

SMALL WONDER

The Transcamper Campmaster claims to bring trailer-tenting to motorcyclists and micro-car owners. Andy Stothert finds out what's on offer



TOP The exterior design doesn't immediately suggest that the Campmaster is a traditional trailer tent **ABOVE** The good looks continue through from front to back

I know it sounds unlikely that there is a trailer tent out there which even quite small motorcycles can tour with, and I doubted it myself, but seeing is certainly believing in the case of the Transcamper Campmaster 4. But to go back to the beginning, I arrived at Camperlands, who are marketing the Campmaster, in Manchester more than slightly dubious about the claims made for the product, and when I saw the supposed ready-for-the-road trailer I thought that maybe I'd got my dates mixed up, and that it was in fact April 1st, and not February 11th. This trailer just looked so small, and shiny, and smooth, and sexy even - in an automotive kind of way - but one thing this could not be is a four-berth trailer tent.

'Err, I think you've got the wrong trailer out,' says I, running my eyes all over what looked like a millionaire's baggage trailer, or the poshest golf trolley in the world. Cute, yes; trailer tent, no.

'Oh, no,' says the man from Camperlands. 'That's the trailer tent we promised you, and there's a bike over there which will manage admirably.' Gulp.

TOWING

You'll have to forgive me for wimping out on the two-wheeled towing experience, but the last big bike I rode was a Matchless G12, circa 1970, and my skill levels may be a bit rusty to be climbing straight onto the supersonic



TOP LEFT Open the trailer and there is room for your sleeping bags and a few other bits
TOP RIGHT The additional berths are at ground level, but there's loads of clearance between inner and outer tents
ABOVE LEFT Extend the frame...
ABOVE RIGHT The bed is above both halves of the trailer with shoe rack and hitch cove added

Honda Pan European which Camperlands had lined up. I'm assured that it tows very amiably behind any bike legally entitled to hitch it to. (Potential two-wheel towers should make themselves aware of the law relating to towing with motorcycles before considering purchase. Camperlands will gladly supply this information to motorcyclists, and I'm confident they will give impartial advice on the suitability of your motorcycle.)

The unit is so light that I reckon I could almost have pushed it the mile or so to the local camping park where we were going to erect the Campmaster. Feedback from owners has been very positive with regards to the on-road behaviour.

PRACTICALITIES

So, it's tiny, it's light, and it's incredibly good looking, but what about practicalities? Surely something has to give? First you open it and there's room on top of the tent part for a couple of chairs, and maybe two sleeping bags. Fine. Then you pick up the whole top half and open that, revealing a cavernous place for your cooker, cameras, clothes, towels, and all manner of other previously banned items on motorcycling holidays. Just imagine it, clean underwear on a biking holiday. Weird. Next thing to do is check underneath, because

no trailer this small can have so much room in it. It's an optical illusion. A confidence trick. Hypnotism, or something mystical even; but the space appears to move with it, so who cares.

PITCHING

The ease with which the tiny Transcamper transforms itself into a spacious tent is just as ingenious as the design of the trailer itself. I think the secret lies in the fact that the designer has incorporated a kind of 'ridge tent mentality' into the basics of trailer tent construction, and with a good dose of modern thinking chucked in, too.

Pitching is simple enough and it took us less than 20 minutes from start to finish. What you end up with is a very stable, well made canvas tent capable of sleeping two bodies off the ground, with a good sized kitchen extension, or second double bedroom across from the living area, where there is ample standing room.

And it has that nice taut canvas look when it's up too, with nothing flapping idly around. I always think this is the best indicator of a stable well-made tent, and though this may just be a personal foible, I suspect I'm not alone in the quest for kink free camping. Nylon doesn't often do it for me.

FACT FILE

>Sleeps Two/four>Unladen weight 114kg>Maximum gross weight 200kg>Trailer size 140 x 100 x 88cm>Overall length 208cm>Erected size 630 x 300cm (plus sun canopy)>Bed size 183 x 122cm>Optional extras Additional sleeping compartment £99.99; sun canopy sidescreens £69.99; spare wheel £29.99; spare wheel carrier £59.99; spare wheel cover £24.99; lengthened drawbar (swivel hitch) and coolbox rack £219.99>Country of origin Holland>Distributor Camperlands, Mill Lane, Northenden, Manchester M22 4HJ. Tel: 0161 998 8523>Website www.camperlands.co.uk

CAMPING RATING

- >Materials ●●●●●
- >Ease of Assembly ●●●●●
- >Weatherproofing ●●●●●
- >Design ●●●●●
- >Value for Money ●●●●
- >Overall ●●●●●

CAMPING VERDICT The Campmaster can't really be compared with anything else on the market. It is what motorcyclists and small car owners (you know what I mean) have been waiting for. It's a quality tent in a superb trailer, which is easy to pitch, and designed for all-weather use. In some areas the diminutive size does create some limitations, such as the absent kitchen, and use of an airbed rather than conventional foam mattress. Although this sort of quality, style, and ingenuity doesn't come cheap, and may put some people off going down this particular route, the Campmaster is a small wonder, and does the job like nothing else can.