

The Family JEWEL



Veteran RVers, John and Nancye Cameron have now been converted to a Travelhome fifth wheel unit.

Forty years is quite a long time to have been recreational vehicle travelling throughout Australia but that is what John and Nancye Cameron have been enjoying. Not long after they were married they purchased their first caravan, an old plywood unit. Since then they have owned a couple of Chesney vans, a Freeway slide-on and a brace of Roadstars.

Younger Cameron family members enjoyed RV holidays too but now John and Nancye mostly travel by themselves. They have been right around Australia but they particularly enjoy visiting the outback; the coastal areas

are a little too crowded, they say, and the Camerons enjoy peace and quiet.

In the past they have also done a fair bit of prospecting for minerals and digging for gemstones in the outback. John taught his children to go mineral hunting and he also cut and ground his own gemstones.

When the Camerons wanted to upgrade from their current RV, they decided it was time to try out the growing fifth wheeler world. They wanted a rig that could be towed behind a 4WD vehicle, so that they could have all the comforts of home most of the time, but the 4WD plus a tent when they

wanted to do some more serious 'get away from it all' exploration.

Another requirement was a 4WD that was not of gargantuan size—which is how the John and Nancye ended up at Australian Motor Homes, Newcastle, NSW, looking at the Travelhome range of fifth wheelers.

It's MHG's view that the smart players in the fifth wheeler market are building rigs to suit the most available and popular tow ute/tray top vehicles around: Commodores, Falcons, Hilons, Navaras, Rodens and the like.

A new three-ton, 30-year-old dual cab Toyota Hilux was the Camerons' choice of tow



vehicle. With its motor supplying a maximum of 175kW of power through a five-speed auto gearbox, it certainly has plenty of grunt to tow the Travelhome Macquarie.

Like most of its contemporaries, the Macquarie is an excellent towing prospect.

With all of the pin weight 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 from reversing a caravan but that's about all.

Unhitching and hitching is quite simple and power jacks on the Travelhome, operated by two switches underneath the nearside front, mean no manual winding up or down.

The Hilux came with a removable hitch mount (so the unit can be used conventionally when not towing) and quick release hitch.

CONSTRUCTION ESSENTIALS

Travelhome employs both conventional and non-conventional constructional 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; 17mm water-resistant timber makes up the floor.

The Macquarie 25 is a very smooth looking fifth wheeler. With a rounded front end and a well moulded rear end, it is quite stylish.

Seitz hopper double-glazed windows are

used all round and the door is the more traditional Carnoc triple lockset. Nearside features include one external locker beside the door, the gas compartment with two 5kg gas cylinders, centre-mounted external light and a decent grab handle by the door.

There's a 'real' boot at the rear which holds the house batteries and battery charger with room to spare. Its door lifts up rather than swings out, so there's no need to stand back too far. There's another locker at the front of the offside and under the overhang is where the spare wheel is located along with two small lockers, one with front jack controls.

With an interior height of 6ft 5in (2.1m), the Macquarie 25 has a relatively roomy feel about it, even though it does not appear to be all that high from the outside. Large windows, the big Seitz hatch in the rear and a smaller



I liked

General fit and finish; the Travelhome is a nice piece of engineering, showing some considerable thought.

Bedroom layout, with single/double bed setup and fittings make it user-friendly.

Multi-purpose J-lounge which could seat two to four people.

I would have liked

One light switch near the door.

Drawers under the J-lounge would be much more convenient.

Powerpoint near table.

hatch above the bed, provide 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 light but strong.

STEP INSIDE

In terms of general design, the main bed is situated in the overhang with the bathroom on the offside behind. It's a tried and trusted

Clockwise from left: Hooked up and ready to roll; lounge relaxation; the main bed is in the overhang; two 9kg gas cylinders are in the rear; rear boot storage. **Opposite:** John makes Nancyce a roadside cuppa.

setup. Fitting nicely in the rear is the aptly described J-lounge with a dinette at one end, leaving the middle area for the kitchen bench.

It's a fairly conventional item with a Stoves Newhouse four-burner cooktop and grill plus a stainless steel sink and drainer. Underneath the cooktop is a Sharp carousel microwave oven. This differs from the standard Travelhome setup, mainly because Nancyce didn't particularly want a full oven and the normal location for the microwave (above the fridge) was too high for her to use easily.

Also different is the cooktop – instead of four gas burners, it has three, with the fourth ring being electric.

Underneath the benchtop Travelhome has fitted two cutlery-sized and two larger wire basket drawers. A large cupboard under the sink includes a fixed wire basket. Above the kitchen bench, a large overhead locker has just one door – a roller shutter, which also contains the electrical controls.

The second half of the kitchen sits opposite and consists of the Dometic 150 litre fridge and a large slide-out pantry – that having

a double latch to prevent an unsuspected opening when travelling.

In the rear of the Macquarie is the J-shaped lounge. With its contoured foam cushions right across the seat, it is 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 of the passing scenery. In standard form the dinette table just sits between the rear-facing seat and the rear lounge but the Camerons had an extra leg hole installed in the floor to make extending the table easy when dining with visitors.

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, like the kitchen one, has 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.

There's certainly no cramped feeling in the Macquarie's bathroom, it's big to start with but the vanity sink is outside as well. A full-sized shower and Thetford cassette toilet occupy most of the space but there is still

