



Small Packages: **Good Things**

Elite bucks the trend with a small on-road camper which rides behind a small car.

The Elite barely registered behind our test Charade.

There is an arms race among some manufacturers to build the most complex, heavy and large camper. For those who like their comforts this might be a good thing, but is it really necessary?

Stephen Melchior of Elite Campers says that it isn't, and if his mini package campers are anything to go by, for on road purposes he may well be right.

Elite Campers has been on the market for 12 years and over 400 units have been sold. In the four years that Stephen has owned the business sales have more than tripled through product refinement resulting in a selection of well equipped, lightweight and practical campers.

The Elite camper was designed for towing behind a motorcycle but has now also been adapted to suit small cars. The Elite Sprinter Limited Edition was barely noticeable behind our Charade at just 230kg, and with a tow ball weight of just 25kg we were picking it up by the front wheel and moving it around like a wheelbarrow, avoiding that age-old campground argument about reversing. This makes storage simple, and since four bolts remove the drawbar and with the trailer just 1100mm wide its fits into the end of just about any garage.

INTERNAL LIVING

Installing the tent from unzipping the vinyl cover to a setup sufficient for an overnight sleep takes just four minutes. Erecting the tent is aided by spring clips on the hood bows, which snap into position when extended. Fully pegging out the base, rolling down window covers and erecting the 2.4x2.8m awning requires another 20 minutes.

Inside is, well, cosy. The bed and foam mattress fold off the top of the trailer to full queen size but leave just a metre of tent room at the foot. There's plenty of storage space under the extended bed, though, and this can be folded back during the day for added room. With a tent height of 185cm at each end and 230cm at the peak there is enough airflow to keep it cool inside.

The sacrifice in internal space can be compensated by adding multiple awnings. Each side of the trailer tent has a zip for an awning, and so does the outer top of each awning, so you can piggy-back them if you desire.

You can option up with solid or screen annex walls, and Stephen sells Smartmat flooring cut to fit the awning size with holes to match the peg locations. All the awnings, walls, mat, and bedding travel on top of the tent, and Elite offers three different size covers to match the contents.

Erecting the awning is a one-man job. The awning requires no ropes, and the poles are stored on racks with clips under the lift-up bed base on top of the trailer. Inside, the tent has 14 pockets on the walls for storage, and the canvas is fire retardant for safety.

EXTERNAL LIVING

The front of the trailer has a storage box big enough to carry a 40L Engel or Waeco fridge and the lid of the box folds over to form a table for a small kitchen, supported by legs which clip underneath. The front of the box is covered by a padded vinyl bra to minimise stone chips.

There's no stove, sink, or water storage, so you have to bring your own, but these are easy to work around.

The trailer features the optional, quoted

★ RATING	
OFFROAD ABILITY	★
BUSHABILITY	★
SET UP	★ ★ ★
ELECTRICS/LIGHTING	★ ★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★ ★ ★ ★
COMFORTS	★ ★



Optional annex walls enclose the awning.

electrical system which includes an Anderson plug and 38 or 80Ah battery in a battery box mounted in the interior, and input from an 80W or 120W solar panel. Twelve Volt lighting is optional but not included on our display.

The carpeted aluminium trailer has 600L of storage space and sits on a 25x50mm fully galvanised frame with a three-leaf slipper spring suspension on a round-tube axle. The quoted, optional brake system of Stephen's design incorporates motorcycle disc brakes. It's basic but effective for the camper's size.

The wheels are mags and can be supplied in 12 or 13in size, and the springs can be underslung or overslung to adjust for trailer ground clearance. Different tent sizes accommodate different needs.

It is rated to 300kg, though, so if you have the full kit of awning, walls, poles, fridge, battery, brakes and other fittings quoted here, then you have a carrying

capacity of about 70kg, which isn't much.

The trailers and tents are made in China, and finished in Queensland, but Stephen offers a one-year warranty and works hard to maintain quality control.

The detail in the trailer's design is impressive. Little things, such as a zippable access point in the bottom corner of the tent to run a power lead inside, the press-stud attached vinyl floor under the tent, and the provision for a third support leg under the bed indicate that Stephen uses his own trailer and listens to customer requests.

SUMMING UP

I was impressed with the Elite. Although it is purely an on road item, it imposes no more on any car than carrying an extra couple of passengers, and is so simple and easy to set up that it would suit a

single person or couple travelling light.

At \$9,990 as reviewed it won't bust the bank and could be the start of many happy camping trips. ■

Elite Camper Trailers
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SPECIFICATIONS	
Elite SPRINTER LIMITED EDITION	
Tare:	230kg
ATM:	300kg
Suspension:.....	3-leaf springs
Brakes:.....	Drum
Coupling:.....	.50mm ball
Price (as shown):	\$9,990



Elite sells flooring for under the awning.



The front box lid doubles as a table.



The Elite can be towed by a car or a motorcycle.