



Ultimate experience

Ultimate Xtrk

It takes about five minutes to set up the Ultimate camp.



Rough tracks are no problem for the Xtrk, which also has excellent dust sealing.

WITH a trip planned to the Corner Country of New South Wales, the folk at Ultimate Off Road Trailers suggested that we should take along the Ultimate Xtrk camper to see how it would perform on an extended run. Two-and-a-half weeks, and 5200km later, we reluctantly delivered the Xtrk back to the factory at Moruya, south coast NSW, with the feeling we would love to turn around and do it all again.

Ultimate has carved out a unique position in the Australian camper trailer world with its tough fibreglass off-roaders by virtue of building quality products. With a background in boat building, the owners literally turned yacht construction on its head and designed a camper along the lines of an upside down boat hull. The result is the aerodynamic spaceship that you might see touring remote corners of the country.

Being the entry-level camper in the Ultimate range, the Xtrk has been described as a no-frills expedition camper. There is a long list of options that can be included at purchase, or owners can modify their trailer over time to suit their needs.

The Ultimate is 4.25 metres in overall length and 2.0 metres wide, but packed down it is 1.8 metres tall so it looks big for a camper trailer by virtue of its height. Much of the loftiness comes from being built with 570mm of ground clearance on 15" off-road wheels.

Design is simple, being a 2m x 2m fibreglass section incorporating the living area with

a wedge-shaped boot at the front. This boot section has a lockable forward opening hatch and there is 1400 litres of space for loads of the equipment we inevitably drag away with us. Along with the boot there are external lockers at each corner of the trailer providing lockable storage with easy access for smaller items.

Ultimate's manager, Jason Stevens, gave us instructions on setting up the camper before we set off. Ultimate buyers are encouraged to spend their first night at the Riverbreeze Tourist Park when they collect their camper so the Ultimate team can demonstrate how things go together.

At 700kg unladen, but with all our extra gear on board, the Ultimate took a bit of sting out of our 3.0 litre diesel Prado on the hills, and on the steep run up Clyde Mountain it could certainly be felt, but we weren't the slowest vehicle on the climb. The impressive thing was the way the trailer tracked so well, and it rides the bumps without any harshness being transmitted back to the car. Once set up properly, the 10" electric pulse brakes work superbly, helping bring the rig to a stop really well.

Our first night at the roadside camping area on the Shoalhaven River west of Braidwood was reached as dusk was settling, so we wasted no time setting up the camper. We established a routine, which we were to follow for the next couple of weeks.

We sussed out a suitable flat area to set things up. This is a good time to point out that



The lounge doubles as a step-up to the bed.

your camping spot needs to be wide enough to fit the folded-out section, to avoid having to move your trailer and start again. The set up is quite easy, and incorporates stabiliser jacks and the jockey wheel to create a stable platform, and then locking straps are unclipped.

After opening the camper's rear door and folding down the fibreglass steps, the camper top is lifted on gas struts out to the side of the trailer. This becomes the base of the king-size bed. The canvas sections are supported by U-shaped bars and spreaders, and the canvas sides are fixed over the fibreglass base for weather protection.



Wedge-shaped front boot is lockable.



Suspension is well thought out.

The king-sized bed is made from three individual single foam mattresses and, for travelling, they are stored on the camper lounge to allow the top to fold. It is then a matter of setting the mattresses in place, each with fitted single sheets, and throwing a doona and pillows on top. This aspect of Ultimate's set-up was probably the most discussed topic. Curious fellow camper trailer towers we met on our trip wanted to know what it was like to set up the bed every time. But in reality the whole procedure took no longer than five minutes from the time we pulled up. It took longer deciding which camp spot to choose...



Kitchen storage is pretty good.

With the main body of the camper erected, you can choose to add the awnings over the entry and the front. If we were doing a quick overnighter, we only set the entry one. When things warmed up the further west we went, or when stopped for a couple of nights, the front awning became mandatory, and it's a simple matter of clipping the fibreglass wands onto the trailer and sliding in the supports. An extra minute or two, and you get fantastic ventilation through the camper with the zippered windows open and covered by the awnings.

So, what's it like inside? There are steps up to the camper from the back and you enter a space with lots of headroom – the height and windows all round create a great feeling of space. To the left of the entrance is a bench with a storage bin, a Dometic metho stove, sink with electric pump and then a second bin. Up front is another bench with an 80-litre two-way Waeco fridge/freezer below. To the right is a two-metre long L-shaped lounge and a fibreglass table. The lounge has storage beneath, some of which is taken by a wheel arch of the trailer. More storage is provided under the kitchen galley in drawers and lockers.

The lounge converts to a bed, which would be suitable for kids or a second bunk if a couple of mates were travelling together. To get into bed you step onto the lounge and onto the east-west mattress.

Reading lamps are provided at each corner and there are storage pockets built into the canvas sides. The foam mattress was extremely comfortable and, as long as the trailer was properly stabilised, it was steady. There was a



Galley set-up is neat and practical.

night when winds kicked in to almost gale force and the noise woke us a couple of times. Although the canvas took some buffeting, the trailer remained rock steady.

We tended to cook outside most of the time on camp stoves or fires simply for the pleasure of being in the open air and watching the evening sky change. A couple of times on the trip when the weather went bad we used the inside kitchen and it was fine. The window over the kitchen provides ample ventilation to suck out cooking smells and the lounge is a cosy space to settle in for the evening.

The camper is equipped with two 95amp house batteries charged from the vehicle as we drove along. Charging is through an XS4003 CTEK unit and there are isolator switches in the battery compartment, which is in one of the external lockers. We found the system able to power the fridge and lights for our entire trip and it should operate without recharge for four days or so.

Water is stored in a 110-litre food grade polyethylene tank centrally located under the floor and, without being frugal, it lasted about six days before it needed a refill.

There is an option for a full annexe and we set that up a couple of times. It is supported by five extendable poles with ropes and pegs. It took about 10 minutes to unpack and erect – and the most difficult part was getting pegs to penetrate the rock hard ground.

Once erected, the annexe creates a homely space to relax and cook. It certainly provided welcome shade in the 35-degree heat we encountered around Tibooburra.



Zippered windows provide flow-through ventilation.

Packing up the camper is naturally the reverse of set up. Store the food, take down the table, set the three mattresses on the lounge, remove the spreader bars and lift the trailer top back into place. Once we got the hang of folding the canvas sides into the centre it was easy, but care needs to be taken to get all the canvas and vinyl material inside the rubber seal between the fibreglass lid and base. Lock the top down with the folding latches, then it's a matter of lifting the stairs and using the two occy strap loops to hold it up. Then lift the stabiliser bars and set them in the travelling position, remove the jockey wheel and that's it. (I had to get out every time and check the steps were up as I had this horror feeling I had left them down and they were grinding themselves flat on the road behind us.)

It's easy to set up and comfortable to live with – but what's it like to tow? Well, after a while you forget it's even there. It simply followed faithfully along like a well-trained kelpie. When we slowed for the jumps over grids, it let us know it was still there but it went along everywhere with no fuss.

The suspension and construction have been well thought out and well tested. The chassis is a Y-frame high tensile Duragal box section. Suspension is independent trailing arm with long travel Lovells coils and Koni adjustable shock absorbers. It has a nominal ball weight of 30kg making it well balanced. It is so light and manoeuvrable that at one stage on the trip I was able to move the trailer by hand 100 metres to a better campsite.

The whole thing is sealed when it closes down on a rubber strip around the perimeter and rubber seals on the door with three locks to keep it airtight. No dust got into the trailer on the entire trip – as opposed to the Prado, which was bathed in red dust inside and out by the time we got home.

Throughout the trip the Ultimate was a pleasure to live with. Not one thing on the trailer broke or fell off – and we had been over corrugations that shook bits off the bullbar, snapped the two-way aerial and blew out globes on the driving lights.

On one section of road that took me by surprise, the car lifted off the ground, but Heather watched the trailer in the mirror as it just rose on its suspension and stayed stuck to the road laughing at us. That's the sort of camper I want following me around.

John Ford

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Ultimate Campers

Model: Xtrk

Length: 4.25m

Width: 2m

Towing height: 1.8m

Towball weight: 30kg

Weight: 700kg

Suspension: Trailing arm coil spring

Brakes: 10" electric pulse

Price: From \$37,000

Price: As tested \$40,500

Options fitted: Three way fridge, main awning

Contact: Ultimate Campers, 39 Shelley Road, Nth Moruya 2537, (02) 4474 4410, www.ultimatecampers.com.au

