we did. The location is amazing. The resort is situated right on Wollongong's main 26km bike track which follows the coast. Bikes can

be hired from reception for \$10 an hour. There are at least two people on reception at all times with another stationed at the kiosk. You don't have to wait to check in or out. And staff members are super friendly and knowledgeable about the area. The beach closest to the park has dangerous surf, but there's a lovely rock pool and it's an easy walk to Fairy Meadow beach. We didn't get a chance to test out all the facilities which include putt putt golf, tennis and an indoor pool.

The Towradgi Beach Hotel is right across the road, a great family pub with superb food and good service. The only negative we could see, there is only one amenities block, positioned at the far end of the park. So it's a long walk in the middle of the night – if you aren't lucky enough to be sleeping in an Apollo Motor home. We'd never contemplated a holiday in the 'Gong, but we're now converts. The Wollongong Surf Leisure Resort is a terrific accommodation choice. 📍



Tips for ticks on your trip

KAREN GOLDRICK HAS ADVICE ON HOW TO AVOID PARALYSIS TICKS WHILE TRAVELLING

Camping with dogs in the bush can be mutually enjoyable, but there are hazards to consider along the way. Paralysis Ticks (*Ixodes Holocyclus*) are one such hazard. These are found in coastal bushland along the east coast of Australia.

A toxin found in the tick's saliva can result in paralysis; usually beginning in the back legs, progressing to include the forelegs, and then the respiratory muscles. Four to five percent of dogs with tick toxicity may die, even if they undergo treatment.

The best treatment for tick paralysis is prevention. Avoiding areas known to inhabit ticks is one option. Generally ticks are found in coastal bush, but their prevalence can vary from season to season. Ticks are thought to be most active in spring and early summer, but in some areas may be active all year around. If you are holidaying in a tick area, try to avoid long grass or creek areas. Female ticks become more active, and eggs tend to hatch after rain and in more humid weather.

Consider calling ahead to the local vet in your intended destination and asking if you are unsure whether the area you are

travelling to is a tick area. It is always handy to know the location of the local vet when travelling with your pet.

There are a number of chemical tick prevention choices available. In our experience no one method is 100 per cent reliable. Options include Frontline Topspot or Advantix every two weeks, Frontline spray every three weeks, or a thorough weekly Permethrin rinse. Both Advantix and Permethrin are toxic to cats. We usually advise some additional liver support, e.g. milk thistle, while using high doses of acaricides on your dog. Neem oil is reported to have some anti tick activity, but has not been shown to be protective against paralysis ticks.

It is essential to check your dog daily while away in a tick area, and to continue these exams for up to a month after returning. Keep your dog's coat short while travelling to make the search easier. Most ticks will attach in front of the shoulders. However, I have found ticks in ears, inside lips, and under the tail. Sometimes there is more than one tick.

An attached tick looks almost like a grey skin lump. If you find a tick, spray it with Frontline, wait one minute, then remove with tick removing forceps or tweezers. Ease the tick out so as not to break off the head (breaking off the head does not increase

the intoxication, but does result in a foreign body reaction). Then keep your dog cool and quiet for the next 48 hours, and watch for the development of any paralysis. If you are unsure, have your dog checked by a local vet.

If your dog does show signs it is essential you transport them to the nearest vet, and keep them cool and calm. Treatment is always more successful the earlier it is started. Early signs can vary, and can include a change in the voice or bark, back leg incoordination or wobbliness, a change in breathing, regurgitation or vomiting, dilated pupils, gagging or coughing.

Treatment consists of medication to reduce anxiety, tick antiserum, and supportive treatment for vomiting or breathing difficulties. Dogs are often in hospital for four days or more. Stress reduction is essential for tick-affected dogs, and we use Rescue Remedy to help those we have had to treat.

Tick prevention for cats consists of daily checks, keeping them indoors if possible, Frontline Topspot or Frontline spray.

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



Hunter Valley

May 24, 25, 26
Maitland
Showground

Mid North Coast

August 9, 10, 11
Wauchope
Showground

Orana

Sept 13, 14, 15
Dubbo
Showground



*live it
love it*
the great outdoors



Rural Scene Promotions

Show

Muswellbrook

April 12, 13, 14
Muswellbrook
Showground

Rockhampton

July 19, 20, 21
Rockhampton
Showground



Adelaide Caravan & Camping Show, February 20-24



Andrew & Steve Foster



Bronte Scholz



Cathi Buttfield & Aaron Stanfield



Craig Tame & Steven Sambell



Dave Cooper



Delores & Rudi Vester



Demo



Erin Low & Tracy Hillier



Jess & John McClelland



Ken Hawkins



Lindi & Allan Rush



Ross McEwan & David Vegh



Roy Yu



Russell Wood & Ross Nichols

Adelaide Caravan & Camping Show (continued)



Scholtz Van Der Walt



Scott Coogan & Michael MacLean



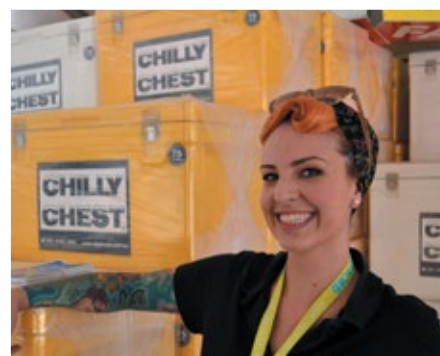
Caravans and Campers Hire



Mark Shifton & Nic Vincent



Michael Imiela



Abi

Gold Coast Caravan & Camping Show, March 1-3



Andrew Ellingworth



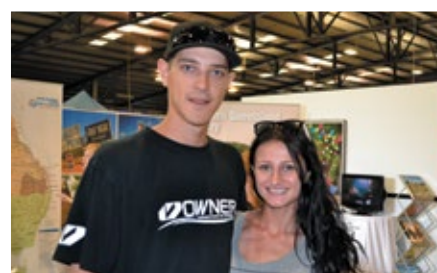
Barry James



Ben Menzies & Nathan Short



Call the Cops

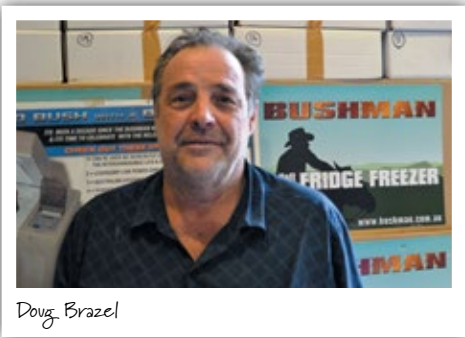


Campbell Green & Chantelle Andreas



Chaise Paterson

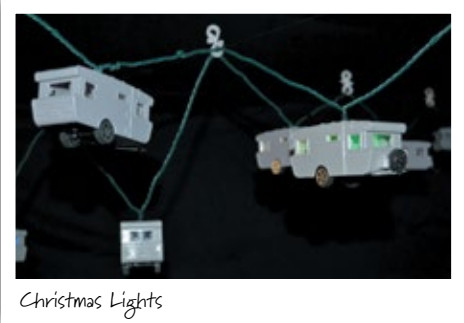
Gold Coast Caravan & Camping Show (continued)



Doug Brazel



Gary, Amy & Robert SLSC QLD



Christmas Lights



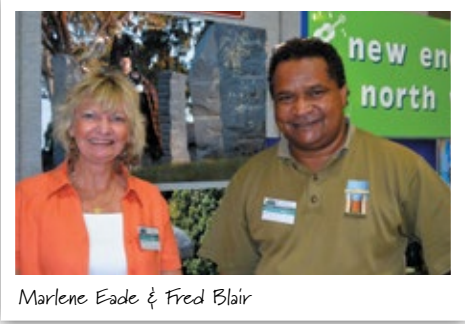
Good but Wet



Lutsje Waddington



Mark Bruem, Lee Kerr & Pam MacDonald



Marlene Eade & Fred Blair



Megan Brown & Sally Buckingham



Rain Hail or Shine



Shana Rogers



Simon & Mick



Simone Paulsen

Melbourne Caravan Camping & Touring Supershow, March 7-12



A break from the heat



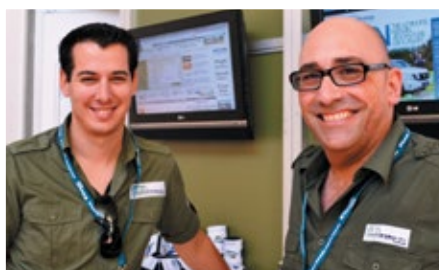
Adriana Manson



Aileen McIvor



Anita Cato



Barry Freeman & Vange Sirianos



Ben & Scott



Bill Pycroft



Browsing



Cassie Caravanning QLD



Cherie Forbes



Chris Soeters



Christina Baker & Leigh Torrance



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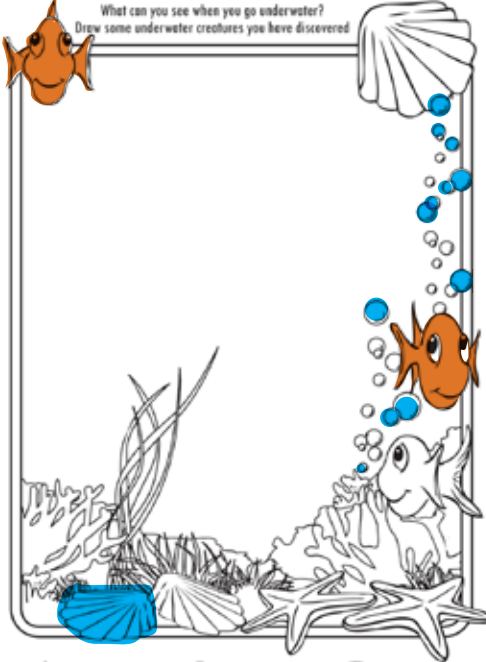
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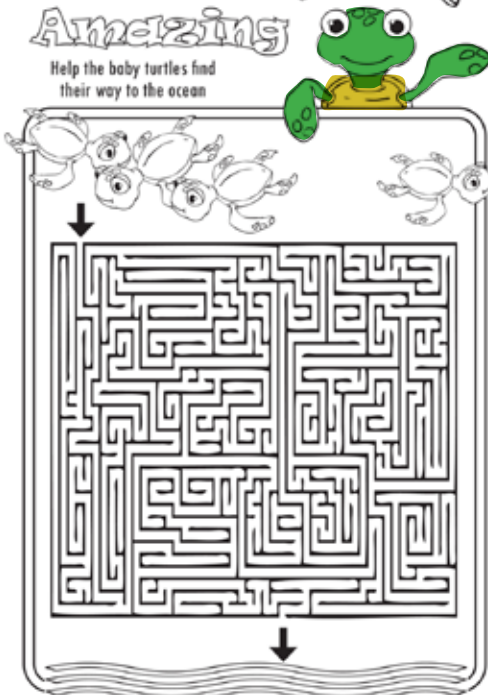
Under the Sea

What can you see when you go underwater?
Draw some underwater creatures you have discovered



Amazing

Help the baby turtles find
their way to the ocean



Word Search

Circle all the words you can find from the list provided.
Remember the words can be horizontal, vertical or diagonal.



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

BIKERIDING	SCOOTER	MOVIES	CRAB	POOL
BOOKREADING	BOOGIEBOARD	RESORT	DIVE	ROD
CARAVAN	SWIMMING	SURFBOARD	HOT	FUN
FISHING	BOARDGAMES	SHELL	PARK	WET
JELLYFISH	BUSHWALKING	SUNBURN	RAIN	SUN
SHOPPING	CAMPING	TOWEL	SAND	PLAY

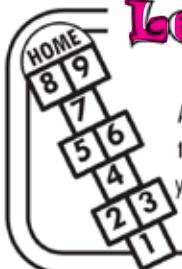
Jokes

What do you call tiles that don't stick to the wall?
Reptiles

Why didn't the skeleton go to the ball?
Because he had no body to go with.

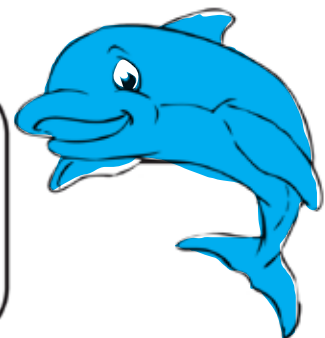
Knock Knock!
Who's there?
Bumblebee
Bumblebee who?
Bumblebee cold if
you don't pull your
pants up.

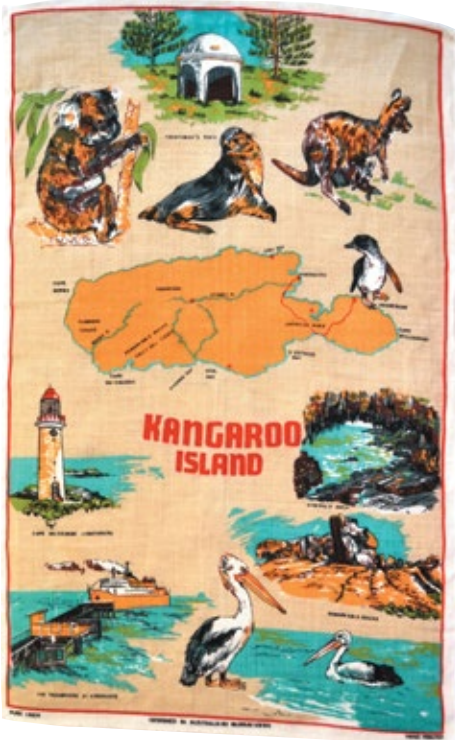
Let's play Hopscotch



Play a game of hopscotch with family and friends. Find a rock.

A player tosses the rock into the first square. The player must hop on each square to the end of the court. Make sure you use two feet for the double squares. When you reach the end you must turn around and hop back, picking up your rock on the way. If done successfully the player moves onto square 2, and so on.





Tea towel travelogue

Tea towels surely make the best take-home souvenirs. We salute the Australian tradition for beautiful textile design matched with efficient offshore manufacturing. This 1970s beauty is a colourful tribute to Kangaroo Island. KI's best attractions remain as inviting today.



Heritage corner

While Sydney has its Opera House, the twin towns of Forster Tuncurry NSW have their own unique icon to late 20th century architecture.

The ablution block at the Forster Caravan Park with its soaring octagonal roof is a real landmark in the heart of town. It was built in the 1960s – the same time Bert Tickner was making his amazing Sunliner caravans in Forster. Locals obviously had high hopes for the future of caravanning and the ablution block is testament to that! We reckon the building deserves a heritage order.

Toying with Caravans

The Mettoy (Metal Toy) company was founded in 1933 by German Philip Ullmann in Northampton, England.

The firm made a variety of lithographed metal wind-up toys. The profits from toy manufacturing were even used in at one stage to rescue Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. The firm is most famous for its line of die-cast toy motor vehicles of their Corgi Toys branch created in 1956.

Tin plate toy caravans were made by Mettoy from the early 1940s to 1950. They were available in a variety of colours and even came with a sun roof which could be opened and shut.

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



Goolmangar NSW 2480

We love a sign that brings a smile to the face as you're passing through. The village of Goolmangar, on the Nimbin Rd north of Lismore proudly salutes its dairy farming heritage to one and all.

Have you seen a funny sign while roaming Australia? Send us a pic: info@timetoroom.com.au





WHAT'S ON



Cooly Rocks On retro



QUEENSLAND

Fri April 26 to Sun 28

Widgee Thornside Country Music Muster

Organisers have found a stunning natural amphitheatre 34km west of Gympie for this event, bringing together artists including the Webb Brothers (pictured) and other Golden Guitar winners and finalists. Camping is free. Info: www.widgeecountrymusic.com

Fri May 3 to Mon 6

Australian Heritage Festival, Jondaryan

Roll out a swag, pitch a tent or bring your campervan for a weekend getaway with a difference. Turn your hand at learning 19th century pioneering skills and long forgotten crafts. Info: www.jondaryanwoolshed.com

Thursday 16 May to Sunday 19

Noosa International Food and Wine Festival

The tenth anniversary festival will see 200 of the world's most prominent chefs converge, along with winemakers, food personalities,

media and passionate foodies.

Info: www.noosafoodandwine.com.au

Sat May 8 and Sun 19

Emu Gully Air & Land Spectacular - Helidon

Be entertained from the trenches to the skies as Emu Gully showcases the largest re-enactment of ANZAC stories in Australia. The festival includes Australia's biggest collection of military vehicles. Info: www.airandlandshow.com.au

Sat 25 May and Sun 26

Captain Cook 1770 Festival, Town of 1770

Walk in the shoes of Captain James Cook in the annual festival re-enacting his first landing in Queensland on 24 May 1770. Info: www.1770festival.com.au

Fri May 31 to June 10

Cooly Rocks On, Tweed Heads Coolangatta

A mix of over 1,200 custom and classic cars and hot rods, over 50 rock'n'roll bands, a line-up of international guest artists. Info: www.coolyrockson.com

NSW

Sat April 20 to Sat 27

Canowindra Balloon Challenge

The annual hot air balloon competition and festival incorporates the 18th Australian National Balloon Championships. Every morning at daybreak and each late-afternoon (weather dependant) enjoy the spectacle as dozens of colourful balloons take to the skies. info: www.canowindrachallenge.org.au

Sat April 20 and Sun 21

Ironfest, - Lithgow

Ironfest brings together artists, designer/makers, blacksmiths, performers of all kinds, musicians, historical re-enactors and machine enthusiasts. Historical displays by local museums, as well as other institutions, such as the Sydney Powerhouse Museum, present stories and presentations by experts in their fields of study. Info: www.ironfest.net

Thurs May 2 to Sun 5

Australian Celtic Festival, Glen Innes

There is a spectacular street parade, mass pipe bands, Celtic strongman events, Kirking of the Tartan and clan gatherings, workshops and the ever popular poets breakfast. Great live music including internationally renowned vocalist Celine Toner. Info: www.australiancelticfestival.com

Sat May 4 and Sun 5

Narooma Oyster Festival

Join Masterchef Julie Goodwin and others for a packed program of events that will ensure everyone from serious food connoisseurs to non-oyster-lovers will be entertained, delighted and most importantly, treated to some of the finest produce in the region. Info: www.naroomaoysterfestival.com

Sunday May 11 to 31

Blue Mountains crossing Bicentenary events

In 1813, European explorers Blaxland,



National Caravan & Camping Shows

Sydney Caravan & Camping Supershow

Rosehill April 20 to 28.

www.caravan-camping.com.au

South Queensland Caravan, Camping, Boating & Fishing Expo

Nambour Showgrounds Sunshine Coast

April 19 to 21. www.australianevents.com.au

Geraldton Boat Caravan & Camping Show

April 27 and 28. Geraldton Turf Club

www.geraldtonboatshow.com.au

Hunter Valley Caravan Camping 4WD Show

May 24 to 26. Maitland Showground

www.ruralscene.com.au

Mackay Home Show & Caravan, Camping Expo

May 17 to 19. Mackay Showgrounds.

www.australianevents.com.au

Cairns Home Show & Caravan, Camping, Boating Expo

May 31 to June 2. Cairns Showgrounds.

www.australianevents.com.au

Brisbane Caravan, Camping and Touring Holiday show

June 5 to 11 RNA Showgrounds Brisbane

www.caravanqld.com.au

Lawson and Wentworth, took 21 days to find a way across the Blue Mountains. To commemorate this 200 years later, events include the Bicentenary Flyover (25 May 2013) and the Bicentenary Re-enactment Walk. Info: www.bluemountainscrossings.com.au

ACT

Sat June 1 to September 8

Turner from the Tate: The Making of a Master, Australian National Gallery

J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851) is one of Britain's greatest artists and a key figure of the start of the nineteenth century. His art generated controversy and admiration for its restless and experimental character.

Info: www.nga.gov.au

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Sat April 20

Opera in the Caves, Limestone Coast

A performance by the Australian Opera Scholars in Blanche Cave, Naracoorte offering unique ambience and acoustic sound. Info: www.australianairholidays.com

Thurs April 25 to April 30

Kangaroo Island Feast-ival

This is an Island feast that celebrates fine seafood, local produce, location and conversation in one of Australia's most unique places. Info: www.goodfoodkangarooisland.com

Tues May 23 to Fri 26

Penola Coonawarra Arts Festival, Limestone Coast

The Penola Coonawarra Arts Festival is one of regional Australia's leading arts festivals. It celebrates the literary and arts heritage of Penola and the fine wines of Coonawarra. Info: www.artsfestival.com.au

Fri May 31 to June 10

South Australian Country Music Festival and Awards, Riverland

Barmera comes alive with country music with 10 days of new talent, old favourites, workshops, tributes, awards, dinners and breakfasts. Info www.riverlandcountrymusic.com

VICTORIA

Thurs April 18 to May 19

Wangaratta Heritage Festival

The Heritage Festival will be held in conjunction with the National Trust's Heritage Month. Events include heritage walks and talks. Info: Wangaratta.com.au

Sat May 11 to Sun 12

Ballarat Heritage Weekend

Ballarat is steeped in history, during the annual Heritage Weekend residents and visitors are encouraged to turn back the clock and celebrate the rich cultural heritage and world class buildings. Info: ballaratheritageweekend.com

NT

Fri May 3 to Sun 5

Wide Open Space, Ross River

Set against the stunning backdrop of the East MacDonnell Ranges, this is one of the most exciting desert culture festivals held in Australia. The bustling and colourful market place with have tasty treats, handmade crafts and clothing from local and interstate designers.

Sat May 4 to Sun 12

Nightcliff Seabreeze Festival, Darwin

Sponsored by Darwin City Council and the Northern Territory Government, the Nightcliff Seabreeze Festival takes place each year on the first weekend in May and

attracts thousands of visitors to the Big Day event held on the Nightcliff Foreshore.

Mon May 6

Bangtail Muster – Alice Springs

Join in the madcap fun of one of Alice Springs' major street parades.

The Muster goes back to the old days when cattle were the main industry of the Centre. Stockmen would cut off the ends of the tails to record the number of cattle mustered.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Fri April 19 and Sun 20

Bunbury Horse and Country Music Show

The free show kicks off with a fantastic family concert and fireworks. Saturday will feature West Australian country music artists and bush poets, local beer and wine tent, the Ute Stampede, side show alley, kid's entertainers, dog displays and local art.

Weds May 24 to Fri 26

Ningaloo Whaleshark Festival, Exmouth

A weekend of fun activities and entertainment in Exmouth, culminating with Family Day on town Beach.

Sat May 25

Airnorth Kimberley Moon Experience, Kununurra

The highlight of the Argyle Diamonds Ord Valley Muster, a fun-filled 10 day festival, is the Airnorth Kimberley Moon Experience. An outstanding line-up of Aussie greats is guaranteed to give the people of Kununurra and their visitors a rocking good time at the Jim Hughes Amphitheatre, under the Kimberley moon. Info: Kununurra Visitor Centre 08 9168 1177. 



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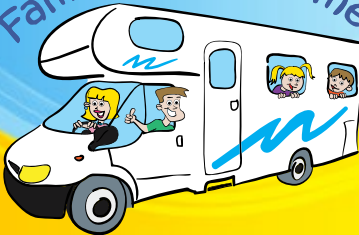


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Wendy Harmer – the Accidental Nomad

WENDY HARMER IS BEST KNOWN AS ONE OF THE GREATS OF AUSTRALIAN COMEDY, ALTHOUGH HER 'FUNNY GIRL' REPUTATION POSSIBLY OUTSHINES WHAT HAS BEEN A TRULY REMARKABLE CAREER.



Wendy started out as a journalist, broke into Melbourne theatre comedy and ended up becoming a national star in hit ABC TV comedy series of the late 1980s.

Her success is even more noteworthy when you consider she overcame a speech impediment in early life and went on to thrive in the cut throat world of Sydney breakfast radio for more than a decade. She even hosted the Logies!

Throughout this time she's been an avid

writer, publishing some 20 books for adults, kids and teens.

Her most recent venture is in web publishing www.thehoopla.com.au. As she describes it; "The Hoopla is an online news and magazine site for a community of wise, warm, witty and wonderful women."

Growing up on a farm in rural Victoria, Wendy has a deep love for the Australian bush.

She became a Winnebago owner 'by accident' and is now passionate about helping make Australia a paradise for RV owners.

Did you go camping or caravanning when you were young, if so where, can you tell us about it.

We camped a lot when I was a kid. I can still remember Dad swearing when he found a tent peg missing when he was raising the huge old cream and green canvas tent which must have weighed a ton!

We lived in central Victoria, so most of our trips were to the banks of a river somewhere

– the Campaspe, the Goulburn or the mighty Murray – in the hunt for the elusive redfin. We were definitely an inland tribe – no beaches for us. The Grampians were also a favourite spot.

There was a little caravan for a while too – hardly big enough to turn around in, so we four kids slept in the annex and laughed ourselves silly way into the night, that's when we weren't terrified at the creepy sounds coming from outside the canvas.

They were great days, no doubt about it.

Do you ever camp or go caravanning today – if so do you have a favourite place?

Some years ago I bought my father a Winnebago as he was living alone, in his 1970s and a bit bored with life after he had sold his farm.

It was a lumbering beast of a thing with a shower, toilet, microwave, DVD player – all the bells and whistles. Something I thought I'd never be seen dead in.

Dad loaded up his mate Meggsy and I

out the back | people

The Harmer family caravan and the Holden heading off for holidays in the 1970's.

don't think we saw him for about four years! Except for the odd postcard from an outback town we'd never heard of. Best money I ever spent.

These days Dad has Parkinson's disease so the Winnie came back to me and I became an Accidental Grey Nomad.

My husband, two kids and I blart off whenever we have the chance.

We have done lots of travelling in it – perhaps most memorable was the New Year's Eve we spent on a bank of the Snowy River, far, far from the madness of the Sydney fireworks.

We took the Winnie over to Tassie and one night camped in the grounds of the Hobart Casino, another in the Launceston Botanical gardens – good sites being hard to find.

These days my kids are teens and would rather stay in a hotel with room service!

But the Winnie is still trundling along and my husband and his mates – all keen surfers – use it to chase great waves up and down the NSW coast.

Based on your experience, do you have any tips for campers, must do's and don't's?

I've ducked under the dashboard as we've driven the Winnie into a remote campsite and been sniffed at by "eco-campers" as a redneck in a Big Rig -then watched in horror as the tent-dwellers chop down trees for the camp fire and dig holes in the ground for bush dunnies.

Meanwhile, in our motorhome, we cook over the gas stove and the water we use to wash dishes, shower and flush our on-board loo has been hauled from Sydney. Do it right and the motorhome has a minimal impact on the environment. Like most responsible motorhomers, we're careful to leave only tyre tracks after our adventures.

The loss of great caravan park sites to permanent cabins is to be lamented. Why not just stay in a hotel?

More should be done to support motorhome drivers – more sites, more dump points for black and grey water. There's an opportunity here for Australia, the largest, most spectacular island on the planet, to become a paradise for road adventurers.

Do you still like to get out and explore Australia, what's high on your travel list?

I very much want to take the van on a trip to the Flinders Ranges. Been number one on my list for some time now.

I love the dry, desert country the best. As I said, I'm from the inland tribe and love the broad, flat expanses of Australia, the red soil and the vast vault of sky from horizon to horizon.

And I'd love to go back to the Uluru- Kata Tjuta National Park – it's probably my favourite place in the world. I experience a profound sense of peace when I'm there and for me, Uluru has a sense of spirituality I haven't experienced, even in the finest cathedrals of Europe. 🏠

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