



# Firm Favourite

The Eco-Tourer continues to win admirers with its economical approach to travelling.

**T**he Eco-Tourer is a perfect combination of a caravan and a low-tow camper, incorporating the advantages and features of both in one unit. It's a variation of the ubiquitous pop-top, and satisfies the desire of many travellers for low-profile, economical towing as well as a comfortable and stylish interior, convenient access and security.

The Eco-Tourer is the brainchild of the team at Caravan Court in Springvale, Melbourne, and was originally manufactured in Australia. Over the past 18 months, the Eco-Tourer team has been working with a manufacturing company in China, where the units are now assembled before being shipped back to Australia.

According to Eco-Tourer's Mike Hawkins, the units are built to ISO 9002

quality assurance standards and are as 'Australian-made' as possible. "We were careful to use parts that are readily available in Australia, like Camec windows and Dometic appliances," says Mike. "That way if they ever need servicing there are dealers around the country that can take care of it."

A few changes have been made to the original design, one being an attractive new varnished timber finish for the cupboards and storage areas. Some options have now become standard, like the hot dipped galvanised chassis, fold-up drawbar and Pioneer radio/CD player. The waiting lists were over six months for a model manufactured in Australia; even though demand is increasing, the company hopes its new arrangements will shorten the queue.

#### WE HAVE LIFT-UP

It took the Eco-Tourer design and engineering team years of research, development and trial and error to achieve its innovative lift-up design; the cornerstone of the Eco-Tourer's appeal. All the action happens at the front of the van. The one-piece fibreglass roof and

the insulated walls lift up with the help of a jack winding handle or cordless electric drill. The operation takes less than 30 seconds and is helped along the way by two spring-loaded jacks linked to the side walls and the roof.

Once the front end is fully erect, lock in the front window/wall (which is sealed to prevent water running into the van), open the van and enter.

When in touring mode, the van is very streamlined and aerodynamic. Owners have reported a 30 per cent improvement in fuel economy. (This only applies to similar-sized caravans and pop-tops, not small camper trailers.) When erected, the Eco-Tourer offers an abundance of space and light, making travelling a much more comfortable – and thrifty – experience.

#### INSIDE OUT

The Eco-Tourer's chassis is custom designed with a slightly up-angled tail to avoid scraping the gutter. A wide-tracked axle improves stability and offers safer towing, while the cutaway rear underside of the van improves ground clearance. Leaf spring suspension with a



**Top and left:** Mike Hawkins demonstrates the Eco-Tourer's innovative 'lift-up' design. **Below:** One of the seven acrylic Galaxy windows that allow ventilation to the van. **Left below:** New timber cabinetry and Formica laminate surfaces are stylish and easy to clean.



solid beam axle is fitted as standard.

The body is made from moulded sandwich fibreglass, with a double-skin construction for the roof. The walls feature two layers of fibreglass bonded with a centre of 15mm foam polyurethane for extra strength and insulation against both hot and cold weather conditions. It's high-impact resistant as well, making it durable and a safe van to tow. Aesthetically, the Eco-Tourer is curvaceous, sleek and ultra-modern.

Storing the Eco-Tourer when it's not in use or when camping is made all the more flexible, thanks to the fold-up drawbar. "Eco-Tourer is the perfect size to fit in a standard garage. Fully tested and certified, the drawbar was designed with the aid of a transport engineer in Australia," Mike explained.

According to Mike, "The one-piece fibreglass roof is totally weather-proof."

Between the lift-up lid and the lower section are rubber flanges which meet to seal and repel dust and moisture while travelling. All folding sections are firmly sealed so the unit can be closed up even in heavy rain conditions without fear of finding mouldy patches a few weeks down the track.

When fully erected, seven Galaxy acrylic wind-out windows with insect screens allow fresh air and natural light inside. The panoramic window at the front of the van is like a virtual feature wall – ideal for facing a magnificent view. Two 4kg gas bottles are fitted in a neat storage compartment on the offside of the van, and there is plenty of storage in the large front boot.

There are two standard layouts for the Eco-Tourer – two single beds with a wardrobe in the middle or one island double bed with side wardrobes. In either configuration, the bed is at the rear where headroom is at its lowest point. It makes sense and is hardly noticeable – not even the extra-tall will bump their heads when sitting upright!

Once fully erected, there's plenty of room to walk around, lounge about and relax in the stylish interior. At the front is a folding table buffeted on the nearside and offside by two comfortable lounges. These offer the perfect position to admire the view through the front panoramic window.

The mid station kitchen comes with a 90 litre, three-way Dometic refrigerator and three-burner stove with rangehood and sink on the offside, with the microwave underneath the L-shaped bench on the nearside. It's an unusual kitchen design, but works well in the Eco-Tourer.

There's no shortage of cupboard space for kitchen and travelling essentials,



**Top:** Touring in streamlined style. **Above:** Plenty of cupboard space. **Above left:** Two 4kg gas bottles in an offside locker. **Left:** LCD TV and DVD are options.

with a pantry cupboard, pot drawer and multiple overhead cupboards. The Formica laminate furniture and benchtop surfaces are easy to clean.

Lighting is 12V and there are plentiful halogen lights, with an outside light for Happy Hour with fellow campers.

An option on the Eco-Tourer is the DVD player and LCD TV. Other optional extras include a rollout awning with walls and windows, Heron 2.2 air-conditioner, battery system, solar panels and a hot water system with an outside shower.

#### FUEL EFFICIENT

Towing the Eco-Tourer is an economical affair. The van's low profile means it is barely affected by side winds and is

manoeuvrable. Its aerodynamic shape has been designed to significantly reduce drag – this leads to improved fuel economy (hence the name 'Eco-Tourer') and also allows higher towing speeds. The Eco-Tourer is light enough to be towed by a regular family sedan, with a Tare weight of around 1350kg.

For details visit [www.ecotourer.com.au](http://www.ecotourer.com.au) or contact one of the following dealers.

**Vic:** Caravan Court, 639-649 Springvale Rd, Springvale Sth 3172, (03) 9546 9822, email: [steve@caravancourt.com.au](mailto:steve@caravancourt.com.au), web: [www.caravancourt.com.au](http://www.caravancourt.com.au)

**NSW:** Coastwide RV Centre, 113-115 Kembla Street, Wollongong 2500, (02) 4228 6877, email: [coastwiderv@optusnet.com.au](mailto:coastwiderv@optusnet.com.au), web: [www.coastwiderv.com.au](http://www.coastwiderv.com.au)

**Qld:** Brisbane RVs: 194 Bruce Highway, Burpengary 4505, (07) 3888 3273, email: [sales@brisbanervs.com.au](mailto:sales@brisbanervs.com.au), web: [www.brisbanervs.com.au](http://www.brisbanervs.com.au)

**SA:** Noel's Caravans: 561 Salisbury Hwy, Green Fields, SA 5107, (08) 8250 8566, email: [enquiries@noelscaravans.com.au](mailto:enquiries@noelscaravans.com.au), web: [www.noelscaravans.com.au](http://www.noelscaravans.com.au)

