



BUSHWAKKA BHOMA REVIEW

AARON FLANAGAN — 21 NOVEMBER 2019

The Bhoma is, at rest, bright and fresh like a cool savannah breeze and, at play, tough as a rampaging elephant.

Relaxing up on one of the Bushwakka Bhoma's generous gull-wing style double beds, a cool afternoon breeze felt damn good against my sunburnt face. I'd left my hat at home. It was a hot day; upwards of 30 Celsius. The sun had cooked my Melbourne winter moon-tan cheeks to a beetroot red. Cicadas were humming their relentless din. Amid the racket, my mind drifted back to basics, back to past experiences, back to moments of sublime camping peace and tranquility; and also to moments of sodden wet-sleeping-bag-for-weeks mosquito cloud misery. As I lay there rubbing Nivea on my face, chewing the end of my pen and thinking about what impressed me most about the Bhoma, the chill breeze prompted an easy realisation. On a hot day, when the blazing midday sun is at its zenith, the most important aspect of any camping set-up is surely its capacity to provide a sanctuary of cool relaxation.

The Bhoma is a high-set box-style offroad camper with generous, cleverly screened-off, breeze-funneling window openings down each side. Up there, lounging like a cooked King of Siam, about a metre and a half off the ground, I felt very much like I was in a super-luxe safari tent. I was immediately relaxed. It was a great shame I couldn't kick off my boots and drift off for an afternoon snooze. To my mind this is the pinnacle of any interior camper test protocol: the camper's ability to lull you off to sleep. In this instance: Bhoma — tick.

Reluctantly, I snapped out of my reverie, scribbled some notes and stepped down into the generous hall-like space that runs between the Bhoma's two side-folding beds. I stood and looked upwards. Space! Pleasant ergonomic space. I could've jumped up and down if I'd wanted. Shame the South Africa vs England Rugby World Championship final was still yet to play out. If it had of been scheduled during the testing period, we could have hooked a screen up to one of the Bhoma's two 120amp/h deep cycle batteries or plumbed the fruits of its standard-fitted 140 watt solar panel, and tuned in. That would have really given us something to jump up and down about. And it would've been fine. There's ample headroom when standing at full height. I'm about 180cm and there was at least 30cm headroom above me. It's about 2.13m floor to ceiling.

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KING OF THE JUNGLE

'Lion' is almost a byword for Africa. They also once ranged throughout Southern Europe, the Middle East and down into India. These days, due to habitat destruction and inevitable conflict with its bipedal mammalian neighbours, if you fancy seeing a lion in the wild, you'll have to drop in on a pride while on safari in sub-Saharan Africa. But to see an African-style camper, it's not so complicated. Rather than spending 12 hours in a plane humming west over the Indian Ocean, buying a safari suit and pith helmet, then booking a safari from someone with a funny accent called Rudi, you can sample the South African way of appreciating the Veld here in Oz by taking a spin in a Bushwakka Bhoma. This top-of-the-range model from Bushwakka is the latest addition on the African take of offroad, off-grid campers now available in Australia.

BUILT LIKE AN ELEPHANT

The Bhoma's fully galvanised chassis is fitted with a 2500kg axle and 2200kg leaf springs (1100mm), heavy-duty Safari shocks, Diesel Mags (supplied by WheelNation in Narang) with 265/65/17 Monsta Mud Warrior tyres. The Bhoma is clad in a composite of stainless steel and aluminium, comes with a 4.5kg gas bottle and has 170 litres of onboard water. With this type of build quality, the Bhoma is perfectly able to handle the rough stuff. The Bhoma clocks in at a diminutive 1300kg Tare weight and packs to a 1700kg ATM, making it pretty nimble on the towball.

After meeting Bushwakka's Johnny and Annalise, we drove to a bush proving ground nestled in the Gold Coast hinterland to give it a run through. The tow-tug hauled the unit with ease, over deep ruts, up inclines and around sharp bends. Together with the Bhoma's relatively light tow weight, its abbreviated box-style length greatly enhanced its towability. Especially when navigating tight tracks, bordered on all sides by trees; the Bhoma's short overall tow length made it a nifty operator around the tight twisty tree-surrounded tracks.

ENOUGH SPACE FOR A FLOCK OF FLAMINGOS

The Bhoma's bulbous nose cone is basically a large storage compartment for your all your extraneous camp gear: extra swags, tent pegs, cleaning equipment, barbecue and fire equipment and whatever other odds and ends you may decide to bung in. LED lights are conveniently fitted on the underside of the lid, making rummaging for things easier after dark.

Along the back you'll find the step-up entry into the camper itself and a fold out, drop down kitchen unit. The kitchen is beautifully organised and functional, with heaps of clever pantry storage solutions with all well positioned, at arm's reach from the BMS and hot water system. There's good storage for all manner of odds and ends, be it equipment for fishing or storage compartments for climbing carabiners and rope, if that happens to be your game. Larger items, or gear for large parties with diverse outdoor interests may have to be stored in the vehicle.

On the left hand side as you face the back of the unit, beyond the fold-out bed, is the dual zone fridge slide-out. Again, in keeping with the 'everything included' maxim, the Bhoma comes standard with a 90L fridge/freezer.

BHOMA MEANS 'SMALL HUT'

At rest, the Bhoma is dominated by an enormous 360 degree awning that casts a massive footprint of welcoming shade. Many campers these days feature 270 degree awnings, but Bhoma custom manufacture their own 360 degree unit. It creates a unique well-shaded outdoor liveability ecosystem rarely seen in comparable campers on the market. You can stroll front to back and all around without having to put on the old Akubra and shades. It keeps the ground around your camper nice and cool too. Perfect for those of us who like to go barefoot when on holidays in summer.

FANCY A BRAAI?

The kitchen is a simple affair, which, to me, is perfect. Good camp food, like food you prepare at home, depends on the quality of produce and the passion and mood of the chef. That's why those 'kiss the cook' aprons were invented, so I'm told: to keep the chef in a good mood. Hot water to the kitchen and shower comes, again, as standard.

IN SUMMARY

The Bhoma and all other Bushwakka Campers come fully-loaded; simply pack clothes, food and, well, get going.

Johnny tells me that the brand new 2020 model will feature greater emphasis on practical and easily

accessible storage space.

Also, at the back left hand corner there will be a small fridge, 40-50L in size, near the kitchenette. This is in addition to the large 90L dual-zone slide out on the side. Above the rear fridge will be an additional food storage cupboard and inside left corner near the hot water system will be another food storage cupboard. The Bhoma is a camper that's clearly been made with quality time off the beaten track in mind. Featuring beautifully ventilated screened-off and shaded window openings that uncannily direct cool breezes right where they're needed and tough as a rhinos' hide canvas for when the wintery heaven's open up in a rude attempt to penetrate the sanctity of your home away from home. Hot or cold weather, it's a comfortable camper for all seasons.

SPECS

TRAILER

Tare 1300kg

ATM 1700kg

Ball Weight 120kg

Suspension Heavy duty progressive rated 1.1m Leaf springs, with Safari gas shocks

Brakes Mechanical

Coupling Knott

Chassis/drawbar 3CR12 Chassis

Body 3CR12 Stainless Steel and Aluminium Body

Wheels/Tyres Diesel Mags, supplied by WheelNation in Narang with 265/65/17 MONSTA MUD WARRIOR Tyres

Style Off-Road Pop Top

DIMENSIONS

Body size (L x H x W) 2100 x 2100 x 1850mm

Length (hitch to camper tail light) 4350mm

ACCESSORIES

Gas cylinders 1 x bottle

Water 170L onboard capacity

Cooktop Dometic two-burner

Kitchen Unique fold-down kitchen design with practically in mind. Comes complete with all crockery and cutlery to fit

Battery(s) 2 x 120amph Deep Cycle Batteries

Solar 140 watt

Fridge/ Freezer 80L dual zone slide out

Hot water system Hot water to shower and kitchen as standard

PRICED FROM

\$49,500

HITS

- Strong and able offroad
- Surprisingly roomy
- Beautifully positioned gull-wing beds
- Generous standard fitment

MISSES

- Could do with more storage
- Slightly fiddly set-up and pack-up

CAMPER STAR RATINGS

Fit for intended purpose — 8

Innovation — 7

Self-sufficiency — 7

Quality of finish — 6.5

Build quality — 7

Offroadability — 7.5

Comforts — 8.5

Ease of use — 7

Value for money — 8

X-Factor — 8