

“13 Common Traps, Pitfalls and **Mistakes** That Unsuspecting Camper Trailer Buyers Fall For – *Regularly!*”

These mistakes could cost you as much as \$5,000.00 and cause you countless headaches and endless years of ‘buyers’ remorse’...

Dear fellow camper,

Let’s face it, when you’re making a significant purchase like buying a camper trailer the last thing you want is to be on day two of your camping trip and having thoughts like...

“How on earth did we end up with this lemon?”

That might sound funny to you now, but unfortunately that’s exactly what happens when the uninformed buyer of a brand new camper trailer walks *blindly* through the process of buying something they know *very little* to *nothing* about....

You see, purchasing a camper trailer these days isn’t a simple decision. You’re going to be investing in long term *serious enjoyment* and many wonderful family memories. A camper trailer isn’t something you should shove in your driveway or shed and pull out once a year for your annual holiday.

So whether you buy from us, or our competitors, we want you to be armed with the knowledge and the questions that will help you side-step the shark infested waters of the camper trailer industry.

That sounds a little scary doesn’t it?

However as you’ll soon learn, these 13 common mistakes will cause you unending frustration, unnecessary arguments and a lifetime of *avoidable* regrets and resentment – because that’s what you can expect if you buy the **WRONG** camper trailer.

I bet you didn’t think this could be such a risky exercise, right?

Well let me give you a little background as to why it is...

You see, 22 years ago, when we first began manufacturing camper trailers, there was us and **only 3 other companies**.

Today there are over 200!

That explosion was fuelled by an Australian culture who, perhaps like you and I, are often driven by the pleasurable urge to **go bush...or just go!**

This was great for our industry because the increased competition fuelled some incredible innovation and a compelling desire for **manufacturing excellence**. And it's this desire that led our company to be nominated for the Employer of the Year and won us a scholarship under the Exporter of the Year Awards!

It also won us international acclaim and led us to export our camper trailers to Germany - the nation that, for decades, has been considered the hallmark of engineering excellence. In fact, to date, we are the only Australian company whose engineering competence has won such prestigious recognition and demand.

But what that explosion of the Australian Supply also did, was expose novice buyers to pitfall number one...

Trap, Pitfall and Mistake No.1

Cowboy companies with no experience, operating out of backyards with:

- No quality assurance systems
- Substandard steel
- No after sales service
- Poorly designed operating system
- Substandard canvas manufacturing
- Poor fabric choice

Unfortunately amongst those of us who take a deep interest in your future enjoyment there are always those companies who are in it for a quick buck and often at **your** expense.

How can you avoid pitfall number one?

1. Stick with companies with experience. You'll be rewarded with quality workmanship and manufacturing system that has stood the test of time.
2. Make sure they provide you with a guarantee. For example when you buy a 3 dog Camper Trailer you get a 3 year manufacturing warranty on our workmanship – that's our promise of quality.

So let's say you jump through hoop number one and end up walking through the front door of a reputable manufacturer. What next?

Well the next stage is a little like looking through a Chinese menu. Sometimes there are so many options to choose from that you don't know where to start. And often no-one explains what those options are so that you can decide if that's what you want to order.

So let's take a look at some of the most common ones.

First let's look at flooring and mistake number 2...

Trap, Pitfall and Mistake No.2

Choosing the wrong style of camper

Most people don't know that there are two types of camper trailers that can be bought. Soft Floor or "soft tops" and hard floors.

Let's examine the difference:

"Soft Tops" have a vinyl floor sewn to the walls that sits on the ground when open, and folds on top of the tent & trailer when closed. It should have a "floor saver" ground sheet under the floor when open and a separate travel and storage cover when closed. Advantages of "soft tops"? They're light, ease of use and have tent floor areas far larger than their trailers. Soft Tops also come in small, simple lightweight packages for comfortable couple cruising. Soft Tops are usually cheaper to buy.



Soft Floor camper - closed

A **"Hard Floor"** camper has a roof that hinges through 180 degrees to become the floor. This floor sits above the ground on adjustable legs. The tent size on a hard floor can only be the same size as the trailer/floor size.



Both types can have zip-on awnings or add-a-rooms, to extend their living space.

So...for a family, a **Hard Floor** camper will be the **wrong choice**, similarly for anyone with **diminished physical ability**.

Let's move on to number 3...

Trap, Pitfall and Mistake No.3

Choosing the wrong canvas.

There is currently a huge influx of Chinese-made tents on the market, manufactured with Chinese-made canvas that isn't up to the strength and durability of the Australian made canvases.

Some have proven to be inferior in quality and haven't stood up to the harsher Australian conditions. Others at this time **appear** viable, but its very early days and only time will tell. So while these cheaper canvases will get you into the camper trailer market at a low entry point, your investment may be **fraught with danger**.

Here's why:

- These products are NOT proven over time
- Uncertain warranties
- Unknown material content

Are you ready for a myth-buster?

Well here a little fact that will confront and challenge some very old fashioned and **unsubstantiated** ideas. Then remember this: Choose **QUALITY** over **weight because thicker is not always best!**

There are two basic canvas types. The first is a light weight, polyester/cotton high-thread count, tightly-woven and proofed canvas. The second is a heavier, thicker and less tightly-woven cloth. Both are commonly used in the Australian market.

Our 30 years of exhaustive research and testing has shown us that the lighter, tighter canvas **outperforms** the heavier, thicker canvas. How? It's more stable, shrinks & distorts less, retains its good looks and viability, and because it's lighter it's **much easier to handle**.

Also keep in mind that the more we support an import market the more we punish our quality Australian manufacturers. And as you know, that **inevitably** has a negative impact on our economy. So if you don't want to support the possibility of 18% interest rates that we faced in the eighties, **buy Australian**. You'll be rewarded with quality while avoiding the discomfort and embarrassment that can come from a leaky canvas and screaming kids trying to sleep in a sludge-puddle.

Trap, Pitfall and Mistake No.4

No privacy and poor ventilation in the bed areas.

This is often overlooked and it's the cause of many sleepless nights and even a cause for embarrassment.

Privacy and ventilation are two **very important** factors that you want to make sure have been thoroughly considered in designing the bed area. If these are overlooked here's what you can expect.

1. To find yourself roasting like a baked potato and sweating uncontrollably on a hot summer's night simply because the camper's windows are too small or non-existent. This will leave you with about as much ventilation and oxygen as a 98 year old marathon runner.



Roof Vent allows warm air to rise and escape

2. Poorly designed windows that don't have hoods to prevent weather from seeping in could leave you wet, cold and suffering from extreme hyperthermia...ok maybe that's a little extreme, but I think you get the point. ☺
3. Ok let's be honest. We've all experienced the heightened sense of bodily pleasure that only the wonders of the great outdoors can stimulate. And sometimes we want to be just that little bit more loving and affectionate with our Beloved. Well if you don't want to feel like Layton Hewitt with all eyes staring at him on centre court at the Australian Open, then make sure that the design of the windows includes a hood to cover the window, or an outer cover that can be held out by either ropes or a pole.



** Hood windows allow you privacy and ventilation in the bed area



Trap, Pitfall and Mistake No.5

Poor light in the tent area.

The tent should have lots of natural light coming through big windows and two doors. If manufactured correctly, there is *insignificant* price difference in manufacturing the size of windows provided the designer knows what they're doing.

The last thing you want to be doing is scratching around for things in semi-darkness or using a spot light in broad daylight just because the goose who designed your tent had eyes like a bat - and thought you would too!

Two doors are also ideal because you don't always have a choice of which way you can park your camper. It's also great for easy access and free-flowing ventilation - there's nothing like catching the breeze!



** note the two doors, large windows = lots of light & ventilation!

Trap, Pitfall and Mistake No.6

Poor mesh type on doors and windows.

The mesh on the doors & windows should mozzie *and* midgy proof. Beware of the mozzie-proof doors that haven't been designed with his dwarf-sized brother – the midgy. You know how annoying and frustrating it is to one of those buggers cut loose on you in your big bedroom. Well I can tell you that your bedroom will feel like the Grand Canyon compared to having one of these little suckers in your camper trailer.



** the mesh in this camper is mozzie & midgy proof, but the large size of the windows and doors allows great ventilation

Ventilation is a word I use a lot, because camping is done mostly in summer, and **heat** goes with summer! So, there are two aspects of ventilation you need to be aware of:

1. Large windows & doors plus permanent vent high in the wall for rising air.
2. Internal volume. Increased internal volume helps with climate control. In other words being in bed and being further away from your roof keeps everything cooler. Also look at the options of a having a tropical roof fitted, or using a fly-over. A tropical roof or fly-over is a second roof that shelters the camper, creates air flow between the roof and also shades the camper. The result? You'll breathe easy and feel as cool as a cucumber while others are gasping for air or dowsing their bodies with wet cloths and sponges.

Trap, Pitfall and Mistake No.7

Poor trailer design.

The trailer should also be simple in its inherent design and function. It should be easily handled by one person. The suspension should be suitable to the trailers weight and style, ie, not too light or not too heavy. Too light can fail under load and too heavy will introduce vibration and bounce which will ultimately cause damage to the suspension, structure and contents. Unfortunately the lay person won't have this knowledge and should seek professional advice on the matter. Should you require further help with this, please don't hesitate to contact me via email or phone and I'll happily guide you through to a successful application.

The axle needs to be adequate to the weights involved. Again this can be difficult if you don't know what your doing, and once again seek professional advice for assurance.

Wheels and tyres can be new or used, ***even on some new trailers***. Used wheels should be checked for true balance because these are sought from vehicle recyclers and usually come with ***no guarantee***. Tyres need to be checked for roadworthy. ***New rims & tyres give the assurance of being new and will come with a guarantee***. Matching wheel diameter between the trailer & the car will result in a smoother ride.

The trailer fittings...like stabilizers, wheel mounts, tailgate hardware and any onboard fittings should also be looked at for soundness and function. Any camper trailer requires rear stabilizers and a jockey wheel. These are necessary to stabilize the trailer when parked and prevent tipping.

Trailers are built from various materials and are finished in several ways. Most trailers on the market today are made of Steel and painted or hot dipped galvanised. Others offer aluminium trailers, or a combination of both.

What to buy? – again this is based on personal choice, budget, appearance and location factors, i.e. living coastal - with rusting issues etc. Steel & Steel hot dipped is obviously heavier and once loaded will increase your fuel consumption. Painted steel will need maintenance if you want a trailer without paint chips or surface rust. You'll also need to monitor it closely for rust if living in any coastal area is a possibility in the future.

Aluminium is usually more expensive to manufacture but is lighter and improves the economy of your trip. *It does not rust and no painting or paint maintenance is required.*

Trap, Pitfall and Mistake No.8

Limited access to your “stuff”.

Limited access can lead to complicated packing of the trailer causing more unloading and loading than necessary when accessing various contents.

Access to your “stuff”. This is either gained through the tailgate and usually one other way - either through access under the bed when tent is opened, or by opening up the bed base when the tent is closed. Choice? This is up to you entirely and no one way is better than the other, you just need to be mindful of the sealing of the access, to prevent dust & water from getting inside the trailer.



Full top opening

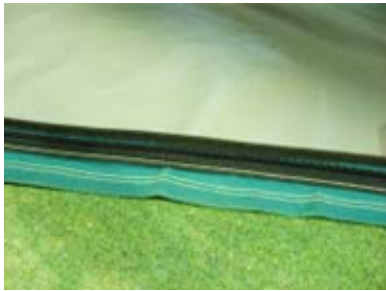
A luggage slide can facilitate access remarkably!

Trap, Pitfall and Mistake No.9

Wrong floor design

Floors – high side or flat? That’s the question. Is there any difference to its functionality? NO, so long as they don’t LEAK. Some customers have said they prefer the higher sides of the vinyl floor to prevent the water coming in. But keep in mind that if its raining that much where water starts to flow through your camping area, its time to pack up and move on! Seriously though, this again is a personal choice, but I do place one bit of advice on the higher door sills, I have seen many people, adults and especially children, rush in and trip over the side, causing undo grief!

A floor, bagged about 60mm, with door sills about 80mm, is the most waterproof and the most ergonomic.



* Bagged floor 60mm high from seam line

Trap, Pitfall and Mistake No.10

Undue consideration to accessories

The accessories like annexes and add-a-rooms should also have the same attributes as the main part of the tent, probably even more so, because this is where you’re going to be spending most of your time away, relaxing, reading with good book or just plain cat napping in between eating well.

The windows should be large and meshed. The floor should be easily cleaned or dusted off. The frame work, for ease of use, should be free-standing and easily handled by one person. The annexe walls should separate or detach from the roof, allowing versatility of set-up style. All these things (which you may not have thought about), make life just that much simpler and the simpler, the quicker you can get on with enjoying your time out.



* large windows in the annexe is a must! This is the place where you do all your cooking & living!

What about the longer than average length of the A-bar?.. Why is this an accessory? It's not, but it is - Confused? If the manufacturer of the camper is smart then they have thought of you and your accessories...things like:

- Room to place a tool box or cone boot
- Storage of bikes, outboard motors etc
- Carrying of spare tyres
- Ease of reversing and towing



What about your kitchen? These are some very important points to consider when looking at your accessories like stoves water etc

- Can you access your kitchen without opening up the whole trailer?
- Is it easy to make a meal & put the kettle on or get the kids a drink without unloading all the contents?
- Is the layout of the kitchen adequate to your needs? In other words, do you have access to stove, water, cooler and kitchen paraphernalia in one area WITHOUT lifting a finger or straining your back?

In all honesty, if you haven't got your camper set up in under 30 minutes (and that's including the annexe and chairs out), there's something very, very, wrong!

Trap, Pitfall and Mistake No.11

Too complex to set up and pack up.

There exist campers with unnaturally complex frames, or frames which do not self support in the opening process or that require more than one person to operate. These will take longer to set up and decrease the enjoyment of camping OR even instigate a decision to not go for short breaks! Some of the worst campers I've seen to date include:

- A camper that kept flopping down when opening, making it impossible to open up by one person...
- A camper that needed guy ropes to actually hold it up...
- One that was so heavy and hard to open that it required two strong folk to open it – so you can imagine that there's no going away for a quiet retreat by oneself...
- And finally a camper that required the poles to be inserted on opening, this was like watching a game of Russian roulette - especially when the partner didn't get the right poles in place the first time...

The tent should be just as easy to open and set up as it is to close and pack up. This is very important. It should be easily opened with one person despite the size. The framework should be simple and user-friendly. The prevention of any domestic dispute in the first 30 minutes of your holiday should be avoided at all costs.

Any seller of a camper trailer, whether it be private sale or through a dealer, should be more than happy to show you how to open & close the tent, if they don't, they could have something to hide!



Trap, Pitfall and Mistake No.12

Buying based on price.

If you've gotten this far you've done well. Now it's time to weigh all of this up and fit it within your budget. But don't make the mistake of being fooled by cheap prices. You know the saying... "You get what you pay for". That's the reason we don't see cheap BMWs - another German engineering masterpiece. So don't skimp on something that's going to give you unending pleasure for decades and perhaps a lifetime. Pay a little extra for quality and you'll be rewarded with hassle-free camping trips, and years of priceless family memories.

Also keep in mind that at some point in the future you may want to upgrade your camper, so buying a quality camper will not only give you greater enjoyment it will also leave more dollars in your pocket from the higher resale price your camper will attract.

Trap, Pitfall and Mistake No.13

Treating Your Camper Trailer like an Antique Item.

So at this stage let's presume that you've bypassed all the landmines and jumped through all the hoops and you've *finally* bought the camper trailer that's right for *you*.

Remember earlier when I said that your camper trailer isn't something you should shove in your driveway or shed and pull out once a year for your annual holiday? Well, unfortunately that's a common mistake people make.

You always need to remember that it's a vehicle that should be ready at the drop of a hat for that quick getaway to a beachside escape, a tropical rainforest, a mountainous ravine or wherever your heart's desire decides to take you.

It's also *extra accommodation* for when guests, and if you have children and the "sleep-over" is on the agenda, then "camping out in the back yard", is the thing to do! If only it keeps them from being away from under your feet, but close enough so you know what's going on!

I hope this report has been helpful, should you require any further information, or if you have any questions (no matter how silly you may think they are) please call Ray on 1300 300 394 or **02 66855460** or send us an email to:

ray@3dogcamping.com

Warmest regards and happy camping,

Ray Grigson and Ngaire McCallum
Directors – 3 Dog Camping Pty Ltd.

P.S If you would like to receive a special report entitled *5 Little-known Ways To Extend the Life of Your Canvas* click on this link www.3dogcamping.com and when you arrive at the page enter your first name and email address into the box and we'll send it to you immediately.