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# Cruising to the end of the Earth

This all-terrain motorhome created in Brisbane is making a name for itself all over the world, writes **Geoff Paradise**.

There are motorhomes and then there are motorhomes. Some may think a basic camper box in the back of a ute is as close to heaven as you could possibly get, while others have grander visions.

One of those that caters to the top end of town is Brisbane-based Earth Cruiser Overland Vehicles.

The company has designed and engineered an all-terrain motorhome that can, quite literally, go almost anywhere in the world. Based on the well-known Fuso Canter 4X4 light truck, the Earth Cruiser is becoming something of a cult vehicle.

The company's director and co-founder, Lance Gillies, says that since the operation started in 2009, about 20 Earth Cruisers have been sold nationally and internationally. Prices start at \$215,000 plus on-road costs.

"We recently took an order from a retired Californian couple who want to travel the world in an Earth Cruiser," Gillies says.

"A left-hand-drive US-specification Fuso Canter is being shipped from America to our Fortitude Valley facility now and

when it is ready the couple will spend a few months exploring Australia before they ship it to the northern hemisphere."

Gillies says two Earth Cruisers are travelling the globe at the moment. One is in Iceland and is owned by a Swiss husband and wife, while former Earth Cruiser company director and co-founder, Kym Bolton, is also traipsing around Europe in his Earth Cruiser following his retirement from the company he helped start just a couple of years ago.

While the Fuso Canter is the heart of the Earth Cruiser, the soul is firmly in the motorhome module that is mounted to the truck's chassis. Existing Earth Cruisers are based on the recently superseded Canters that are fitted with a 4.9-litre engine rated at 110kW and 471Nm of torque but the company plans to switch to a 3.0-litre engine producing 110kW and 370Nm of torque and a manual gearbox as supplies of the previous model run out.

While a drop of 101Nm does seem dramatic, Drive Life can confirm the flat torque curve of the smaller Fuso engine gives little



**No limits ... the Earth Cruiser is based on a Fuso Canter 4X4 light truck.**

away in terms of performance. The basis of the Earth Cruiser is of course the module that is made entirely in Australia.

The company indirectly employs 30 specialist tradesmen on the construction of each Earth Cruiser. The standard of design and the quality of materials is excellent.

Each module is mounted using eight ADR-approved spring-assisted mounting points that isolate the body from the chassis.

The internal fitout, while not luxurious, has everything you'll need for short or long hauls: a double bed, shower/toilet combination, stove and benchtop, fresh- and grey-water tanks, water

purifier and a refrigerator. It's from this base that Earth Cruiser clients can add their own accessories after they take delivery.

Some buyers choose to install a GPS system (handy if you don't know the difference between Transylvania or Timbuktu) or some sort of satellite communication system that will allow phone calls and access to the internet.

There's plenty of storage inside and in external lockers, and all Earth Cruisers are fitted with a solid front bumper/bull bar and an equally solid rear bar that mounts two spare wheels and tyres.

Earth Cruiser says the Fuso factory-specified dual rear wheels aren't ideal for serious off-road

environments. So it upgrades the standard package to military-specification Michelin "super single" tubeless tyres.

You won't have to worry about the suspension, however. Earth Cruiser offers a "hard road/soft ride" suspension system with springs that are 100 millimetres longer than standard but retain the secondary factory spring rating to maintain the 2600-kilogram load capacity of the Canter.

Further adding to the ride quality is a pair of Stratos suspension seats that can be trimmed in fabric or leather.

Other vehicle options include additional water tanks, an endless air compressor and diff locks.