



BUILT AUSSIE TOUGH

Words Robyn Dallimore Photos Bruce Mountain

Built for the rough and tumble of Australian travel, the latest Winnebago Australia motorhome and campervan range have landed in New Zealand, ready for summer sales and for the Covi Motorhome and Caravan Supershow in Auckland in mid-March.

The New Zealand agents for the Winnebago range are the DeLuxe Group in Blenheim, and the Smith family will all be in Auckland over the Covi show event with the latest Winnebago Australia models on show, RnRV.

Keeping stock on the yards is proving to be a challenge as Kiwis are loving the grunty chassis available on these models, with four cab chassis options used; the very popular RWD Mercedes Sprinter 513 CDi 5-speed auto, the FWD Fiat Ducato 2.3L Multijet II Power 6-speed auto, the RWD IVECO Daily 50C17 3.0L 8-speed full auto transmission and the VW Crafter 6-speed manual option. These chassis are all in the 4490kg GVM range offering payloads from 590kg in the Kirra right up to 700kg in

the Byron – pretty impressive figures. At this weight these vehicles are all on a standard driving licence and require a COF.

If you're looking for something under 3500kg, Winnebago offer two- and four-berth campervan models. The Bondi 2S offers a rear lounge conversion to a bed option, or a fixed queen bed in the rear. All the Bondi campervan range have a combined shower/en-suite, kitchen with full 190L fridge, gas hob, storage, and more bench space than many other RV vehicles. A front dinette with swivel cab seating accommodates four people. Under the seven-metre mark and with 350kg payload this is a great option in this Mercedes Springer 313 CDi 5-speed auto range. The Bondi 4S has a rear club or two single side lounge options in the rear that covert to a queen bed.

When in Nelson earlier this year, and more recently on our way to Kaikoura, I looked over the Kirra model that had just landed. This model is based on the big impressive IVECO



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Daily 50C17 rear-wheel-drive cab chassis base. This feels like a beast when you climb into the spacious cab, and reading all the spec's you can't help but be impressed; 8-speed full automatic transmission, the 4-cylinder 3.0L engine has variable geometry turbocharger and intercooler, popping out 170hp or 125kW @ 2900–3500rpm, 430Nm @ 1500–2600rpm. Whew – that sounds really impressive (if you know what on earth it means); essentially this baby has heaps of pull, and maintaining the legal 90kph while getting up hills will be no problem at all, anywhere in the country.



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1. Always good to look under the vehicle, this shows the dual-wheels, greywater tank above with their hoses held in place to come out to the edge of the vehicle for emptying
2. Iveco 50-170 Hi Matic power!
3. Electric two-steps up into the vehicle



4 For Aussie owners it means that cruising at 110kph on the Aussie outback roads is also a piece of cake.

The spec's for the rest of the chassis highlight all the latest technology such as the Electronic Stability Program (ESP) that includes Anti-Slip Regulator or Traction Control, Hydraulic Brake Assist (HBA), Hill Holder, Adaptive Load Control (LAC), Trailer Sway Mitigation (TSM), Hydraulic Rear Wheel Boost (HRB), Hydraulic Fading Compensation (HFC), Roll Movement Intervention (RMI) and Roll. We had only just got our heads around ABS and ESP, and now we have a whole new lot of terms to learn.

The most important difference from UK- and European-built models, is the suspension setup on these Aussie models. Anyone who has

travelled through Australia and the Outback will know it is vital to be able to handle the long stretches of dirt roads, and to be able to get off the road in some situations with road trains or similar coming your way – but even more importantly being able to get back on the road, especially with some of the soft loamy soil over there. All the Winnebago models are made for this terrain with independent and adjustable steel torsion bars in the front, and in the rear, multi-leaf springs, rubber rebound bump stops, anti-roll bar and double-acting telescopic shock absorbers. Some might say things like leaf springs are old technology nowadays, but shocks and springs are key to keeping the house body stable and supporting the vehicle structure by doing so. Driving New Zealand roads, and taking on the back-country

gravel roads are well within these vehicles' capabilities, especially with the engine spec's.

I met with Brendan Ludlow from Winnebago Australia at the 2017 Hamilton motorhome show, and one of the things we discussed was Winnebago's construction methods, so I share part of our chat with you here. "The Winnebago body construction uses a single-piece structural composite panel with a plywood deck; the side walls and roof are also single-piece structural composite panels both with insulative foam core. There is no framing in the internal walls, but structures are fitted inside the panels where cabinetry is to be secured, in this case with 60mm cleats at the back, glued and screwed securely. The floor, walls and roof are joined using an aluminium extrusion that runs around the whole perimeter of the floor;

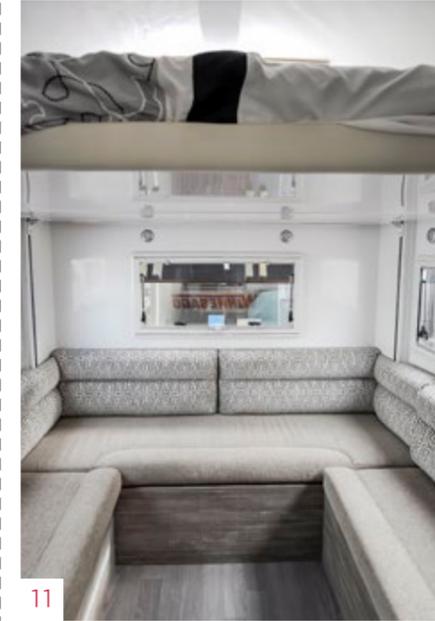
the sandwich panel walls then slide into the extrusion and are secured with an industrial strength adhesive. A similar extrusion runs around the top securing the walls and roof structure to create a structural box." Brendan tells me you could walk on these panels, they are so strong.

"Hand-laid-up fibreglass wall panels weigh more but are stronger; they will take a knock and can be repaired by any panel beater, The walls also hold shape better, and the monocoque construction makes its own structural integrity; you can lift our caravans or motorhomes off the chassis and they will hold their own. This is a major thing, especially with caravans in Australia – the chassis has its own structural integrity and so does the body."

"We don't use plastic on the exterior trim, nose cones or backs. Plastic parts can't be repaired – they have to be replaced, which takes time and more cost. Winnebago use fibreglass wall panels instead. We know that if they back into a tree, or whatever, the customer won't have to get parts brought in from somewhere."

A good way to look at your product – from the end user's point of view, that was nice to hear.

Back to the interior of this Kirra model: the high-gloss gel-coated wall and ceiling finish is modern and fresh, strong and sensible; it



11 appealed to the cleaner in me immediately. The fixed furniture finish is called Timeo Pine and is a light modern look, as is the floor covering. With all the overhead cupboards sporting the same high-gloss white finish, the overall interior effect is one of a light, bright and modern environment, ready for personal touches of colour and personality. Pretty hard

- 4. Four-seater dinette, note the two passenger seat belts, storage lockers overhead
- 5. A mixture of finishes inside the cupboards – each space has a separating lip so items won't slide all the way along, small nose lip as well
- 6. Luton bed over the cab is the second berth
- 7. Behind the dinette we move to the utility tower with 190L auto three-way fridge, microwave and entertainment centre above, storage above that – walk through to the shower en-suite and the rear lounge
- 8. All the controls in one spot in the cupboard above the microwave and fridge
- 9. Always a plus, the old pull-out pantry complements the four drawers and cupboard under the domestic-style kitchen sink with drainer
- 10. Combined grill and oven with glass lid for extra bench space – hob with one electric and two gas burners
- 11-12. Electric chain-driven system for the ceiling drop-down bed – industrial and strong looking... and in lowered position



HALF PAGE AD SPACE

BANNER AD SPACE



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to do damage to these walls – no rubbing off a flimsy paper covering on the walls of these Aussie models, that’s for sure.

The habitation entry is behind the passenger seat, and directly opposite is a four-seater dinette, with two fitted seat belts on the forward-facing seats; a large opening picture window is a feature on this side.

This model has a Luton bed over the cab in a fixed position, with a framed break between the house and cab area – once again in a light off-white colour matching the Luton interior. Ladder lives to the left side. Curtains for privacy, LED lighting, and a window each side for sleepers’ comfort up there. A good size at 2250x1350mm. By fixed I mean you can’t flip the mattress and slide the base forward to create space when walking through.

The dinette area has overhead cupboard storage and a diesel heating vent below to keep the front area cosy. New Zealand models come with a Eberspacher 2kW diesel heater installed instead of air-conditioning, though with the heat we have had this summer I don’t know that I wouldn’t want both – that is probably



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an option that could be ordered.

The kitchen has a domestic style stainless steel sink with drainer, four drawers, a cupboard and pull-out pantry to pack your goods into, as well as three overhead storage lockers. The combined grill/oven has two gas burners and one electric; its glass lid adds to the available bench space for food prep. Below the stove is a handy drawer for the pots and pans. Opposite is the utility tower with the large AES 190L fridge/freezer unit, microwave above, stereo and storage, then a cupboard that houses the monitors, dials, and switches for the home.

Walking through, on the left we have the one-piece fibreglass 780x760mm fully enclosed shower box with hot and cold tapware; across the hall is the en-suite toilet with mirror, vanity cabinet and vitreous china basin – the throne itself is also porcelain china – a swivel cassette toilet with electric flush – nice.

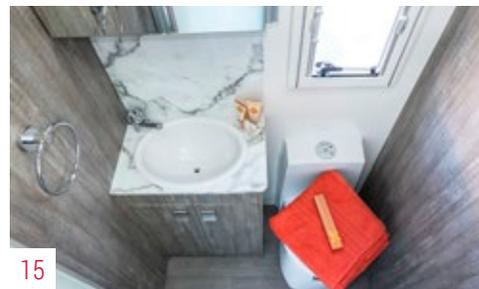
The rear of the motorhome has a large U-shaped lounge that just begs to be lain on with feet up, flicking open the windows and enjoying the views surrounding you – a great space. I particularly like that the rear window can open, as well as the sides, and of course they are fitted with fly screens and concertina privacy blinds.

When the views have faded into darkness, you have the option of flicking on the 28-inch 12V full HD LED multimedia-capable TV and catching up on the latest show. Bed time in this area is pretty special; press a button and the ceiling descends, presenting you with a fully made up (sheets and blankets) bed measuring 1900x1340mm. With weight band limits of 205kg (moving) and 270kg (static) I would be happy with the Rock and me rolling on this bed all night long, no worries. I like the utilitarian look of the chain-driven electric mechanism on the bed – like the rest of the vehicle build it feels tough, industrial strength, made to travel thousands of miles.

There are no overhead cupboards or



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storage places at all in this area. In fact there is minimal storage for personal items, but from my experience people can pack way too much stuff to take away with them. Unless you travel for extended periods of time you will be surprised how much you don’t need. The storage is under the seating, lift up and store your clothes, shoes etc as required. Also accessed from the exterior hatches, the large, full-width exterior storage space will take a lot of extra bits and bobs, chairs and tables, fishing gear and more.

There are some excellent variations in the models in the Winnebago range – all on the bigger 4950kg chassis – offering lots of living space, and options such as a fixed bed on a slide-out and rear bathroom, or the two fixed single beds; you can choose to change the style of your dinette area from a dinette, to a long table and lounge-type seat, and there are all sorts of floor plans and colours to choose from, all manufactured to the Winnebago standard. **RV**



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13. Note the ceiling, which is the hidden bed’s bottom. TV on the right, charging ports under the seating, LED lighting all around, larger viewing windows on the sides and at the rear of this space

14. View from rear to forward, push open side windows

15. A separate en-suite with pedestal electric flush toilet, vanity with storage below and above with mirrored cupboard doors. A window offers light and airflow, with privacy blinds

16. Bumpers and exterior trim, LED lights and signwriting make this model noticeable on the road

17. Accessed from both sides, this rear storage area is well lite, and a good size