



FRENCH A-CLASS WOOS NELSON

Words Robyn Dallimore Photos Bruce Mountain

Over the last weekend in November, Tahuna Beach campground in Nelson was busy as Rotary set up and ran their fundraising Rotary Nelson Motorhome show. We attended the event with *RV Lifestyle* and *NZTODAY* magazines to enjoy the warm weather as well as catching up with readers and with South Island local industry people such as the Deluxe Group Smith family who are based in nearby Blenheim.

They had a lot going on in their display with a run-out sale on UK Bailey caravan models, clearing the decks for the arrival of new models, and next to them a range of the quality German-built Dethleff caravan models - Deluxe are an agent for this brand, along with Central RV in Taupo. Down the back, the Aussies dominated with the Winnebago range of motorhomes on display, and up the front, the very classy French Pilote motorhomes evoked a lot of attention from visitors. The whole family was



2

on deck for the weekend, with Gary, Greg, Brett and Laura Smith sharing their knowledge of the brands, not only with the public but also with a new face to the Deluxe team, Colin, who absorbed as much information as he could over the weekend.

At the front of the display was the latest, biggest and most fully fitted out model of the French Pilote range, the Emotion four-berth A-Class motorhome. Gary Smith showed me over the new model, proud as punch of all the extra features in this model, down to the fitted toilet-brush cleaner and wooden slatted floor in the en suite.

ENTRY - ENTERTAINMENT

The extra-wide (800mm) habitation door is on the right (driver's) side of the vehicle; an electric step aids entry to the next inset tread and into the entertainment area of the home. To the left is a 19" TV on a sliding-height rail - this will take up to 24" TV. To the immediate right is a wall-backed lounge seat with fitted armrests facing the dinette area. Under this seat is a storage space for shoes, accessed from inside the door side. To the front are the swivel driver and passenger seats - the



1

armrests have two adjustments for ultimate comfort. The cab itself is well equipped with air-con, drink holders, entertainment centre, 7" colour screen reversing-camera, storage for maps, glasses, etc. The cab windows are sliding, and with the seats in the forward position you can easily enter and exit the vehicle on the left side, so stepping onto the footpath is possible, when necessary. Above the cab is shelving and overhead-storage options galore.

From the front cab looking back: the table is adjustable; the seat removes on the window seat offering leg space when carrying a passenger in the dinette seat (fitted seat-belt); an 820x520mm panoramic wind-out roof vent above, with a decorative pelmet surround while dimmer-controlled strip and LED lighting is a nice feature.

KITCHEN

To the left of the entry door, opposite the sink and oven is the 160L Dometic AES fridge-freezer unit with a utility cupboard above that



3

1. The habitation door is on the right side. Upon entering, the seating with armrest is to the right, L-shaped dining opposite; AGUTI 'Lounge' swivel cab seats with two height adjustable armrests. Note the long window in the dining area - offering expansive views from the entertainment position, as well as the expansive front cab windows with great viewing 2. An all-in-one control and monitoring panel above the habitation entry door 3. The front cab and dinette view, nice lighting and good-sized seating available, adjustable table height, and this area converts to a bed if required 4. The bench is deep and with this configuration offers a good working space 5. The shower with fitted soap dish, slatted shower floor and extra mirror are some of the extras in this top-of-the-line model 6. The en suite is well equipped with pedestal swivel electric toilet, plenty of storage, ventilation and lighting

could be fitted with a microwave if desired. Next to that is a substantial pull-out pantry with sturdy shelves top to bottom - not much you couldn't cook with this sort of storage capacity. The kitchen bench backs onto the dinette seating, and an extra piece of the bench has been placed here - a good idea. The kitchen bench itself is deep and has a three-burner wide gas hob at the rear, with splash protection on the sides and back. The round stainless sink is to the left and forward of the hob. This leaves a good space for food preparation, and with the glass lids down on the sink and hob, this



4

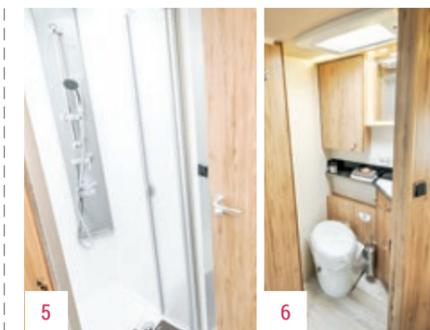
area becomes a good working space. On the left there's a fitted spice-rack shelf, and above, a wine-glass cupboard with clear Perspex door cover. Above the bench, overhead cupboards with shelves offer good space, and below bench, a gas oven, the utility drawer and separate pot drawer with fitted rubbish bin, are good spaces.

SHOWER AND EN SUITE

You step up into this area, that can be closed off by doors from the rear bedroom for privacy. On the right, a full-size shower with a wood slatted floor, soap dish and split acrylic door. And opposite, the en suite with swivel cassette toilet, plenty of cupboard and shelf storage, toilet-brush holder, towel racks, strip lighting around the mirror, and a roof vent - a good space.

BEDROOM

The rear bedroom has a queen-size bed with a Bultex mattress on a slatted bed frame that pushes back at the press of a button for a raised seating position that also pulls the length back to allow more walk-around space. Two drawers are underneath the foot of the bed, and more storage is available by lifting the bed up on gas struts to access three separate compartments. Storage spaces and shelves on both sides of



5

6

the bed are nice, and the flat-top surface for a cup of tea, your glasses, or a bottle of water, is great. The wardrobes on each side have lights inside and there are two overhead lockers, and in the left back corner, a small corner cabinet with mirror above gives the owner plenty of space for clothes and linen. The headboard is upgraded fabric, as is the inner roof lining of the whole vehicle. There are speakers and reading lights above the headboard, as well as the strip lighting that trims the room. A roof vent above with fly screen and blind offers ventilation and light. Windows in the body of the vehicle have fly screens and pull-down blinds, dressed with net and decorative curtains. The bedroom is wired and ready for a TV and has two USB charging ports - a sign of the times.



7

EXTERIOR

The cab is a 2018 Fiat Ducato FWD, 2300cc diesel turbo, auto transmission with all the usual traction control, EBC, ABC, air-con, central locking, cruise control, electric and heated bus style mirrors, weighing in at GVM 4500kg. Based on the lowered Alko chassis, this model is only 2.85m high and 2.3m wide. This makes the double floor storage 21cm from side to side, and all the waste tanks and pipework are within the double floor, protecting them from frost or other damage. The underbelly of the vehicle is also lined with a polyester skin under the chassis, keeping the area waterproof and protected from potential damage. All storage area doors feature a double seal and compression locks to ensure perfect waterproofing and insulation.

The gas locker is situated under the driver seat area – two 9kg bottles are at home in here. Further back we see the two under-floor storage locker doors. This storage space goes full width and is accessible both sides. Each area is split so items can't roll around, and some of the space is accessible via floor hatches in the interior. An exterior shower hose with hot and cold water is situated in the middle storage area, and the rear storage boot is really large. There are two rails running the width,



8



9



with sliding security tie-downs – great idea for securing bikes or boats, etc. Power and heating are in here as well.

The back of the vehicle has a three-piece bumper system – easy to repair a section if required. This is the latest 2018 design one-piece back for the Emotion model, a 180-degree colour camera is fitted and new coloured graphics add some personality to the exterior. You can't see it but the chassis has been boosted with a rear reinforcement extension, which means your chassis won't sway at the rear. With its resistant structure, the storage area can support considerable weight, as well as ensure your towing capacity is optimised. The track of the lowered chassis' track width is also widened at the rear, resulting in a lower centre of gravity. This, along with the fitment of front and rear anti-roll bars, aids road-holding. All this adds up to a sturdy package and a 1080kg payload – nice. The whole Pilote portfolio benefits from Isotek construction that features L-shaped aluminium profiles that fasten together securely on the joined sidewalls and floors. A Styrofoam insulation core is integrated into the sides and roof at a thickness of 28mm, and into the floor, which is 35mm thick.

Moisture-resistant structural battens and aluminium inserts ensure the vehicle and its furniture are perfectly stable, as is the convex-profiled polyester roof attached to the body. The dent-proof overlap roof is also hail and impact resistant.

Certainly a nice motorhome, and I can see why Deluxe are having trouble keeping stock on the yard – these models sold as soon as they arrived and the next shipment is looking to go the same way. A lot of storage options for those who may want to live on the road or travel for long periods. Gary also tells me they have a new dealer in the lower North Island for the Pilote brand, Gypsy Caravans in Levin have some models on display now and more on order. If this is the size and specifications and budget you are looking for in a motorhome then make time to view this range with the Deluxe Group in Blenheim. **RV**

PILOTE EMOTION 2018 FIAT DUCATO G781C 4-BERTH, \$199,990

Base vehicle

Fiat Ducato 2.3L 150hp auto, diesel turbo
GVM Maximum laden weight (full tanks, people, everything loaded in.)

4500kg GVM on a COF payload 1080kg

External boot storage

3270L capacity

External length, height, width (mm)

7890(L), 2850(H), 2300(W)

Wheels and tyres

16" alloy wheels, motorhome tyres

Batteries

2 x 130Ah deep-cycle batteries, 18A battery charger, solar controller 230V–12V

Power supply

Solar 150W, upgrade a further 150W

Extra-wide entry door

800mm

Flooring

Vinyl flooring

Bed size

Island bed 1500x1900mm with electric bed head lift. Dinette converts to double bed

Cooking

Gas oven, three-ring hob

Entertainment

Kiwisat aerial with 19" TV, stereo, bluetooth, USB charging ports

Fridge

Dometic AES three-way fridge 160L

Heating

6kW hot water and heating – Truma combi gas/electric

Lighting

LED individual and strip dimmable lighting

Toilet, shower

Full shower box – separate cassette toilet en suite

Water tanks

Fresh: upgraded 205L – Grey: 120L

Warranty

Five-year body integrity warranty

7. The bedroom with a 1500x1900mm island bed, storage galore and electric headboard 8. A large boot area, offering 3270L of storage, with two-floor rails on each side with sliding security tie-downs, two storage bins, a power outlet and even a heating vent – wow 9. The storage lockers are accessible from both sides and from floor hatches inside the vehicle. This locker sits to the right of the larger rear boot storage, allowing for separation of smaller items – you will see the wall inside on the left. There is a hot/cold shower hose here as well