

CAMPER TRAILER

KIMBERLEY KAMPER

The highest-specified camper trailer in Outback Travel Australia's 2010 Camper Trailer Torture Test was Kimberley's Kamper Platinum edition and it also carried the highest price tag, with a RRP of \$50,660. Allan and Kez lived with the Platinum model for a month and assessed whether it's worth the asking price.



The Kimberley Kamper Platinum hard-floor camper trailer comes fully loaded. The mechanical specification includes independent coil-spring, trailing arm suspension and electro/hydraulic disc brakes with hydraulic hand brake.

A high degree of structural build quality is evident, right down to the smoothest, easiest to use galley slides we've encountered and a pressed stainless steel drawer under the bed. Also under the bed are six AGM deep-cycle batteries, with a combined power storage of 198amp-hour capacity. Charging is done by a four-stage electronic unit with solar panel back-up.

The Platinum features three gull-wing-lidded storage bins in the forward section of the trailer: the forward-facing unit has a shelf for fold-out solar panels and can also stow a jerry can or two and some of the canvas tent extensions; the right hand side has more canvas stowage space as well as general storage capacity and the control unit for the diesel-fuelled hot water system; and the left-side unit houses a slide-out BBQ/oven and wok burner tray, large, slide-out galley and 73-litre Autofridge eutectic fridge/freezer.



Because of the generous battery capacity of the Platinum it comes with timer-controlled under-mattress heating, in addition to interior and reading lights and an exhaust fan. All lighting is by LED spot lamps and flexible strips that attach under the awnings.

Camp site power comes from fold-out 80W solar panels that can be moved to an optimum position in the sunlight. There's also a 20W trickle-charge panel on top of the forward bin that keeps the batteries in good condition while the camper isn't being used.

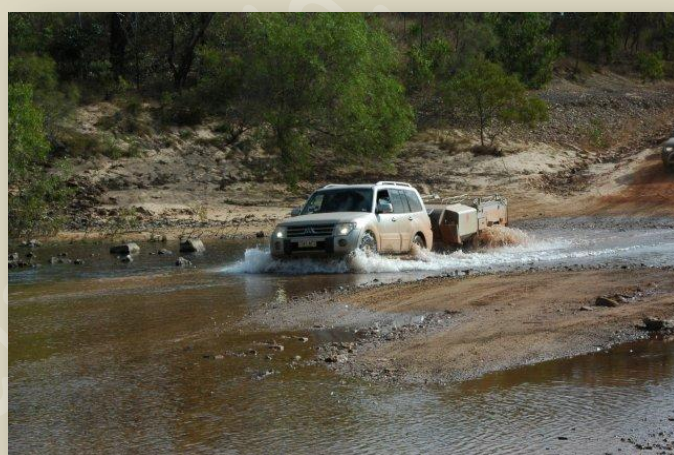
The Platinum comes with enough canvas awning and wall panels to turn it into a home on grass, with the entire camper covered by canvas as well as a zip-on toilet or shower annexe.

All this equipment adds weight, of course, so it was no surprise to discover that the Kimberley with a typical load of stores on board was the second heaviest camper on test, with a loaded axle weight of 1.26 tonnes and the highest ball weight, at 156kg.

On Test

Our route took in 10,000 kilometres of roads and tracks, from freeways through secondary roads to gravel roads, bush trails, rocky river beds and water crossings. We camped in conditions that varied from freezing, driving rain to tropical warmth. Through all this the Kimberley performed flawlessly.

We had no rain leaks and the tropical roof kept sun heat to a reasonable level. In cold conditions the under-bed heating gave us a warm bed to slip into.



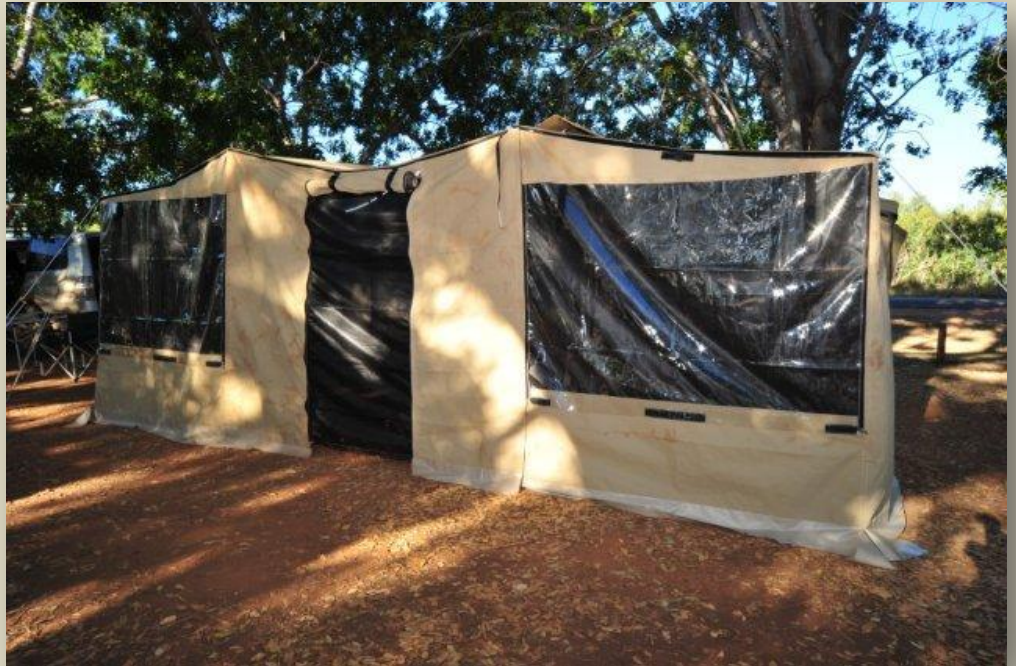
The galley arrangement was very good, with the lidded BBQ unit doubling as an oven. The eutectic fridge was a winner, needing only overnight running to maintain almost freezing temperatures.

A central charging unit display gave us clear indication of battery condition and the water level LED display was accurate. The solar panels were more than adequate to run the fridge and camp lights without draining the batteries. Even on two-day camps in cloudy weather the battery voltage never went below 12.3V.

However, there were some downsides. The hard-floor, lift-over action was effortless, powered by gas struts, but with an optional extended tent and tropical roof wasn't so easy to pack away. The canvas needed persuasion to tuck inside the trailer body, although it became easier as the trip went on and the fabric softened.

The extensive awning and wall arrangement was time-consuming to erect and best done using a small step-ladder.

It took us over an hour to kit the trailer fully, including fitting the toilet/shower annexe, so it's not the job you'd bother with unless you were staying somewhere for an extended period.



Of course, campers who need faster unfolding and packing can have similar quality in Kimberley's smaller models.

Fitting only the awning was easier, but the aluminium roof struts are under quite a load and should be replaced by more durable steel poles.

We left the galley open one night and rain trickled around the cover plates and filled the drawers: the lids need to be weather-proofed. Also, the BBQ control knobs were awkward to operate and the roll-out pantry interfered with saucepans on the stove.

Towing the Platinum caused the standard Pajero's rear suspension to sag noticeably, so after-market suspension might be necessary on a 4x4 towing wagon. Utes should be fine.

Smaller Kimberley Kamper models have lower towball weights, so that's another buying option for those seeking Kimberley quality.

The braking system worked well and we particularly liked the zero-effort electro/hydraulic handbrake. Kimberley Kamper quality is excellent and the Platinum shows off the company's innovative ideas.



