



Dressed to impress



Images supplied

The uber-classy Le Voyageur 7.8CL makes a lasting impression on Malcolm Street, who falls in love at first, second and third sight

Although they shouldn't always, first impressions count for much. And there's no doubt that a first look at the DeLuxe Le Voyageur 7.8CL motorhome creates a considerable impression – a positive one, I should add. For starters, it's an A-class motorhome with a streamlined-looking front, and then the 7800mm of body length does the rest. In addition, there is Le Voyageur's name, which creates the impression of exotic travel to far-off places.

Mostly out of sight but certainly not out of mind is the Fiat Ducato Multijet 180 that is bolted to an AL-KO chassis. That is a combination that gets Fiat's 2.3-litre 132kW/400Nm turbo diesel, six-speed AMT gearbox and a chassis with a 4500kg GVM rating.

Moving to the construction side of things, Le Voyageur has a frameless composite structure consisting of aluminium/Styrofoam/polyester which is 35mm thick and used for the walls and roof. A little differently, the 25mm floor consists of fibreglass/Styrofoam/plywood. It's all designed not only to give a rigid body structure but also to be well

insulated, which is good for New Zealand winters. Double-glazed acrylic windows are fitted all round and there are two doors – a habitation door along the offside and a passenger side cab door. Given the swivel seat, it's quite easy to get in and out of from the living area.

Tare weight of this particular van with full water tanks, gas bottles, fuel tank, and all added extras – ie solar panels, TV aerial etc – is 3840kg, giving a payload of 660kg. There's a decent size garage storage area across the rear and two smaller bins along the sides. In addition, there are three utility bins – one for the 9kg gas cylinders, one for access to the Alde 6kW gas space and water heater, and one for the house battery and main electricals. That's a good design feature, nothing awkward to get at.

POWER AND WATER

On the subject of utilities, Le Voyageur is well appointed, with the house battery rated at 200AH and two 150-watt solar panels to keep them charged up. There are no problems with water capacity either, given the 200-litre fresh water tank and 120-litre grey tank. A point of note

Specifications	
Vehicle make/model	DeLuxe Le Voyageur 7.8CL
Engine	2.3-L 132kW /400Nm turbo diesel
Transmission	Six-speed AMT
Berths	4
Approx overall length	7800mm
Approx overall width	2300mm
Tanks	200L fresh/120L grey
Gas	2 x 9kg
GVM	4500kg
Price	\$249,990

here is that the water tanks are mounted above the rear axles, a good position for driving stability.

STEPPING ABOARD

Good impressions continue when stepping inside Le Voyageur; it's clear that no corners have been cut in creating a luxury interior. Inside it's light and bright, and that's the case even in the evening as there are light fittings – down, strip and reading – everywhere they might possibly be needed. If something a little more romantic is wanted, simply turn a few switches off. Just a little footnote here (pun intended); there's a floor level locker behind the step as you enter, excellent for stashing shoes. ▶▶



The décor is very classy, particularly the lighting

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That little curve in the benchtop not only looks good but adds useful space



Curved lines are a bedroom feature but the bedside shelves' square edges come in handy at night time



Once the cab seat backs are folded over, the bed drops down very easily

“It's clear that no corners have been cut in creating a luxury interior”



The cab area looks very Fiat familiar

DINING AND RELAXING

Up front is a somewhat familiar layout. Both cab seats swivel around, there's an L-shaped lounge behind the passenger seat, and a sideways-facing seat behind the driver. All the seats have matching leather upholstery and there's plenty of room to sit around and relax.

The single pole-mounted table is hinged and will swivel around, which does make it easy to get past when not being used. This is a bit of a tried-and-trusted layout and it does work well. TV viewing is best done from the front seats because the somewhat small TV is mounted on the fridge cabinet beside the habitation door. There are no cupboards or shelves above the driver's cab; instead something much more useful – a drop-down bed – out of the way when not needed but easy to use if visitors drop by. Its other asset is that the rear lounges can still be used even when the bed is down.

KITCHEN

It's not always easy to get, but the kitchen bench area does manage to have a few flowing lines about it, both in the benchtop shape and the shelf area. It's not just artistic either; even though the three-burner hob and stainless-steel sink take up most of the benchtop, there's still a bit of space for cutting veges. In addition to the overhead lockers, there's a bit of cupboard space around the grill/oven. However, things are better on the opposite side. While the 150-litre three-way fridge takes centre stage, it has storage space on both sides, including a full height slide-out pantry plus a cupboard above. Down at ground level, there are a couple of floor hatches, one for getting access to the water tanks, and one for smaller items, especially those left out of sight.

BATHROOM

Bathroom layout designs, like everything else, seem to go through phases. The latest is certainly a split arrangement, as in this one, with the shower stall on the nearside and the toilet cubicle across the way. Another trend of recent years is that the toilet door, when fully opened, will close off the front part of the motorhome and a sliding door does the same for the bedroom. It's not a silly idea; it does mean a closed-off bathroom area if desired but otherwise it doesn't take up space for, say, a walkway. The toilet cubicle is well appointed, with a

Le Voyageur leaves very good impressions

cassette toilet, washbasin, shaving cabinet and towel rails.

SLEEPING

In addition to the front bed, there is, this being a luxury motorhome, a 1950mm x 1450mm island bed in the rear. Because of the garage underneath, it does sit quite high, but there are steps on either side for clambering into bed. Overhead lockers are fitted above the bed, there are bedside cabinets, and curved door wardrobes on either side of the bed are a stylish touch. They're practical too; they have a sliding hanger rack so it is very easy to get clothing in and out. Given the class elsewhere, pillow-side cubby holes might be nice.

ON THE ROAD

Although the cab area is very much a cut-down Fiat Ducato, it still comes with all the Fiat features, including a wide-angle reversing camera. Certainly having the 130kW turbo diesel is an asset and the A-class cab design gives a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside, whether you are driving or not.

VERDICT

Lasting impressions are almost as important as first impressions and there's not much doubt that Le Voyageur leaves very good ones indeed. It's certainly not designed for the budget market but has a high level of fitout and finish. In short, a luxury cruising motorhome with just about everything you could wish for. ■

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- Luxury motorhome
- External bin capacity
- Spacious front lounge
- Easy access to all utilities
- Floor storage compartment



- Handing the keys back
- Small TV
- No pillow-side compartments



The toilet cabinet is tight but functional



The gas bin fits 2 x 9kg cylinders



Hoses and power leads are easy to get to



The water/ air heater are readily accessible for maintenance



The 230-volt and 12-volt electrics share a common but segregated compartment