



Appealing APOLLO

Apollo Motorhomes deals with hire vehicles and motorhomes for touring. The Apollo rigs are built by Talvor Motorhomes, and if customers have liked what they hired, they can buy one through Talvor

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANTHONY KILNER



A tunnel boot offers plenty of storage



The dinette is where extra passengers can travel



The forward dinette converts to a bed as well

The hire company, Apollo, started back in 1985 with one vehicle available for hire over the weekends. Since then, the company has grown to include nine offices around Australia and two in New Zealand. The company employs around 150 people, which is an amazing leap from where it began just over 20 years ago. This family-owned business has around 1500 vehicles on the books, which range from 2WD cars to 4WD campers and the six-berth motorhomes such as the one we are reviewing.

When motorhomes are hired, they come with a starter pack (coffee, tea, mini shampoo and conditioner, salt and pepper, dishwashing liquid, soap and a sponge) and maps, guides, linen and 'living' equipment as it is referred to in an info pack. The guts of this means that when you pick up your motorhome, you get a bunch of goodies and plenty of instruction and help to ensure your holiday is a great one.

While this review is on an Apollo unit, we must point out that Talvor builds motorhomes for Apollo to Apollo's

specifications. When buying a Talvor unit itself, the specs can be quite different and even more luxurious. Apollo buys and hires out the basic units that will stand up to the punishment tourists mete out, which would certainly indicate that the Talvor product will stand up to pretty much anything!

THE VEHICLE

This VW Crafter is pretty awesome with its 2.5L turbo-diesel with inter-cooler that delivers a whopping 350Nm of torque at just 2000 revs and 120kW

at 3,500 revs. Coupled to a six-speed auto box, this baby is built for cruising the highway. The stated fuel economy is around 17L per 100km on the highway, which means the 75L fuel tank will get a range somewhere around the 440km mark. Obviously, that's just the simple math and in reality it could change dramatically.

For the bucks you get power everything from mirrors to steering, air-conditioning, CD player and a new vehicle to boot if you purchase it new. There are quite a few optional extras

that can be fitted, so it's worth talking to Talvor to tailor a package to suit. The VW is covered by a three-year/100,000km warranty. In hire mode there is a 24-hour roadside service policy in place just in case.

On this photo shoot, the VW-powered along easily with the auto making life simple around the twists and turns of Brimbank Park. On the road it accelerated smoothly to the speed limit, so although our drive was short, I reckon this Dub could be the ticket for touring!

ON THE OUTSIDE

Body-wise, the Apollo body is big, bold and looks the goods with foam composite sandwich-construction fibreglass. The exterior is finished off smoothly, while the interior walls are trimmed with marine-grade carpet. The body of the Apollo is built on an aluminium frame that offers toughness and insulation in the one package. The windows are Hopper slide and vent style, and look very trendy in the fibreglass body of this rig.



A nice and clean layout



Cooking here could be a bit squishy

Sometimes simplicity is the way to go for longevity, and that's what you get with this Apollo. On the passenger side of the body there is one door to secure the twin 4kg gas bottles, and another to access the full-width tunnel boot at the rear of the unit. The entry has a drop step, door light and security door, with a Fiamma awning and an awning light also fitted on the passenger side.

On the driver's side of the unit is a door that lifts up to expose the battery on a slide-out unit, a door for the rear tunnel boot, and another door to access the Thetford toilet cartridge. There are the usual vents and power points, but the exterior is basic and practical, with the only hitch being the lack of a catch to hold up the battery door when it is pulled out.

Aside from this missing catch and a broken latch for the access door, there was very little to pick on with the exterior of the Apollo. It is certainly a very functional design.

ON THE INSIDE

So, where to start once you are inside the Apollo? You can access the living area from the cabin or via the door at the front of the body. Above the main cabin is a two-berth bed complete with foam mattress, windows and lights. The ladder to access this area is strapped to the rear wall when the vehicle is mobile.

Behind the driver's seat is a club dining area complete with four seatbelts for the passengers. I should mention that this vehicle is fully engineered for six people and includes two child seat anchor supports. A central table drops down and the base of the seat extends to form another bed ready and cosy for two more people. A curtain slides across to separate the cabin from the living areas when required.

The next room along on the driver's side of the van is the ensuite, which is full fibreglass and features a Thetford toilet, drop-down sink and a mirror. There is just enough space in this room to be practical.

At the back of the van is the lounge area, which is bright and airy. And guess what? It converts into yet another bed for the final two people in the six-person holiday. This space is great and can be screened off for privacy.

The kitchen area runs along the passenger-side wall from the rear lounge area to the door. Appliances include an LG microwave, Smev three-burner gas cooker and sink combo unit complete with flick mixer and glass lid. Above the stove is a Dometic rangehood. Water is pumped via a Flojet 12V pump with hot water supplied via a Suburban gas-only unit.

Cool air flows from an Air Command unit also mounted in the overhead cupboard above the kitchen. Entertainment-wise, a Palsonic TV is supplied with a DVD player in-built. The VW's radio is connected to the speakers in the living area to listen to CDs or community stations while travelling.

Storage-wise, there are plenty of overhead cupboards around the roof line and space under the middle-row seats.

There's certainly enough room to hoard everything you'd need for a great holiday.

As part of the hire deal, enough bedding, plates, cutlery and cooking gear is supplied to suit six people, so customers can fly into an area with only their clothes, and then jump aboard and head off while leaving the food shopping to be done at their convenience.

I liked the layout of the Apollo and its ability to handle six people in relative comfort. The overall quality and construction of the motorhome was neat and finding any faults was hard. I reckon I'd enjoy going away in one of these motorhomes with just two of us so that we had all the extra space on offer.

WRAP-UP

There's a lot to be said for the 'try before you buy' scenario. A six-berth motorhome may not be everyone's first choice, but for a family of four or more, it offers plenty of sleeping space and internal room for everyone to have a space of their own.



An all-in-one bathroom



The rear dinette is lovely and converts to a big bed

The beauty of the hire experience really boils down to the fact that if it is a great success, the customer knows exactly what will work and what ideas they may be able to change to suit the individual lifestyle. At this point, Talvor is the place to visit and view the expanded range on offer for sale.

The overall quality of fit and finish was very good, and aside from a few small things that would be easily fixed, I reckon it is a good thing. The price tag of just under \$130K is reasonable when you look at the whole package. ■

RATINGS

THE VEHICLE:	8.5/10
ON THE OUTSIDE:	7.5/10
ON THE INSIDE:	8.5/10
IN THE KITCHEN:	8.5/10
AT THE DINETTE:	8/10
IN THE BEDROOMS:	8.5/10
KEEPING CLEAN:	8/10

SPECIFICATIONS

MANUFACTURER:	Talvor Motorhomes
MODEL:	Euro Deluxe
VEHICLE:	VW Crafter
INTERNAL LENGTH:	5.03m (16ft 5in)
EXTERNAL LENGTH:	7.20m (23ft 6in)
INTERNAL WIDTH:	2.14m (7ft)
EXTERNAL WIDTH:	2.30m (7ft 5.5in)
TRAVEL HEIGHT:	3.10m (10ft 2in)
TARE WEIGHT:	3660kg
PRICE:	\$129,990

RENTAL CONTACT

Apollo Motorhomes
 698 Nudgee Rd Northgate Brisbane 4013
 Tel: (07) 3265 9200 or Freecall 1800 777 779
 Email: info@apollocamper.com
 Web: www.apollocamper.com

SALES CONTACT

Talvor Motorhomes
 3/38 Fraser Road, Northgate, Brisbane 4013
 Tel: (07) 3265 9230
 Email: sales@talvor.com
 Web: www.talvor.com

THANKS

We visited the Apollo branch in Melbourne, which cleverly enough is not far from Melbourne Airport. We'd like to thank Klaus Hampel for his time driving the motorhome around and setting up the beds during this photo shoot, plus providing plenty of background on the company in Melbourne.

BRIMBANK PARK

Special thanks go to the rangers at Maribyrnong Valley Parklands, which incorporates Brimbank Park, Horseshoe Bend Farm and Greenvale Reservoir, for allowing us to photograph the Apollo Camper within the park grounds.

We visited the Brimbank Park area which includes some brilliant areas with play equipment, BBQs, large grassy areas and plenty of shady trees. Bike and walking paths are well marked. It is a fantastic place to visit roughly 15km north-west of Melbourne.

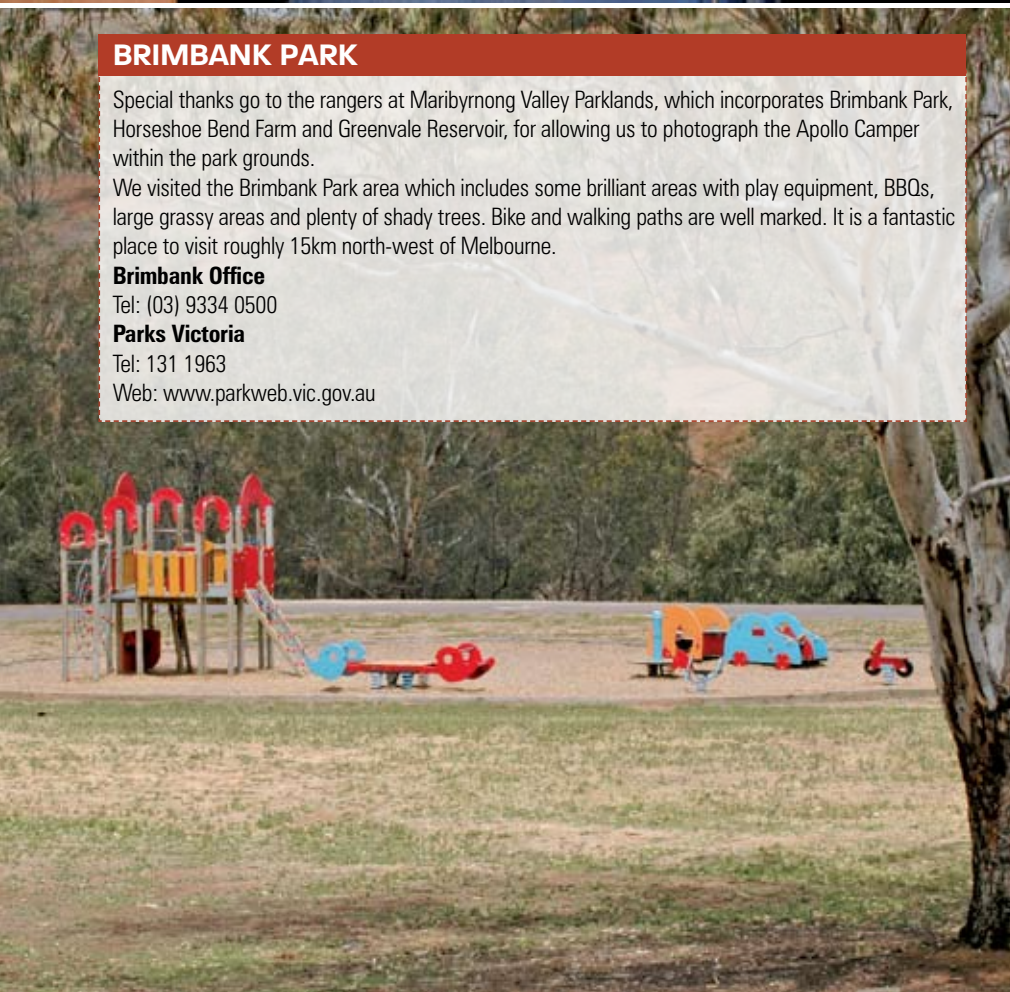
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KEY

1. Roof bed
2. Dinette seats
3. Dinette table
4. Kitchen
5. Bathroom
6. Rear lounge/bed

