

Rhinomax Scorpion Review



New hard shell camper resets the parameters for micro hybrids

It has a body length of just 3100mm, at 1970mm wide is only slightly narrower than it's tall and weighs only as much as a [top-spec Tvan](#), yet the RhinoMax Scorpion is one of the biggest things in Australian camper trailers for many years.

Since [entering the hyper competitive micro hybrid market](#) in pre-production form in October 2015, this 'mini' from Maroochydore on Queensland's Sunshine Coast has set the pace in terms of its package, quality and price.

Starting well equipped at \$58,950, the Scorpion comes with a raft of features that are usually extra-cost options on its major rivals. These include an external rear pod with a drop-down tent for its hot/cold shower, a clever inside toilet, an aluminium front storage box large enough to swallow a mega 82 litre portable fridge/freezer and a well-designed stainless steel slide-out kitchen.

Together these and other 'standard' items would add the best part of \$10k to the cost of some of

its rivals, but it's a signature thing at Rhinomax to include what many people would require as essentials in the basic price of its products.

THOUGHTFUL DESIGN

Thoughtful design is another area in which the Scorpion excels and which some of its rivals have followed.

The basic idea of a 'micro-hybrid' – as this new generation of small, hard-walled pop-up off-road campers have been tagged – is to take the time and trouble out of camping without destroying the concept of getting well off the beaten track.



Expat Brits Andy Dean and Steve Punton approached the challenge from their joint engineering backgrounds.



Dean, who did his 'time' at Rolls-Royce in the UK and Punton, whose previous left-field thinking included the design of a hydraulic manhole cover lifter, saw the writing on the wall for the hard and soft floor camper trailers they were building on the Sunshine Coast.

Their 14ft Discovery Hybrid pop-top introduced in late 2014 created such interest that they immediately saw the market for something

similar but smaller and started work on the Scorpion later that year.

"What people liked about our campers was their design and their ease of assembly," explained Dean, "but high quality campers take a lot of time to build and we thought, 'what if we could capture the appeal of our campers in a vehicle that would be even faster to erect, more comfortable and simpler to build', so the idea of the Scorpion was born."



A popular feature of fold-out, hard-floor tent campers is that the bed is already in place, so the first thing Dean and Punton did was to work out how to incorporate this feature in a fixed wall pop-top occupying about the same footprint.



Their novel solution, which has since [been copied by at least one of its rivals](#), is to hinge the bed at its forward edge and have it rise on gas struts.

The pop-top roof, which is similarly hinged at the front, provides the necessary height for the bed to rise and because the roof is held down by just two over-centre clips, the entire set-up and pack-down process takes well under a minute.

Elastic cords that draw the pop-top mesh towards the centre, ensure it all packs up quickly with nothing left sticking out.

ROOM TO MOVE

Enter with the bed down and there's sitting room for one and standing room for two, or seating for three with it up. That's plenty if you're overnighting on the way to somewhere warm and dry and it's for these travellers that the Rhinomax Scorpion is designed for.

Following the KISS principle, there's no internal kitchen, just a narrow benchtop above a nest of cupboards and drawers that span the Scorpion's rear end. But it would take little imagination to set up a single or twin-burner portable stove here to make a cup of tea or even toast some bread for breakfast if need be.

The only downside is that there's no interior water or fridge, however an internal sink is an option, but there are some simple camping solutions available here if this is required.

The good thing about this rear living space is that it's available almost immediately you step inside, as the Scorpion's pop-up table is already anchored to the base of the offside seat and only needs to be lifted into position once the bed is raised.

There's also plenty of light in this area thanks to the zip-down side and rear fly mesh windows of the pop-top, while twin large windows near the head of the bed also open for ideal cross-flow ventilation.

Twin drawers provide ideal under-bed clothes storage, while there's also room under the door-side seat to leave valuable items out of sight.

PERFECTLY PLACED POTTY

However, the real design winner inside is what sits below the offside seat facing the door. Lift the

cushion and below you'll find a large Dometic portable toilet, perfectly placed for use at night without having to take up valuable floor space.

Even better, it's also accessible for emptying via the external hatch immediately behind it.

Alternatively, you can spend less than five minutes swinging the spare wheel out of the way and drop the rear shower pod's tent to create a very quickly assembled private ensuite.



As the Scorpion, like a camper trailer, is designed primarily for outdoor living, an exterior kitchen with a three-burner cooktop and its adjacent sink with mixer tap and prep bench, extend along the full side of the Scorpion.

This is sensible, as it means that this area is well covered by the vehicle's standard Fiamma F45S wind-out awning.



The other great feature about the Scorpion is its exterior storage space. By ensuring that the kitchen is wide, not deep, it slides into space beneath the bed and leaves a large and very useable storage space that is accessed by a large locker on the other side of the vehicle.

This space is also shared by the Scorpion's two vertically-stacked 120W AGM batteries, its Flojet water pump that can be diverted to suck water from a creek instead of the Scorpion's 110-litre water tank and its Projecta battery charger and 600W pure sine wave inverter.

This space is also shared by the Scorpion's two vertically-stacked 120W AGM batteries, its Flojet water pump that can be diverted to suck water

Twin 150W roof-mounted solar panels feed the batteries.

Personally, I'd feel more comfortable with a quickly-removable fibreglass cover over all these electrics in case some heavy items shifted and did some damage in the extreme off-road travel that the Scorpion is very capable of dealing with.

MORE EXTERNAL STORAGE

Up front, as well as the A-frame storage/fridge box, there's space for four jerry cans in the centre compartment, with holders for twin gas bottles on either side – all safe from stone damage.

Above this box, a large aluminium wood rack is optional.



Of course, all these features would be useless if the Scorpion couldn't deal with the sort of tracks that take you there and its hot-dipped 150mm x 50mm x 3mm galvanised chassis and proven Cruisemaster XT 2600kg-rated independent coil spring suspension with two shockers per wheel, provide that assurance.

The composite fibreglass body should also hold together well, thanks to its external aluminium skeletal frame.

Large 12-inch electric brakes, 16 x 7in alloy wheels and a DO-35 off-road coupling complete a very impressive package for the money.

However, the final point that must be mentioned here is that there are no corners cut when it comes to quality in the Scorpion.

True to their engineering background, both Dean and Punton have impressive quality standards that make the Scorpion's pricing even more impressive.

"When we started building our campers, we thought we were selling them because of their price," admitted Dean. "However now we realise that the price was secondary for many of our customers; they were choosing them because of our quality.

"That's something we are very proud of."

WE LIKED:

- >> Trend-setting design and superb finish
- >> Off-road ability and specs
- >> Clever use of space including internal toilet
- >> Sharp price

NOT SO MUCH:

- >> Would like more rear shelf space for a portable cook-top
- >> Also a cover for the electrics in the front locker
- >> Order book extends 10 months!

VERDICT

The Rhinomax Scorpion stands apart in this growing, ultra-competitive market segment for its innovative design, combined with high quality construction and competitive price.

The fact that Scorpion production is sold out until October is testament to this.

RHINOMAX SCORPION

Travel length: 5300mm
External body length: 3100mm
External body width: 1970mm
Travel height: 2200mm
Tare weight: 1320kg
ATM: 2000-2500kg
Ball weight (Tare): 90kg
Body: Insulated fibreglass composite body panels and pop-top
Chassis: Galvanised, hot dipped steel 150mm x 50mm
Suspension: Vehicle Components Cruisemaster XT independent trailing arms and coil springs with twin shocks per wheel and 2600kg axles and bearings
Brakes: 12-inch electric
Wheels: 16 x 7in alloy with 265/70R16 off-road tyres
Fresh water: 1 x 110L
Battery: 2 x 110Ah deep cycle AGM
Solar: 2 x 150W roof-mounted panels
Gas: 2 x 4.5kg
Hot water: Truma gas
Cooking: Exterior slide-out with 3-burner cooker and stainless steel sink
Fridge: Option external portable
Shower: External rear hot/cold shower
Lighting: LED throughout
Price (As reviewed): \$58,950
Options fitted: None
Supplied by: [Rhinomax Campers, Maroochydore, Qld](#)