

New AUSTRALIAN

Best-known for its American imports, Winnebago introduces the Burke – its first all-Australian caravan.



In brief...

- 5.82m (19ft 1in) tandem-axle caravan
- Slide-out fitted
- 2000kg Tare weight
- Front island bed, rear bathroom layout
- Composite wall construction

Early last year, Winnebago made a splash when its Australian-designed, US-built caravans were launched on to the local market. As expected, the vans were quite different to their locally-made counterparts, not least because of their bright external colours. Since then, there has been a bit of a shift in the US exchange rate and Winnebago decided to use the experience it had gained building vans in the US to develop its models here in Australia. Enter the Winnebago Burke – the first Winnebago model to roll off the line in Australia – which is a 5.82m (19ft 1in) tandem-axle van with a slide-out and a Tare weight of 2000kg.

The Burke's modest length and weight indicate something about the van's structure, and a look under the Burke reveals a simplified chassis with 150mm (6in) rails and 50x50mm(2x2in) cross members. It's actually more like a European van than an Australian van underneath, especially with the Al-Ko independent rubber suspension and a swing-away jockey wheel.

Above the chassis, the Burke's structure is

designed to keep its weight down while retaining strength and it does this with a single piece composite floor, composite wall panels, and a single piece front wall and roof, all without a frame.

On first glance, where the Burke differs from its US siblings is with features such as the Dometic windows, Dometic hourglass-style door and Dometic awning. The curved front of the van does not lend itself to a conventional front boot so, instead, a tunnel boot stores all your camping goods. Up front, the drawbar is appointed with a conventional ball coupling, handbrake and two 9kg gas cylinders.

On the road, the Burke makes for a good towing package. Its ATM of 2400kg fits under the 2500kg limit of many common tow vehicles, and the Mitsubishi Triton ute that I used coped without any problems. The Burke is not an offroad caravan but I did take the opportunity to try it out on the bush tracks in the D'Aguilar National Park, north-west of Brisbane, Qld, and it tracked along very nicely behind the Triton, even though the Triton struggled a bit with the lack of weight over the rear wheels – a common issue with an unladen ute.

AUSSIE STYLE

The Burke has a forward entry door and inside is a front bedroom, full-width rear bathroom, nearside kitchen and an offside lounge which sits in the slide-out.

Another obvious difference between Winnebago's American vans and this local model is the interior decor. The Burke does away with the characteristic 'American' look and instead employs a much more contemporary Australian look – white walls and ceiling, along



WORDS AND PICS
MALCOLM STREET



Clockwise from main: The offside slide-out encompasses the lounge; two 9kg gas cylinders sit on the drawbar; the Burke rides on Al-Ko independent rubber suspension.

Measuring up

Pros

- 👍 Relatively lightweight van
- 👍 Spacious interior with slide-out open
- 👍 Unusual bathroom layout
- 👍 Interior decor
- 👍 Chassis design
- 👍 Van can be used with slide-out closed

Cons

- 👎 Lounge/bed seat needs a bit more work
- 👎 Table top quite heavy and has fixed location
- 👎 Small windows up front



Winnebago Burke

Weights and measures

Overall length 7.4m (24ft 3in)
 External body length 5.82m (19ft 1in)
 External body width 2.49m (8ft 2in)
 Travel height 2.66m (8ft 9in)
 Internal height 2.03m (6ft 8in)
 Tare 2000kg
 ATM 2400kg
 Ball weight 120kg

External

Frame n/a
 Cladding Fibreglass composite
 Chassis Hot-dipped galvanised
 150mm/6in rails
 Suspension Al-Ko independent rubber
 Brakes Al-Ko 10in
 Wheels 15in alloys
 Water 2x82L
 Battery 1x100Ah
 Solar 1x150W
 Air-conditioner Dometic roof-mount
 Gas 2x9kg
 Sway Control No

Internal

Cooking Combo three-burner cooktop,
 grill and oven
 Fridge Dometic 190L three-way
 Microwave Camec
 Toilet Thetford cassette
 Shower Separate cubicle
 Lighting 12V LED
 Hot water Truma gas/electric 14L

Options fitted

None

Price as shown

\$66,490 (on-road, Qld)

Enquiries

To enquire about this van, visit
www.caravanworld.com.au/spec or
 phone (07) 3073 8472

OnCaravanWorld.com.au

More pictures
 Specs to compare



Because of the tunnel boot, storage room under the bed is limited.

Winnebago has gone down a common route with the bedhead, which has the usual arrangement of overhead lockers, side wardrobes and bedside cabinets. Although, the overhead lockers do protrude more into the air space than normal, due to the shape of the front wall. On both sides of the bed, 240V, 12V and 5V USB sockets are fitted.

Because the slide-out occupies the entire mid-offside of the van, the kitchen takes up the opposite side. There is a square stainless steel sink and a three-burner cooktop with grill/

Clockwise from top left: The roof hatch lights the kitchen nicely; with the slide-out open there's a spacious walkway to the bathroom; a Dometic roof-mounted air-conditioner keeps things cool; five drawers provide good storage in the kitchen.

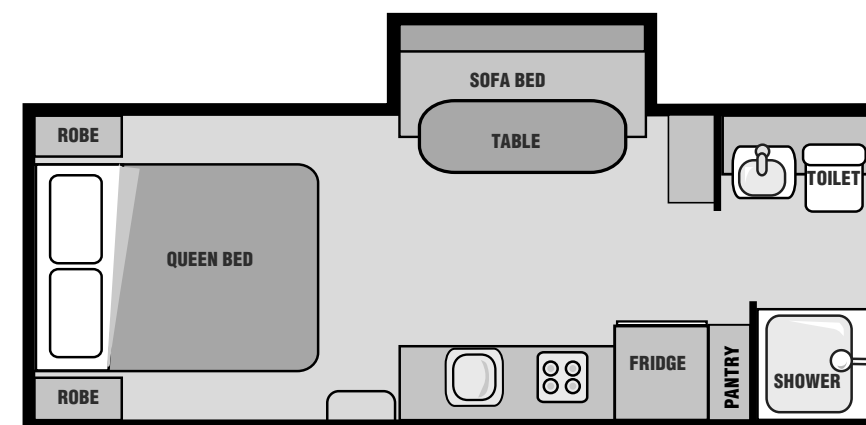
with faux timber cupboard doors and marble laminate on the benchtops and table. Another characteristic of the US vans are small windows but the Burke's are much larger. Although, I would have preferred even larger windows around the bedroom and in the slide-out.

Everything in the van, except the dining table, can be used with the slide-out closed up. That means you can access the kitchen bench and bathroom without opening the slide-out at quick rest stops. Once the slide-out is open, the table, which is mounted on two poles, can be fixed in position. Both the table and supporting poles are stored behind the lounge seat when not in use. I did wonder whether a Euro-style, free-

standing table might be a better alternative to this arrangement. However, one of the reasons for the removable table is so that the lounge can be turned into a second bed if needed. It measures 1.84x0.95m (6x3ft 1in) when set up, so will really only suit one person.

Up against the offside bathroom wall is a small cupboard, 22in flatscreen TV and an overhead locker. The slide-out needs to be open to see the TV and while it can be easily seen from the bed, people sitting on the lounge seats will need to sit sideways.

The front island bed measures 2.01x1.53m (6ft 7in x 5ft) and the mattress is mounted on a part-posture slat, part-metal framed bed base.





From top: The curved front dictates the shape of the robes and overhead lockers; a top-loader slides-out from under the bathroom vanity; while the windows are larger than in the US-built Winnebagos, Malcolm would have preferred them even bigger.

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	★★★★★

oven below, leaving space under the bench for five drawers, a cupboard and a wire basket pantry. During my travels in D'Aguilar NP, the wire baskets were the only indication of the rough roads. True to form, the baskets jumped out of their slots. Cable ties are a good solution for this problem, but it would be nice if a more attractive, permanent solution was developed.

At the rear end of the kitchen bench are the 190L fridge and microwave. Oddly enough, the fridge door was hinged on the wrong side but I suspect that was just an aberration in the prototype. Above the microwave is the radio/CD player and a charging slot, complete with 12V socket, for something like an iPad. Between the fridge and the bathroom wall is a cupboard with multiple shelves that could be used for a pantry or a linen cupboard.



Tested
Winnebago Burke



toilet and the offside bathroom wall. That arrangement allows for a top-loading washing machine to be fitted into the cabinet beside the loo with a wash basin above. A shaving cabinet and open shelves occupy the air space above and it's a nice change from the usual arrangement.

Electrically speaking, the Burke is quite well set up with a 100Ah battery, 150W solar panel, 25A mains charger, LED lighting in all the relevant places and 240V/12V/5V sockets similarly located.

THE BOTTOM LINE

In my opinion, the Winnebago Burke is an improvement over the US-designed vans. Although, I was interested to note that some of the design ideas, such as the chassis and composite wall structure, appear to take inspiration from the Europeans. The van I looked at was a prototype so, while it did have a few rough edges, I imagine those will be smoothed out in future models.

Winnebago appears to have put a lot of thought into the weight of its van and has managed to lop off quite a few kilos for its given length, resulting in not only a good towing caravan but one with a spacious interior. **CW**

Above: The nearside shower cubicle tucks into the rear corner.
Above right: A slightly unusual bathroom layout, with the vanity bench on the offside wall.

THE BUSINESS END

Across the rear, the bathroom is laid out a bit differently to many vans as it is not the usual rectangular shape. Instead of having a vanity cabinet across the rear wall between the shower cubicle and toilet, it sits between the rear corner

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