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**CARAVANS**

# Outback Trakka



**By KEITH DIDHAM**

HANDS up all car drivers who have cursed large motorhomes for being on the road. OK, that's most of you.

Motorhomes, you say, are big, ungainly, thirsty, are real slugs and have no place on the road. Right?

Far from it. The world of recreational vehicles has changed rapidly.

Nowadays, you don't even need a truck licence — and they're dead easy to drive, providing you remember they are more than twice as long and high as a compact family car.

That ease of driving is becoming a big drawcard for those following the call to holiday at home in these tough

economic times. And we are not talking about traditional grey nomads. Enter the Trakka 730, a plush home away from home, which is pulling interest from a new and younger breed of RV buyer.

"We're finding our 730 and the bigger 770 are drawing interest from baby boomers who have done their overseas trip, but now want to explore Australia," Trakka managing director Dave Berry said.

That means they can rent out their house for a year, live on the road in luxury and recoup most of their purchase price once they get rid of the travel bug.

That's if they decide to sell and most motorhome owners, it seems,

are hanging on to their new wheels because they love the gypsy lifestyle. A shortage of near-new vehicles on the market has kept residual values high, though the economic crisis may change the playing field.

There are mixed messages from caravan park operators. While the number of visitors has softened in recent months, there is an increase in first-time users from two groups — family campers on a budget and mobile home owners.

Britz, one of the big campervan hire players, says it has noticed an upsurge in Australian clients compared with overseas tourists. "We have seen a huge increase in domestic bookings over the past five years,



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with Aussies making up more than 40 per cent of our customer base,” Britz brand manager Johanna Penny said.

You certainly don’t have to rough it when camping in the Trakka 730. At \$160,000, it lacks for little in terms of luxuries, such as leather upholstery, plush settees, airconditioning, double-glazed windows, privacy blinds and a 48cm HD TV with DVD player (for an extra \$900 you can have a second one in the rear lounge/bedroom).

The Trakka is based on a Fiat Ducato, but the cabin is where any similarity with a delivery van ends.

Check the rear view mirror and you realise there’s a kitchen, bathroom and lounge following behind, all fitted out in timber, grey plastic and plush cream-and-navy-blue decor.

Up front, above the cabin, is a double berth, but you need a ladder to get up there. It can be a bit of a struggle so it’s best left for the kids. Down below, the leather upholstered

driver’s and passenger’s captain’s chairs can swivel and become a second lounge area.

There are two more inward facing seats (with seat belts) behind them that surround a slide out and swivelling dining table.

The galley has a microwave, gas oven, gas hotplates, 175-litre fridge/freezer and filtered drinking-water system.

Across the way there’s a small wardrobe and an enclosed bathroom with shower, and a chemical loo that powers in and out of the wall by remote control. Trakka has applied for a world patent for the now-you-see-it, now-you-don’t party trick.

Options includes a separate stainless steel barbecue, solar charging, satellite navigation, satellite TV and reversing camera (a must for a vehicle this size). The Trakka 730 returned an impressive 13.5-litres/100km over a mix of rural, city and highway conditions, giving it a range of about 900km.



The Trakka 730 motorhome. based on a Fiat Ducato