

IN BRIEF

- ⊙ Funky 6.2m (20ft 6in) dirt-road-capable couples' cruiser
- ⊙ Composite construction with independent rubber suspension
- ⊙ Conservative, enduring design and loads of features.
- ⊙ \$64,990 as tested



NEW MOON

After troubling times earlier this year, production at Jurgens Caravans has picked up. This revised Lunagazer shows the company is very much still aiming for the stars

Jurgens Caravans has been a mainstay of the local scene since 2008 and offers a range of innovative touring vans capable of dirt road travel. It takes a very individual approach to engineering and a distinct styling that has endured over time.

Following a period of uncertainty for the company in late 2018, when new owners transitioned a revised system of management, Jurgens is now ramping up production.

Jurgens' parent company is based in South Africa, with the Australian arm operating with its own designer, as well as managers for operations, customer experience and business development and a staff of 40. The company owner visits every three weeks or so from Pretoria to oversee the brand's return to health. By all accounts, everything is returning to normal (see breakout on page 154).

STARS IN OUR EYES

The Lunagazer is the premium model of its fleet and at 6.2m (20ft 6in) it's the most popular in the range. Sporting new graphics and a host of upgrades, we recently took the trusty Jurgens on a jaunt over the hills north of Pakenham. Here we hoped to secure some photos near the lake at the Puffing Billy complex, except the venue was closed for refurbishment. Oops.

Not to be deterred, we wound our way along graded roads and a winding goat track until we found the Beaconhills Golf Club, where the manager welcomed us with open arms and a spot on the 18th fairway. With the warning to beware of errant golf balls, we set up behind the clubhouse and our review was back on track. I am trying not to say that such setbacks are par for the course when photographing vans, but I can't resist...

To maximise economies of scale, many of the components of Jurgens' caravans are manufactured by the parent company and imported in containers. The composite wall sheets and galvanised chassis are prime examples. The raw material is imported in ready-fit sections but bolted together locally. That's right. The chassis is bolted, not welded together, because it can be engineered with C-section longitudinal rails and cross members to be light but immensely strong.

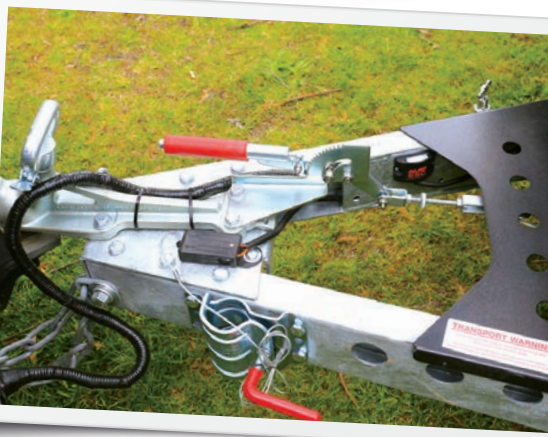
The Duratherm walls are 23mm combinations of an exterior aluminium sheet, an inner section of high-density foam and an inner ply wall that are joined to the structural end pieces. A single-piece, aluminium-skinned roof and external grade plywood floor complete the picture to make an immensely strong unit, well sealed against the weather once doors and windows are installed.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT The on-trend new graphics suit the Lunagazer's modernised features; gas cooking and hot water help when going off-grid; the straightforward tow setup is more than enough thanks to the van's well-engineered light weight

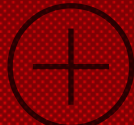


"I hope you see a theme here because *shedding weight while remaining robust is one of the secrets of a successful caravan builder.*"

JURGENS LUNAGAZER 2405 TESTED



MEASURING UP



PROS

- ⊕ Well-engineered for travel over highways and secondary roads
- ⊕ Lightweight for easy towing
- ⊕ Good value



CONS

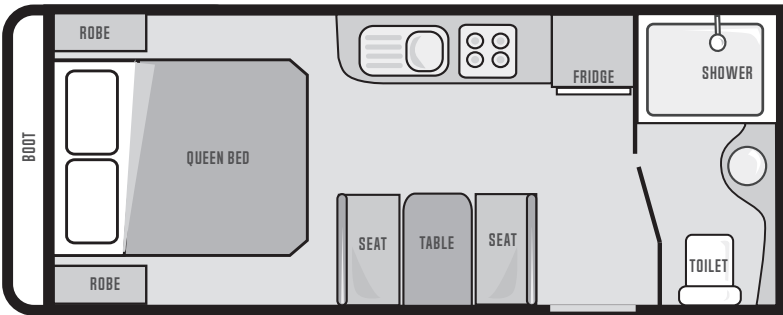
- ⊖ High microwave could be dangerous

Yet another unusual feature is the AL-KO rubber torsion suspension under the van. The system provides dirt-road-capable travel over corrugations but the modest ground clearance limits travel over seriously rough terrain. Twin 60L water tanks are slung between cross members and are high enough to be safe in most conditions.

THE LUNAR MODULE

Digital age swirls now flow along the sides of the van, even covering the door and part of the picnic table. They lend a fresh look to the familiar sweptback entry and rounded rear end. Up front is a large window, which can be covered by a supplied travel blanket. A small boot hides a jack and two 4.5kg gas bottles out of sight, leaving room for a few essentials. I noted a tunnel boot further back with access to items stored under the bed.

Changes in the latest Lunagazer are more



Lightweight ply furniture is also cut to millimetre tolerances on impressive CNC cutting benches in the Pakenham factory before being assembled and double screwed into place. Again it's light and robust. I hope you see a theme here because shedding weight while remaining robust is one of the secrets of a successful caravan builder. Weight is the enemy when towing, but you can't remove weight indiscriminately; the van has to be correctly engineered to last.

JURGENS LUNAGAZER 2405

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Overall length 7.4m and (24ft 4in)
External body length 6.32 (20ft 9in)
External body width 2.35m (7ft 9in)
Travel height 2.77m (9ft 1in)
Internal height 1.91m (6ft 3in)
Tare 1745kg
ATM 2200kg
Payload 455kg (calculated)
Ball weight 125kg

EXTERNAL

Frame Composite
Cladding Aluminium
Chassis Galvanised Optima
Suspension AL-KO Independent Rubber Torsion
Coupling 50mm ball
Brakes 10in offroad
Wheels 14in alloy 195 R14
Water 2 x 60L (fresh), grey optional
Battery 1 X 12V
Solar 1 x 130W

Air-conditioner bis 4
Gas 2 x 4.5kg
Sway control AL-KO ESC

INTERNAL

Cooking Swift grill/cooktop
Fridge Thetford 184L three-way
Microwave Yes
Bathroom Cassette toilet with separate moulded shower cubicle
Washing machine No
Hot water Swift

OPTIONS FITTED

No options fitted to the test van

PRICE AS SHOWN

\$64,990

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about this caravan contact Jurgens Australia, 13 Sharnet Court, Pakenham Vic 3810. Ph (03) 5943 7700 Web: www.jurgens.com.au



than cosmetic. As well as the on-trend graphics outside, there's a new Milenco entry door with a better dust and insect seal, better security mesh and a stronger four-pin lock on a stainless steel bar. The A-frame is smarter looking and more practical, with the fibreglass cover changed to a metal step so owners can better reach the travel cover over the front window to unzip it when parked.

The rear impresses with an uncluttered fibreglass panel and new clear tail-lights with coloured LED globes. Keeping the look simple, the spare lives under the van and winds down when needed.

SPACE(SHIP) GALORE

With an interior in keeping with the conservative exterior, Jurgens seems less intent on wow-ing customers than making them feel immediately at home. Warm timber finishes on the joinery and floor are contrasted against the white walls and ceiling for an interior that's classy and welcoming.

I've got a feeling young moderns will find it somewhat staid, but maybe that's not their market. I like it, but it's a long while since I was a young trendy. I think it makes an excellent alternative to the many ornate interiors we see that may go out of style quickly.

New features inside include an Ibis 4 air-conditioner that is said to offer quicker cooling and heating and quieter running over the previous unit. Other improvements are new Dometic windows, larger cupboard handles and a new BMPRO battery management system.

The layout is a standard couples touring-style with an island bed up front and the ensuite down the back. This works for most people, offering privacy for the bedroom and easy access from outside for the bathroom.

Jurgens saves on production costs by offering one furniture colour only and allowing owners to create their own style with a wide array of fabric and leather upholstery choices.

At the entry, the door to the ensuite is offset to maximise space. The area around



"With an interior in keeping with the conservative exterior, *Jurgens seems less intent on wow-ing customers than making them feel immediately at home.*"

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Suspension is unusual but works well; the interior is simple but timeless; a microwave above the fridge may be a challenge for some; windows at every angle fill the interior with natural light



the passenger-side cassette toilet is narrower than the rest of the bathroom to give more room at the caravan entrance. The ensuite then widens towards the driver's side to make the separate moulded shower cubicle more usable. This layout leaves plenty of room to move while maximising space in the living area. It's a clever design.

An elegantly curved vanity includes a stainless steel sink and mirror with storage cupboard and a set of lower shelves with fiddle rail to keep things in place when travelling. Another mirror on the shower door reflects light from roof hatches and a small window and adds to the roomy feeling. I like the moulded shower with its seat and handy shelves and ample room to move.

GALAXY SNACKS

The kitchen is laid out along the driver's side and includes a good size 184L three-way Thetford fridge/freezer, a Thetford cooktop and grill and a microwave over the fridge. Storage space is generous with overhead cupboards and deep drawers under the bench but, like most vans this size,

RATINGS

VALUE FOR MONEY

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

"Right on the money for a well-engineered van with all you need for a touring couple"

TOWABILITY

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

"The light weight of the van and a durable independent suspension combine to deliver exceptionally smooth towing without having to break the bank with a hefty tug"

SUITABILITY FOR INTENDED TOURING

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

"Everything is there for a comfortable time on board. The roomy interior and cosy lounge will be well used of an evening, and the well-insulated body should keep things fresh in the tropics"

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

"The CNC-cut furniture is well finished and sturdy. A well-engineered and galvanised chassis is designed for lightness and durability, and the wiring and water lines are well protected under the van"

LIVEABILITY

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

"A roomy and comfortable with a welcoming, airy feeling and lots of natural light. There's a good size ensuite and an island bed and enough power and charging points to keep everyone happy. Like most vans in its size, it could use more bench space"

CUSTOMER CARE (WARRANTY/AFTER PURCHASE)

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

"Three-year warranty on the Jurgens-built components and minimum one-year on appliance warranty is pretty standard across the industry. A dedicated customer care department takes care of problems"

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

"Twin 60L water tanks, a single solar panel and battery will let you hold up off-grid for a few days, and there's gas for cooking and hot water"

INNOVATION

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

"The original concept of a lightweight bolted chassis, composite walls and incite full design are worth mentioning, but recent innovations are limited"

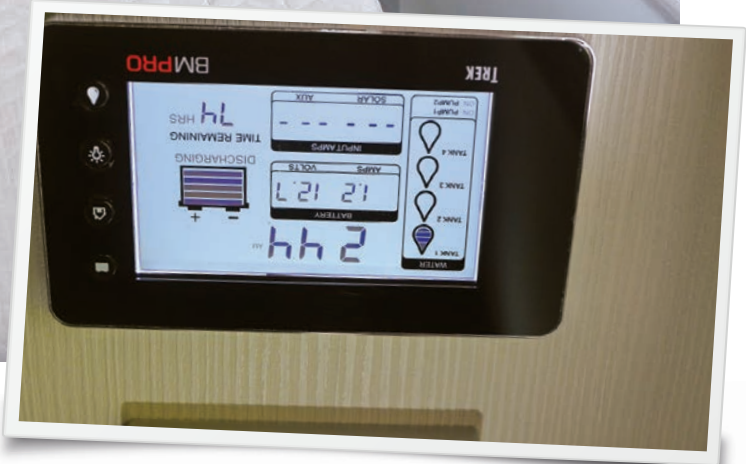
X-FACTOR

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

"Engineering types will be impressed, but it's more practical than blingy. It doesn't as much jump out at you as pull you by your heartstrings into its warming nature"



"At only 1745kg the benefits of weight shedding are apparent... *many medium vehicles are easily capable of towing the Lunagazer.*"



FROM LEFT The large front window is an attractive choice; everything you need to know, all in one place

preparation room is limited, and many cooks will need the dining table when in full flight.

The cafe dinette has a trifold table with a brown marble finish and a pair of richly upholstered seats, each with padding at the wall end to recline lengthways. A long window will be great for taking in the view, while the USB and 12v plugs are handily placed. The lounge and drop-down table converts to a bed for two small children and more storage below is welcome. The addition of bookshelves with fiddle rails between storage lockers over the diner is a nice touch.

The extendable island queen measures 1.9m x 1.5m and is surrounded by hanging lockers, small bedside tables and overhead cupboards incorporating a sound system and speakers.

READY FOR LIFT-OFF

At only 1745kg the benefits of weight shedding are apparent. Loaded with its maximum 455kg payload, the scales would record 2200kg, so many medium vehicles are easily capable of towing the Lunagazer.

The Ford Ranger in our review had no problem, and the van tracked smoothly over all the various road surfaces on our review without lurching or wandering and with no banging from the simple 50mm ball hitch.

The van comes with a three-year warranty on the factory-built structure and a minimum one-year on appliances. Jurgens now has a dedicated customer care department and an online members' group who share information about travel and problem fixing.

THE WRAP

Pricing as tested is \$64,990, which is fair for this size van with a lot of quality features. On top of that is the added benefit of not having to buy a big tow vehicle.

The Lunagazer will suit couples who like things simple and practical. There are no airs and graces about a Jurgens – what you see is what you get. Well not quite, I guess because a lot is going on under the hidden surface.

Several things make this van special, such as the weight-saving engineering and space-age chassis and walls, built to withstand the terror of travelling on corrugated outback roads. **G**