

THE LONG TRAK

What's the result of nearly 50 years of motorhome building experience?

Words and pics Brendan Batty

Of all the caravan and motorhome manufacturers in Australia right now, the small, family-owned Trakka, tucked away in far north of Sydney's furthest reaches, is the fourth oldest. Even more significantly, the three companies older are no longer still owned by their founders (although two are still in the same family). But if you drop into Trakka, you'll very likely find Dave Berry still ready to show you around a couple of motorhomes and campers, just like he's been doing for 46 years. Either he was still in high school when he built his first one, or building motorhomes fights the seven signs of ageing, because he doesn't look old enough to have been in business that long.

Except it's hard to imagine that many people with less experience could build a motorhome quite as succinctly as Trakka do, and the updated Trakkaway 700 is arguably the best 23-foot coach-built motorhome on the market at the moment – a comment I don't make lightly.

The Trakkaway is based on the Italian-built Fiat Ducato, a front-wheel drive light commercial cab, which is one of the most versatile motorhome-bases on the market, because Fiat sell it in so many variations that it reduces the amount of preparation builders like Trakka have to do to fit the home part to the motor bit. In the case of the Trakkaway, the Fiat cab is paired with an AL-KO AMC motorhome chassis, that even Fiat agrees is an upgrade.

It's pulled along by a 130kW, 2.3-litre, four-cylinder turbo-diesel and paired to a robotised, six-speed manual gear box, which will change the gears for you, if you want (there's no clutch pedal, either). The Fiat's been around in this configuration for nearly 10 years, and although it's had updates to the engine, transmission, looks and features, it's getting a little long in the tooth, compared to vehicles like the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter and Iveco Daily.

Some might call it a little





Either he was still in high school when he built his first one, or building motorhomes fights the seven signs of ageing, because he doesn't look old enough to have been in business that long

THE BASICS
TRAKKA TRAKKAWAY 700



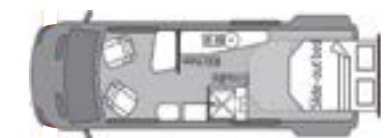
CHASSIS

Vehicle – Fiat Ducato
Engine – 3.0-litre, turbo diesel
Transmission – 6-speed robotised manual
Power – 130kW
Torque – 400Nm
Fuel Economy – Around 11.9L/100km



DIMENSIONS AND WEIGHTS

Length – 6990mm
Width – 2400mm
Height – 2900mm
Tare Weight – 3590kg
GVM – 4490kg
Towing – 1500kg



CAPACITIES

Water – 165L
Grey Water – 135L
Fridge – 136L and 50L
Battery – 2 x 100ah AGM (1x200ah lithium as tested)
Fuel – 120L



WARRANTY

Three years-



PRICE

From \$185,000. As tested \$193,200



CONTACT

Trakka Australia
trakka.com.au



underpowered (me – I would), while others might criticize the automated gear box as it struggles to find the right gear when its put under load up a hill (also me), but in most scenarios, it chugs along nicely, doesn't use much fuel and is mostly quiet and comfortable to drive. And you can just flick it to manual mode up hills.

Increasingly, as I drive other motorhomes based on other, fresher, vehicles, I find the driving position a little bus-like, though – the steering wheel is flatter than we're used to in normal

vehicles, and although the steering column is telescopic, I always find it hard to get the balance between my legs and arms at a comfortable distance from pedals and wheel. Considering motorhomes are best enjoyed at camp, rather than on highways, it's only an inconvenience about two percent of the time, I suppose.

It's the work Trakka's done behind the front seats that is the real strength of this motorhome, though. This is an exceptionally detailed RV that has gone from strength to strength since I first

reviewed the model back in 2012.

Once you're parked up for the night (or the week, or whatever), the two front seats can be swivelled so they face back into the motorhome. Although Trakka fits a second row of seats (which has seat belts and ISOFIX anchor points for children's boosters), the swivelled seats are the best in the house – because they recline, have lumbar support and armrests. In between the seats is a neat little fold-up coffee table, although a large, fully adjustable table is stored up the back, and can

slot in to eat dinner at. In either seat, there's power points close at hand, and somewhere to put your tea and bickies. The second row seats are handy if you're having guests over for a meal, or travelling with grandkids, but they'll never be your first choice of seating if you just want to relax.

The kitchen is one of the cleverest spaces in the Trakkaway, and even though it's not a large space, all of it is well used. Under the bench there are six drawers of varying sizes, all with soft-close slides, and one with a built

in divider for cutlery. Because of the narrow space, the drawers make more sense than cupboards, because it's easier to get things from the bottom of them.

Pride of place in the bench is a Webasto diesel cooktop, which Trakka fits because it runs on the same fuel as the engine (literally – they're plumbed to the same tank), which means no need to worry about filling up gas bottles. There's also no exposed flame, and the Ceran glass surface is hardy and easy to clean. Unlike gas, which is an

instant heat source, the Webasto is a bit more ponderous, and takes some getting used to – but the more I use them, the more I like their simplicity. It also means no grill or oven, but a Weber will fit easily in the rear boot. Still, not everyone will be able to stomach the cooker and I'd hazard a guess that it's the one point that becomes a stumbling block for potential buyers.

Under the counter is a 136-litre compressor fridge, because the motorhome has no gas on board, but does have 200Ah of battery capacity (in either AGM or lithium), and at least 240 watts of solar on the roof. Some might criticize the fridge as being small, but were it any bigger, it would sit higher than the bench, and there goes that usable space. Like everything else in the vehicle, it's been chosen because it's the ideal fit.

What I really like about the kitchen is its level of organisation. One of the overheads is built to fit the included crockery, while to overcome a lack of bench space, there's an adjustable little shelf that's perfect for sitting your ingredients on as you cook. When I look back at the first Trakkaway in 2012, I see some of these ideas developing, but now they've been near perfected.

The rear bed is another that's evolved over time. Since the beginning, it's been a slide out section that extends 500mm rearwards, keeping the motorhome short on the road, but spacious at camp. It's still that, but the access around it has improved, and so too the lighting and access to conveniences, like power. It's a very comfortable space, with inner spring mattress, dimmable lighting and ducted air con and diesel heating all the way around it. There's also a privacy screen, so you can divide the bed from the rest of the motorhome and shut out all the light if you like napping during the day.

The ensuite is opposite the kitchen, in the middle of the motorhome. It's not a large space, but what's available is well used. The basin and shower share the same faucet, for instance, and cleverly, the toilet slides out from under the counter, freeing up space to shower in. This is about the only area that hasn't significantly changed since 2012, but Trakka has just updated it in the new Jabiru, so I'm hopeful those changes will make it here, as they further improve what's already a great space.



Talking space, outside is just as good as in. With the upgrade to an Alfresco Pack, Trakka fits an external kitchenette forward of the entry door and under the electric awning (how good are electric awnings, by the way!). It's got a second 50-litre Dometic fridge, which is perfect for storing drinks and cheese, plus a little basin and plumbed with hot and cold water and an extra solar panel, to help keep the fridge ticking over. The basin's tap can also be used as an outdoor shower to rinse down with after swims, or clean pets. Trakka also supplies a clip-in picnic table that's far better than the generic ones you find on most caravans.

The motorhome is also well serviced – it's fitted with a 165-litre fresh water tank and 135-litre grey. The grey water tank has an electronic emptying valve, too, so you don't have to crawl under the vehicle to open it. There are two 100ah AGM batteries standard, although this one, tested, has a single 200ah lithium battery in it, plus a 1600W inverter which will run the microwave

or a coffee machine. The air con and heating is ducted and everything that could be remote controlled is remote controlled – including the rear slide out section (great if you forget to slide it in before moving off – the dongle is on your keys)

And I can't finish without commenting on the interior design – the whole motorhome is a symphony of curves, stunningly matched colours and fine details. No one does motorhome interiors as well as Trakka.

I would contend that there's no real competition for the Trakka Trakkaway 700 – it's a motorhome without peer. Partly because it fills a niche that few other manufacturers deal in, but mostly because no other builder goes to the same level of detail or sophistication in coach-built motorhomes. The Trakkaway is a premium, high-luxury product, and you pay for that, but in all that luxury, Trakka hasn't forgotten that convenience or useability are even more important, and that's what really sets it apart. 