

# Caravan Review - Tvan Tanami



## Tvan Tanami 2007 Caravan Review

### Fast Facts

|                                |                  |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Manufacturer</b>            | Track Trailers   |
| <b>Model</b>                   | Tanami           |
| <b>Country of Manufacturer</b> | Australia        |
| <b>Vehicle</b>                 |                  |
| <b>Length/Width/Height</b>     | 4400/1860/2050mm |
| <b>Tare/Gross/Kerb Weight</b>  | 750kg            |
| <b>Towball down load</b>       | 110kg approx     |
| <b>Price</b>                   | \$35,765 + ORC   |

### Verdict

- + Distinctive appearance is actually useful  
Bed can be accessed without full set-up
- Pump-action tap might get knocked around during arduous off-road treks

### Rating (out of 5)

★★★★★

### Contact

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### Any Track Trailer

The revolutionary Tvan camper trailer re-wrote the off-road rules seven years ago. Allan Whiting enjoyed a reunion with this iconic go-anywhere camper.

When Track Trailer released the Tvan in 2000 it made most other camper trailers look decidedly old-fashioned. Some competitors dismissed the Tvan as a design study, but the Track Trailer military-vehicle-pedigree showed through in practicality that few trailers could match. Seven years down the track the Tvan remains a stand-out design with features many bush travellers wouldn't live without.

You don't need to be told that the Tvan is different from its competitors, because the Tvan looks unlike anything else on the market. Careful colour-contrasting in the paint scheme highlights the differences and, seven years on the Tvan still looks futuristic.

### Talking technically

Many camper trailers have a lift-over-floor design, in which the trailer 'roof' hinges aft, taking the tent section with it, to become a hard floor. This design is popular, because it's very quick to open.

The Tvan's hard floor is in two, hinged parts that transport on the back of the unit. It folds down in about the same time that a lift-over-floor design does, but the tent section needs to be unfolded separately. This takes more time, but Track Trailer points out the advantages: a wet tent folds up well away from the bedding and any drips fall on the rear floor of the van. There's also more under-bed storage space with the Tvan design.

Another Tvan advantage is that in lousy weather the floor can be unfolded quickly and the travellers can leap into bed, closing the hard access door behind them. There's no need to unfold the tent at all. It's a close environment, but it's leak and flap free. If the rear of the trailer faces the weather the roof hatch can be cracked open for ventilation.



An optional insect-proof mesh panel can cover the entire access opening, so the bed can be used without opening the tent.

Under normal conditions the tent section is unfolded after the floor is levelled.

The basic tent section folds into the rear access panel moulding that becomes part of the roof when opened. The folded tent is held in place by a zip-on mesh cover that allows it to 'breathe'.

Erecting the tent is simply a matter of swinging the captive roof bow into place, propping it up at both corners with extendable poles, then slipping the floor tensioning shock cord over the retaining buttons on the floor sides.

The finishing touches are unzipping the mesh side doors and slotting the back wall 'bench' into place, between the canvas and the support poles. For longer stays the annexe sections can be zipped on.

With an overall width of 1860mm and a height of 2050mm, the Tvan tucks in neatly behind most tow vehicles. The Tvan tips the scales at 750kg empty and can cope with a payload of 500kg. Brakes are electric off-road-rated drums and there's the expected cable-operated handbrake.

Track Trailer has supplied light trailers to the Australian Army since the 1990s and to do so, had to come up with a suspension design that would provide durability, good ride quality for transporting sensitive equipment and off-road capability. The same MC2 asymmetric link, trailing-arm suspension is used in Track Trailer's civilian trailers.

The layout consists of a pair of tubular cross-over swing axles that have a wide arc of travel and up to 250mm suspension travel. Fore and aft location is by long trailing arms. This design reduces the camber change that is typical of short-pivot

independent arrangements, so handling is stable, with inbuilt self-steering characteristics and very little bump-steer action.

The axle tubes are located at slight angles to the chassis rails, with offset stub axles, so the coupling-to-wheel-end dimensions are identical for right and left sides. Springs are coils, damped by quality Koni shock absorbers.

The chassis is hot-dip galvanised after assembly for maximum corrosion protection.

Military tow-test experience shows in drawbar dimensions that allow the trailer to track tightly in off-road conditions.

### **There's always room for improvement.**

As good as the Tvan is we feel some aspects could be improved upon.

- The hinged floor can be awkward to handle and align on uneven ground. However, if the two halves locked together once unfolded, there'd be less chance of getting a finger jammed between them.
- The levelling legs are fiddly and should be replaced by captive legs that stow away on the floor panels
- The elastic that holds the tent floor in place is a tad crude. We like the general idea of the bench that attaches with Velcro and cords to the tent wall, but I wouldn't trust my last cold tinnie to stay upright on it. This thin plywood panel needs a more positive location.

### **On the inside**

Our evaluation Tvan Tanami came from Alan Graham's Caravans and RVs, of North Gosford, NSW. This well respected dealership is now a Tvan distributor.

Towing and manoeuvring the Tvan behind our Land Rover Discovery 3 was a doddle. The proportions, suspension design, weight distribution, with less than 100kg on the fully articulating AT35 coupling, and the Tvan's wedge shape combined to give straight tracking under all on-road conditions. Off-road it trailed in the Disco's wheel tracks with very little cut-in. On tracks where we did have to back up and fiddle a little, it was reassuring to know the back-end of the Tvan is all-metal, with no vulnerable bits.

The only item we feel is exposed to bush damage is the manual fresh water pump on the left-hand side. It would be more secure if it was tucked inside the bodywork.

We loved the roll-out galley arrangement that can be set up for a quick bite on the road without having to open the van. The gas line reaches from the drawbar-mounted bottles to the stove without the need to unpack a bottle and we liked the snap-connector on the line. There are ample power outlets and the circuit breakers and battery voltage instruments are easily seen.

The fold-down panel on the back of the Tvan is a useful addition since we last checked out this camper trailer. It's handy for securing firewood or rubbish bags.

### **In the end**

We like the Tvan, we really do, and if you're keen to get out and into some of Australia's tighter corners then it's a tough camper to go past. It isn't cheap at \$35,765 (plus on-road costs) but then quality never is.

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