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WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN ROOTH

CHUCKING A TEARY

So different it'll make you cry...



If there are two problems with traditional camper trailers, it's the 'set up and peg in' that stops you from pulling over for a snooze next to the road, and the fact that they can be loaded to the hilt. By the time you've added the generator, the water bed, the six-piece string orchestra and four pallets of tinned potatoes, you're wondering if you'll need a supercharged V8 to pull it over the sand hills!

Meet the answer, at least as far as couples go. Aussie Teardrops were developed by Reiner Gudd, a bloke I first met when we were both escorting groups of trail bike enthusiasts through the outback. An avid bike rider, off-roader and adventurer, Reiner trained as an electrician back in Germany before falling in love with Australia over three decades ago. He worked in many industries over here and picked up a lot of skills before finally settling down to build caravans and off-road trailers.

The first Teardrop he made was for himself, and he designed it to look good – and be practical – towed behind his Volkswagen power trike. That meant keeping the weight right down (his smallest Teardrops weigh in at 320kg all up) while going for the

lovely 1930s look for some style. Being Reiner, it had to be practical and strong – you get that when a trike trip across the Tanami is your idea of a holiday!

It wasn't long before people were asking him to build Teardrops for them and Reiner had a business on his hands again. But the four-wheel driver in him kept thinking 'off-road', and so the Adventuretear – BigFoot model – was born.

With a super-strong chassis, spring-over axle and 15in off-road wheels and tyres, this Teardrop can be towed almost anywhere. Its huge advantage over conventional caravans is light weight. At a full esky over half a tonne, it weighs about the same as a garden trailer full of lawn clippings, and that means it can be towed by the smallest motors without them noticing it.

Yep, here at last is the perfect camper for the Vitara, Scat, or whatever weapon of choice you've got. In fact, when I first towed one home behind my brother's Sierra, the thing I noticed most was how the extra length of the trailer actually 'flattened out' the little Suzi's short wheelbase tendency to hop around like a rabbit on Viagra. Put one behind an 80 Series or something and you need to keep looking in the mirror to



A huge icebox and two 4.5kg LPG bottles are standard equipment, but no doubt you could opt for a fridge if the mood took you. I used the truck fridge and kept the esky full of ice – and refreshments! Note the 100x50mm A-frame – overkill engineering at this weight!



The Adventuretear is the 'heavy off-road' model in Aussie Teardrop's range, if you can call anything that weighs 560kg 'heavy', and with 15in eight-ply tyres and 'spring over' leaf packs it has all the ground clearance you need for anything short of severe off-road conditions



Electrics are very simple and easy to monitor too. The battery is charged by a smart charger that can be switched to power mode if you're hooked to shore power. It'll run for days powering the lights and stereo, and there's no doubt about when you'll need to charge it either.



Teardrops have been around since the 1930s, when they were first made popular by car tourers looking for something more substantial than a tent. The shape gives them the name, but it also gives them superb aerodynamics to make towing a breeze

"Bigfoot" Deluxe



Strong chassis and frame match the simple leaf pack suspension, and the 60L water tank is well placed for overall balance without affecting the ball weight. It could use shock absorbers to dampen the bounces caused by sudden potholes, because with a 1000kg hitch a roll is always possible



Unless your travelling mates are tiny, this is definitely a two-bed stand! There's enough room for basic clobber to be stowed inside, access is easy, and with flyscreened security doors on either side and roof hatch the ventilation options are superb. Err, that's BigFoot, not BigFart...

make sure it's still there!

Then there's the sheer convenience of being able to pull it around the backyard with one hand, hook it up without spilling your beer, and hop in the back in truck stops for a few hours sleep without looking like you're camping. Sure, you might want to erect a big plastic annexe for longer stays or if there's a storm brewing over the kitchen, but for those of us who prefer life outdoors to really mean that, the Adventuretear is magnificent!

Problems? The spring rate in our test trailer, the first of the new off-roaders, was too hard for the weight we were packing – an overnight bag and a couple of sandwiches, oh, and a full esky of course... – and it bounced pretty high on a couple of potholes and a log.

Anyone familiar with springs knows that the lighter a vehicle is, the more critical it is to match the spring rates to load.

Another hundred kilos or so of luggage and a full tank of water would have sorted it, but I'd be adding shock absorbers too for added security. On road it wasn't noticeable. In fact, it wasn't noticeable at all. Towing a Teardrop means your truck pretty much does everything it does solo – from chewing fuel to turning tight circles. Absolutely lovely!

There's an awful lot of travelling pleasure in this simple little package, and while my three kids means we won't be buying one just yet, I reckon the real question is how do you justify towing much more? It's stronger than any caravan through shape and dimensions alone, but anything with windows and drawers is going to hate corrugated roads. That aside, I know why I haven't seen my mate Reiner much lately.

He's too busy building more Teardrops! ■

AUSSIE TEARDROP AT A GLANCE

- MODEL:** Adventuretear (Teardrop Camper)
- COST:** \$26,000 base model
- HARD/SOFT FLOOR:** Hard floor (plywood/fibreglass body)
- DIMENSIONS (LXWXH):** Body 2.7m long, 1.5m wide, 1.2m tall
- TARE WEIGHT:** 530kg
- AGGREGATE WEIGHT:** 740kg (no brakes)
- TOWBALL DOWNLOAD:** 50 to 70kg
- COUPLING:** Tregg
- SUSPENSION:** Axle and springs or AL-KO rubber torsion bar independent
- CHASSIS:** 100mm x 50mm main and 50mm x 25mm sub
- WHEELS:** Six-stud off-road
- TYRES:** Off-road 14in
- BRAKES:** None standard (optional electric)
- TENT CONSTRUCTION:** None (Annexe available but not standard)
- INTERIOR ACCESSORIES:** Stereo CD radio and speakers, 12V power point and lights, three-burner gas cooker, sink, 12V water pump, 65L water tank
- EXTERIOR ACCESSORIES:** Evakool 60L Esky, two 4.5kg gas bottles
- ELECTRICAL:** 12V only
- OPTIONAL EXTRAS:** Anderson leads, dry cell battery, smart charger



The simple but very effective kitchen has plenty of storage drawers and is easy to clean. Because access is through the rear hatch, it's dead easy to pull over for a quick bite and a cuppa, and the lid provides some protection from light rain too. Gas struts complete a lovely picture

CONTACTS

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