

POETRY IN MOTION

THE PIONEER MITCHELL LETS YOU ENJOY AUSTRALIA'S WILD AND TREACHEROUS EXTREMES IN COMFORT AND STYLE. WORDS AND PICS JOHN WILLIS





Major Sir Thomas Mitchell stood a large part in the exploration of our great country. Commissioned in 1828 as the Australian Surveyor General, his legendary expeditions explored and mapped much of our eastern seaboard from Cape York in far north Queensland to Portland in Victoria's south-west, including such extremes as the Menindee Lakes, the Barcoo River and Warrego Range.

This esteemed Scotsman was honoured firstly by knighthood in 1839, and again in an obituary published in the Sydney Morning Herald in October 1855 with the words, "For a period of 28 years, Sir Thomas Mitchell had served the Colony, much of that service having been exceedingly arduous and difficult. Among the early explorers of Australia, his name will occupy an honoured place in the estimation of posterity."

Mitchell had much to be proud of. So, too, does our Australian camper trailer industry. It is a field of innovation, excitement and world-leading

engineering and design skills. Melbourne's Pioneer Campers is an industry stalwart with its very high standard of construction, commitment to quality and professional attitude towards product sales and ongoing service commitment.

I had a call from an associate who has been shopping for a camper. His wife has some special needs that will be more important over time and he has whittled his wishlist down to three manufacturers. He is leaning towards Pioneer not just for its design, strength and appealing price, but for the team's commendable service and friendly attitude. He was impressed with the hi-tech production facility in Dandenong, Vic, and most of all with the company's accommodating attitude towards modifications to help his wife's mobility in the future. References like this are priceless.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A Redarc solar panel rides up top; Raise or lower the pop-top to suit the weather; Reach straps keep the springs from overextending; The front box can hold three jerry cans; Huge full tunnel boot.

MEASURING UP

HITS

- > Ease of use
- > Great selection of features
- > Raised, secure living area
- > Top quality local manufacturing
- > Relatively lightweight
- > 1650mm track and 30° departure angle

MISSES

- > Only one battery as standard

EXTREME OFFROAD HYBRID

Pioneer produces a great range of rear-folding hardfloors, but the offerings have now been extended with the aptly named 'hard roof' Mitchell, which almost fits into the hybrid class. The Mitchell has plenty going for it and rates as one of the most attractive campers I have tested to date.

The overall unit has a very solid body shell of powder-coated zincaneal and marine-grade aluminium panels, insulated fibreglass/aluminium walls and a fibreglass pop-roof and floor. Pioneer uses the strongest, yet lightest, materials to produce the Mitchell, in order to provide the strength, towing weights and insulation necessary for extreme outback adventures. This tough rig will be a great companion for a lifetime of rough and tumble service on this country's worst tracks. It sits on a heavy-duty, fully-welded, hot-dipped





CTA RATING

1. FIT FOR INTENDED PURPOSE



2. INNOVATION



3. SELF-SUFFICIENCY



4. QUALITY OF FINISH



5. BUILD QUALITY



6. OFFROAD-ABILITY



7. COMFORTS



8. EASE OF USE



9. VALUE FOR MONEY



10. X-FACTOR



galvanised steel chassis that, like the suspension, comes with a five-year warranty.

With a Tare weight of 1330kg, towball weight of 145kg and an ATM of 2000kg, you have plenty of loading capacity for water, food and accessories. Pioneer manufactures its own Grafta independent suspension and it tows a treat.

But you really must inspect under the trailer to fully appreciate its immense strength and easy-to-service design. All the plumbing and wiring are tucked securely out of harm's way and the standard 120L stainless steel water tank (a further 60L is optional) is mounted high in the strong relief angle at the rear.

The Grafta suspension also features long-life Kevlar bushes, dual Ridepro twin tube gas shockers and fully-rated coil springs. I was also pleased to see reach straps to stop the suspension over extending in extreme situations. She rides on six-stud black Sunraysia rims with Al-Ko 12in electric brakes, and the spare wheel is underslung just in front of the trailing arm suspension but still allows excellent ground clearance.

COMFORTS AND SETUP

Getting there and back is one thing but ease of set up is one of my primary prerequisites in

a camper. Who wants to waste energy after a long day on the road? I'd rather sleep in a swag! However, the Mitchell is one of the fastest, easiest and most pleasing campers to set up. Simply open the large gas-assisted tailgate that hinges up to become the roof, fold out the solid floor with its plug-in adjustable feet for uneven ground, and secure the rear 'H' frame with two bars – that's it, you're set up for an overnight sleep in under three minutes – perfect! For extra play space, you can pop open the forward roof section which gives more than a metre in head room, however, in extreme weather you may wish to leave it closed as you can still sit comfortably on the bed.

The enclosed living space is quite large with an innerspring queen mattress up front on a very solid tilting frame with slatted base for aeration. The sides of the bed are leatherette-lined and the simple staircase is easily ascended and individually illuminated.

A large storage area under the bed can also be accessed via the tailgate when it travel mode. There's individual LED reading lights either side of the bed, a step strip light, tonnes of ventilation with tinted opening side windows either side of the body and further flaps in the canvas all with fine mesh flyscreens.

The storage continues with internal access to

the large 70L partitioned storage drawer which also slides out from the external kerb side, as well as a handy 20L lockable bedhead storage box.

STAY COOL

The lucky intended owner of our review unit had opted for 2.2kW 240V reverse-cycle air-conditioner for an escape to creature comforts when the mercury rises. It even has an opening sunroof with screens. The exposed faces of the bed base have the water indicators, 240 and 12V plugs, thermostat and vents for the air-conditioner.

The internal composite floor area is surprisingly large at 1700x2000mm and features easily maintained woodgrain vinyl finish. The canvas and poles are high quality with doorway and windows either side and a full panel awning and zippered fly screen at the rear. It feels very inviting with a place for everything and no sharp or hard edges.

The exterior of the Mitchell has plenty to admire and the black and white colour scheme looks great with its red accents. Up on top we find a Redarc 12V 80W polycrystalline solar panel hardwired to the BMS and its inbuilt charger to maintain power to the rear mounted 110Ah deep cycle battery. This is probably enough power for most applications however added batteries and lithium alternatives are available as options.



CARRY THE LOAD

Out front, we find a very strong drawbar of 150x50x3mm galvanised steel. The Mitchell comes complete with a Hitchmaster DO35 offroad coupling, handbrake and a very solid wind down swing away and removable jockey wheel. The forward compartments are lined with black Rhino coating eliminating the need for a separate

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Easy access to cups and crockery with extra benchtop space for whipping up a feast; Slimline appliances maximise space inside and out; Two campers can work either side of the bench; The wide handle and a self-supporting bench simplify setting up; Enjoy a hot and cold shower away from the action; The divided pantry and fridge slide out side-by-side; Gas struts on the large front storage provide easy access to your gear.

RIGHT: Downward facing seams are visible in the design of the windows. **BELOW RIGHT:** A stylish timber-like floor folds out at the rear.

CTA SPECS

PIONEER
MITCHELL

> TRAILER

Tare 1330kg
ATM 2000kg
Suspension Grafta independent with long life Kevlar bushes, dual Ridepro twin tube gas shockers and fully rated coil springs
Brakes 12in Al-Ko electric drum
Coupling Hitchmaster DO35
Chassis Fully welded and galvanised
Drawbar 150x50x3mm
Body Powder-coated zincaneal, marine-grade aluminium, insulated fibreglass/aluminium walls and fibreglass pop-top roof and floor.
Wheel/tyre Six-stud black Sunraysia rims with 17in GT Savero AT tyres
Style Hard-roof rear-fold hardfloor

> DIMENSIONS

Box size 2900x1950mm
Length (hitch to tail lights) 5300mm
Tent size 1600x1850mm

> ACCESSORIES

Gas cylinders 2x9kg
Water 120L
Cooktop Two-burner Smev
Kitchen Stainless steel with sink and bench extension and a 60L Engel fridge/freezer
Battery 110Ah deep-cycle battery

> PRICE AS SHOWN

\$59,965

> ENQUIRIES

To enquire about this camper, visit www.campertraileraustralia.com.au/spec or phone (03) 8373 7342

> CAMPERTRAILERAUSTRALIA.COM.AU

> More pictures
> Specs to compare



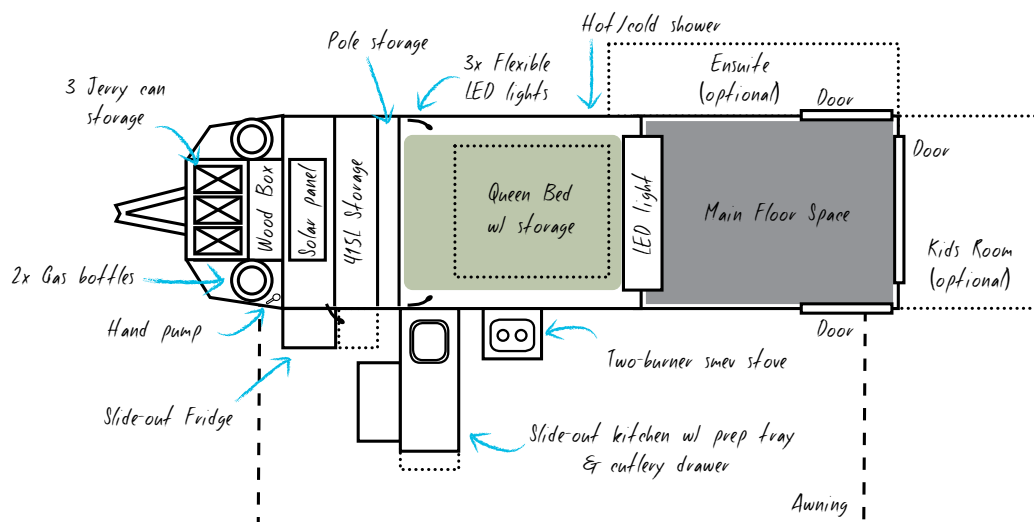
stoneguard. There's a large storage locker with a mesh base that is entirely suited to carting wet items, but is also capable of securing three jerry cans. Behind this is an open compartment for rubbish or firewood and either side of the unit is a swing away face protecting dual 9kg gas cylinders. There's even a manual pump tap for easy water access while on the road and a large set of Pioneer branded mudflaps to reduce stone impact under the trailer. Over the top is a huge 340L storage box that carries all of your tools and recovery equipment with a tonne of room to spare.

The kitchen is on the kerb side where it should be. In front is a very solid slide for a large optional fridge with vent and both 12 and 240V outlets. This cavity runs right through the width of the trailer leaving plenty of added storage on the driver's side. Behind this is the large sliding pantry and with the side access for the 70L sliding drawer. The comes a well designed pull out stainless steel kitchen complete with its own lighting, pressurised sink with hot and cold water, a large pull out drawer suitable for cups, plates and so on, and with a folding stainless steel top that allows added bench space. The



digital screen and controls for the Redarc 1230, 30A Battery Management System are also mounted conveniently on this passenger side. There's an added cutlery and utensils drawer and a swing away twin-burner stove. It is all most convenient and shows the compact advantages of CAD/CAD design.

For a more extended stay the Mitchell comes with a full length, 2m wide awning with strong frame and spreader poles. The sky is the limit for further optional canvas with full annexe enclosures, ensuite, draft curtain and even a kids' room readily available. The ensuite and

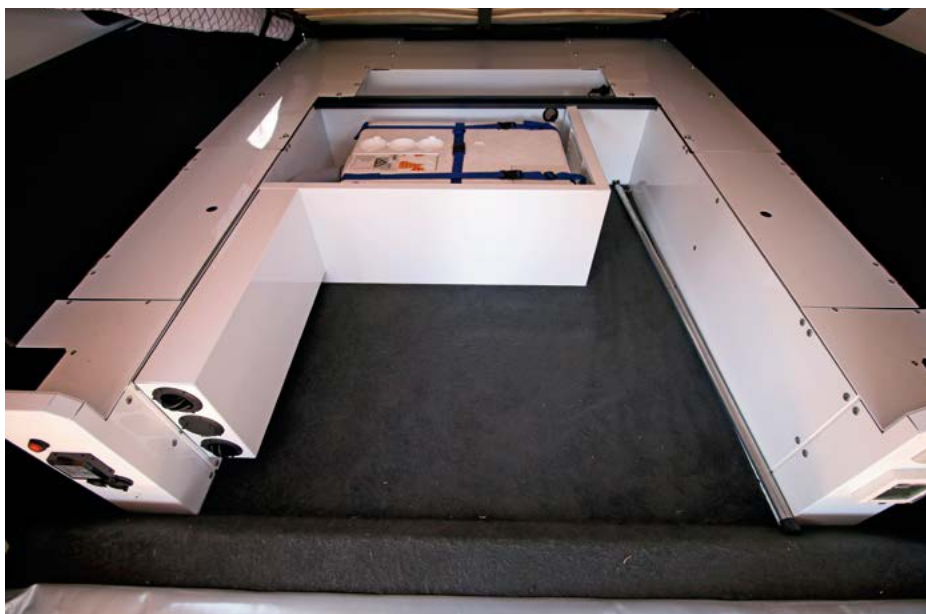




kids' room are excellent add-ons for a travelling family that won't take forever to assemble.


The driver's side of the Mitchell has more storage including a pole rack and a 35L container on each side. There's a small ventilation hatch which you'll need to when using the Truma 14L gas hot water service that feeds both the kitchen and the pull out shower, also on the driver's side.

Out back is a 50mm square hitch receiver solely for recovery, reflectors, submersible LED tail lights and boot access to the under bed storage. For those looking for fewer accessories, the unit also comes in a lower fit-out level called the Wilpena.



THE VERDICT

I have no qualms in placing the Pioneer Mitchell high on my personal list of desirable campers. The hard roof and floor provides the ease of assembly and security.

The manufacturing quality and offroad ability really appeals to my senses. I'm not afraid to declare my pride for my Aussie heritage and neither is Pioneer Campers. 

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Ample open storage under the bed, with speakers, plus 240 and 12V outlets close at hand; Easy access to the hot water system; Flush acrylic windows provide illumination in wet conditions.