



When it comes to towing big US-style fifth wheelers, you don't have to splash out on a pricy tow vehicle with a monster engine.

In recent years there have been quite a few larger US-style fifth wheelers appearing on our roads, which leaves buyers having to make a further decision – which tow vehicle should they purchase to haul the thing?

In many cases it is limited to something like a Ford F350 or an imported US-style SUV like a Chevy Silverado or a Dodge Ram. In the latter case, it can be quite an expensive purchase, and with importation, conversion and compliance you can be set back as much as \$80,000 to \$90,000.

Newcastle, NSW-based Australian Motor Homes sells a range of fifth wheelers, both the excellent locally-built Travelhome range, which is designed to be towed by everything

from utes up, and the imported King of the Road, which requires a larger vehicle.

On a recent visit to Australian Motor Homes, MHG was shown an interesting alternative to the more traditional American SUV, and one that's not readily considered at that.

Proprietor Ron Warden had just returned from a show trip to Coffs Harbour with one of his King of the Road (KOR) fifth wheelers, and he was waxing lyrical about the tow vehicle he'd used for the job – an Iveco Daily 50C17.

MHG is familiar with the Iveco Daily, it being used as the base vehicle for quite a few motorhomes. However, we must have looked

a little unconvinced, because we were soon handed the ignition keys to Ron's, as the King of the Road fifth wheeler was still hitched up and ready to go. The KOR was a not insignificant 30ft model (9.22m), with a Tare weight of 4100kg.

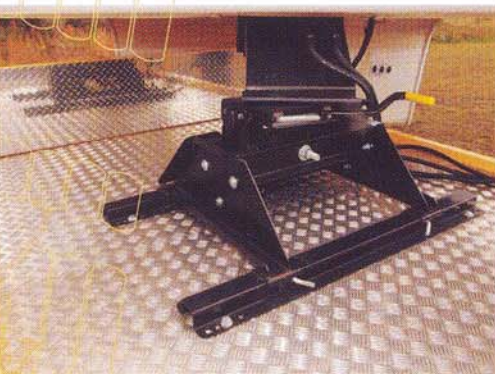
IMPRESSIVE FIGURES

Just looking at some further figures for a moment, the Iveco 50C17 has a gross combined mass (GCM) – that is the total loaded maximum weight of tow vehicle and trailer – of 8500kg. Its Tare weight (with fuel, water and driver on board) is 2250kg.

Adding a passenger to that, KOR pin weight and some load, say 500kg, gives a total



THE BIG FIFTH WHEELER IS WELL WITHIN THE IVECO'S CAPACITY



Top: The Iveco and KOR passed braking tests with flying colours. Middle: A fifth wheel hitch has been fitted to the alloy rear tray. Above: A bullbar is an addition from Australian Motor Homes.

of 2750kg. The KOR has a Tare weight of 4100kg and say 700kg of load, so that gives us 4800kg. Adding both the loaded weight of Iveco tow vehicle (2750kg) and KOR fifth wheeler (4800kg) gives us a total of 7550kg – well within the Iveco GCM of 8500kg.

Iveco, one of the largest truck manufacturers in Europe, builds its vehicles in Italy, and although it's an entity in its own right, Iveco is actually owned by Fiat. The Daily is a rear-wheel drive, unlike the other well known Fiat product, the front-wheel drive Ducato.

The Iveco Daily also comes with dual rear tyres – a real asset when you're towing a decent load like the KOR.

Australian Motor Homes has modified the Iveco cab chassis, not only adding the all-important fifth wheel hitch but also fitting a low alloy tray with drop sides, tool box, side steps and bull bar.

It's altogether a very neat looking job, which together with the added airbag suspension makes this Daily ideal for the job at hand.

WELL APPOINTED

In the driver's seat the steering wheel is adjustable, the six-speed gearshift is on a pedestal

at the front corner of the driver's seat and the handbrake is to the left on the floor. Being a Euro vehicle, the indicator controls are on the left stalk and the wiper controls are on the right.

All the usual instrumentation is there, and the dash has been designed in a semi wraparound format. On the left of the dashboard are the air-conditioning and heater controls, a radio/CD player plus other control switches and even more blanks where more accessory switches can be installed.

The dual cab Daily is actually a six-seater with two bucket seats and a four-person bench seat in the rear. Being a commercial vehicle, the rear seats may not be particularly comfortable for long journeys, and we suspect that if you were going to have people regularly in the back going any considerable distance, aftermarket seating would be worth investigating.

All seats have head restraints and the driver and passenger both have airbags. It's not as important as in a motorhome, but it is relatively easy to move to and from the front and rear seats, but the gear shift does get in the way of the driver.

There are two interior lights and the driver

It might sound quite small when compared to one of the US trucks' six or seven-litre motors, but the Iveco 3.0L turbodiesel is a willing performer.

In tandem with the six-speed gearbox, the Iveco handled the KOR very well, both around the town and along the freeway. We have to admit we were pleasantly surprised because we thought we would be working the gears (which are sure and slick) a great deal, but it just wasn't necessary.

FRUGAL PERFORMER

MHG did not have time to do any fuel checks but we believe the 3.0L diesel is reasonably frugal as well. Sure, you know the fifth wheeler is there but the performance of the Iveco

Below: The Iveco's 3.0L turbodiesel engine might look small, but it is a mighty, and willing, performer.



That other important matter, braking, we also tested out – and the Iveco passed with flying colours. Because the KOR is fitted with air brakes, which worked impressively well, stopping was a very prompt matter, with no pulling to one side or the other either.

The rear window isn't right behind the driver's seat, but seeing the hitch and pin for hitching up isn't a problem; it's certainly much easier than hooking up to a caravan!

SUMMING UP

Australian Motor Homes has fitted out the tray of the Iveco Daily very neatly. And while it might not have the panache and dash of a US-style pickup truck, nor perhaps the leather interior, the Iveco Daily is certainly still a very worthy alternative fifth wheeler tow vehicle.

Towing capability is not a problem and being a Euro vehicle, it is well appointed. Apart from anything else, the price tag is a very good incentive on its own. ■

IVECO Daily Dual Cab 50C17

MANUFACTURER:

Iveco, modifications by Australian Motor Homes

MODEL:

Daily Dual Cab 50C17

ENGINE:

3.0L turbodiesel

GEARBOX:

Six-speed manual/six-speed automated manual

MAX POWER:

122kW@3500rpm

MAX TORQUE:

380Nm@1250-3070rpm

BRAKES:

Disc front and rear

TARE WEIGHT:

2250kg (wet weight plus driver)

GVM:

4495kg

GCM:

8500kg

TOWING CAPACITY:

3500kg

AIRBAGS:

Driver and passenger

PRICE:

\$60,000 (as tested)

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