



SCAN TO PLAY VIDEO



2024 AUSTRALIA'S BEST HYBRIDS



FINALIST

The Fantasy FD-15A offers some improvements on previous iterations, but we discovered its point of difference is allowing customers to use their imaginations by offering unlimited design options.

Words ABH Judges
Pics Capture Factory

FANTASTIC FANTASY



ALLISON WATT
CARAVAN WORLD DEPUTY EDITOR

BUILD QUALITY

Fantasy Caravan has been around since 2018, starting in Moorabbin producing 10 trailers a month, then opening a new factory in Dandenong where production increased to 50 units a month. They are soon to branch out into Campbellfield, the Melbourne mecca of caravan production.

The FD-15A – a couples van – is another Chinese import. It is constructed on a steel frame, which contributes to the surprisingly heavy weight (3000kg ATM) on such a small van although an aluminium frame is an option. The chassis is 6in fully welded galvanised steel, which is probably bigger than you would expect although probably necessary given the van's weight. The walls are an aluminium composite with XPS foam sandwiched in the middle. The roof is aluminium and the floor plywood.



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Like all imported vans, once the basic structure reaches Australian shores all the electrical, gas and plumbing work is done here to meet local compliance standards. Fantasy fits quality components that are household names in the sector such as Aussie Traveller (doors and windows), Dometic (dust reduction system), Sirocco (fans), Gree (air-conditioner), Pedders shockers on the independent suspension, Cruisemaster DO35 hitch, Fusion stereo, Projecta battery management system and the list goes on.

The FD-15A is a pop-top with a fold-out king size bed, internal and external kitchens, internal toilet/shower/vanity combination bathroom, an exterior shower with built in tent and plenty of storage inside and out with separate slides for gas bottles and a barbecue and a firewood box.

A point of difference with the Fantasy hybrid was its internal painted aluminium cabinetry – cupboards and shelves – with no

screws. I also liked that the drawers were lined with a carpet-type material and soft closing.

It certainly looks the part with its dark grey walls, colourful decals and lots of black checkerplate – however the colours and decals are customisable.

CUSTOMER CARE

Fantasy Caravan offers a five-year warranty on the structure of its vans that covers the drawbar and the chassis. In addition to that is a one-year manufacturer's warranty and then one year on all appliances after which the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) warranties will kick in – so five years on the Projecta BMS, two years on the Gree air-conditioner and so on.

Fantasy Caravan has a nationwide network of dealers so that's a good thing when you're out on the road and need assistance.

BUILD QUALITY ★

"Fantasy fits quality components that are household names such as Aussie Traveller, Dometic, Sirocco, Pedders, Cruisemaster and Projecta"

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The main bed folds out the end; The Fantasy is hefty but doesn't need a monster truck to tow; The company has grown since 2018

RIGHT The Fantasy is 2340kg empty

FANTASY FD-15A

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Overall length 6.55m (21ft 5in)
External body length 4.65m (15ft 3in)
External body width 2.2m (7ft 2in)
Travel height 2.68m (8ft 8in)
Tare 2430kg (2400kg standard)
ATM 3000kg
Payload 570kg (calculated) (600kg standard)
Ball weight 240kg
Ball weight at tare 9.9% (calculated) (10% standard)

EXTERNAL

Frame Steel frame
Cladding Plywood floor, fibreglass roof, XPS foam insulation
Chassis 150mm x 50mm x 4mm hot dipped galvanised drawbar, 150mm x 50mm x 3mm chassis
Suspension Independent with Pedders shocks
Coupling Cruisemaster DO35
Brakes 12in electric drum brake
Wheels 16in alloy
Water 2 x 100L freshwater and 1 x 80L grey water
Battery 3 x 135Ah Australian supplied lithium LiFePO4 (2 x 135Ah standard)
Solar 3 x 200W (4 x 100W standard)
Air-conditioner Gree 2.5kW rooftop
Gas 2 x 9kg
Sway control Lippert sway control (option)
Cooking Slide-out exterior kitchen
Fridge Optional 95L slide-out fridge/freezer

INTERNAL

Cooking Thetford two-burner cooktop
Microwave N/A
Fridge N/A
Bathroom Combo toilet, shower and vanity
Hot water Truma 14L UltraRapid gas/electric

PRICE FROM \$55,990

OPTIONS FITTED

- Sound system upgrade to Fusion stereo and speakers
- Off-grid pack
 - 1 x 135Ah battery
 - 1 x 200W solar panel
 - 2000W Projecta Inverter
 - Dometic dust reduction system
 - Diesel heater
- 95L fridge/freezer

PRICE AS SHOWN \$62,090

MORE INFORMATION

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TOWABILITY ★

"This hybrid will suit those mainstays like the Isuzu D-MAX perfectly"

JOHN FORD

CARAVAN WORLD EDITOR-AT-LARGE

INNOVATION

One of the advantages of being in business for several years, like the Fantasy Caravan team, is that plenty of owners offer valuable feedback for gradual improvement as the brand grows. This latest offering in the FD-15A continues the evolution with minor improvements without breaking significant new ground. That said, the slide-in canvas roof cover is one of those 'why didn't I think of that' improvements that go a long way to improving comfort because the bed end will cop a lot of heat, and the shade will make a big difference.

But the most significant innovation is the almost unlimited design options available. Fantasy staff said customers could change the layout, customise floorplans, move or replace bunks and select their favourite colours and graphics.

The newest Fantasy also boasts a new generation Projecta battery management system with a Bluetooth app for smartphone control and charging ports with USB-C ports.

TOWABILITY

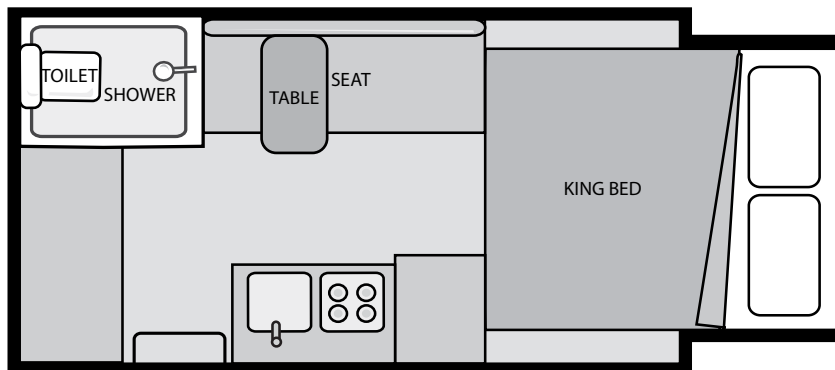
The 15ft 3in Fantasy is relatively hefty for its size at 2430kg empty. You can legally add a 570kg payload for an ATM at 3000kg meaning you will need a higher class of tow vehicle like most of the twin-cab ute style 4WDs that are common in our market. Fantasy chose a Chev 2500, which might be



somewhat over the top for the task, and it's fair to say it had no trouble towing the little FD-15A over our course. The big Chevy is wide enough not to need tow mirrors for the 2.2m (7ft 2in) width and powerful enough to be truthful when we said you could hardly feel it on the back. Oh, and expensive enough to ensure it fits with room to spare down any bushy tracks.

With a 9.9 per cent ball to tare weight (10 per cent on the standard model), the van followed without swaying or pitching. It didn't roll alarmingly in turns, and the need for a wide arc to turn around was purely down to the monster truck, not the Fantasy.

For a more affordable and car park friendly option, this hybrid will suit those mainstays like the Isuzu D-MAX perfectly, and there are plenty of other rear leaf sprung vehicles that won't break the bank.





LIVEABILITY ★

“Having off-grid air conditioning in a trailer is one of my favourite innovations of the past decade”

ABOVE AND BELOW The spacious interior has a comfortable bed, dining area and internal kitchen; Plenty of space to move around in this layout

TIM VAN DUYL
CARAVAN WORLD CREATIVE DIRECTOR

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Standard, the FD-15A comes with 270A of lithium and 400W of solar and an OEM 2000W inverter.

The model we saw at ABH had some upgrades adding 50 per cent more solar and a third battery for totals of 600W and 405A respectively, plus an upgrade to a 2000W Projecta inverter. All of which means you should never see the depths of the battery unless you hammered the air-conditioner – yes that’s right, this setup is enough to fire up and maintain the Gree 2.5kW AC unit.

We saw a miserly 820W consumption from the roof-top air-conditioner, which would allow for a couple of hours a day of use without straining the system too hard or fearing you’ll run out. Should you see a bit of a cloudy patch, when hooked up to the car the 25A DC charger will top up the battery bank quickly, or you can plug it into the wall for 30A from its AC charger. All the power is monitored and controlled by a Projecta PM300 Intelli-RV system, a really good bit of that includes an easy-to-understand LCD and Bluetooth connectivity to an also easy-to-use phone app.

Heating water and cooking uses old-school decomposed trees, aka gas-fed from twin 9kg bottles which are found on

really neat slides making getting them in and out of the front boot a breeze.

The limiting factors in how long you can stay off-grid in the FD-15A are the water and loo capacities. With 200L of freshwater, a couple should see five to 10 days depending on how much time you sing into the shower rose. Park yourself by a clean water source that you can use for showering and you should be good for weeks if it were not for the loo. The standard cassette toilet is likely good for a few days, tops, so a trip to the nearest dump point is a reality. Another consideration is with a calculated 570kg of payload you will need to be careful packing the FD-15A especially if you fill the 200L of freshwater tanks, gas bottles and the fridge.



LIVEABILITY

Having off-grid air conditioning in a trailer is one of my favourite innovations of the past decade. It was not long ago that it was only an option on very high-end trailers but now you can take the edge off of the heat with the flick of a button in an entry-level product with a couple of options.

A really nice touch is the LED strip lighting under the awning. It adds a lot of indirect light to a campsite and across the kitchen and outdoor living area. The kitchen and fridge are at opposite ends of the trailer – my favourite layout as it allows the chef space to work and me an easy line to another drink.

You have the option to cook inside too with a two-burner stove beside a second sink opposite the dinette while 12V fans above the bedhead will help on still, hot nights.

Internal storage is decent with about as many cupboards as you’d expect in a pop-top hybrid but do be careful when loading it all up as the payload limit will come at you quickly.

Important for the buyer of a trailer like the FD-15A, there is good space around the dinette and equally as important, the mattress felt comfortable and inviting while the ensuite is decent, not massive but also not poky. The FD-15A has a really good balance for internal space making it feel comfortable.



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4WD Suspension
FINALIST

LEFT The external slide-out fridge is located at the opposite end of the stove so there's ample room to move in between

MALCOLM STREET
CARAVAN WORLD FIELD EDITOR

EASE OF USE

Setting up the FD-15 is almost child's play. Once unhitched and levelled up, the 'drop-down' corner steadies are quickly positioned. Probably the fiddliest item is setting the rear bed end – lowering spare wheel holders, lifting the roof section and opening the side walls and floor sections. The pop-top roof isn't electrically operated in this model, but in future models, it will be. Consequently, a bit of physical effort is required to lift the roof. Opening the awning is done by pushing a switch, but I don't like electric awnings, so it's not a big feature for me. There are the usual 240V and 12V outlets on the side of the hybrid, easily accessible but the gas bayonet is located under the rear of the hybrid, a little awkward to get at when the bed end is open.

For the external catering facilities, the slide-out kitchen and slide-out fridge are easy to access and located at either end of the hybrid. Adjacent to the kitchen, there's a pantry built into the hybrid wall. In addition, the stainless-steel bench includes a hinged set of racks, adding to the convenience factor. Having a second kitchen area inside with a two-burner hob and stainless-steel sink means catering can happen whatever the weather.

The external storage is quite generous, and the front tunnel boot features several slide-outs (trays and boxes) on both sides, making getting gear in and out easy.

For two people, the internal layout is quite spacious. The bed is in the rear, plus the lounge and kitchen are in the middle area, leaving space up front for the corner bathroom and general storage. It's all very user-friendly.

VALUE FOR MONEY

As reviewed, the FD-15A is priced at \$62,090, which is certainly not the cheapest of the

ABH entrants, but it is more of a mid-range price. Chinese-built, the FD-15 is very well appointed throughout. The package includes any number of brands familiar to Aussie RV users. The towing department has items like the Cruisemaster DO35 hitch, ARK XO 750 jockey wheel, SKF bearings and Pedders shock absorbers. For the bodywork, Aussie Traveller supplied the security door and windows. For domestic and cleaning-up duties, the Dometic hob and Truma hot water heater are readily available from any supplier. Projecta has supplied much of the electrical equipment – the PM300 battery management system, 25A DC to DC charger and 2000W pure sine wave inverter. In keeping with contemporary times when we all have multiple devices, the FD-15A is well equipped with numerous USB-A and USB-C charging ports.

There were several options fitted to our review FD-15A. These included an extra 135Ah lithium LiFePO4 battery (two are standard) and an extra 200W solar panel (400W total is standard). In addition, there's also a Fusion radio upgrade, Dometic dust reduction system, diesel heater and a 95L fridge/freezer unit.

Small things matter too, like the weather fly above the rear bed extension – a simple but value-adding idea from years ago that works very effectively at no cost. For inside cooling, there's the roof-mounted Gree air conditioning but also the more environmentally friendly Sirocco fans. It is much more effective than the cheaper Chinese models.

Value for money is a subjective factor, to say the least. It's not only the nice-to-have features that matter but also the construction techniques, general fit and finish and appointment level. When it's all added up, the Fantasy FD-15A scores quite well.

X-FACTOR

With its FD-15A, Fantasy has gone through some trouble with the 4.65m (15ft 3in) hybrid to create a fairly spacious interior layout, even with the corner bathroom. Adding to the roomy effect are the main body's window area and the gusset insect-screened windows. Having two kitchen areas, one inside and one out, is undoubtedly a bonus, as are the sliding drawer extensions on the fridge slide-out.

One of the features I always look for in any recreational vehicle, be it a caravan, motorhome or hybrid, is storage facilities, both internal and external. Not just empty spaces either but cupboards, bins and lockers that can be effectively used and easily accessible. Fantasy does that quite well in their FD-15A hybrid.

Looks are not a major concern and hybrid vans, by their very nature, tend to be a little boxy. However, Fantasy does a nice job of creating a more pleasing-looking shape and in a world where there is plenty of competition, having an eye-catcher isn't a bad thing. Having something different, like the weather fly above the rear bedroom area, is a good idea, too.

It is interesting that the Fantasy brand is growing in popularity, and there's an expanding dealer network – something essential to handle servicing requirements. 

■ EASE OF USE ★

"Setting up the FD-15 is almost child's play"