

SlipSTREAM

This lightweight pop-top is prepped for rough-road touring.



In brief...

- Pop-top van built for rough-road travel
- 4.32m (14ft 2in) single-axle
- Fixed double bed and combo shower/toilet
- Will suit a wide-range of tow vehicles

Goldstream RV manufactures a wide range of RVs, everything from wind-up camper trailers to full-sized offroad caravans.

In the case of the pop-tops, there's a good selection, from the aptly-named Mini to a tandem-axle 5.6m (18ft 5in) unit. All are available in on-road and offroad configuration. For this review, we went for one right in the middle of the range – an Explorer ST pop-top, fitted with an Aussie Adventure package to give it a bit more travel flexibility.

The Aussie Adventure package isn't a full offroad kit but more for rough-road travel and so includes items like a heavy-duty axle and shock absorbers, mud flaps, a pressure hatch, 15in alloy wheels, an awning, an antenna and pre-wiring for solar panels.

Pop-top caravans aren't necessarily suited to everyone but I reckon two of their major advantages are that they have a lower travel height (great for offroad ventures) and, particularly in smaller vans, they offer a considerable amount of air space around head height. Of course, they lose out on overhead

locker storage, but there is always going to be a compromise, isn't there?

My review Explorer ST pop-top has an external length of just 4.32m (14ft 2in) and a Tare weight of 1554kg, making it ideal for towing by any number of vehicles. I have to say, it tracked along very nicely behind my Nissan Navara ute.

Internally, the Explorer ST has a layout that is a little unusual but still very user-friendly. Across the front of the van, to the left of the forward entry door, is a double bed and to the right of the door is a cafe-style dinette. The kitchen bench fills the mid-offside wall area, leaving the rear offside corner for the bathroom cubicle and the remaining wall area for storage and, in Goldstream speak, the 'microwave tower'.

The internal decor is an interesting mix of colours and material – from the neutral and light brown tones of the upholstery to the darker brown of the glossy, laminate finish of the cabinetry. Typical of any pop-top, it has a nice, light and well-ventilated interior.

FIT FOR FAMILY

Across the front, the innerspring mattress measures 1.9x1.3m (6ft 3in x 4ft 3in) and sits on a posture slat bed base, which can be lifted up for easy access to the storage space below. The reading lights positioned on the nearside wall tend to dictate which end the pillows go, but that doesn't mean the nice shelf at the foot of the bed can't be used as a bedside cabinet of sorts. In saying that, the overhead lockers above said shelf do have LED downlights fitted, so they could be used reasonably effectively as reading lights if you so desired. This might depend



WORDS AND PICS
MALCOLM STREET

Clockwise from main: With its Aussie Adventure package fitted, the van can handle some rough-road travel; 4in DuraGal chassis; front storage under the overhang; a distinctive moulded rear.

Measuring up

Pros

- 👍 Relatively lightweight
- 👍 Front bin storage
- 👍 Decent-sized dinette
- 👍 General internal storage
- 👍 Good provision of 240V powerpoints
- 👍 Microwave tower

Cons

- 👎 Smallish kitchen
- 👎 No 12V/5V charger outlets
- 👎 Rear roof lifter a tad awkward



Goldstream RV Explorer ST

Weights and measures

Overall length 6.3m (20ft 8in)
External body length 4.32m (14ft 2in)
External body width 2.36m (7ft 9in)
Travel height 2.28m (7ft 6in)
Internal height 1.84m (6ft 1in)
Tare 1554kg
ATM 2000kg
Ball weight 148kg

External

Frame Meranti timber
Cladding Aluminium composite plus aluminium checkerplate
Chassis 100x50mm (4x2in) DuraGal
Suspension Leaf spring with shock absorbers
Brakes 10in electric
Wheels 15in alloy
Water 2x80L
Battery 1x80Ah
Solar Optional
Air-conditioner No
Gas 2x9kg
Sway control No

Internal

Cooking Smev three-burner
Fridge Thetford N304.3R 93L three-way
Microwave Daewoo DC
Toilet Thetford cassette
Shower Flexible hose
Lighting 12V LED
Hot water Truma 14L

Options fitted

None

Price as shown

\$49,900 (on-road, Vic)

Enquiries

To enquire about this caravan, visit www.caravanworld.com.au/spec or phone (03) 8373 7328

OnCaravanWorld.com.au

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Clockwise from right: A Smev combo three-burner cooktop and sink; four can sit at the dinette if you're happy to get a bit cosy; the neatly labelled electrical centre is in one of the lockers above the bed; Goldstream's 'microwave tower' provides additional storage.



Windsor waterfront



My Goldstream pop-top came from the Parravans dealership in Windsor, NSW, which, for me, used to be a pleasant country trip. These days, with the seemingly endless urban sprawl, it seems much more like a drive to the suburbs of outer Sydney!

That said, not far from Windsor, careful exploration reveals not only some great views of the Hawkesbury River, but some interesting chunks of early Australian history.

on whether you like to have a TV and, more specifically, whether you like to watch said TV in bed, as the aforementioned shelf is where the TV is most likely to go. All a matter of personal preference, though!

There is also a lipped pelmet shelf above the front window, wide enough to accept any number of items. Finally, in this area are two overhead lockers on the offside, one of which is also the electrical centre with 240V circuit breakers, water pump switch, hot water control and 12V fuses, all nicely labelled.

With a benchtop length of 1.5m (4ft 11in), the kitchen is going to be a little crowded but space has been saved by fitting a Smev combo unit, complete with three-burner cooktop and round sink. That does mean no griller and only a 93L under-bench Thetford three-way fridge, but it also allows for three good-sized drawers and a wire-basket pantry.

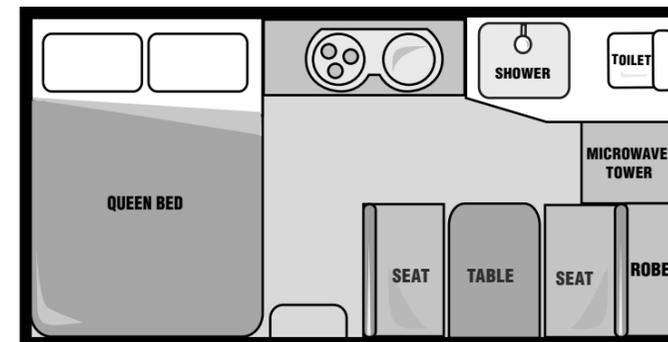
The rest of the kitchen facilities are found in the aforementioned microwave tower. This is located in the centre of the rear wall and consists of the microwave, at a user-friendly height, above a shelved cupboard, two drawers and a floor locker.

The dinette is surprisingly large for a van of this size and could seat four adults with a bit of a squeeze, so it will certainly seat a small family without a problem, which works well given this van can sleep four. Having sat in the nicely-



upholstered seats while typing up much of this review, I can say from experience they are quite comfortable. The table is generously-sized and is slightly unusual in that it's not fixed to the wall. This is because the table mounting is fully height-adjustable and can be lowered to convert the dinette into a second bed, measuring 1.8x1m (5ft 11in x 3ft 4in).

Fitted into the rear corner, the shower cubicle is, not surprisingly for a van of this size, a combo unit with a bench-style cassette toilet, a moulded wash basin and a flexible-hose shower. Although the latter is variable height, it can be no taller than the solid wall – a slight disadvantage of pop-tops. Above the walls, vinyl curtains keep water vapour from the rest of the van.



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Ratings

1. Value for money	★★★★☆
2. Towability	★★★★☆
3. Setting up and hitching up	★★★★☆
4. Suitability for intended touring	★★★★☆
5. Layout	★★★★☆
6. Quality of finish	★★★★☆
7. Build quality	★★★★☆
8. Creature comforts	★★★★☆
9. Innovation	★★★★☆
10. X-Factor	★★★★☆

NEAT PACKAGE

The Explorer ST has a DuraGal box section 100x50mm railed chassis, meranti timber frame and an aluminium exterior, complete with the ubiquitous lower waist of alloy checkerplate. Moulded fibreglass gives the rear wall a unique, rounded shape.

A distinctive feature on the front wall is the small overhang, which allows for more bed space inside and an alloy checkerplate storage bin on the outside – a sort of cross between a front boot and tunnel storage. Not a bad compromise, really; especially as the only other external bin is located at the nearside rear of the van where the awning arm has to be moved to open the bin door.

But that's a small compromise and it's

better than no bin or no awning! There are two other bin doors along the offside for access to the toilet cassette and the house battery compartment.

A look under the Explorer ST reveals the roller rocker leaf spring suspension complete with shock absorbers and the 80L water tanks on either side of the axle, both protected by alloy checkerplate. All the plumbing and pipework appears to be neatly strapped up out of the way.

THE BOTTOM LINE

In the RV world, where many caravans – particularly the offroad variety – seem to be getting bigger and heavier, this little Explorer ST is a breath of fresh air. It makes no pretense about being a fully-equipped larger van or one

Above: The front bed lifts up for access to the storage below. **Below:** You could choose to sleep with your head at either end, although the reading lights are on the nearside.



Right: The combo shower/toilet has vinyl curtains above to keep moisture at bay. **Far right:** Although the shower is variable height, it can only go as high as the solid wall.



for full-scale offroad travel; however, it does come provisioned for what it is designed for and is a relatively lightweight van, fit for rough-road travel.

As noted, there are smaller and lighter pop-tops available, but I reckon this Explorer is a happy compromise that offers much for both weekend explorers and longer-term travellers. Being a pop-top, it does take a little longer to set up, but it is easy to store and also a good all-round towing package. [CW](#)

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