

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY CLAIRE WILSON

# Into the fold

It's a folding camper trailer, but not as you know it

**A**ustralia has long been a heartland for the camper trailer. It is a form of RV that many intrepid travellers believe is perfectly suited to the rough roads that traverse our seemingly endless expanse of flat, dry and rocky country. Camper trailers offer a balance between mobility and comfort, with more space and amenities than a tent, while being able to get you further off the beaten track than your average caravan due to their smaller size and weight.

Now, from a land of small distances, rolling hills and muddy fields, an English immigrant has arrived on Australian shores, one that is unlike anything this caravanning journalist has seen before. When on the move, it looks like a normal hard floor camper, but set it up and it unfurls like an insect emerging from a chrysalis, with a generous canvas tent housing two double beds, a large lounge (that can also act as a third bed) and an internal kitchen – specs you normally only find in a caravan.

Designed by Jonathan Harrison, CEO of UK company Purple Line, the Opus certainly lives up to the company ethos to “design, innovate and improve”.

I picked one up from the Purple Line warehouse in Braeside, Victoria, to take it down to the Otways for a weekend of testing. Jason Dodd, Purple Line Australia's Operations Manager, explained how the young camper trailer is being constantly improved:

“The factory in China custom-makes the Opus exactly to our specifications, which means we can constantly refine or amend any design issues that we, or our customers, notice.”

The body of the Opus is exported from the factory across four continents to the UK, South Africa, America and Australia. It is then locally mounted onto a chassis and running gear, which in Australia sees the model we had, the Ready to Roll, fitted with a hot-dipped galvanised chassis, 100x50mm extended drawbar, 10-inch electric off-road brakes, and AL-KO's off-road hitch, seven-leaf suspension, drop down stabiliser legs and swing down jockey wheel.

The hard top on the Opus folds out like a barn door, with both the front half and the back half housing a double bed. Gas struts assist with folding these beds out and, although I managed to do it by myself, they are quite heavy, making it a job better carried out by two people.

Once folded out, each side requires two additional support struts to help the hinge support the weight of a sleeping couple. It is an unfortunate design issue that at the front end of the trailer these supports prevent access to the huge storage container that

sits on the drawbar. I would like to see this improved in future models.

The tent on the Opus is the uniquely defining feature of this trailer, taking its inspiration from old-fashioned perambulators. It has three struts that concertina from the bed at either end, supporting a mass of canvas, helped by an additional vertical strut in the centre.

Setting the tent up involves climbing through the small door and extending these seven support struts. It is then secured to the exterior of the camper body with the elastic that is threaded through its hem. As usual with this amount of canvas, setting up is a process that takes some time, but the payoff is that you get plenty of head space inside the camper. There are also some sections around the hinges of the beds where the tent is held securely to the body of the camper by the elastic, but it isn't technically an insect or wind-proof seal.

Once the tent is erected there is still a fair amount of work to be done to get the interior of the camper set up. The kitchen travels on the floor and both the sink and two-burner stove must be lifted up and locked into place. The gas and water then need to be connected. The upside to having to build the kitchen is that the bench height is much higher than is usual in a pop-top camper trailer.

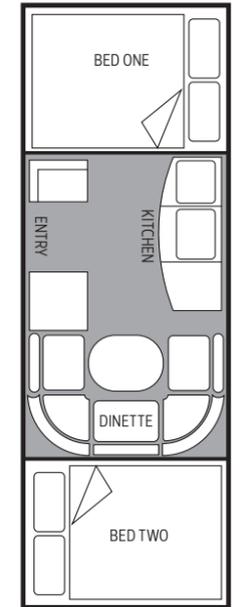
Finally, the lounge must be assembled – the backs of the chairs are secured using Velcro and the table leg needs to be fetched from the storage underneath the lounge, inserted into the tabletop and secured in the floor. The white fabric of the lounge, with its red piping, is attractive and it is big enough to seat four people in comfort.

The justification for this extended setup is that, when travelling, the Opus is remarkably compact. You can barely see it in your rear-view or side mirrors. Having to disassemble the kitchen and lounge keeps the height of the camper to 1300mm (excluding roof racks or suspension lifts), a height at which you can easily see over the camper to the road behind you. And, at 2000mm wide, it is only marginally wider than the Mitsubishi Pajero I was using as a tow vehicle, which was a slim 1875mm.

There is a double bed at either end of the camper trailer, and the lounge can be reconfigured to form a third double bed. This volume of sleeping space is only possible because the beds run from side-to-side of the camper trailer, rather than along the length, as is generally standard. There is an unfortunate drawback to this configuration, which is that the beds are 1900mm in length, much less than the standard 2030mm. I am 172cm tall and found that throughout the night my feet regularly touched the struts supporting the



**MR HARRISON'S OPUS**  
(1) Secured via Velcro, the white lounge has a stylish red trim and can be configured into another double bed. (2) The kitchen bench and cook top thankfully sit higher than on your average camper trailer. (3) And you'll wonder how the whole thing fits into such a compact trailer.



**OPUS READY TO ROLL**

**VERDICT**

- + Compact accommodation for six people
- Fiddly set-up and pack-down
- = A unique newcomer to the camper trailer market

**FAST FACTS**

- MAKE: Purple Line
- MODEL: Opus
- INTERNAL HEIGHT: 2280mm
- OPEN LENGTH: 5750mm
- TRAVEL LENGTH: 4900mm
- WIDTH: 2000mm
- HEIGHT: 1300mm
- BERTH: Six
- TARE: 900kg
- ATM: 1450kg
- TOW BALL WEIGHT: 90kg
- WARRANTY: 12 months
- RRP: \$24,490 plus on roads
- CONTACT: Purple Line P/L, 246A Governor Rd Braeside, Vic 3195, 03 9588 2959
- OPUSCAMPER.COM.AU

It almost beggars belief that this camper trailer can sleep up to six people, while also providing an indoor kitchen

tent. I think anyone taller than me would need to sleep diagonally or bend their legs to stop this being an issue.

To reach the bed at the back of the camper trailer requires climbing over the lounge, a pretty standard compromise in a camper, but one that could be an issue given the lounge's white fabric and the possibility that someone may already be asleep there.

A unique feature of the main beds that I liked was that both of them have an individual privacy pod, which clips onto the tent struts and zips up to completely enclose the occupants. I have never seen these before in a camper trailer, but I can certainly appreciate the added privacy they afford.

The Ready to Roll model of the Opus, as tested, comes with almost everything you need to take a comfortable and extended trip in the bush. This includes a 59-litre water tank with an electric pump, 9kg gas bottle, and an electrical system that boasts a 110Ah battery and charger, LED lights embedded in the cabinetry, and storage in the kitchen, underneath the lounge, and in the large box on the drawbar. The notable exception is a fridge.

It almost beggars belief to be told that this compact camper trailer can sleep up to six people, while also providing an indoor kitchen. Most trailers that are designed to accommodate only two people and have outdoor kitchens that only provide weather protection once the awning is erected.

It is the innovative design of the tent that allows the Opus to boast this number of berths, slim travelling profile and indoor kitchen. However, it is unsurprising that with such a unique design the Opus has some rough edges that need refining. With Purple Line being committed to a continual process of improvement, I look forward to seeing them smoothed out. **ACHRV**

