



Little RIPPER

THIS LITTLE GUY WILL WIN HEARTS OUT ON THE ROAD
BUT CAN IT LIVE UP TO ITS ROUGH RIDER NAME?

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Have you ever wandered through your favourite 4WD and camping show with your mum? I have – at this year’s Queanbeyan 4 Wheel Drive Spectacular Outdoor Recreation Show. Everything was well and we’d all kept our hands in our pockets, aside from minor expenditure on camping necessities. But then we turned a corner and Mum squealed with delight: “Oh how cute. Honey, I need one of those! What do you think?”

As the eldest son, what was I supposed to do? We know we’re spoilt for choice in today’s market and none of us can afford to buy the first cute thing we see. But teardrop campers have been winning hearts since the 1930s, from the moment their plans were published in DIY magazines.

In this case, it was a Rough Rider by teardrop specialist Little Guy Australia that became the subject of affection. So, with mum full of enthusiasm, I got under it, I got in it, and I looked at it with a son’s protective eye. Seeing the opportunity to satisfy both Mum’s curiosity, and our readership’s, I negotiated a test-run with the distributor.

“I’ll put it through its paces Mum and let you know what I think, okay?” I offered.

Little Guy Australia was established in the US in 2002 and has been in Australia since 2006. The local company initially imported units from the US but turned to building its campers to order in 2007, from its Australian-owned and



operated headquarters in South Australia. The US and Australian companies are independent today but still enjoy a friendly association and share research and development. Now there are more than 70 locally-built Little Guys roaming Australia’s road and up to 4000 units in the US.

The Little Guys appeal to baby boomers, child-free couples and non-traditional family units. Some buyers are former tent campers while others have towed full-size campers and are seeking to downsize for more modest travel ambitions.

Little Guy Australia can assemble a unit within five days and achieve a 2-4 week turnaround from order to delivery, depending on options. And if you’re keen to try one, Camper’s Delights offers a hire service in



Tasmania, which sounds like a great way to discover the Apple Isle.

LIGHT AND STRONG

Little Guy Australia’s engineering credentials paint it as a flyweight punching above its class. The Rough Rider we tested had an ATM of 740kg, GTM of 680kg, 580kg Tare and a ball weight of 60kg, leaving a 160kg of payload, which is plenty for its size. The A-frame storage rack, rear galley compartments and main bed let you distribute the load for a stable ride. The test unit displayed the optional, heavy-duty Rhino-Rack system, with the manufacturer looking to upgrade the Rough Rider’s load capacity for storing kayaks, surf boards, bikes or even luggage pods for touring.

Being so light, and with its aerofoil shape, we wondered whether we’d encounter issues with lift or sway at speed. But, happily, Bernoulli’s principle of flight physics didn’t take hold. In fact, we towed it at 100km/h in a cross-wind and hardly felt the load, so it was no surprise to learn the Rough Rider was designed by an auto engineer.

Getting off the main road, the Rough Rider happily came along for the outing. The structural plywood construction and laminated fibreglass provides a hard-shell, with aluminium checkerplate acting as a stoneguard. The A-frame common to all models supports the Rough Rider’s square bar with leaf springs and shocks, while the Deluxe and

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The Darche Eclipse side-awning fitted to the optional Rhino-Rack sheltered the ‘test crew’; The spacious rear kitchenette is set at a great working height; Al-Ko riding gear equips the Rough Rider for tougher stuff; The tank is shielded by checkerplate; The proven Treg hitch increases towing comfort.

MEASURING UP

HITS

- > Australian made
- > User friendly
- > Affordable

MISSES

- > Limited battery storage
- > No factory-fitted roof-mounted solar from factory



ABOVE: The galley includes an 18L fridge, microwave, pantry, induction cooktop and bench under a hard-top roof.

CTA RATING

1. FIT FOR INTENDED PURPOSE



2. INNOVATION



3. SELF-SUFFICIENCY



4. QUALITY OF FINISH



5. BUILD QUALITY



6. OFFROAD-ABILITY



7. COMFORTS



8. EASE OF USE



9. VALUE FOR MONEY



10. X-FACTOR



Deluxe Plus models rely on an AI-Ko torsion bar. The spare wheel is on the A-frame forward of the luggage rack on the Rough Rider and the chassis wall is 2mm thick with a 50x75mm box section. The D-shaped hollow rubber seals on the cabin doors worked a treat protecting against road dust and grime. As did the pinch-weld seal on the back hatch that encloses the camper's galley.

COMFY NEST

As you step into a camper, you'll find the internal space taken up entirely with a camper-queen-size bed that easily accommodated a 6ft 3in (1.9m) adult. The optional 100mm thick foam mattress folds into three sections for easy removal. You can fit your own custom-made mattress but you'll need to ensure it will fit through the 65x81cm door.

The internal floor and walls are carpet-lined to soften any blows to the head until you're used to the camper's classic design.

We tested the camper in the Tinderry Ranges south of Canberra, ACT, and found that the sleeping compartment was well-protected from the elements on a blowy night in the High Country in autumn. The camper's 38mm insulation is made from 75 per cent recycled glass and 25 per cent natural minerals and did a good job. The two glass entry doors with flyscreens, and the roof-mounted vent and roof vent with 12V fan over the sleeping compartment, ensured that the capsule didn't feel claustrophobic. The camper

was fitted with the optional Transcool evaporative cooler that hangs from a ceiling-mounted hook. We recently travelled to the Dead Centre with one of these in our own camper and it worked a treat in the heat.

Surprisingly, this little pearler has a whopping 378L of storage (think of 19 jerry cans worth of storage area). The 155L storage cupboards above the bed provide space for clothes, toiletries and other personal items. Meanwhile, the Rough Rider also has a 200mm deep shelf for your daily knick-knacks such as sunnies, keys and books.

So there's certainly enough room to deal with for an extended long weekend away. Anything beyond that would probably see luggage stored in the tow-vehicle or roof racks and rotated through the Little Guy as needed.

Opening the hatch at the rear of the Little Guy, the galley reminded us of a mobile coffee van. The microwave and induction hotplate offers a hot drink and a quick feed at powered sites. The optional fitted fridge is the Waeco CF18 which has an 18L capacity. While that's fine for some milk and a few breakfast essentials, if you like a refreshing ale or are considering a remote trip, you'd need to supplement it with an in-vehicle main fridge. Meanwhile, the 133L of storage above the galley workspace is good for dry goods and some essential crockery and utensils.

Under the food preparation area, there's a 60L storage bin for pots and pans. The removable



bench that attaches to the side of the camper measures 460x340mm, making it big enough to fit a few of the more popular barbecue options. While gas can't be plumbed-in at factory, you can store a gas cylinder on the front luggage tray and run a long gas hose to the barbecue tray at the rear. Or, alternatively, simply use pony-bottles.

The Rough Rider's flat surfaced flares make a handy additional side bench, and we could see utility in fitting an after-market 'lifestyle table' to the Little Guy. At the side of the camper, near the

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A 12V pump ferries water from the 60L tank to a faucet near the galley; Conservative management of the 55A battery will keep you in good stead for two days; A seven-stage charger enables you to top it up at powered sites; Storage throughout helps to maintain stability under tow.



REVIEW



galley, is a water faucet linked to a 60L water tank and 12V pressure pump.

When it comes time to sit down and relax, the Little Guy has two factory options for an outside living space. One approach is to side mount a 3x3m screen-room tent by US company PahaQue which is specifically designed for the Little Guy, the Dune 4x4 Deluxe RV shelter is another option for galley annexe.

We prefer the utility of a simpler awning and the test unit was fitted with an after-market Darche Eclipse side-awning, which protected us against sun and rain at the side of the camper. But, for our money, we'd opt for a Foxwing awning that would offer a simple-to-unfurl cover for living area and for the rear galley. Add the optional Foxwing side panels and you'd be set for any conditions.

LIGHT AND POWER

Focused on the weekend get-away market, the Little Guy is supported by a modest 55A factory-fitted battery linked to the unit's 12V system. This powers the camper's on-board LEDs, the Waeco CF18, water pump, vent fan and 12V jacks. The battery is big enough for a weekend escape but it shouldn't be taken for granted. The fridge utilises 46W, so that's a 3.83A draw, provided you fill the fridge with cold items and don't open it every half hour. Otherwise it will become much greedier. I imagine this battery will be pushed to its limits without care, and with

REVIEW



ABOVE: The fan improves airflow, while a Transcool air-conditioner provides an extra boost when the mercury rises.

RIGHT: Scott's five-year-old daughter inspects the comfy camper-queen-size bed. Note the storage up top.

CTA SPECS

LITTLE GUY AUSTRALIA ROUGH RIDER

> TRAILER

Tare 580kg
ATM 740kg
Suspension Al-Ko leaf springs and dampers
Brakes Al-Ko
Coupling Treg
Chassis 75x50x2mm RHS
Drawbar 75x50x2mm RHS
Body Structural plywood with fibreglass lamination
Wheel/tyre 15in alloys, 235/75 R15
Style Teardrop

> DIMENSIONS

Box size 2265x1520mm
Length (hitch to tail lights) 3955mm
Tent size NA

> ACCESSORIES

Gas cylinders No
Water 1x60L
Cooktop Two-burner induction
Kitchen Laminated ply, hard roof
Battery 1x55Ah

> PRICE AS SHOWN

\$18,000 (base price from \$13,950)

> ENQUIRIES

To enquire about this camper, visit www.campertraileraustralia.com.au/spec or phone (08) 7099 1799

> CAMPERTRAILERAUSTRALIA.COM.AU

> More pictures
> Specs to compare



the use the evaporative cooler for a few hours and read a book each night, we reckon you'd be looking to recharge it in two days.

The Anderson plug, however, can be used to charge the battery with the right after-market solar kit. We'd like to see something space-saving like a Redarc Amorphous Flexible and Folding Solar Panel packed in one of the Little Guy's storage compartments. Alternatively, the curved roof space could potentially accommodate a fixed solar panel with the added benefit of being able to recharge the battery while on the move. Better still, it wouldn't be hard to find room to fit a larger battery or a dual battery system for some added peace of mind during remote area

travel. All models are dual-wired, so that you can source 240V from a generator or a powered site to operate that microwave and induction plate.

THE VERDICT

The Little Guy's byline is "I go where I'm towed to". And we reckon this sums up the hassle-free recreational opportunities offered by these little campers.

The Rough Rider is a great, sturdy unit with some creature comforts, minimal overheads and at a competitive price.

So, after our test-run, what do you reckon we told Mum?

"Go for it. It's exactly what you need!" **CTA**

