



The front area is multi-purpose – driving, dining, relaxing and sleeping

## French fancy

The French-built Sensation may be small, but she's got plenty of class, says Malcolm Street

**M**any potential buyers of A-class motorhomes imagine they are a very large vehicle to drive. That has changed somewhat in the past few years with the arrival on our shores of a number of European A-class rigs under 7500mm. However, I admit I was surprised at the DeLuxe RV Group stand at the recent Covi show to see a Pilote Sensation G600L with a body length just 1mm short of 6000mm. A pocket-sized motorhome indeed.

French-built, the Pilote Sensation G600L is based on a Fiat Ducato Multijet 150 cab chassis, minus most of the Fiat cab part, of course. It comes with the 109KW/350Nm, 2.3-litre turbo diesel that drives through, surprisingly, a six-speed manual gearbox. That's not really a hardship, the Ducato gear shifter being quite a slick changer.

One of the benefits of an A-class layout is that the driver and passenger get a commanding view of the road and

surrounding landscape. Below the dashboard, it is all Fiat Ducato components and a familiar layout. The passenger also gets a door, as does anyone else because the swivel seat isn't too difficult to get around.

On the matter of weight, this motorhome comes up quite well, having a tare mass of 2910kg and a GVM of 3500kg, giving it a payload of 590kg.

Being a fairly short A-class design, the G600L could look a bit boxy, but from the front in particular, it is a stylish-looking motorhome. Like many these days, it has a composite fibreglass structure with a hail-proof polyester roof, polyester underfloor covering and it's all assembled on aluminium rails. Let's not forget the Styrofoam insulation (28mm walls/50mm roof and floor), something the European manufacturers seem to be very good at! Something else the Euros are good at is air flow within the

motorhome to minimise condensation and maximise insulation.

Many motorhomes this size don't come with much external storage, but the G600L scores quite well, with a decently sized bin at the offside rear. It's not tunnel storage but does offer plenty of shelved space for all the camping essentials and quite a few extras as well. Sitting more or less just under the driver's seat, the gas bin will hold two 9kg gas cylinders.

Given the relatively short length of the motorhome, the windows are a bit of a mixture. All the cab ones are safety glass of course, and the two down the nearside are double-glazed acrylic awning style. But the one beside the Hartal door is, sensibly, a sliding window. No door/window issues here.

Thanks to the slightly compressed length of the motorhome body, the layout inside is a little different to the usual. Some things remain familiar, like the front dining/lounge area with the two swivelling cab seats, the L-shaped lounge behind the passenger seat and the sideways-facing lounge behind the driver's seat. Above all that the 1900mm x 1350mm drop-down bed fits neatly into the ceiling area when not needed.

The kitchen is mid-station, leaving the rear area for the bathroom. It's not quite full width because of the external storage bin. Pilote certainly do a nice job on the

The driver and passenger get a commanding view of the road



Images supplied

The Pilote is short but well equipped; note the rear storage compartment

Pilote certainly do a nice job on the interior finish

interior finish, everything from the seat upholstery to the extensive lighting system. Although this is only a two-berth motorhome, there are four seat belt-fitted seats and there is an option of having the lounge made up into a second bed.

Lowering down the drop-down bed is quite easy, but it does require folding over the front-seat backs. Of course you lose the front seats, but if one partner wants to retire earlier than the other, there is still the dinette seating that can be used and it's not too difficult to have a cup of tea in bed by using the side table!

There does seem to be a bit more space than usual at the kitchen bench. That is in part due to its length and variable width but also because a space-saver three-burner hob has been fitted to the back of the benchtop, leaving enough room for both a round stainless steel sink and a fair bit of vege cutting space. The extra little shelves on either side help, as does the wine glass holder. And to assist with fume extraction, there's both the opening window and fan extractor fitted directly above the hob. Fitted into the right-hand corner are two 230V power points and two USB charger sockets – handy for the dinette area, a cable length away.

Located under the benchtop are a Thetford mini-grill and a selection of drawers, one of which includes a garbage bin – just so much better than the plastic bag hanging off a door handle. That other kitchen essential, the Dometic 138-litre fridge, is well sized and has small storage lockers above and below, making it at user-friendly height.

Across the rear area, the bathroom has a small step up and offers the full complement of a Dometic cassette toilet, vanity cabinet and shower cubicle. While the vanity cabinet is well appointed with mirrors, cupboards and shelves, the shower cubicle is a bit on the narrow side. That is in part due to the space taken at the opposite end not only by the external bin but a cupboard that offers a generous amount of hanging and shelf space. A little bit of a compromise, but a good one I reckon.



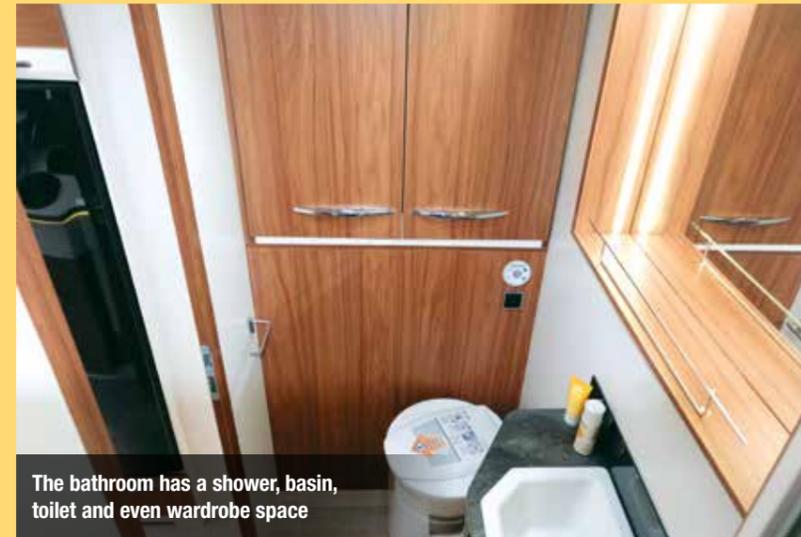
The front bed drops easily into position



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The three-burner hob is set back to free up bench space



The bathroom has a shower, basin, toilet and even wardrobe space



The shelves in the external bin are a nice touch



A handy space for your toolbox



Maintenance hatches are always handy



The slide-out bin is useful for power leads and water hoses



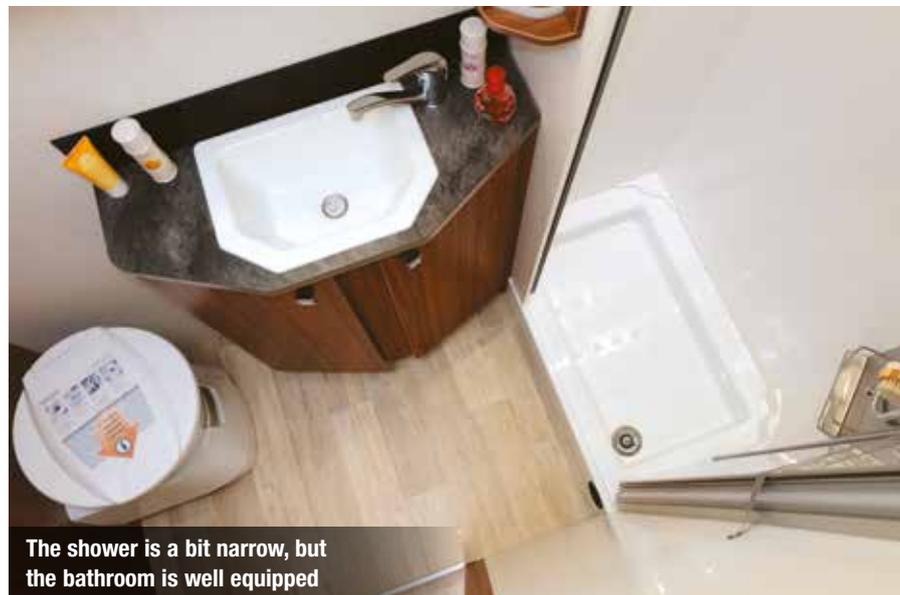
**The passenger door gives easy access to the kerbside**

Up front there is a generous amount of space in the seating area. Five or six people could probably sit around the table if needed, especially if the table is folded over to its maximum size. It has a hinged top so is not in the way when you walk past but can accommodate a decent feast if needed. In case you are wondering, the seat cushion right in front of the rear seat can be removed to give the nearside passenger some legroom.

The TV is mounted by the habitation door on the fridge cabinet and is certainly seen best from the swivelled cab seats.

But you can also see from the sideways-facing seats without too much head turning. Even when turning on the television there's no need to move from your seat because the satellite dish is fully automatic!

In terms of self-containment, the G600L has a 130-litre fresh water tank and a 95-litre capacity for grey water. The electrics offer a 100AH deep cycle battery charged up both by a 18A mains charger and a 120W solar panel. Anyone planning extended remote stays might like to consider extending the battery



**The shower is a bit narrow, but the bathroom is well equipped**



- A class motorhome less than 6000mm long
- Great view from the driver's seat
- Good-sized kitchen bench area
- Drop-down bed (rather than a day/night lounge)
- Can transport four people
- Reasonably sized external bin



- Minimal lowered bed area ventilation
- Narrow shower
- Step up to bathroom (more of an issue at night)
- Battery capacity for remote stays

capacity. Supplying the hot water and air heating is a Truma Combi 6E heater which will operate from both 230V mains power and LP gas.

### VERDICT

If looking for a small A-class motorhome, the Sensation G600L has to be a contender. It's easy to drive and is very well appointed, with everything from the wine glass holder to the automatic satellite dish. It will serve a couple very well, but a solo traveller who desires a bit more class will equally be at home. Some good things do come in small packages! ■

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