

BIG WINNER

WHEN WEIGHT IS NO OBJECT, THE CUT LOOSE INVESTIGATOR RK GIVES YOU THE ULTIMATE LUXURY: SPACE.

Any RV offers advantages and disadvantages, and fifth-wheelers are no different. When compared to caravans they offer more interior space for the same towing combination length, but they're more stable on the road. Compared to motorhomes, fifth wheelers offer greater flexibility, in that – like a caravan – you can separate your tow vehicle once you've parked, making lighter work of local exploration.

However, a downside is that here in Australia we don't have a particularly wide range of tow vehicles, and that's especially the case when it comes to fifth-wheelers. It's a problem that Nick Oliver at Cut Loose RV has attempted to address with his range of rigs.

In terms of size, all the Cut Loose RV

offerings are designed for ute/tray vehicles that are quite common in Australia – and he's done a considerable amount of research to get this right.

It was therefore with interest that I recently took a look at the largest and latest of the Cut Loose fleet, the Investigator RK. With an external length of 8.33m (27ft 4in), it offers a considerable amount of interior space, although it does come with a tare weight of 2850kg and an ATM of 3620kg. That, along with the tare pin weight of 400kg, means careful consideration is needed when it comes to choosing your tow vehicle.

In our case I was using an Isuzu D Max, which has a GCM of 5900kg and a load capacity of around 1045kg. The dual cab has a tare weight of around 1845kg,

and while it is certainly capable of towing the Investigator without trouble, it should be loaded with care.

AUSSIE APPROVED

In common with quite a few US-sourced fifth wheelers, the Investigator has a powdercoated 6in railed chassis. It rides on shock-absorber-fitted Equa-Flex leaf spring suspension and 15in wheels. Up front, the Hijacker double pivot hitch is fully ADR compliant.

On the compliance subject, it would be my observation that Nick also goes to some trouble to ensure both the actual fifth wheeler and all the fitted appliances have the necessary Australian approvals. That includes full 240V cabling to Australian Standard 3001.



IN BRIEF

- US import fifth wheeler with plenty of room to move
- A heavyweight RV, with a tare of 2850kg
- Fully complied for Aussie use

Above the actual chassis, the body has an aluminium frame, fibreglass composite walls, a moulded fibreglass nose cone and an EPDM rubber roof – one strong enough to walk on to carry out essential maintenance like cleaning the solar panels and roof hatches.

Slightly wider than usual, the Challenge door has a non security insect screen fitted. Windows are glass hoppers, which mostly only allow the lower third to open. The rear offside slide-out is also worthy of note. Like most it slides out less than 460mm/18in, but it adds greatly to the interior space.

For a fifth wheeler with an external height of 2.89m/9ft 6in (the lower the height, often the lower the bin capacity), the Investigator has a surprising number

of external bins. There's the usual under-overhang bin, two directly behind it for gas cylinders (offside) and battery/electrics (nearside), a large one (washing machine size) at the offside rear and a smaller one in the rear wall for something like a generator. A benefit of the under-overhang bin is that you'll stay dry if it's raining!

Internally Cut Loose has opted for a standard fifth wheeler layout, with the bedroom in the overhang. Directly next to that is the bathroom area with the lounge/dining area and kitchen filling the rear space. Having a bathroom door does allow the front area to be kept private from the rear. In the décor department, Cut Loose has definitely moved away from the US look with a light, easy-on-the eye

hue for the cabinet work. Lighting too has moved from the US preference for incandescent fittings to much more eco-friendly fluorescents and LEDs.

SPACE: THE FINAL FRONTIER

Starting at the front, the bedroom – with its ceiling height of 1.35m (4ft 5in) – requires three easy steps to get in or out of. Some fifth wheeler bedrooms are awkward to use, but not this one. The bed measures 6ft 3in x 5ft 1in and it has bedside cabinets and reading lights on either side. There's also a very neat-looking bedhead, complete with a third light set in the nose cone. Windows on either side deliver good cross-flow ventilation.

Good use has been made of the large

MEASURING UP

I LIKED

- The bedroom arrangement, which gives very easy access and provides good storage
- The light (both natural and powered) interior
- The abundance of powerpoints
- The external bin storage
- The general bathroom layout
- The improvements over earlier models

I WOULD HAVE LIKED

- More bench area around the bathroom wash basin
- Windows that opened a little further, to aid cross ventilation
- A mid external light for late evening al fresco dining and entertaining
- Contoured seat backs, for greater comfort for anyone with back problems

step, with non-symmetrical wardrobes on both sides offering good hanging space. A large marine-style hatch immediately above this area offers good natural light for both it and the adjoining bathroom.

Having the wardrobes offset from each other does allow a vanity cabinet and shower cubicle to be fitted into the nearside wall of the bathroom, in turn allowing a separate (always a good idea) cubicle for the toilet cubicle opposite. It comes with a Sealand foot-operated toilet and both a large window and vent hatch. The quarter circle shape of the shower cubicle works quite well and the vanity area does have both an under-wash-basin cupboard and a shaving cabinet, but the size of the basin does result in minimal shelf area.

Although it's possible to have this arrangement of a sideways-facing lounge with dinette opposite, there's no doubt that a slide-out adds considerably more interior space. Three people can sit at the lounge, or more likely two with their feet up. A large window behind and roof hatch above provide plenty of natural light, backed up by a fluorescent light and two halogens.

Opposite the dinette is definitely for two people. Like the dinette, it comes with flat cushions, overhead lockers and additional underseat storage in the form



Caption: ??

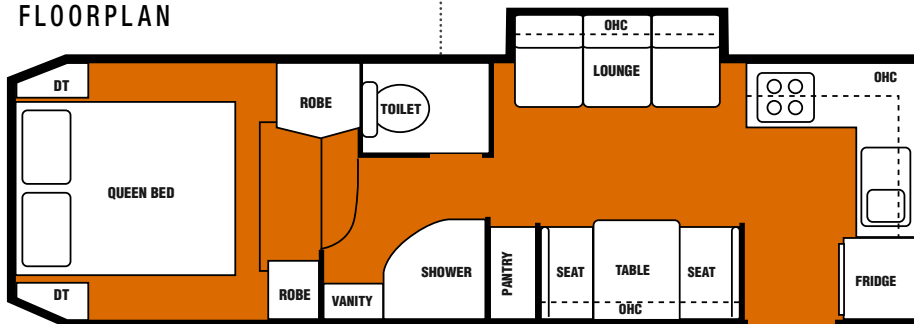
CUT LOOSE INVESTIGATOR RK

External length 8.33m (27ft 4in)
External width 2.38m (7ft 10in)
Interior height 2.03m (6ft 8in)
Interior height (bedroom) 1.35m (4ft 5in)
Nameplate Tare 2850kg
Nameplate ATM 3620kg
Pin weight 400kg
Frame Aluminium
Chassis Powdercoated steel
Suspension Equa-Flex leaf spring with shocks
Cooktop Stoves four-burner cooktop and grill
Fridge Waeco 190L Coolmatic
Microwave Panasonic
Shower Separate cubicle
Toilet Sealand
Lighting 12V fluorescent/LED
Gas 2 x 9kg
Fresh water 1 x 165L
Drinking water 125L
Grey water 125L
Black water 105L
Price \$104,990 plus on-road costs (\$2330 in Qld)

SUPPLIED BY

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FLOORPLAN



Above: ??

of convenient drawers.

Built in an across-the-back-and-around-the-corner style, the kitchen bench looks a bit cramped, but in fact offers just about everything you might want in a kitchen layout. Located in the corner beside the door and mounted quite high off the floor is a two-door, 190L Waeco fridge. The under-fridge area is used for the external generator box.

Fitted into the rear wall section of the benchtop is a stainless steel sink with drainer, with both tank and filtered drinking water. With the four-burner cooktop and grill set on the offside wall, this does allow for a reasonable amount of working space and a good-sized cupboard/drawer/overhead locker area. Often with a corner kitchen bench, the corner area is difficult to use in a practical way, but Cut Loose solved that by using it as an external bin.



THE BOTTOM LINE

Be aware that the Investigator's weights make it a marginal proposition for ute-sized vehicles. The advantage of being the largest of the Cut Loose fleet is that the Investigator offers plenty of interior space to play with, the end result being that bedroom, bathroom, living and kitchen spaces are all very liveable, without there being too much of a compromise in any one area. All round, the Cut Loose Investigator RK is a good addition to the growing number of fifth wheelers available in Australia.

