



OOHLALAH LUXURY-LINER

Story Peta Stavelli Photos Bruce Mountain

The all-new French-made Le Voyageur brings a certain *je ne sais quoi* to the luxury-liner market of RV travel in New Zealand, writes Peta Stavelli



Knowing the all-new Le Voyageur was going to be introduced to the public at the Covi Supershow, I had done my homework and checked out the beautiful behemoth online. Ooh la la! I liked what I saw, and felt as if *la belle époque* of Kiwi motoring had finally arrived on our shores. But nothing prepared me for my first viewing of the real thing on day two of the show.

At 8.5 metres, Le Voyageur is more of a motor-liner than a motorhome. It has the feel of a luxury ship. With this apparent craftsmanship on display, it is not surprising to learn that only 308 are produced each year by the French manufacturer Pilote.

Pointing out the features of Le Voyageur was Brett Smith from DeLux Group. DeLux is the sole New Zealand importer of Pilote, and like other members of the DeLux team, Brett has been to the factory in France. There he was impressed by the level of true craftsmanship he witnessed, this was really brought home when he saw the traditional craftsmen's tools in use.

I was later to learn that the head of sales for the group, Gary Smith, had really put his money where his mouth was when he bought the first Le Voyageur for his own use. Knowing the attention to detail and excellence DeLux Group prides itself on, this personal investment in the brand speaks volumes.

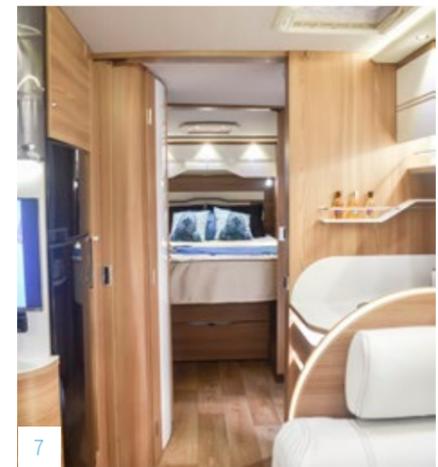
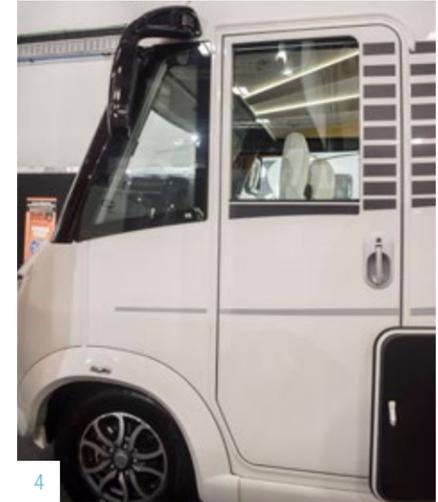
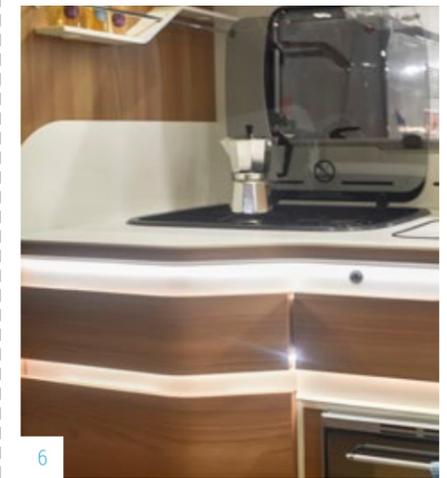
I've been reviewing motorhomes for a living for around six years now, and in that time I've seen a few luxury vehicles. Not one of them equalled the sense of luxury experienced with Le Voyageur. It is entirely possible that the price tag of \$264,000 reflects the attention to detail and the investment in quality materials in the overall finish. Le Voyageur is clearly not the creation of an anonymous assembly line.

Look around and you can see contrast-stitched white leather, glass, curved wood



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cabinetry and elegant white flush-front panels. Take your time and pay attention to the details: the reverse curved kitchen, glide-out and full-height pantry, the flip-top table that can seat up to eight people, the discreet LED lighting and the glimpse of the private master bedroom, with ensuite, to the rear of the vehicle. Of course this is a four-berth and the drop-down bed with all-white walls and built-in shelving is sure to soothe your guests.



1. The flip-top table seats eight for a *banquette du jour*
2. Clean lines convey the superior French styling
3. Step through to a private sanctuary
4. The passenger-side exit door will please many
5. The elegant design carries throughout and includes a curved acoustic ceiling
6. Note the classy strip lighting
7. Curved lines throughout please the eye



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I keep banging on about the feeling of a beautifully crafted boat, and there's a reason for this. Everywhere you look is evidence of a nod to the nautical, from the curve of the cabinetry, to the wooden-finish flooring, to the design of the rod and eyelet curtains. All is sweeping; no harsh lines halt the view. This is one swank little 'ship'.

The internal headroom just adds to the sense of space, and I was intrigued to learn that the roof is lined with 'soft-sound' acoustic fabric that not only blocks out external noise, but also soothes the sounds within the vehicle. All closures are designed to be gently affirmative, and this carries through to the smooth-slide-window catches. Windows are – of course – double-glazed poly-vision, and framed as you would expect in a vehicle of this quality.

The floors throughout the vehicle are level and these cleverly hide all the workings beneath, including the insulated 200-litre fresh-water tank and 120-litre grey-water tank. And all the tanks, the workings of the Alde heat exchanger and hot water system, the electrical and gas conduits, and the storage options, are accessible but hidden beneath the floor, protected from damage by a fibreglass sheath.

Externally it's all smooth sailing as well. The one-piece fibreglass roof is gently curved and designed to prevent water ingress and hail damage and it's welded seamlessly to polyester side walls with moisture-resistant wall battens and 35mm insulation. The rear tunnel locker is tall enough to stand your bikes for transport, so if you've spent the kind of money on your two-wheel transport that you've invested in your four-wheeler, you're not going to sacrifice fitness for security concerns.

Of course this is high-end transport, with the finish you would expect carrying through to the studded wheel trims. Very sexy indeed. So you might be surprised to find that there is a touch of the commoner about Le Voyageur which is powered by the ubiquitous Fiat motor. Or does this say a great deal more about the adaptability of Fiat that even luxury brands recognise the value of having a Fiat engine under the bonnet? Considering this, perhaps we should instead say that this French beauty has a touch of the racy Italian about it.

Whichever way you look at it, this vehicle will cosset you in the luxury to which you will want to be accustomed. **RV**



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7-8. The lighting and underneath storage are features of the bedroom suite

9. An enormous tunnel boot with tie-downs augments the numerous storage options

10. The accessible electronics locker

11. Le Voyageur is built on a Fiat base



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**SPEC'S LE VOYAGEUR 2018
4-BERTH \$264,990**

- Base vehicle: Fiat
- Engine: 2.3L turbo diesel
- Length: 8.55m
- Width: 2.35m
- Height: 2.95m
- Weight (GVM): 5000kg
- Payload: 837kg
- Water fresh: 200L
- Water grey: 120L
- Bed: island
- Bath: separate shower and toilet
- Cooking: three-burner hob and oven
- Fridge: three-way
- Awning: roll out
- TV: 24" Avtex TV with sound bar
- Solar: 2 x 150W panels