



Andrew and Ally Dodge’s Winnebago provided luxurious accommodation on their recent trip over the Forgotten Highway – including the obligatory stop-off in the ‘republic’ of Whangamomona.

WINNEBAGO A WINNER

NZMCA members Andrew and Ally Dodge (#45517) from Murchison have been camping for as long as they can remember – although nowadays their luxurious new Winnebago Whitehaven, from the DeLuxe Group in Blenheim, is a far cry from how they started out.

It all began with a little old caravan on the back of a farm truck; that was over 30 years ago and Andrew and Ally are still in love with life on the road.

“We love the flexibility it gives you,” says Andrew. “Having our own caravan or motorhome has given us the ability to go where we want and do what we want to do. If we want to pull into a park or a POP we can. It gives you so much freedom.

“I’ve got a saying that owning a motorhome is like having a bach at every beach.”

The Dodges have been members of the NZMCA since 2012 when they bought a Ford Transit: “We went to look at a few campervans initially

and we liked the Transit. We checked it out to see if we were compatible and if we could handle it on the road.”

Within a year they’d upgraded to a Volkswagen that was an ex-rental. In 2015 they decided to upgrade again: “We were retired and wanted to spend more time on the road so we wanted something a bit fancier,” says Andrew.

Once more they made the trek from their hometown of Murchison to the DeLuxe Group in Blenheim where they’d bought their previous two motorhomes.

“The service we got from DeLuxe was top notch,” says Andrew. “They’ve always exceeded our expectations. I sent Gary Smith (the

Managing Director of DeLuxe’s automotive sales division) a list of things that I wanted and two or three things I didn’t want.

“Some of the things we wanted were swivel front seats and an island bed that we could leave made up. I wanted a table big enough that I could fold out a broadsheet-sized newspaper. As it turns out I read the newspaper on my tablet nowadays but it’s still good to have a big table. We wanted a big fridge and lots of storage and the Winnebago delivers in every way.

“We spent two or three hours going through everything with Gary before we picked it up in January last year. We asked for a few extras.



The first of its kind sold in New Zealand, the Dodge's iconic Winnebago Whitehaven turns heads wherever the Murchison-based couple take it on their adventures around the country.

We updated to Sky TV and we got bigger water tanks installed and a bigger solar panel.

"The only thing we had to give in on was the front wheel drive. I would have preferred a rear wheel drive in a vehicle of that size but we're approaching nearly 15,000kms in her now and we're very happy.

"We did a South Island tour soon after we got it and we've done two trips to the North Island. In August last year we went up the east coast, right up as far as Whakatane and came back down through Taupo.

"In the last few weeks we've been up the west coast to Hawera and we did the Forgotten Highway and went to our grandson's wedding at Te Awamutu. We came back via the Wanganui River Road and stopped off at Jerusalem where the famous poet, James K Baxter spent his hippie years!

"Our next trip is down the West Coast of the South Island and I'm going to bike ride from Mt Cook to Oamaru on the Alps to Ocean cycle trail.

"While we're over there we're going to drive up to the NZMCA Easter Rally at Kaikoura. I love the fact that we get to meet so many

like-minded people. You come across a few unpositive people but most of the people we meet on the road are like ourselves; they're older, more mature people with a really positive outlook on life and we've had some lovely comments about the Winnebago."

Winnebago is a classic American brand and since the company was founded in 1957 it's been recognised as one of the world leaders in motorhome design and technology. Like all Winnebagoes, the Whitehaven is built to the

highest standards of quality and excellence and Andrew has lost count of the number of people who've asked to have a look around.

"Sometimes you get sick of showing it off to people but they're excited to have a look inside. We've seen one or two other Winnebagoes on the road but this one was the first of its kind sold in New Zealand. It's such an iconic brand."

No regrets then?

"Absolutely none. We got everything we asked for and more." 

