



Adventure's TrayTop Adventure will tempt those who want the freedom of a traytop with a uniquely accessible bed.

# TOP quality

I must admit to having a soft spot for traytop campers, and was keen to try the latest offering from Adventure Offroad Campers in Adelaide. My past experiences with the company's towed trailers left me impressed with their rugged build quality and practical features.

I'm fond of traytops because they have most – if not all – the features of a conventional camper trailer without having to be towed. Some people insist they need the storage capacity of a trailer unit plus what's available in the back of their 4WD tow vehicle, but for others the storage in a trailer, and thus a traytop, may well suffice. This is especially true if there are only two travellers rather than, for example, a family of four or more.

The beauty of traytops is that a work or leisure ute can very quickly be transformed into a mobile camper, ideal for those wanting to get away quickly. The TrayTop Adventure unit is designed to fit all flat-tray utes, from a Toyota HiLux (such as our 3L diesel test vehicle) to a Ford F250 and more. Whatever you drive, the product can simply be dismantled onto camper jacks to free up your vehicle once you've got your camping spot.

### TESTED FOR TOUGHNESS

As tested, this TrayTop Adventure isn't cheap (\$32,747 as reviewed with optional solar panels), but you can rest assured you are getting quality for your dollars. The solid, 2.3x2.1x1.1m camper is zinc-anneal powder-coated, and unlike some other traytops, the trailer cover is a hardtop rather than just canvas. This is practical (allowing roof racks and solar panels to be fitted) and looks a lot better, too.

Paul Tabone from Adventure emphasises the importance of solid and

durable construction in Australia's harsh environment. The old "built by enthusiasts for enthusiasts" saying couldn't be more relevant.

Our test day just happened to be the coldest Adelaide morning since 1983 – not the ideal day for enjoying the delights of camping, and as we started to set up on a frosty ground, we were all keen to light a campfire, get the kettle on and enjoy some bacon sandwiches.

Not a problem with this traytop. The side of the unit opens up after quickly undoing the recessed flush-pull lockable handles (great for dust sealing), and within seconds the kitchen area is ready to go. There is no messing around at roadside stops: just swing the two-burner gas cooker and grill out, and if you choose the optional 60L Engel fridge, it is right alongside.

The kitchen preparation area is large and well thought out, with overhead cupboards for the groceries and a large laminated bench area all at the same height as you'd expect in your kitchen at home. Your 240V

**Clockwise from above:** The TrayTop Adventure completely set up; the Adventure bed is set very low; where the bed stows; there is plenty of storage room in this traytop, so you won't miss the ute bed.

powerpoints and tap are all close to hand, and LED strip lighting illuminates the scene, powered by a 100Ah AGM battery. The whole area is easy to clean and uncluttered.

For slightly longer stops, and if you require extra protection from the elements beyond what is provided by the gas-lift side door, a 2.5m awning can be quickly set up with the provided poles and ropes. As an option, side walls for this awning are available to give a totally protected living area, plus an extra sheltered space for sleeping if required.

### SETTING UP

The actual main sleeping area is a very clever setup and features Adventure's patented bedding system. The bed base simply slides out of the traytop's rear and is held up using



supporting legs. Next, the solid, folded-up bed base needs to be spun through 90°, lowered using a handle mounted on the traytop's side, and opened out to its full king size. This can be performed easily enough by just one person.

The next step involves pulling out the main tent canvas from the bed base, which again is an easy one-person job. The cosy tent area is soon up and running after some simple pole work inside and some rope and peg work outside. The hard, frosty ground excluded, setting up was a breeze at our campground.

Inside the five-window, one-door tent area, the bed is a real plus. Paul says the TrayTop Adventure offers the lowest and largest bed available in the ute camper market, and it is certainly a bonus not having to worry about a ladder to get in or out of the bed. Plus, thanks to the positioning of the bed, you don't have to clamber over your partner in the night should nature call.

Storage is an issue with all traytops as you won't have the luxury of much extra space in the ute, so the roof-rack basket on top is ideal, while the true winner is the 1900L cargo area on the side opposite the kitchen. This is accessible in seconds with the gas-lift door and can contain plenty for a long trip away. It is well lit using an LED light strip, and the swing-up door keeps you sheltered while you're finding your equipment.

A 4.5kg, permanently-connected gas bottle is handily kept separate right beside the storage area, while supporting legs for the

traytop are safely tethered just below.

These camper jacks with two-point pickup are for use when you want to free your ute from the traytop camper. They are sturdy bits of kit that are not the cheapest, but ensure the camper is very stable and much safer when free-standing.

With your vehicle now free of its 600kg traytop load, you can head off for supplies or go exploring.

### SUMMING UP

So what's the downside of having a traytop? Well, not much with a product like Adventure's, it seems. With our test model, two optional tilting 65W BP solar panels mounted to the roof provide a power source to go with the battery (charged via an Anderson plug from the vehicle), while a 57L water tank will prove ample for most trips.

The storage you get from the 1900L cargo area, plus the roof-rack cage, should make up for the storage you'd have with a normal camper trailer.

Not everyone has or wants a ute of course, so the traytop won't be for everyone. But if it is something you would consider, a quality unit like the Adventure – while at the higher end of the price range – is sure to provide years of happy outdoor living.

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**Clockwise from top left:** Setting up the 'bedroom' is one-person job; the kitchen can be pulled out for quick roadside smokos; there's a king size bed hidden within the traytop; this crank helps stow and unpack the bed frame.