

CAMPER TRAILER T VAN TANAMI

During our 2010 Camper Trailer Torture Test the T Van Tanami proved to be one of the best-designed units in the convoy. It scored particularly well for ease of setup and its need for minimal site area.

The T Van was the only hard-roof camper trailer in this test and was judged the best for short overnight stops, with no need to open the tent section at all. The outer section of the tailgate doubles as an easily packed firewood rack and becomes the tent floor when hinged down to ground level.

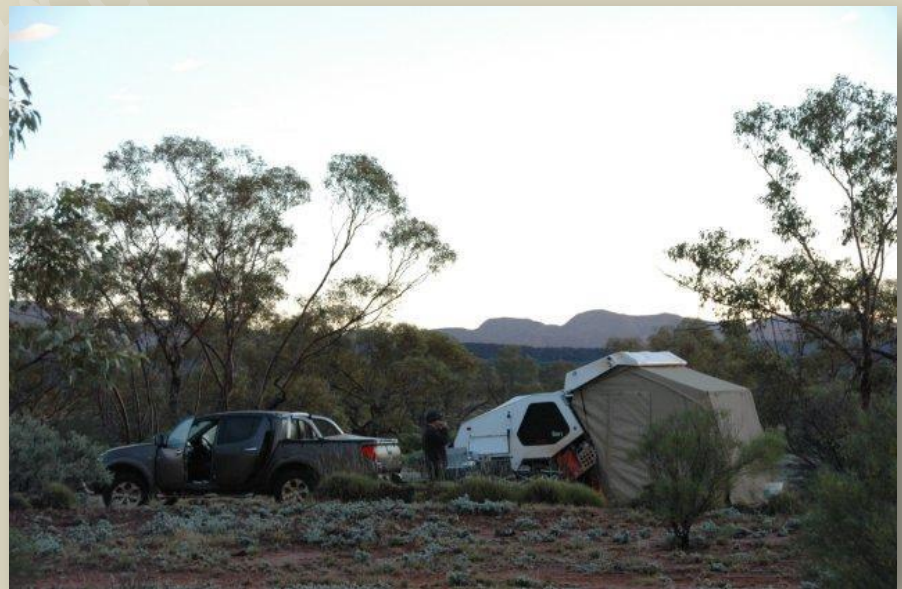
This hard floor makes site preparation unnecessary and height-adjustable legs compensate for uneven ground.

The inner lid opens upwards and, normally, the tent section is then unfolded from the under-side of the lid.

However, for overnight stops it's possible to leave the tent stowed and either shut the lid for privacy, or zip in a mesh flyscreen to keep out the creepy-crawlies.

A clear roof hatch provides ventilation over the bed, even with the rear lid shut.

For tented camps the canvas section unrolls from the lift-up rear door and is reasonably easy for a couple to erect and pack away. The tent emerges from under the lid and is clipped to the hard floor section, which makes a sheltered dining area or space for kids to sleep. Zip-up doors on both sides of the tent provide flow-through ventilation.





Long-stay mode involves fitting the standard awning and end wall. If you really want to stake a land claim you can buy optional annexe walls. Fitting the awning isn't difficult, but is made easier if you have a small folding stool or mini-step-ladder. Like most camper trailer awnings it's held up by poles and pegs, so you need to be on reasonably soft ground.

The T Van tent-stowing arrangement means there's no chance of a wet tent soaking the bed, because it's safely stowed inside its storage net on the underside of the lid. Our testers loved the bed comfort and the night-time view of stars through the roof hatch. Getting in and out of the sack was a little tricky, but the payoff was excellent under-bed storage space.



The T Van has a roll-out galley with two-burner stove. The test trailer came with a deep-cycle battery, but without an optional floor-mounted fridge. Our test crew used an in-vehicle fridge.

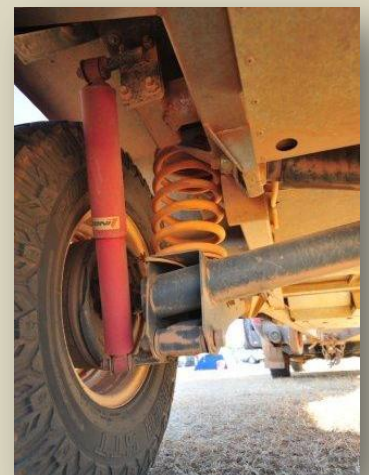


The Tanami came with electric pressure pump over the sink and an additional manual pump on the side of the body. The latter was ideal for a quick hand wash after packing up and for topping water bottles without the need to open the galley.

The standard water tank holds 70 litres and a second tank is optional. The only kitchen change the testers wanted to make was a clip-on stove frame, rather than the screw-on attachment, to make cleaning quicker and easier.

The T Van Tanami sits on Track Trailer's, military-design, cross-over swing-axle, independent suspension, with coil springs and top-quality Koni dampers. Unlike many independent trailer suspensions this asymmetric link design has optimum roll-over resistance and even high-speed manoeuvres failed to provoke any sway in the trailer. The wheel ends were fitted with electric, off-road drum brakes.

With a loaded axle weight of 1.1 tonnes the T Van was the second lightest camper on test, but, with three full jerry cans located on the drawbar, had a heavy ball weight of 132kg.





It was towed by a Mitsubishi Triton and that amount of weight on the towbar gave the standard-suspension Triton a rearward droop. Moving the uncoupled T Van around on its jockey wheel was a literal pain, unless the jerry cans were removed.

Track Trailer makes the Sport model, without a jerry-can storage rack and a longer drawbar, with a claimed ball weight of only 60kg. Given the T Van's super-stable suspension design, that should be enough.

T Vans come with a DO35 mechanical coupling that we found easier to connect than the poly blocks used on all the other trailers, but we had trouble every time we tried to uncouple it.

Our test conditions involved a sequence of soaking rain, mud spray, creek crossings and bulldust and the DO35 didn't like any of them. The coupling jammed in place and needed the persuasion of 'The Murray' (a 110kg crew member) whenever we had to separate trailer from vehicle.

We read the coupling instructions carefully and followed them to the letter. We also performed several cleaning and greasing operations on the coupling to no avail.



The T Van proved to be a true go-almost-anywhere camper trailer that was stable to tow in all conditions, quick to set up and very easy to live in and around. If we bought one we'd opt for no jerry can stowage on the drawbar and a different coupling.

Track Trailer Upgrades the Tvan Range

OTA spoke with Lloyd Waldron, Track Trailer's Marketing & Media Manager about the company's 2011 products.

"The Tvan range has been fully refreshed this year," said Lloyd Waldron.

"This time last year we released our new-bodied Tvan that has 23 percent more interior space and more external storage options.

"This body was exclusively released in our top-model Murraraji and featured upgraded construction that was all-metal and off road rated.

“For this year, we have upgraded the Canning model with this new body, giving it more space, refinements and a different colour scheme, so it’s the new release for 2011”

Track Trailer has also rejigged its entry level van that was previously known as the Sport and is now tagged Yulara. It comes with more standard equipment, including a stainless bench and cook top that were options on the Sport. The Yulara also comes with LED lights and a fabric lined roof. The price has risen slightly to \$34,900, but the ball weight has dropped to a more flexible 63kg. With this low ball weight and a tare of only 800kg, virtually any vehicle can tow it.

“As with other Tvans the Yulara can be retrofitted with any item from the options list,” said Lloyd Waldron.

“So this van can evolve with its owners’ needs for coping with changes such as a growing family, downsizing, wanting to go more off road or simply wanting more comfort.

“Because of durable construction and this reto-fitability, Tvans hold their value well in the second hand market.”

Our off-road testing of Tvans has shown that they handle Australian conditions superbly, but we’ve had dramas with the company’s preferred coupling, the Vehicle Components DO-35. We’ve had couplings that simply refused to separate, without considerable effort, despite regular greasing in accordance with the maker’s instructions. Dirt and creek water combined to ‘glue’ the locking mechanism to the pin.

Lloyd Waldron acknowledges that the early D035s did have some ‘sticking points’, but that the latest versions have overcome these issues:

“Vehicle Components has refined it, to make it easier to unhitch after exposure to dust and dirt.

“It’s the best coupling we’ve ever had off-road and addresses all our customers’ wants, being extremely easy to hook up, having full articulation and rotation, and rated to 3.5 tonnes capacity.

“Customers can request different couplings, if they wish, but we don’t believe there is a better alternative,” said Lloyd Waldron

