

Make The Discovery

Words by Gil Schott Photography by Robb Cox



If you have a flair for discovering out-of-the-way places, this off-road pop-top may be just what you need

Judging by people's reactions at recent shows I've attended, today's caravan buyers are showing an increasing interest in off-road vans. There's no doubt that getting to 'out of the way' places is gaining more of a following and the ability to be independent of the power grid for a few days is becoming more attractive to vanners.

Mind you, the vanner's version of getting 'off the road' does not necessarily mean climbing massive dunes, lurching over car-sized boulders or swimming creeks with just the snorkel, exhaust and TV antenna poking above the water. It's more a case of poking into the back-blocks and working your way into quiet little campsites where the family Falcon towing a blacktop tourer wouldn't dare to venture. The Discovery, the latest model from Bill Deralis at Royal Flair, suits this activity perfectly.

On The Outside

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The Royal Flair Discovery has the robust style of the classic off-roader, from the chequerplate skirts to the upswept tail, but there's a bit more to this van than rugged good looks. It's solid right the way through.

The Discovery is clad in aluminium over a meranti timber frame, mounted on a solid hot-dipped galvanised chassis. Aluminium chequerplate is fitted on the front, sides and rear, and the rear end is upswept for additional clearance in creek crossings and similar caravan callisthenics.

Up front on the A-frame there's an aluminium chequerplate toolbox with a jerry can holder on each side and two 4kg gas bottles mounted forward of it. There's a water tap mounted on the driver's side of the A-frame and a Hyland off-road coupling keeps the van following the vehicle. In the front locker



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there's dual-battery storage and a Cristec battery charger. There's also a handy light inside the locker. The dolly wheel has twin clamps with both clamping levers on the same side. This could easily lead to skinned knuckles and they could have been better positioned.

On the driver's side there are power and water inlets, a TV antenna jack and a radio aerial. On the passenger side there's a grab handle and light at the door, low-voltage inlet, power outlet and an outside light. A spare tyre is mounted on the rear bumper and the tail-lights are mounted high and easily seen.

A Dometic awning is fitted on the passenger side. Deploying this is easy once you get used to it and learn its idiosyncrasies, or so I'm told, but for some odd reason this type of awning and me seem to be enemies. Still, we got it done eventually.

The awning material is attached to the pop-top, so this needs to be deployed part-way, with the door closed, before you 'pop'. Popping the top is comfortable with the Pop Top Easi Lifters that use a neat lever system.

Underneath, the water tank is tucked up between the chassis members and well shielded by a galvanised cover. Indeed, the entire floor is clad in gal sheeting. The Control Rider independent suspension features coil spring and shockers with leading A-arms. This is heavy-duty suspension that will handle some pretty rough terrain. Drop-down corner legs provide stability when parked and the wiring and plumbing is tucked up out of the way of snags and such.

In The Kitchen

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The kitchen is sited up front and is user friendly. Along the front wall there's a bench with a slide-out pantry and narrow drawer beneath, and two power-points on the wall alongside. Alongside that there's a Dometic Spinflo Minigrill

Right: A nice big analog clock sits over the rangehood. Funny, but I reckon time seems less important when you're out bush
Below: The kitchen is mounted up forward and is pretty user friendly. Benchspace is good. Note the hatch in the corner that conceals a lift-out basket for more storage



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four-burner stove with grill underneath, and two cupboards beneath. The stainless steel sink has both mains pressure and pump taps and a good drip tray on the right. Beneath the sink there are two good cupboards and a knife drawer.

Above this section there are two overhead lockers, a Swift rangehood over the stove and a clock in the bulkhead above it, and a fluoro light over the sink. The forward window provides light and air to the kitchen (together with the door) and there's a main light overhead.

The kitchen section turns down the driver's side to accommodate the Waeco 90L three-way fridge. There's a goodly bench above that and in the corner of the kitchen there's a pull-out hatch that

exposes lift-out basket storage under the bench. Above the fridge there's a NEC microwave.

Throughout the kitchen, and indeed the whole van, all the cupboards and trims are nicely finished in a rich melow timber.

At The Dinette

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The dinette is located on the passenger side and features a longish lounge with a moveable drop-down table that will convert to another bed. The dinette will seat three comfortably and there's plenty of storage under the bench.

Opposite the dinette is another long lounge that will seat three in comfort.

Bottom: The dinette/lounge layout is pretty neat. There's lots of room to stretch out and relax and plenty of elbow room at the table. Below: The lever top poppers are great. They make popping the top easy as pie



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Above: The bedroom area is comfy (if you like singles) and there is plenty of storage space in cupboards, overhead lockers and under the beds

There's storage underneath and the DNA stereo system control overhead next to the microwave. Speakers are mounted in the roof over the kitchen and bedroom, so you'll get the stereo effects right there in the lounge/dinette. There are windows on each side that provide light and air, fitted with curtains and insect screens.

At the bedroom end of the lounge and dinette there are narrow benches ideal for resting a bowl of nibbles and a cold drink. Above the bench on the driver's side there are mains and 12V power points and a TV antenna jack. There are reading lights over both lounge and dinette. Overhead there are four long lockers, two each side.

In The Bedroom



The Discovery we checked out had two single beds, but a double bed is obviously an alternative configuration. There's lots of storage under the beds and there's a power point and reading light adjacent to each bed, with a main light in the roof. Between the beds there's a wardrobe

with twin mirrored doors and just forward of these there's a roomy bedside table with a drawer and cupboard under.

Overhead is a stack of lockers and curtained, screened windows next to each bed provide fresh air. Screened vents in the pop-top skirts right around the van also keep the air circulating.

In the twin-bed configuration, there's plenty of room in the bedroom, and if a flat-screen telly were mounted on the bench at the end of the driver's side bed, there'd be no problem lazing back watching the box.

Worth Buying?

The Royal Flair Discovery is built to take some rough treatment. Underneath, where it all counts when roads turn into tracks and the going gets a bit rugged, this van has the strength to inspire confidence. It's got all the comforts of a blacktop tourer, too, so you can get out into the sticks without having to rough it.

If you like to get away from the tar and vanpark side of caravanning and do your own thing in the scrub, the Royal Flair discovery is well worth a look. **C&M**

FACT FILE

Manufacturer:	Royal Flair Caravans
Model:	Discovery
Length (internal):	16ft (4.9m)
Length (external):	17ft (5.2m)
Width (external):	7ft 6in (2.3m)
Tare Weight:	1584kg
Ball Weight:	200kg
Price as Tested:	\$39,999 (plus ORC)

(Note: Sydney Caravan and Camping Centre has a neat cash back arrangement where you can claim up to \$10,000 on this model.)

THANKS TO

Paul Hutchinson at Sydney Caravan and Camping Centre Pty Ltd for lending us the Discovery.

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The gang at Nepean River Caravan Park for allowing us to play in their beaut camping area.

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