



# Mountain HIGH

ADVENTURE  
OFFROAD'S ARKARoola  
IS A RUGGED RIG  
DESIGNED FOR EASY  
TRAVEL.

WORDS GED BULMER  
PICS ELLEN DEWAR  
AND JOE PRESS









## CTA RATING

### 1. OFFROAD ABILITY



### 2. TOURABILITY



### 3. SET UP/EASE OF USE



### 4. ELECTRICS



### 5. LAYOUT LIVEABILITY



### 6. COMFORTS



### 7. KITCHEN



### 8. BUILD QUALITY



### 9. FIT AND FINISH



### 10. VALUE FOR MONEY



**S**andy and Emily Banna of Melbourne Adventure Camper Hire were very enthusiastic about the trailer we were set to test – the Arkaroola from Adelaide-based Adventure Offroad Campers. They told us all about its easy set-up, the fact there's just three guy ropes, and that it can be erected in sections, so you could just do the tent if time is of the essence.

But the trailer's kitchen is clearly the apple of Emily's eye; she enthused about how it's an integral part of the trailer body, and how it "doesn't need to be pulled out on wonky legs".

Sandy agreed. "It's really easy," he said. "Everything's got its own space and the fact the lights and gas are always connected makes life a lot easier."

He also said the original trailer design was conceived to have a punt on top, so it's been designed to allow access without the need to take everything off the top of the trailer.

## ON THE ROAD

Briefing over, we hitched the trailer to our test rig, a 200 Series Toyota LandCruiser (see breakout), and took to the highways from Reservoir, in the





**“We negotiated a couple of creek crossings and some fairly rough bumps, none of which bothered the trailer”**



northern suburbs of Melbourne.

Our travels took us through the undulating foothills of the Great Dividing Range, en route to the busy little rural hub of Mansfield. The road narrowed and deteriorated as we wound deeper into the hills, but the 'Cruiser comfortably handled the lumps and potholes, the trailer tracking so well I almost forgot it was there.

Daylight was almost gone by the time we arrived at our chosen spot. We soon discovered Sandy and Emily's comprehensive briefing invaluable, with some of the finer points of the trailer's set-up a little fiddly.

To access the bed, you first need to drop the rear-mounted spare, which folds on a hinge to rest on the ground. Once that's done, slide the bed out on rollers before rotating it 90°. You then release two clips to pop open the bed case and locate the three spring-loaded cables that allow the tent's internal frame to join up. That accomplished, grab a D-ring on the tent roof and slowly lean back to pull the tent up from its folded position. Step inside onto the seamless sewn-in floor and insert the five internal poles (stored on the bed), place a peg at each outside corner and you're in business.

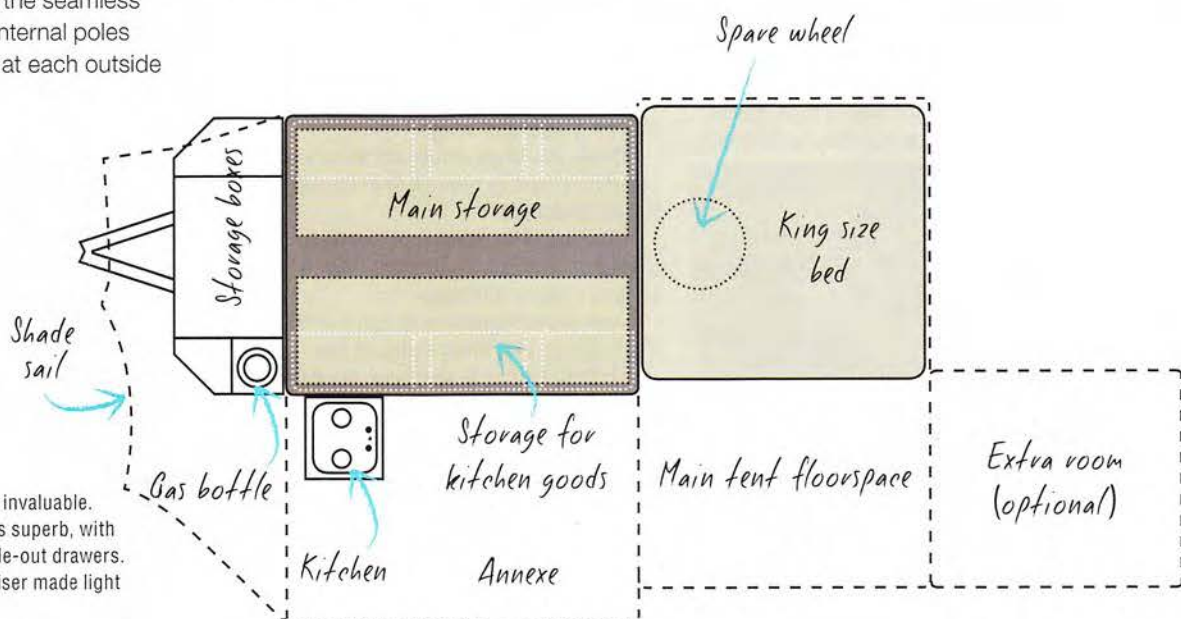
The king-size bed measures 2050x2130mm (6ft 8in x 6ft 11in), so you can be guaranteed a bit of space. Better still, it's about the height of your bed at home, which means no steps or ladders.

The tent walls are quality 8oz Aussie-made Wax Converters canvas, with fine

**TOP LEFT:** Easy access to the kitchen is invaluable.

**LEFT:** The quality of the general fit-out is superb, with quality cabinetry and smooth-acting slide-out drawers.

**ABOVE RIGHT:** The 200 Series LandCruiser made light work of the camper's 950kg Tare.







## HITS & MISSES

### I LIKED

- > Exceptional storage capacity
- > Ease of set-up
- > Access to roof-rack without needing to unload

### I WOULD HAVE LIKED

- > Some aspects of the set-up to be less fiddly
- > Lighting in tent/bedroom as standard
- > Easier fitting stone guard

**LEFT:** The innovative design sees the bed base slide out of the rear of the trailer body and rotate 90°, leaving the body itself for the kitchen and a heap of storage. **TOP RIGHT:** A king-size bed means plenty of space for both sleepers. **BELOW RIGHT:** It's a substantial rig, but a lighter weight makes for easy towing.

insect screens on the various windows and door openings. The sleeping area offers excellent ventilation courtesy of three large windows, and two zippered and screened doors.

Other amenities include three stowage pockets and light-hanging loops, although, oddly, there's no lighting in the bed area itself.

The main tent is big enough for a couple and two kids for a short stay, but longer trips would likely require the optional side-room extension.

When packing, it's best to first cover the bed with a sheet of plastic (supplied) to avoid damp canvas wetting the mattress. The same three steel-cable ring-pulls collapse the tent poles, allowing it to fold without fuss.

Care needs to be taken when tucking the tent edges into their case, otherwise it won't close properly. It's a bit like making a bed, requiring a neat hospital tuck at each corner, after which you use your body weight to expel the last of the air from the tent and clip everything up.

There are a couple of support legs to be folded, but once that's done it's time to swing the bed and slide it back into its cavity beneath the trailer. The whole folding and sliding mechanism works brilliantly, requiring little effort.

## KITCHEN

A standard 2500mm (8ft 2in) retractable awning sits in a metal case above the kitchen. To access the kitchen, the awning case needs to be slid up slightly on its twin poles, but it doesn't need to be fully deployed – very handy.

## ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

Remember the old Remington shaver TV ad in which the bloke declared, "I liked it so much, I bought the company."? The man in question was Victor Kiam, an American entrepreneur who, following his wife's decision to buy him a new shaver, bought Remington Products and became a millionaire.

I neglected to ask whether Sandy and Emily Banna of Melbourne Adventure Camper Hire had ever seen Victor Kiam's ads, but in their own way they're following

in his footsteps, putting their money and faith into a product they feel is the best on the market.

The couple were keen campers before the arrival of their two children, and travelling with kids soon led to the realisation they needed a camper trailer.

Sandy and Emily tried several different campers before spotting Adventure Offroad Campers at Melbourne's Sandown Leisurefest. They soon grabbed one for a weekend away.

"It was the first camper we hired where you didn't have to have stuff in the car," Sandy explained.

However, the camper's price tag, and that of most of quality trailers they looked at, was a major obstacle.

Enter the entrepreneurial spirit of Victor Kiam. Sandy and Emily realised that, rather than having their trailer sit idle for 10-11 months a year, they could have it pay its way via a hire business.

Melbourne Adventure Camper Hire was thus born and has been operating since December 2011, servicing people just like its owners who want to try a camper trailer before they buy.





And if you do want shelter over the kitchen, the annexe is simple to use, with all poles and ropes either built into the canvas or stored in the annexe casing. Just pull out the awning on its ratcheted roller and fold out its three internal poles, while a fourth pole and two guy ropes sit inside the annexe container.

Dust and water-proof lockable metal lids with gas struts conceal the kitchen and equivalent storage space on the trailer's opposite side. LED strip lighting provides illumination for both areas.

Opening the kitchen lid reveals a generous 2300x600mm (7ft 6in x 2ft) bench and splashback, set at waist height and finished in an attractive and durable laminate. There's no sink, but a basin is supplied and the space where the sink sits in other models is given over to a deep storage compartment. A metal-protected 86L water tank with lockable fillers feeds the 12V water pump to the kitchen. There are two good-sized drawers and a cutlery tray built into the bench top.

A swing-out two-burner Lido Junior stove sits over the main bench, fed by a 9kg gas bottle stored on the front of the trailer.

The storage on the opposite side to the kitchen offers more than 1100L of space, swallowing



**“The sleeping area offers excellent ventilation courtesy of three large windows”**







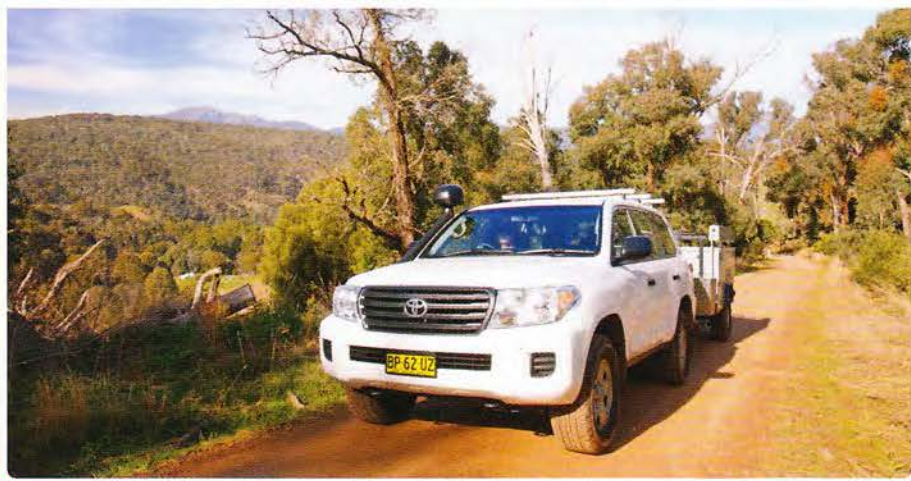
## TOUGH CUSTOMER

We chose the hose-out spec LandCruiser GX as our tow vehicle. Its vinyl floors, rear barn doors, 17in steel wheels, snorkel and under-body protection plates are perfect for hard yakka.

At a list price of \$77,990, the GX isn't cheap, but it's still the entry point into the 200 Series range. For the money you eschew a few creature comforts, such as carpets, but get essential gear like six airbags, stability control, traction control,

hill-start assist and multi-terrain anti-skid brakes. Then there's the 'Cruiser's impeccable offroad credentials, including Torsen limited-slip centre differential, two-speed transfer case and under-body protection.

On the road, the 4.5L V8 twin-turbodiesel, six-speed auto and full-time 4WD system made light work of the trailer's 1500kg laden mass, the big oiler ticking over at a lazy 2100rpm.



everything from tent poles to tables, chairs and extra tarps. A lidded space around the wheel arches is home to the battery and switching gear.

A lockable 60L aluminium fridge box and adjacent tool box sit at the front of the trailer. The fridge box is vented, wired for 12V and 240V, and includes LED lighting and a solar-powered exhaust fan.

A shade sail installs over the fridge to keep it out of the heat.

Electrical specs include a 100Ah AGM battery, 15A multi-stage Redarc DC-DC charger, Projecta battery charger, 50A Anderson plug charging inlet, five 240V hard-wired power outlets with a circuit breaker, and a pair of 12V marine-grade sockets.

## ROUGH STUFF

While we can't claim thousands of kilometres of corrugations, we did negotiate a couple of creek crossings and some fairly rough humps and bumps, none of which bothered the trailer – nor should they have.

Built on a sturdy 50x75mm powder-coated chassis, and riding on a nine-leaf offroad spring arrangement with rebound helpers (you need to step up to the \$40,990 Pilbara model to get shocks) and a solid square-beam axle (rated at 1500kg with screw-in grease caps to the hubs), this is a solid trailer.

**LEFT:** The cavernous offside storage space has a capacity of 1100L, while all electrics are housed just below, near the wheel arches.







**"The 'Cruiser comfortably handled the lumps and potholes, the trailer tracking so well I almost forgot it was there"**







**"The ability to set-up the kitchen and annexe without opening the rest of the trailer is invaluable"**



## CTA SPECS



ADVENTURE  
OFFROAD CAMPERS  
ARKARoola

### > TRAILER

**Tare** 950kg  
**ATM** 1500kg  
**Suspension** Nine-leaf offroad springs with rebound helpers  
**Brakes** Mechanical offroad drum  
**Coupling** Treg offroad hitch and coupling  
**Drawbar** 75x50mm RHS  
**Chassis** 50x50mm RHS  
**Body** Zinc anneal sheet metal  
**Wheel/tyre** 265/75R16 Mickey Thompsons  
**Style** Soft floor/hard top

### > DIMENSIONS

**Box size** 2300x1860mm  
**Length (hitch to tail lights)** 4200mm  
**Tent size** 2150x230mm (plus bed)

### > ACCESSORIES

**Gas cylinders** 9kg  
**Water** 86L (extra 59L optional)  
**Cooktop** Two-burner Lido Junior with grill  
**Kitchen construction** Laminated  
**Battery** 100Ah AGM

### > PRICE AS SHOWN

\$35,990

### > SUPPLIED BY

Melbourne Adventure Camper Hire,  
3/72 Newlands Road, Reservoir,  
Vic 3073, 0420 723 091,  
[www.melbournecamperhire.com.au](http://www.melbournecamperhire.com.au)

**LEFT:** The front tool box will also take a stack of gear, while the checkerplate stone guard provides plenty of protection.  
**BELOW:** It's built to handle some hardy offroad use, and our test didn't throw up any challenges the Arkaroola couldn't conquer.

The body is fabricated in zinc anneal double-powder-coated panels and Adventure Offroad makes much of the fact the campers are designed for "hard-core offroad travel".

The Arkaroola rides on Mickey Thompson 265/75R16 rubber on black-painted steel rims, although our test trailer featured the easier-to-get-on-tour 31x10R15 LT Westlake Radials. If you do get into trouble, three recovery points are provided.

The Arkaroola sits in the middle of Adventure Offroad Campers' six-model range, both in terms of price and spec. The range starts with the \$24,990 Stockman and tops out with the \$49,750 Grand Tourer, with the Arkaroola coming in at \$35,990.

This is a well specified trailer, but there is an extensive range of options, including an additional room for the tent, a boat rack, colour matching to your vehicle, electric brakes, additional 59L water tank, solar panels, a hot water unit, and more.

## SUMMING UP

There is a lot to like about the Arkaroola. The ability to set-up the kitchen and annexe without opening the rest of the trailer is invaluable. And the fact the roof rack can stay laden at all times and not affect the trailer setup is also great – there is nothing more annoying than having to take gear off when you're not intending to use it. Likewise, the lack of guy ropes for the tent sections helps make the camper set-up a stress-free affair.

We did have a couple of small issues, but nothing too serious: a cotter-pin-style clip for one of the bed supports came away, and we bent the cross bar for the stone guard during a particularly tight turn.

There isn't a lot of muscle required in the set-up and, while we needed two people to pull up the tent and bed, with a bit of experience you could do the whole thing single handed. In fact, Adventure Offroad's Paul Tabone claims he can set-up an Arkaroola in four minutes, without rushing.

His record is in no danger from us. **CTA**