

The beauty of a Desert Rose

Unscathed from its maiden voyage to Lake Eyre, this desert rose took it all in its stride

WORDS BY PAUL HUTCHINSON PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRETT SHEARER



RATINGS

EXTERIOR	✓✓✓✓
INTERIOR	✓✓✓✓
LAYOUT	✓✓✓✓
KITCHEN	✓✓✓✓
VALUE FOR MONEY	✓✓✓✓
OVERALL	✓✓✓✓

LEGEND

✓ POOR	✓✓ FAIR	✓✓✓ GOOD
✓✓✓✓ BETTER	✓✓✓✓✓ BEST	



EXTERNAL FEATURES

- CHASSIS:** Galvanised 6in draw bar and main member
- FRAME CONSTRUCTION:** One-piece panel
- WINDOWS:** Dometic
- INSULATION:** Beaded polystyrene
- CORNER JACKS:** Drop down
- WASTE WATER COMMON OUTLET:** Yes
- WATER TANKS:** 3 x 90L
- WATER TANK COVERS:** Yes
- COUPLING:** Hyland hitch
- SUSPENSION:** Control rider coil spring
- CLEARANCE:** Off road
- BRAKES:** 12in electric
- WHEELS:** 15in alloy
- TYRES:** 235/75 R15 Savero AT Plus – GT Radial
- AWNING:** Dometic 9000 series
- BOOT(S):** Front
- STONE GUARD:** Padding to front
- GAS CYLINDER SIZE/S:** 2 x 9kg
- HOT WATER:** Truma 14L
- BATTERY:** Rocket – 2 x 130Ah
- BATTERY CHARGER:** Ctek 30A
- SOLAR PANELS:** 2 x Unisolar US-64
- SOLAR PROVISION:** Yes
- ENTRANCE DOOR:** Camec Tri-lock security
- TAP ON A-FRAME:** Yes
- GENERATOR BOX:** Sealed on slide-out
- JERRY CAN HOLDERS:** Yes x 2
- BBQ:** Sovereign Bravo slide-out

EXTERNAL

The Desert Rose may be a bit heavy for its size, but that's because it is packed with so many features. There's the two spare wheels and jerry can holders on the rear bumper bar, the sealed generator box with slide-out tray, the Sovereign Bravo slide-out BBQ located conveniently under the huge rollout awning, the heavy-duty off-road independent suspension, and the unique caravan roof frame that all add to the van's mass but also to its quality.

The Desert Rose is obviously built with care and attention to detail. It comes with a three-year warranty as evidence of its durability. Scott believes in his product and stands behind all his vans.

The smooth sides, front, rear and roof panels all give the Desert Rose a very clean appearance. The splash of colour on the sides combined with the padded stone guard and chequerplate down the sides gives this van a very nice street appeal. You won't be ashamed to pull up in a park with this beauty.

INTERNAL

The layout is a standard layout for Designer's vans, with a few modifications by the owner to add his own personal touch, which Designer was more than willing to accommodate.

The kitchen bench is serviceable and the layout is easy to use. The raised two-door fridge is a real bonus, as none of us like leaning down under the bench to get to a pokey little fridge.



INTERNAL FEATURES

- FRIDGE:** Waeco 190L
- TELEVISION:** Daewoo 19in LCD TV/DVD
- ANTENNA:** Winegard or Saturn
- MUSIC SYSTEM:** Clarion – radio/CD/MP3 player
- COOKING EQUIPMENT:** Spinflo – three gas/one electric grill
- MICROWAVE:** Kambrook 25L
- HEATING/COOLING:** Dometic reverse-cycle air conditioner
- RANGEHOOD:** Dometic CK155
- LIGHTING:** Hybralec – fluoro/LED 12-volt
- SMOKE ALARMS:** Yes
- GAS LEAKAGE DETECTOR:** No
- CUPBOARD FINISHES:** Timber with polyester-coated ply
- TYPE OF LATCHES:** Shell grip – push button
- LOUNGE CONFIGURATION:** Café and couch

- SEATING CAPACITY:** 6
- UPHOLSTERY:** Cloth
- SINK:** Stainless steel bowl
- SLEEPING CONFIGURATION:** Queen bed plus lounge & dinette
- BERTHS:** 4
- BED SIZE(S):** 6ft 6in x 5ft
- MATTRESS:** Innerspring
- UNDER BED STORAGE:** Yes, gas lift
- PRIVACY SCREENS:** Yes
- BATHROOM CONFIGURATION:** Separate shower and toilet
- PRIVACY DOOR:** Curtain screens
- TOILET:** Dometic China Bowl
- TOILET ROLL HOLDER:** Yes
- SHOWER HEAD:** Flexible slide head
- WASHING MACHINE:** No
- TOWEL RACKS:** No

Most manufacturers provide us with RVs fresh off the production line. That was not the case with Designer Vans; the team introduced us to the Desert Rose, just back from its maiden voyage to Lake Eyre with its new owner, Gary Roberts. There was evidence of red dust and a few close shaves with the odd tree. It proved to be a testament to the durability of its construction and endurance.

Designer Vans is located in north-east Victoria, three hours drive from Melbourne. The company specialises in building custom-built caravans to suit individual needs. When purchasing a van through Designer Vans, you deal directly with the owners, Scott and Barb, and they encourage you to visit their factory while your van is under construction.

Scott says the business is very much a partnership. Barb has quite a lot to do with design and colour selection, not to mention the most difficult of jobs – putting up with all the boys (workers) and me.

Excellent value for money

Designer Vans in conjunction with Accessavan also specialises in wheelchair-access caravans. Scott has been manufacturing vans for five years now after he built his own van to suit his family's needs. This same van has been reconstructed several times as Scott tests out new ideas in a very practical way before they ever go to the production line.

I was quite impressed with the aptitude of this man, a builder by trade, who test tows every caravan that comes off his production line, along the same long trek, to ensure they all meet every requirement. Then he makes any necessary adjustment before the van is introduced to its new owners. Scott and Barb listen to what their customers say about their vans, and whenever they can, they incorporate their ideas into production.

We towed the Desert Rose with a Nissan Patrol 3L turbo diesel, and they made a fantastic couple. The Desert Rose sat very steady and the Nissan was ready for action.





The café dinette is roomy and the table is removable, which is a nice feature. The lounge opposite has a removable backrest and it all serves the occupants well. The only negative to this layout is the wheel arch in the bedroom; however, the Desert Rose has lined this section to allow the owners to walk over the top of these without tripping over.

The bedroom has the separate shower and toilet leading from it, and there is a dividing curtain for privacy at the entrance to the bedroom. The toilet and shower also have their own doors.

All the cupboards are well sanded and the cupboard corners are well mitred. The attention to detail is everywhere and will satisfy many a buyer.

Test tows every caravan that comes off his production line



WORTH BUYING?

With the freedom to deal directly with the man who is going to build your van and have input into every area of your van's construction, the Desert Rose becomes a very attractive proposition. It represents excellent value for money and a very good build quality, all at an affordable price. ■



TECHNICAL SPECS

MAKE/MODEL: Designer Vans – Desert Rose
CHASSIS NUMBER: 08722-23
EXTERNAL BODY LENGTH: 6.1m (20ft)
EXTERNAL WIDTH: 2.44m (8ft)
VIN TARE WEIGHT: 2340kg
BALL WEIGHT: 260kg
RRP: \$62,000

NB: length and width are external measurements of the vehicle shell (and awning) only

CONTACT/THANKS

CONTACT PERSON: Scott French & Barbara Rourke
COMPANY NAME: Designer Vans Pty Ltd
ADDRESS: 62 Newman Street, Wangaratta VIC 3676
PHONE: (03) 5721 4800
FAX: (03) 5721 6500
EMAIL: designervans@bigpond.com
WEBSITE: www.designervans.com.au

LAYOUT KEY

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|-----------------|-----------|
| 1. Bed | 5. Table |
| 2. Kitchen | 6. Fridge |
| 3. Café dinette | 7. Shower |
| 4. Lounge | 8. Toilet |

