

REVIEW: MATILDA TASMAN

MOTORHOMES

WORLD

MOTORHOMES - CAMPERVANS - TRAVEL - LIFESTYLE

\$6.95 inc GST NZ\$7.9

#12 JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2007



THE FIFTH ELEMENT

» Travelhome's Macquarie

- » Venture 5th Wheel
- » Outback Flinders
- » Carry-Van 400
- » Sun Valley Xtreme
- » Elross Offroad
- » Wirr-Away

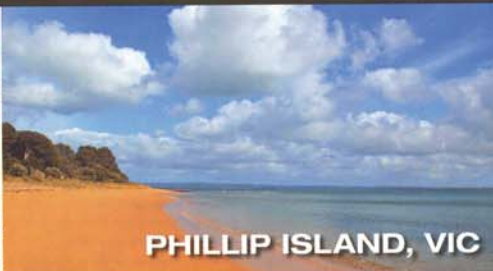
acp magazines



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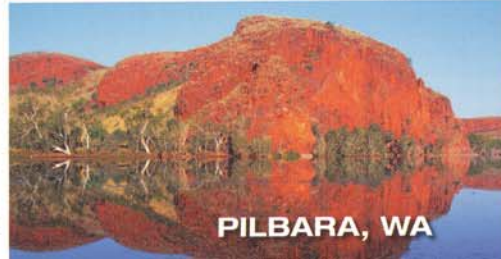
2 GREAT CONVERSIONS



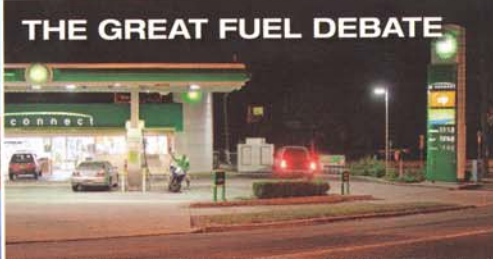
PHILLIP ISLAND, VIC



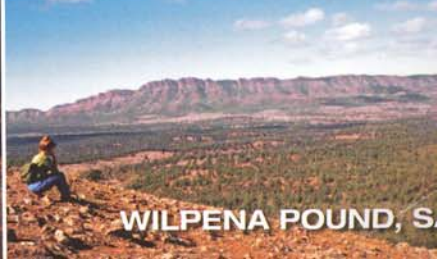
SATELLITE TV ON A BUDGET



PILBARA, WA



THE GREAT FUEL DEBATE



WILPENA POUND, SA

Travelhome's Macquarie 25 is a neat fifth wheeler that offers plenty of interior space.

There is an ever increasing interest in the fifth wheel sector of the RV market. For many years fifth wheelers were something of an oddity in Australia, considered much more a US-style rig, with relatively few on the road.

The growth of and interest in the fifth wheel market can be attributed to a couple of factors; a growth in the general RV market itself and slightly smaller units being built which mean a greater tow vehicle selection.

Whilst there will always be a demand for larger fifth wheel rigs, it's MHW's view that the most available and popular tow ute/traytop vehicles around, such as Commodores, Falcons, Hiluxs, Navaras, Rodeos and the like, will be where the fifth wheeler sector grows fastest.

That's the market Newcastle (NSW) based Travelhome decided to move into a few years ago with its Macquarie fifth wheelers. Travelhome now has dealers in NSW, Qld, Vic and across the Tasman in New Zealand. Our review unit came from Australian Motor Homes at Newcastle.

LITTLE BEAUTY

Like most of its contemporaries, the Macquarie is an excellent towing prospect. As all the pin weight is above the rear axle there is none of the snatching and jerking of a conventional caravan under tow, and reversing is a breeze. It's a little different to reversing a caravan but that's about all.

Travelhome will supply a tow vehicle as part of the fifth wheel package. MHW knows

this is often a stumbling block for potential purchasers and a dealer/manufacturer that offers sound advice is to be valued.

Our review unit, the 25-footer, came with a dual cab Nissan Navara. Powered by a 2.5L turbodiesel that's mated to a five-speed auto gearbox. The Navara is currently the vehicle of choice at Travelhome. Apart from anything else, its low 'tub' makes it ideal for the fifth wheel connection.

A slight disadvantage of the dual cab is that the pin connection sits behind the axle rather than above or just in front of it.

Advantages are that passengers can be carried in the rear and the 60/40 split/rear fold seat adds greatly to the cabin's versatility. Something as large as a fridge can be carried or, for someone like MHW, it's a good place





for instantly accessible camera gear.

Unhitching and hitching is quite simple and power jacks on the Travelhome mean no manual winding up or down. The Navara came with a removeable hitch mount (so the ute can be used conventionally when not towing) and quick release hitch.

Travelhome employs both conventional and non-conventional construction techniques in the building of its fifth wheelers. Box section zinc-coated steel is used for the construction of the chassis. In order to save weight in the chassis, large holes are drilled in non-weight-bearing components.

The chassis rides on Al-Ko torsion suspension and axles with the decorative bit being the mag wheels. For the walls, a fibreglass/ply timber/fibreglass sandwich is used but for the roof, nose cone and rear panel, moulded fibreglass is utilised. The floor is made from 17mm water resistant timber.

From a styling point of view, the Macquarie 25 is a very smooth looking fifth wheeler. With a rounded, smooth-looking front end and a moulded rear end, it has quite a stylish appearance. Seitz hopper double glazed windows are used all round while the door is

the more traditional Camec triple locker.

The spare wheel fitted into a moulded mounting under the overhang, along with two small compartments – the nearside one contains the switches for the front jacks. Along the nearside are two external lockers, one beside the door and the gas locker at the rear containing two 9kg gas cylinders.

At the rear, the boot is designed to take a decent amount of gear: its door lifts up, rather than swings up. The house batteries and battery charger are located there but there is still plenty of room.

ALL KITTED UP

With an interior height of 6ft 5in (2.1m), the Macquarie 25 has a relatively roomy feel. It does not appear to be all that high from the outside. Large windows, the big Seitz hatch in the rear and a smaller hatch above the bed all give plenty of natural light. Much of the 'cabinet work', including the shower cubicle, is built using powder-coated aluminium rather than ply timber or moulded fibreglass – it's not only lightweight but strong.

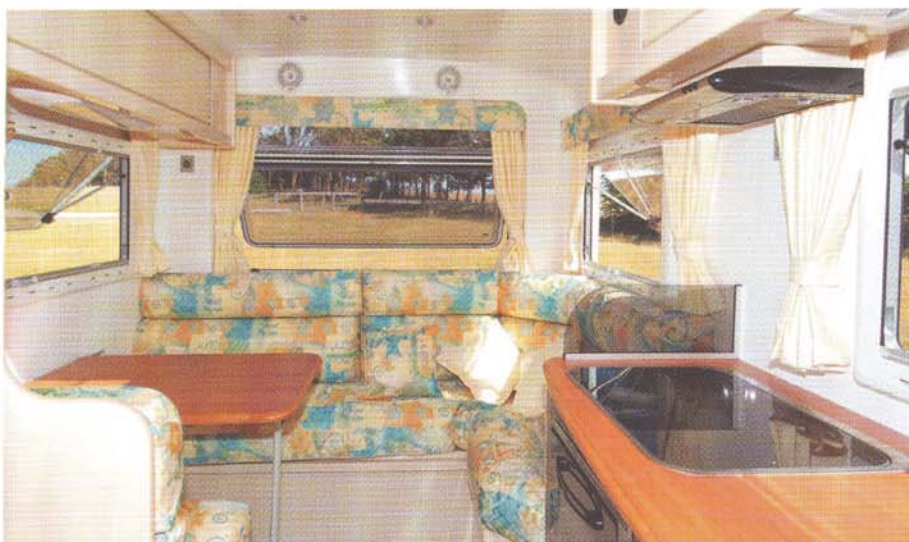
In terms of general design, the main bed is situated in the overhang and the bathroom sits

on the offside behind it. It's a tried and trusted setup. Fitting nicely in the rear is the lounge/dinette, leaving the middle area for the kitchen bench. One of the improvements that we noted since earlier models was that the wheel arch intrusions have disappeared, and there's more space under the table and in the kitchen cupboards.

Lighting throughout the Macquarie is all 12V and a mixture of halogen reading/downlights and fluorescent lamps. Powerpoints are mostly all where they are needed, including one above the table. A Truma Climatic unit supplies cool air.

The kitchen layout is a fairly conventional item with a Smev three-burner cooktop and oven/grill plus a stainless steel sink and drainer. Underneath the benchtop Travelhome has fitted two cutlery-sized and two larger drawers, one being a wire basket. A large cupboard under the sink includes a fixed wire basket.

Above the kitchen bench, a large overhead locker has just one door and there's a slightly unconventional but practical roller shutter. Travelhome supplies moveable partitions for compartmenting the locker. Also in the locker are the electrical switches.



Above: Rear lounge has both dinette and extra lounge seating. **Right:** The bedroom can be two singles or a double.

The second half of the kitchen sits opposite and consists of the Dometic 150L fridge, Sharp microwave and a large slide-out pantry which has a double latch to prevent an unexpected opening when travelling.

In the rear of the Macquarie is a J-shaped lounge. With its contoured foam cushions right across the rear, it's a neat way of combining a dinette with a lounge so there is room to relax without having to move the table around. Large windows all round give good views. The dinette table sits between the rear-facing seat and the rear lounge.

Storage under the seats is plentiful and instead of the usual ply timber lids, they are aluminium. Above the dinette is a good sized overhead locker which also has a roller shutter instead of the more conventional doors.

The dinette/lounge can be folded down into a double bed. The bed base is formed from the table, which is really a two-piece item, the second layer just being a plain piece of ply timber. It's a neat little idea that does not take up space.

In the Macquarie's bathroom, there are no cramped feelings – it's big to start with but the vanity sink is outside as well. A full sized shower with flick mixer tap and Thetford cassette toilet occupy most of the space but there is still room to dry off. There's both a double towel rail and a towel ring on the door. Outside the bathroom by the front bed is the classy-looking vanity sink unit. It's fully fitted out with flick mixer tap, mirrored cabinet, towel ring and soap dish. Opposite the bathroom is a two-door wardrobe with both hanging space and wire basket drawers.



In the bedroom area, there's a choice – either two single beds set at a slight angle to each other or a double bed.

However, this is not one of those decisions that must be made when you buy: the two single innerspring mattresses simply zip together and form a queen sized bed and a board underneath fills the gap.

Other features are the window pelmets that have been extended into the rear corners thus making 'bedside shelves' and the magazine rack at the bed head, which also has two halogen reading lights fitted into it. Not

Travelhome macquarie 25

CHASSIS:

Galvanised steel

SUSPENSION:

Al-Ko torsion

EXTERNAL LENGTH:

24ft 6in (7.5m)

EXTERNAL WIDTH:

7ft 3in (2.22m)

INTERNAL HEIGHT:

6ft 5in (2.06m)

BEDROOM HEIGHT:

4ft 3in (1.3m)

NAMEPLATE ATM:

2800kg

NAMEPLATE TARE WEIGHT:

2200kg

PIN (BALL) WEIGHT:

500kg

COOKTOP:

Smev three-burner, oven/grill

FRIDGE:

Dometic RM2553 150L

MICROWAVE OVEN:

Sharp carousel

LIGHTING:

12V - fluorescent and halogen

GAS:

Two x 9kg

FRESH WATER TANK:

150L

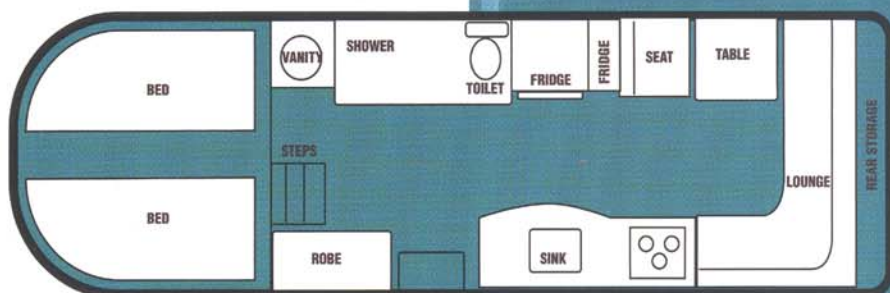
GREY WATER TANK:

64L

PRICE (FIFTH WHEELER ONLY):

\$98,370

Travelhome, 36 Creek Reserve
Creek Road, Boolaroo, NSW
2284, (02) 4950 8495, email:
jason@travelhome.com.au





Clockwise from left: Two 9kg gas cylinders; chassis rides on Al-Ko suspension; tow hitch point sits slightly behind axle; rear boot lid lifts up to reveal spacious storage.

readily noticeable in daylight is the concealed lighting strip that sits in the roof moulding. No harsh lights at night to disturb your partner should you wish to get up. The steps to the bedroom lift up to reveal a wire basket shoe holder underneath.

SUMMING UP

It's a very stylish looking unit and the use of powder-coated aluminium is an innovative

change from the usual internal structure.

The Nissan Navara certainly appears to be a very capable tow vehicle.

MHW was interested to note a few improvements since we last looked at the Macquarie in several areas – little things but they all make a difference.

At 25ft (7.62m) long, the Macquarie is going to be an ideal length for many travellers with a good choice of tow vehicles. ■

i liked

General workmanship with some innovative thinking used in its construction

Bedroom layout with variable bed set up

Generally good lighting and powerpoint distribution

Smooth look of the exterior which makes for a very smart looking towing rig

Good supply of information with the product - not all manufacturer/dealers do this

i would have liked

Not much - we note that our comments from our last review have been incorporated!

CARAVAN vs TRAVELHOME



WHY MORE PEOPLE ARE CHOOSING TRAVELHOME

Travelhome is the favourite Fifth Wheeler in Australia today because you don't require larger, more expensive tow vehicles, it's unique aerodynamic design reduces traveling costs, it's extremely safe & simple to tow, it's overall build quality & modern finish is second to none and it only takes minutes to un-hitch from your vehicle.

PLEASE CALL THE TRAVELHOME CALL CENTRE TODAY FOR YOUR LOCAL DEALER AND MORE INFORMATION

Travelhome

Even Smarter Than It Looks

Phone: 1300 785 495

Email: enquiries@travelhome.com.au