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AT Overland's Aterra XL Flatbed Camper

Revolutionizing the truck camper
with the remote traveler in mind.

While I'm tucked into the warm camper bed, the wind howls outside. I don't have to worry about an unattended ground tent liberating itself from the ground and tumbling away, nor any rooftop tent canvas flapping. I'm enveloped in a motionless cocoon, like a caterpillar protected against the elements. Ponderosa pines sway in the wind outside the portal window, stars shining bright during the cold night. I chuckle to myself, smiling in the dark. *So, this is what it's like to sleep in a hard-sided camper—what luxury.*

While most truck campers can be used for long-term travel, AT Overland's Aterra XL flatbed camper is specifically designed for it. Seasoned overlanders covet generous storage space, a lightweight shell, and a comfortable space to call home. The Aterra answers that call.

For the past 20 years, Arizona-based AT Overland Equipment has offered solutions such as truck toppers, campers, storage accessories, and more for off-road and overland enthusiasts alike. There is no doubt the company has been foundational to the

North American overland market; the popularity of the AT truck topper line is evident both online and in the wild.

AT Overland was the first to create a lightweight independent suspension trailer manufactured in the US, so CEO and Founder Mario Donovan is no stranger to developing unique products. His desire to build the ultimate hard-sided truck camper for long-term overlanding was driven by deficiencies he noticed in the market. Slide-in campers tend to be heavy and without sufficient storage for four-season travel, so Donovan collaborated with Tern Overland to design and build AT Overland's latest offering, the Aterra XL flatbed camper.

A lightweight, fiber-reinforced thermoplastic honeycomb composite cell with plenty of storage space, a king-size bed, and a comfortable dinette, the Aterra is fashioned with all of the creature comforts one desires in a hard-sided living space. Plus, its geometrical shape is designed to withstand the bashings of terrible roads no matter where you are. Intrigued, we took the prototype, mounted to Mario's burly Ram 3500 Chassis Cab and custom flatbed, out for a couple of nights in the woods to see what it's all about.

Mario's Ram rests on 40-inch Toyo Open Country M/T tires, so I used my rock-climbing skills to hoist my five-foot-three frame into the camper. Fortunately, the handrail was sturdy, but those with pain or mobility restrictions should consider bringing a small ladder or steps. The interior is finished with a UV-resistant polyurea coating and an upholstered ceiling. My only gripe here is a small and seemingly fussy one: a lighter-colored upholstery would make the space even brighter. From inside the camper, a 360-degree view is not possible (there are no windows on the front), which could be important to some for security reasons. However, upon first impression, I was delighted by the ample natural light streaming into the camper. The oppor-

tunity to bring the outside in while being protected from the elements feels decadent.

We rolled over some large bumps and ditches on the way to camp, but I was happy to see that everything was still in its place, including the dinette cushions, mattress, and bedding. The dinette area exhibits an intelligent use of space as it offers extra storage and can transform into a bed, Sagiv shower, or a place to do your business as a Wrappon Trekker waterless toilet system is kept beneath one of the dinette seats. In the kitchen area, a Dometic two-burner sink/stove is fitted to the bamboo countertop, providing enough space to chop, dice, slice, and wash when the bed is in the locked position. There are 30 gallons of freshwater available but no graywater tank, so keep that in mind.

We lost some counter space when the bed was pulled out fully; it was just enough for my bedtime lotions and potions, but the setup seemed most functional when the bed was put away. For those traveling as a couple, early risers won't have as much counter space or any access to the cavernous National Luna 90-liter dual-zone fridge/freezer. But access to the sink (and on-demand hot water via the Truma AquaGo heater) and the burner is generous, so the smell of coffee percolating (and initiating the Truma VarioHeat Comfort heater on chilly mornings) should quickly arouse your partner from their slumber.

A 105-amp-hour lithium battery and 400 watts of solar are complemented by a National Luna 40-amp DC to DC charging system with an integrated MPPT solar controller and automatic vehicle charging disconnect. Whether creating dance party or mood lighting, dimmable interior and exterior scene LEDs are controlled via manual toggle switches or the easy-to-use Garmin Power Switch app. Five double USB and four 12-volt sockets are found throughout the camper. The Aterra is not equipped with an inverter; however, one could be permanently installed, or a small version could be plugged into one of the 12-volt sockets. Our lifestyle demands a collection of devices that aren't charged via USB (computers, camera chargers, hair curler and straightener), so in a perfect world, we would definitely add an inverter.

While the truck camper market has focused on the needs of the weekend warrior (and rightfully so as they make up most of the customer base), Donovan has considered the desires of multi-season, long-term, remote travelers. To test out the Aterra's storage capacity, we brought all of our clothing, a ton of food, a yoga mat, our electronics, and many other odds and ends. Kitchen and miscellaneous items are stored in Step 22 Stingray cabinet storage cubes, while clothing and shoes can be organized in three under-bed storage drawers (I'm in love), three hidden under-bed compartments, a hanging closet, and a shoe cubby. Mario has set this camper bed apart from the competition by making under-bed storage drawers easily accessible when the bed is pulled out completely; other beds require you to lift the bedding to grab your favorite pair of jeans, books, etc.

Now that you're dreaming of the glorious storage space, let's talk about the weight of the Aterra camper—at 1,250 pounds, the published base model weight is revolutionary. Donovan and his team have even managed to lighten it up by another 70 pounds. As such, the camper is designed for half-, three-quarter-, and one-ton full-size pickups and cab chassis trucks with 6.5-, 6.75, and 8-foot or longer flatbed trays (AT Overland notes that half-ton trucks may require augmented rear suspension).

I tested the prototype version (Generation One) of the camper, which was equipped with several optional features, including a second battery, fuel can, Max-Trax, and external shower curtain options. As it often goes, changes have been made to improve future generations. Dinette windows were raised 4 inches to improve the view when seated, and indoor/outdoor fabric now covers the cushions and mattress. In addition, pockets have been added to secure the mattress in one place while driving on rough roads. Generation Three also offers an optional DC power-driven 6,000 Btu split air-conditioning unit and an additional 105A battery. Finally, users can now transform the dinette into a sofa, bringing the comforts of home to a smaller space.

Overall, the Aterra XL flatbed camper ticks all the boxes. It's lightweight, well-laid-out, offers plenty of storage space, pre-

mium appliances, and is built to withstand harsh conditions and the test of time. I would argue it is also competitively priced. Now, if you will excuse me, I'm off to convince Mario to hand over the keys so I can take this baby out for another sleep beneath the stars.

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Opposite:

1. One of my favorite features of the Aterra camper is the under-bed storage drawers, which minimize clutter and keep clothing organized and out of the way.
2. The Garmin Power Switch app controls interior and exterior lights. This function comes in handy if you arrive at camp in the dark, want to dim the lights for a romantic evening, or switch the lights out from the bed.
3. A well-laid-out and spacious interior is a highlight of the Aterra XL flatbed camper.
4. This functional storage space includes slide-out stairs to access the king-size bed, a 3-inch upholstered foam mattress, and Froli Travel spring system.
5. Two strategically placed double-pane Arctic Tern windows allow sleepers to gaze at the stars, enjoy the breeze, or close up shop with bug screens or privacy curtains.
6. Keeping cozy in cold temperatures requires activating Truma's VarioHeat Comfort heater or the Truma AquaGo heater for on-demand hot water.
7. The Aterra camper is designed for half-, three-quarter-, and one-ton full-size pickups and cab chassis trucks with 6.5-, 6.75-, and 8-foot or longer flatbed trays.





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