



ROUGH RIDER

Can the Adventure Offroad Camper survive 'Cyclone Roothy'?

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For our first Bush Mechanic Challenge, featured in the last couple of issues, we towed along a Pilbara model Adventure Offroad Camper behind ARB's extensively equipped 100 Series. It performed so well we figured it deserved a special mention!

The Adventure Offroad campers come from the 'Outback city', Adelaide, and it makes sense that something so suited to travelling Australia should have been developed so close to the bush. Paul Tabone and his father Frank, are both skilled cabinet makers who were dropped into the camper trailer business through sheer demand for their ideas!

WITH LOUSY, SLEETING RAIN AND COLD MISTY NIGHTS, THE ADVENTURE WAS THE ONLY HAVEN OF COMFORT IN OUR LIVES

The Tabone's have been life-long travellers and campers. Connie Tabone reckons that her boys Paul and David, were first taken camping when they were six weeks old and their love for the freedom of the bush has meant they've been at it ever since. Frank tried a few camper trailers but kept breaking things, usually up back of the High Country, a bit of a family favourite, and he knew he could come up with something better.

So in 1984 Frank Tabone built his first trailer utilising a stack of fresh ideas that'd been brewing around his campfires for years. As the boys grew up they started taking dad's camper out on holidays too and wherever they

stopped, people kept asking questions. The most common question was "where can I get one like that?"

Frank and Connie had been copping similar feedback themselves, but it was easy to ignore until their sons started reinforcing it. It took seven years for Frank to decide to put his camper into production and then another two of intensive development before he was ready to release the first models for sale. That was in 1993 and Adventure Offroad Campers haven't had a slow day since!

No wonder why when you've seen one in action! Paul's an experienced off-road driver who's done his club training on top of a lifetime of adventuring, and his skills

were well tested during the couple of weeks we spent punting around the back blocks of New South Wales. Long, steep and slippery wet clay slopes where the trailer's mechanical brakes were the only thing between a comfortable night and a disaster, huge drainage ditches that'd stop anything without some lift, a couple of articulation sections that lifted two out of four truck wheels, deep water crossings and plenty of sand - Paul towed the Adventure Pilbara through the lot!

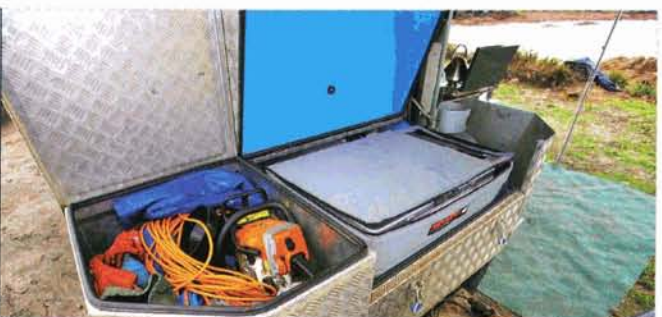
Sure, there was that night when we had to snatch-strap it to the 79 Series to slow the descent and there was the day we had to winch the '100 and trailer over the top of a loosely rocked hill. But the Adventure was with us the whole way and all up, its



The Adventure layout offers a heap of options come set up time. You can open up the kitchen, swing out the cooker and roll out the self standing awning in less than a couple of minutes for a meal stop, or you can unfold the bedroom on it's own in four minutes. Full set up including two bedrooms, awning walls and a shade sail over the fridge takes about fifteen minutes tops. It has to, Paul Tabone likes a beer...



The stove is a stainless steel two-burner, complete with grill that hinges out on a sturdy steel leg before dropping and locking in to place. One of the best things about the Adventure way of doing things is that the kitchen and stove are accessible in around 15 seconds!



Massive storage on the A-frame and the Engel 60L (or Waeco 80L) is fully boxed and air filtered for protection too. The chequer plate work is excellent and should outlast you and me!





rapid storage access and almost 'instant' kitchen sped things up more than towing a trailer slowed them down. It's awesomely practical to tow off-road thanks to a relatively short wheelbase, plenty of ground clearance, great departure angle and very low centre of gravity.

Camping trailers – the good ones

ONLY FIFTEEN MINUTES MAX TO DO A 'WORKS BURGER' SETUP...

– are all about dust and water proof storage and plenty of it. The Adventure wins out here because it's got massive storage, but it's so easily accessed at waist height, with no need to flip the boat off or unfold the tent. The slide out rear bed, a King sized 70mm thick number that's built for long sleep ins, keeps you off the ground but at normal level – no more climbing ladders when you're, err, too relaxed. And the best thing is that the bedroom can be swivelled out and set up independently for a quick stop in less than four minutes.

You'll note the emphasis on timing things with the Adventure? That's because the Tabone's are campers themselves and they know the last thing you want to do is dick-

around fighting canvas when the beers are cold. Unlike some manufacturers, they supply a DVD (available for \$10 including postage and loaded with good camping stuff) that includes timed set up runs to prove their point. And they've made that point by making every step of the set-up process as easy as

possible, even to using flip-up extenders on the roof support poles and things.

Yep, fifteen seconds to access the kitchen, two minutes to have the kitchen set up and under an awning, four minutes for the bedroom and fifteen minutes max to 'do the Works Burger' – two bedrooms, awning walls and a shade sail over the fridge.

The Adventure is built on a very sturdy 75x50mm box section steel chassis that features a tough 50x50mm solid axle, sprung with nine leaf off-road packs backed by rebound helpers and off-road shock absorbers. The axle is rated to 1500kg which gives plenty of extra capacity since the loaded trailer

shouldn't weigh in much more than 1300kg at most.

This is good, proven off-road practice and the Tabone's engineering is first class with neat welds and practical touches everywhere. The body panels are powder coated zinc anneal and in conjunction with sturdy latches and top quality rubber seals, the dust and water sealing is extraordinary. You expect some dust to creep through any seal but on this trip it just didn't happen. Not in the trailer anyway!

Paul's got a bit of an understated way about him. He's very proud of the family product and the unique design, but rather than hopping in and pushing the point he was more inclined to let us find out ourselves. So when I asked him how strong the trailer's roof rack was, all he said was 'pretty solid alright, more than enough for a boat or whatever' and left it at that. But when I was trolling through a pile of Adventure camper owner's own shots, I saw some with up to half a dozen old railway sleepers stacked on that rack.

It's a testament to the sheer strength of the camper body and frame that it's possible to do that without collapsing something,



especially given these were from trips up the Oodnadatta and Birdsville Tracks. When I talked to owners they all said the same thing – their trailers will handle anything, anytime and no, they don't leak dust when you load them up with logs either!

Impressive stuff but the proof of the pudding was the way the whole crew continuously gravitated to the Adventure camper every time we pulled up to camp. In a fortnight's worth of lousy sleet rain and cold misty nights, the Adventure was the only haven of comfort in our lives. From its kitchen came the meals that kept us going, under its roof we got the only dry seats in the paddock and from its Engel fridge we pulled a continuous supply of cold comforts. Most of us wound up sleeping in it too!

I think the Tabone's are really onto something here. They've come up with a superbly practical and easy to use layout that fulfils almost every camper's wish list, and then some. They've proven the design, yet are constantly looking at ways of improving it even more. The construction is superb and given the price, the value is there with more on top – no wonder they have such a contented group of customers.

Yep, that Adventure Pilbara was our warmth and comfort at the end of some pretty harsh days. There were some very serious campers on our trip and every one of them was impressed. In fact, this camper made what could have been a miserable trip in to a memorable, err, Adventure! ■



It's called the 'Adventure Camper' for a damned good reason – this is one camper that'll happily tag along no matter how far your adventuring takes you! We pulled the Pilbara through hell and back yet no leaks – either water or dust – and apart from a few scratches, no damage of any sort. It tows beautifully, tracking right in the Toyota's wheel tracks and maintaining stability even when the ground wasn't!

ALL THE GOOD STUFF

Camper: Adventure Pilbara

Features:

- King size bed
- Roll-out kitchen awning
- S'steel two burner stove and grill
- 12V lighting
- Laminated kitchen bench and splashback
- 100amp hour sealed AGM battery
- Built in charger
- 50amp Anderson plug
- 2 x 59L water tanks with stone guards
- 2 x water meters
- 60L Engel or 80L Waeco fridge/freezer
- MPS50 Inverter
- Sas lifters, S'steel hinges
- Lockable waist-height storage
- Seamless sewn-in bedroom floor
- 75x50mm heavy duty chassis
- 50x50mm solid beam axle, 1500kg rating
- Grease nipples on bearing caps
- 9-leaf off-road springs with rebound rubbers
- Mechanical override drum brakes
- Treg hitch, pneumatic jockey wheel
- Full stone guard
- Rubber flairs, mud flaps
- 3 snatch strap recovery points
- 3x16in ROH rims and Mickey Thompson MTX tyres
- LED tail lights
- Boat rack
- Roof carry-basket
- 12V sockets
- 9kg LPG bottle
- Zinc anneal powder-coated panels
- High quality dust seals all around
- S'steel sink with a 12V pump
- Lockable A frame box (fits 5 jerry cans!)
- All awning walls and a shade sail

Price: Pilbara models start from \$32,674. The model tested was a prototype, top-of-the-line Pilbara, which has since been released as the 'Grand Tourer' model for \$39,300. It comes complete with two solar panels that can be tilted to face the sun, a 120amp battery, solar powered fridge box fan, a four-burner stove and a whatever other refinements the Tabone's make along the way. Talk about making a great camper even better!



Massive storage potential thanks to the well thought-out cupboards in the kitchen. The surfaces are all laminated and the workmanship is superb. Both water tanks have their own gauges, there's a battery indicator and there are power sockets and lights right where you need them. Even the fire extinguisher is easy to reach for when you burn the damper again...



Our camera team, who carry slightly more gear than the US army, couldn't get over the amount of lockable, dust proof space available on the Adventure. There's over 1100L alone in this waist-height boot and it's accessible easily anytime you need it, without having to unfold anything else. This sort of layout gives you huge flexibility in terms of what you carry and how quickly it's accessed.

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