

CaravanWorld's Strictly camper trailers – all you need to know



# CAMPER TRAILER

## Guide

\$5.95 incl GST

## CAMPERS DO IT IN STYLE!

Kimberley Kampers' Platinum has the lot



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# Aussie Teardrop

Words and pics by Michael Smith



**If you want to tow something really small, this unit may fit the bill.**

**M**y first question when I was given this little assignment was "What's a Teardrop camper?" When I met up with Reiner Gudd, proprietor of Aussie Teardrop Campers, it didn't take him long at all to cheerfully explain all the finer details, including two very interesting facts.

The first was that Teardrop campers have actually been around for a long time – since about 1939 to be precise. The second was that Teardrop Campers had their origins in the USA – thus proving the exception to the rule that everything that comes out of the US has to be bigger than anything else! Although the first designs for the

Teardrop Camper first appeared in 1939, it wasn't until 1945 that production on a reasonable scale started. Even then it was only with whatever postwar surplus material was available.

Teardrop campers take their name from their streamlined shape. Because of their very light weight (300kg), Teardrop campers can be towed by just about anything and that is how Reiner Gudd came to build his first one.

Reiner owns a trike – a three-wheeled motorcycle, enjoys road touring a great deal and is happy to camp. However, he was less enthusiastic about a tent or anything with canvas and wanted something with solid walls. The trike limited what could be towed but Reiner finally discovered Teardrop campers in production again in the USA.

"All we wanted was something where you sleep dry and warm," he said. "I know some people reckon they need to stand up to get dressed, but I can still

put some pants on lying down and we camp mostly in parks with showers and toilets where I can grab my backpack and get changed in comfort."

To build something was no problem because for the last 15 years, Reiner had been repairing and building caravans. So once he had a design to work from, his personal Teardrop was soon being built.

From then it was a story familiar to many small RV builders. According to Reiner, "While we were building our very first Teardrop, friends started to get interested and more and more people wanted to know how much it was and what it would look like".

It didn't take long for production to begin on a larger scale. After Reiner produced several of his onroad Teardrops, requests also came in for an offroad version and that is now available as well.

Teardrop campers, in a nutshell, are a mobile bed that can be fitted out with



**Above:** Reiner Gudd demonstrates the Teardrop. **Right:** Rear boot contains shelves and storage bins.

**Below right:** All the comforts of home.

**Below:** A very simple drawbar, pictured with esky.



a small kitchenette and a few other comforts of civilisation. With an overall length (including drawbar) of 12ft 6in (3.8m), and overall width (including mudguards) of 5ft 11in (1.8m) and an overall height of 4ft 11in (1.5m), the Teardrop is a very easy towing proposition indeed.

### GO RETRO

Reiner Gudd calls his Teardrop camper the Belmont and from the outside it is not unlike an older style bondwood caravan – just a little smaller. Teardrop campers are built on a 2in x 1in (50mm x 25mm) steel chassis, that is

galvanised and powder-coated. That includes the corner stabilisers and the rear bumper bar. Simple leaf spring suspension is used and the wheel size is a relatively small 13in. In the wheel department you get a choice of powder-coated “retro look” wheels or optional mags.

This is a very simple drawbar, with just a conventional ball coupling, jockey wheel and maybe the optional esky! We’re not sure what the ball weight is, but it’s quite easy to lift with one hand.

Sheet hardwood is used for the floor and the internal walls of the Teardrop

# Aussie Teardrop



are made from 15mm external plywood. The most popular material for the external finish is stucco aluminium but 2mm fibreglass sheeting is also available. All the internal framework and cabinetwork is made from Tasmanian Oak.

## AIRY INTERIOR

The standard Belmont has a door with sliding window on the nearside and just a sliding window on the offside. However, it is also possible to get doors on both sides or the optional 'Euro' doors that come complete with security screens.

Further ventilation is available via the wind-up roof hatch or if you really want the full flow-through effect, you can lift the boot lid and open the internal 'locker' doors! A small clip-on table fits on the nearside above the wheel mudguard. All the fittings are either stainless steel or aluminium.

The small round tail lights have that Austin 'Frogeye' Sprite look about them.

Since the Belmont Teardrop is really just a mobile bedroom, we should

## GOOD POINTS:

Small, lightweight and with a kitschy, almost retro feel to it

## NOT SO GOOD:

Some may not be able to stand the Teardrop's simplicity and size

These vans may not be tall, but they are certainly easy to move around.

mention that the foam mattress, which occupies most of the floor area, measures 6ft 2in x 4ft (1.9m x 1.2m).

## Lightweight camping but with a bit of style and panache

Taller people can be accommodated but the two rear storage lockers must be removed to give another 6in of length.

There are a few comforts in the 'bedroom', like the internal blinds on both door/windows, halogen reading lights, AM/FM CD player, storage net on one side and folding shelf on the other. On the options list are the 12V fan and the DVD player with small flat screen.

Opening the rear 'boot' lid reveals a small storage area. You are going to have to travel fairly lightly with this set up but with a couple of shelves and a couple of storage bins, it will fit a small camping stove, cooking and eating utensils plus personal gear.

Occupying one of the storage bins is a 12V battery. A plug in 12V fluorescent light supplies the illumination at night.

## SUMMING UP

These little Teardrop campers are not going to be for everyone. However, there is also no doubt that they offer some interesting possibilities for owners of trikes, small 2WD sedans and small 4WDs – sadly not conventional motorcycles, though.

With the Belmont you are going to be able to carry only a minimal amount of gear with you, but that's the point really – this is lightweight camping, but done with a bit of style and panache.

The Aussie Teardrop is well designed, and has been built using all quality fittings that results in a very attractive little unit.

At present Reiner is staying with the practice of building just one size and model, although there is quite a lengthy list of options that can be fitted.

If you are interested in the Aussie Teardrop, then make sure you look at Reiner Gudd's very informative website – It not only gives an interesting history of the Teardrop but some fine detailed construction pics and information about the many options that can be fitted to this little Aussie ripper.



## Aussie Teardrop Belmont

### Manufacturer

Aussie Teardrop Campers

### Model

Belmont

### Advised Tare weight

300kg

### Advised ATM

750kg

### Advised ball weight

35kg

### Price

\$8750

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