

Dung and Dusted



BUSH LAPA MISKRUIER OFF-ROAD CARAVAN

Words by Johan Schronen
Photos by Mark Samuel



Dung beetles, or *miskruiers*, play an important role in nature. They're the tough little guys that collect animal waste and bury it, improving the soil. The Bush Lapa Miskruier off-road caravan is also tough, and is certain to play a vital role in the off-road camping scene.

Dung beetles are the little crawlies that facilitate nutrient recycling in the soil of farmlands and in the veld. They also protect livestock from pests such as flies, which the buried dung would otherwise attract.

But when Jannie Oeschger, owner of Worcester-based Bush Lapa 4x4 Caravans, Trailers & Camping Equipment, christened his new caravan the 'Miskruier', he wasn't likening it to a sewage truck. Rather, it's the hard-working and dependable qualities of his Miskruier that are so similar to those of the little black bug.

Jannie's new Bush Lapa range of off-road caravans includes the four-berth Miskruier, the three-berth Boskriek, and the two-sleeper Vlooi.

Like the dung beetle, which can carry an, er, 'load' that's equal to its bodyweight, the Miskruier, with its tare of 770 kg, can take a hefty payload of 730 kg, setting the GVM at 1500 kg. But I can assure you, this super robust off-roader is designed to take a load of camping equipment – nothing else!

The compact Miskruier, a capable all-terrain, is the first model to run off this bustling manufacturing firm's production line. It's a top performer in the bush, but as our travels revealed, equally happy on the open road getting to where the tar ends.

LIGHTEST IN CLASS

The Bush Lapa Miskruier is intentionally basic and functional and unashamedly bush-ready in its design. It's one of the lightest in its class in South Africa, and very compact at just 4050 mm long and 1850 mm wide.

Considering its size, I was surprised when I saw how comfortably it can sleep four adults in the dual double bed configuration. But there was another surprise when I took a closer look at the caravan. Jannie builds his Bush Lapa range from corrosion-resistant stainless steel – that's the body *and* chassis – and altogether it still weighs in at under 800 kg!

The words 'camping convenience' come to mind once the Miskruier is opened up in its entirety.



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Let's focus on the Miskruier's aesthetics first. And believe me, in this instance you *can* judge a book by its cover.

The Miskruier is as robust as it looks. With its considerable ground clearance of 500 mm and 15-inch wheels, it has an uncompromising can-go-anywhere attitude. The design is blatantly 'off-road functional'. I'm sure Jannie's brief was pretty short and sweet: 'I want to create a tough off-road caravan that's strong, functional and light, and campers must

be able to add everything they need, and a bit more.

With its windowless, angular body panels, light khaki paint and industrial-style tread-plate aluminium storage ▶



It boasts the 40-degree depart angle of a true off-roader.



The jockey wheel is removable when you're tackling challenging terrain.



There are two double beds tucked inside the compact Miskruier.



Gear, gas bottles and other camping equipment are easily stored and accessed in the front hatches.

boxes, the caravan looked like a mobile army kitchen due for stationing in Libya. When we hitched the Miskruier behind our Nissan Navara 4x4, we might just as well, from all appearances, have been heading for the desert sands of Muammar Gaddafi's former stronghold. But instead our destination was Desert Wind, a private game farm on top of the Ouberg Pass, about 40 km from Montagu in the mountains of the Western Cape.

BATTLE-READY

Climbing the gravel pass at a steady pace, the battle-ready Miskruier passed the off-the-tar test with flying colours. It felt well-weighted and sure-footed with its 1.8-ton braked axle, heavy-duty eight-blade leaf springs and large off-road tyres. It never stepped out of line on the dusty, stony road surface. Perhaps you'll excuse me for declaring that the khaki 'kruier stuck to the road like dung to a blanket; it never wandered once through the twisties – and we certainly weren't crawling. The 45-degree wind-cheating front panel of the caravan helps a lot against wind resistance, and likely contributed to the respectable 12.3 l/100 km fuel consumption figure that we achieved.

In the rougher stuff, the Miskruier's go-anywhere looks more than lived up to their promise. Descending from the Desert Wind farmhouse down to the camping site next to the river, which winds its way through the farm, the caravan's 40-degree departure and

10-degree approach angle came into their own. Not once did we have to cringe in expectation of that unpleasant under-belly scraping sound. The jockey wheel is completely removable, for when the going gets really tough.

When we unhitched and started opening the hatches, the Miskruier offered up a few more surprises. Tucked away inside the small shell are two full-size double beds and four canvas-covered closets for storing your clothes and belongings.

In the cooking department, two hatches on the left side open to reveal a fully equipped kitchen, with a two-plate gas stove, fridge-freezer, 286 litres of storage space and a large stainless steel working surface. All this is ideally suited to those roadside lunch stops: whip open the side hatches and you're ready to prep those delicious sarmies and

enjoy a cold drink. The fridge, or fridges (our test caravan boasted two Engel units), and the stove top slide out from the fore hatch. This can be customised to suit the buyer's needs, as some people prefer to store their cutlery here.

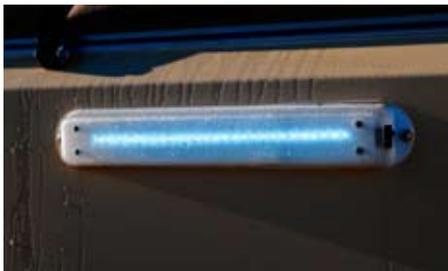
QUICK STOPOVER

The Miskruier's balanced and well-thought-out interior design allows for quick sleepovers without the need to unhitch from your towcar. The fold-down front bed and accompanying tent do not extend far enough forward to impede the rear of your vehicle. We could just unfold it all, step inside and crash for the night.

When not in use, the corner stabilisers are bracketed on the outside rear of the caravan. When they're needed, simply remove them, slot them in place and wind the handle to attain the desired height.

The corner jacks live securely on brackets on the back, until you need them.





The exterior light is fitted with low-wattage LEDs.



The optional solar panel is securely mounted on the roof.



The right side hatch folds open, revealing the second double bed.

The A-frame storage box – which, incidentally, can be tailored ex-factory to suit the client’s needs – has ample space for wood and other camping paraphernalia.

The Miskruier is a serious off-roader, and is set to become a hit on roads less travelled. Jannie and his team have cut no corners getting to where they are today. They’ve come up with a caravan that’s first and foremost an off-roader, right down to the industrial-quality stainless steel hatch hinges and latches.

Although the Miskruier is the only four-berth model in the Bush Lapa range, the others share the same dimensions, differing only in their interior layout. Choosing which one’s for you simply depends on how many it regularly has to sleep.

If the Miskruier is anything to go by, all of the Bush Lapa models will satisfy the off-road adventurer who loves exploring off-the-beaten-track destinations, with the freedom and convenience of having a tough, tow-anywhere, no-frills caravan hitched behind them.

AGILE

In a nutshell, the Miskruier is light and compact, and likely to be more agile than the 4x4 to which you hitch it. The attention to detail in its design gives a

surprisingly high level of comfort and convenience for its basic design, without sacrificing any of its ruggedness.

Whether you take this Bush Lapa on a fast cross-country sprint or a slow tootle to your favourite camp, you’ll end up with your very own lapa wherever you go.

Optional extras include a roof-mounted solar panel, which personally I’d recommend to any off-road enthusiast. So effective is Jannie’s choice of solar panel that owners needn’t fit a charging system to their vehicles for the caravan’s battery. Its charge is topped up while you tow to your destination, and while you’re parked at camp.

Be sure to chat to Jannie about the various accessories that you can have added to your Bush Lapa purchase.

BEETLE EXPORTS

And just as the South African dung beetles that Australian agricultural scientist Dr George Bornemissza imported in the 1960s improved the quality of Aussie cattle pastures, I predict Jannie and his Bush Lapa brand will also ultimately enjoy the success of exporting off-roaders down under. Then there will be more than just one South African dung beetle exploring the outback!



SPECIFICATIONS

Price (Basic, without spare wheel)	R149 796
Tare (full house)	770 kg
GVM	1500 kg
Payload	730 kg
Overall length (includes spare wheel)	4050 mm
Height (roof closed)	1900 mm
Total width	1850 mm
Wheels/tyres (can fit up to 17" wheels)	15"
Front bed (double)	1850 x 1500 mm
Side bed (double)	1800 x 1300 mm
Ground clearance (to axle)	330 mm
Ground clearance (to chassis)	500 mm
Departure angle	40 degrees
Approaching angle	10 degrees
Axle	Braked – 1800 kg
Suspension	8-blade leaf springs

Bush Lapa 4x4 Caravans, Trailers & Camping Equipment

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The Miskruier’s design offers quick and easy access, even during a brief roadside stop.

