

ULTIMATE XPLORE WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Calling yourself the 'ultimate' makes a pretty big claim, especially in the camper trailer world.

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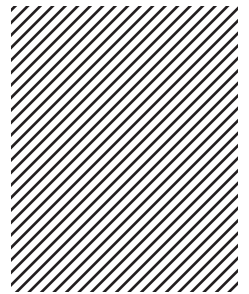
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A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW.



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Sometimes, all it takes is a different point of view to start pushing something in a different direction; a fresh set of eyes to show what can change. It happens here in the office all of the time: I will pore over pages of the magazine before it goes to print, scrutinising every detail looking for errors. I won't find any, but a quick glance from someone else does. "You've misspelt that," or "that caption is wrong". A new and different set of eyes picks up on things in an instant.

There's a big correlation between this and the Ultimate Xplor camper trailer that I recently took on an Outback jaunt. The Ultimate is quite a bit different to other camper trailers out there. It looks different, packs up differently, has different features. Hell, it even smells different to the other campers.

This difference comes from its progenitors and its ancestry. Ultimate isn't laden with history like other camper trailer manufacturers, but it is from a different

place. A different point of view.

You see, the business started in 1994. Michael and Wendy Hackett, keen campers and outdoors people, quickly got fed up with ground tents. So they started looking at other options. At the time, they were involved in the boat building industry. Namely, Michael's trade was boat building, and he worked extensively with Australia's leading yacht manufacturers.

So, they went about building a camper trailer, which they ended up calling the 'Ultimate'. Today, they are still going, and going strong. Based in Moruya on the New South Wales south coast, Ultimate now makes three different models and employs just under 50 people.

Big boats are made of fibreglass, a strong, lightweight and malleable material that is essentially a plastic, reinforced by glass fibres. And obviously, it doesn't rust. So it makes great sense for building, providing you know how to use it. The good news is, Ultimate does know how to use it. The build quality on the Xplor we

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A Treg hitch is used on the Ultimate for off-road twisties.

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265 75/R16 is a common size, and can be changed to suit the tow vehicle.

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I can personally vouch for this bed being particularly comfortable.

04

A simple set-up can be done by experienced hands in only a few minutes. Allow a bit more time on uneven ground, or if you want to set up some of the awnings.

05

Bendy poles for the awnings are fast to set up, and strong.

06

Coopers, Konis and coils; Ultimate definitely hasn't cut corners underneath.

07

There's a handy tap behind the left-hand wheel, but it does get quite dirty on dusty and muddy roads.

08

Dual 110AH AGM deep-cycle batteries, CTEK 15A charger, Redarc 1225LV DC-DC charger and 6 x 12-volt outlets standard.



Although it looks big, it has a low overall weight and a **TERRIFIC SUSPENSION SETUP** UNDERNEATH.





had was wonderful. All of the doors and hatches opened and closed with proper purpose, and sealed well. The whole vehicle sealed well, in fact; the only dust ingress we had was due to some canvas pinching on the seal, because of user error.

It's not all lightweight business, however. The chassis is still a meaty steel affair, all the way from the towbar to the water tank at the back. It's galvanised, and then coated in a kind of sacrificial coating of paint, which can be easily fixed in terms of stone chipping and wear.

Technically, the Ultimate is a hard floor camper trailer. It doesn't follow the same rules as the other hard floor campers on the market, however. Instead of flipping over the back way, it folds over to the side. The complication here is that it needs small stabiliser arms which add a few minutes to the set-up time. On the plus side, the side flipping does open up a lot of space inside the camper: the Dynaproofed canvas from Wax Converter Textiles (the best in the business) opens up

high and taut quickly, allowing plenty of headroom for standing around inside or sitting on the bed. Cramped is one thing this camper certainly is not.

After deploying the stabilisers, set-up is simply achieved by opening the back door, undoing a few clamps and flipping the roof over to the side. This can be done either with the aid of the lifting bar or without – depending on how vertically/ergonomically challenged you are.

INSIDE

From there, four poles snap into place in the top corners of the ceiling to form the structure. Put the mattress in place and throw a few cushions around, and you are done. For the amount of space and comfort the setup affords, it really is a fast and easy process.

The inside is really well specced out in the Xplor, and could cater for an extended sojourn within its shelter if weather didn't allow you to escape. All of the cabinetry

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Getting the trailer even was a bit hard at times because the tow vehicle sat much lower than the trailer. Most 4X4s with aftermarket suspension and a slight lift shouldn't have a problem. Or, just unhitch.

02

Underneath is coated in a sacrificial paint, which can be topped up at a service.

03

They have made good use of the extra space. Every bit goes a long way.

04

110 litres of water is more than enough, most of the time.

05

Outdoor dining, if you so desire; just pack a little barbie in.

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Gas-powered heating is an option on this model, along with a hot water system.

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The front 'nose cone' has 1,340 litres of storage space. We didn't come close to filling up ours.



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The extra awnings take some time to set up with poles and guy ropes, but give a lot of sheltered space for that long stay in one spot.

and fittings are of a high standard; no corners cut here. Along with the spacious kitchen and upright fridge, they even managed to squeeze a small dinette in with the lounge area.

The bed is more than spacious and plenty comfortable, and the windows can all open up for space and a nice breeze. A nice touch: the small shades over the windows which will allow you to keep them open in light rain, providing it isn't coming in sideways.

TOWING

Put simply, the Ultimate is a dream to tow. Although it looks big, it has a low overall weight (850kg, 45kg towball weight) and a terrific suspension setup underneath. We did a lot of towing along dirt roads at higher speeds, and not once was the trailer (or tow car) phased ... even when we were carrying a little bit too much speed through washouts, bulldust and ruts.

When looking at second-hand cars, I like to see what sort of aftermarket gear people put on them. More expensive, well known brands indicate that the owner doesn't mind spending a little bit extra on

quality stuff, and the car is probably the better for it. If this camper was a second-hand car, it would get full marks: Koni shock absorbers, Cooper tyres and Lovells springs. Big names indicate dollars spent where they could have been saved with other items that might not perform as well.

Off-roaders will note that the rampover and departure angles are all quite spiffy. Although the body is high, the fibreglass body means the centre of gravity is still quite low (especially when loaded). Serious off-roading won't be a problem with the Xplor, as long as your 4X4 is up to it.

This camper is one that is quite a bit different to others out there, and it is not built to a price. If the Ultimate is in your price bracket, then check it out. It's got more than its fair share of points of difference, and delivers a great balance between comfort, size, weight and capability. If you are looking for a little bit more, there is an extensive list of options that will scratch the 'bells and whistles' itch we all sometimes get.



For more information, call: (02) 4474 4410
or visit www.ultimateoffroadcampers.com.au.

SPECIFICATIONS → ULTIMATE XPLOR

Suspension: Independent trailing-arm with Koni shock absorbers and Lovells coil springs.

Wheels/tyres: Cooper AT3 265/75 R16 on steel rims.

Bed: King-size with foam mattress.

Price: \$52,500.

Tare weight: 840kg.

GTM: 1,300kg.

Water: 110 litres with electric pump.

Gas: 3.8kg bottle.

Ground clearance: 570mm.

Departure angle: 32 degrees.

Rampover angle: 18 degrees.

Hitch: Treg.

Standard features: 25A DC-DC charger, dual 110AH AGM deep-cycle batteries, 110 litre compressor fridge/freezer, 16-inch steel rims and a full-length front awning.

Fridge: 110 Waeco upright.