



TOUGH & stylish

Elegant, and with plenty of rough road guts, Royal Flair's Tuff Roder caravan will go that little bit further.



While not actually having anything to do with the folk who live at Pall Mall, London SW1A 1AA (aka Buckingham Palace), Royal Flair is a company that has a certain, shall we say, stately air about it.

Like any royal, the company, currently under the management of Bill Deralas, has a respected pedigree in the caravan industry, having been around since 1975, all that time in the hands of the Deralas family.

Royal Flair produces a large range of caravans – everything from small pop-tops to the lordly Manor – including rigs built especially for those who like to explore the more remote parts of Australia off the bitumen.

It was Royal Flair dealer Queensland RV that introduced the rough road range with its Tuff Roder model. It's available from other dealers as the Van Royce Discovery, but the Tuff Roder, with a few extra goodies, is available exclusively from Queensland RV – David Bellis is the person to see about a prospective purchase.

CW's review Tuff Roder was built especially for a customer, Jim Gorman, who wanted a single bed layout, mainly to achieve a sense of flexibility with whom he goes away with. Jim has owned caravans previously, but wanted a van that he could take to the front line during his fishing trips, rather than leave it in the nearest caravan park.

At nearly 20ft (6.1m) long and with a Tare weight of just over 2500kg, this

Above and right: Royal Flair's Tuff Roder is made for the rough road traveller. **Above right:** The Tuff Roder rides on tandem axle independent suspension.

Tuff Roder is definitely in large 4WD towing territory – in Jim's case a Nissan Patrol is used.

CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT

Built on a hot dipped galvanised chassis, like many rough road vans, the Tuff Roder rides on tandem axle independent suspension, in this case a trailing arm setup built by Control Rider. The chassis is built with 6in x 2in rails.

Although the drawbar features the usual items found on a caravan – jockey wheel, handbrake and a pair of gas cylinders – it also has a couple of additions in common with camper trailers – a Highlander AT35 tow coupling, two jerry can holders, and a checkerplate aluminium toolbox.

The latter is in addition to the front boot, in which there are two 100Ah deep-cycle batteries.

One of the features of this van is that there is a considerable amount of external storage. In addition to the front toolbox and boot, there's a storage bin at the front nearside and a sizeable ventilated bin at the rear offside – designed for a generator, we suspect.

At the rear is a solid looking bumper with curved ends and the necessary spare wheel. Something to remember



Above: A two-tier pantry separates the Vitrifrigo compressor fridge and the full Caprice oven.

Above right: The Tuff Roder layout is economical in its use of space.



with any van like this is that the spare wheel and bumper bar can add about 20in (500mm) to a van's length, which may not matter for many people but, if storage length is critical, it might be a problem.

While mentioning the spare wheel, the Tuff Roder comes with 16in wheels and these can be matched

to the tow vehicle if you are so inclined.

Clearly some outdoor living is planned with this van. In addition to the usual awning, there is a hinged picnic table and a slide-out barbecue at the front of the van.

A slight disadvantage of this setup is that the barbecue location means the awning arm has to be set back, thus blocking the front side window from opening unless the awning is out.

BACK TO NATURE

Inside the Tuff Roder, the layout has a generous kitchen area along the nearside, front single beds, mid nearside kitchen, and a rear nearside corner

bathroom. This particular layout is an interesting example of the compromise that is required in van design. Some people opt to have a full width bathroom, which of course means less space for other things.

In this case, though, the owner has opted for a small bathroom and a generous kitchen area. It's not a case of one design being better than the other, but more of a personal preference.

The decor is the timber look on the cabinets and walls, but a lighter stain has been used, which is good because the windows are relatively small. Wooden pelmets adorn each hopper window.

Above the kitchen, a Four Seasons

hatch supplies the ventilation, as does a Polar Aire fan hatch at the front. For keeping cool, a centre-mounted Dometic reverse-cycle air-conditioner is used.

The kitchen features a generous benchtop area and storage space that consists of cupboards, a slide-out pantry, drawers, and multiple overhead lockers.

At the forward end of the bench is a two-door Vitrifrigo compressor fridge near a full Caprice oven, and in the rear corner is a stainless steel sink with two basins. The microwave is set high above the oven and rangehood.

Four under-locker halogens illuminate the benchtop and there's a ceiling

fluorescent as well. Behind the bench are twin 240V powerpoints at either end, plus one 12V socket at the front end.

Above the fridge, a small locker contains the essential electrics – fuses, a solar panel regulator, 240V circuit breaker, hot water switch and tank level indicators – all easily located.

Alongside the locker is an AM/FM radio and CD player. This must be the entertainment area because, on the bedroom side of the fridge, a flatscreen TV is mounted, such that it can be swivelled to be seen from either the bedroom or dinette.

Opposite the kitchen is a dinette and table that will fit the grandchildren if they

Top: This Tuff Roder was built with two single beds to provide flexibility with sleeping arrangements. **Above:** A neat compartment for essential electrics.

come along for the trip. Above the dinette are lead-lined, glass-fronted storage lockers, and below is the usual under-seat storage area, partly taken up by the wheel arch.

There is a drawer at one end and a small door at the other. Lighting consists of under-locker halogens and an overhead fluorescent.



Left: The flatscreen TV swivels to face either the dinette or bedroom. **Below:** The ensuite has all the essentials.

The bathroom, in the rear nearside corner, is compact, but all the essentials are there, including a height flexible hose shower, Thetford cassette toilet, and a wash basin.

The shower door is translucent, thus giving a slightly more spacious feel to the inside of the bathroom.

At the front end of the caravan, two 6ft x 2ft 8in (1.83m x 800mm) single beds with innerspring mattresses sit on either side of the van. Between the beds is a central wardrobe with cupboard and drawer below and both beds have a small shelf behind them.

Underneath the beds are storage areas that are accessible by a top hatch and floor lockers.

Part of the nearside bed area is occupied by the slide-out barbecue.

In keeping with the rough road 'get-away-from-it-all' theme of this Royal Flair, it is fitted with two 100Ah batteries (as mentioned earlier), a 20A charger, two 85W solar panels with 30A regulator, and the option for a 2kVA generator.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The Tuff Roder definitely has a lot going for it. It has been built with a 'fitness for purpose' in mind and is well fitted out for the traveller who likes to get off the bitumen.

A downside, if there is one, is that the van has a relatively high Tare weight, meaning a large tow vehicle will be required and that should be kept in mind if you are considering purchasing one of these vans.

Inside, the layout is user friendly. The kitchen area in particular should keep many travelling chefs quite happy and that outside barbecue should keep the fisherfolk more than happy.

Queensland RV, 248 Nicklin Way, Warana, Qld 4575, (07) 5493 4699, email: northcom@iprimus.com.au, web: www.queenslandrv.com.au Visit www.royalflair.com.au for your nearest dealer.

Royal Flair Tuff Roder

External length	19ft 7in (6m)
External width	7ft 8in (1.51m)
Interior height	6ft 4in (1.93m)
Nameplate ATM	2941kg
Nameplate GTM	2673kg
Nameplate Tare weight	2541kg
Frame	Timber
Chassis	Hot dipped galvanised
Suspension	Independent Control Rider
Cooktop	Caprice cooktop/grill/oven
Fridge	Vitrifrigo DP2600 240L
Microwave	Sanyo
Shower	Yes
Toilet	Thetford
Lighting	12V
Gas	2 x 9kg
Fresh water tank	2 x 90L
Price	\$68,900 including on-road costs

liked

- General interior layout, which is spacious and relatively well fitted out
- The generous kitchen area is fully fitted out and offers good benchtop space
- Good external storage areas

now I'm being picky

- A different style awning so front window could be opened with the awning
- A drawer under the sink drainer, rather than just a soap container
- Larger catches on the cupboards and doors

floorplan

