



The Pilote Galaxy Essentiel A-class model stands out in the line-up

# A CLASSY FRENCHIE ARRIVES IN TOWN

Words Robyn Dallimore Photographs Bruce Mountain

**N**elson is only about 90-minutes' drive from Blenheim, so it was no surprise to see Marlborough-based DeLuxe Group displaying the products they distribute here in New Zealand - from the latest Dethleffs and Bailey caravans, to the classy Australian Winnebago and French Pilote motorhomes - at the NZMCA National Rally and AGM in the Nelson suburb of Richmond last month.

I noticed straightaway that there was a new model in the Pilote range, the first of the 2017 A-class motorhomes - the Pilote Galaxy



John Coatsworth (Helen's husband so a long time NZMCA member) thinks this Captains chair is just right for him



Bruce catches a few visitors making themselves at home, and there's plenty of space to do so around the dining/lounge area

740C - and what a beauty it is, so cool that it was no surprise that it had sold by the end of the weekend, and a second order was on the books by Sunday.

It looks like a large vehicle, but being on a WOF and under 3500kg rating, you can zip along in this 150hp, 2.3L motorhome at 100km/h no problem.

Bruce roped in some keen models to show us the vehicle's features for our photographs, while I met Morton Price and his wife who'd just purchased the vehicle. They told me they'd looked at more than 90 vehicles over the last year or so before deciding this was the one for

them. They're long time motorhomers so this isn't their first vehicle, and they say it won't be their last - they aim to buy an even bigger model in around three years when they'll get on the road full-time for a while. This one is just an in-between at this point.

You can see this and other newly arrived Pilote motorhomes at the Covi Motorhome, Caravan and Outdoor SuperShow in Auckland on the 17-19 of this month.

## THE BODY

The Fiat special motorhome chassis is the market standard nowadays, with its front

Helen Coatsworth from CBOP is a long-time member of the NZMCA - her number is 6827 and they're into the 60,000 now. Helen spotted the under-seat storage; great for shoes or things you want on your way out or in the door



The 820mm x 520 panoramic sunroof opens with a winder and is on stays, what a great idea instead of push open and pull close - no blowing up in the wind with this model



The Thetford oven is compact and has a grill unit in the top and a storage drawer underneath. The pot cupboard is under the fridge unit opposite



Passenger entry door on the Pilote Galaxy Essentiel



Checking out all the exterior features, this one is most important!



John is very impressed with the size of the exterior storage boot, which is accessible from both sides, offering 2240L of space

and back anti-roll bars, the special reinforced motorhome tyres, and the wide track width at the rear which offers better road holding. As with all Pilote motorhomes, the chassis is lowered by 15cm which allows for under-floor services like pipe work, water tanks and valves to be contained in an insulated environment offering frost or freezing protection if you're a winter camper. This also lowers the overall height of the vehicle and offers extra full-width storage for all sorts of bits and bobs like fishing rods, camp chairs and the like, leaving the large boot for the bigger items.



The kitchen has storage cupboards overhead, a utility drawer and a larger storage drawer with a fitted bin. The sink and hob units have glass covers to increase the workspace - not a large space but this is bigger than other European models

The whole Pilote portfolio benefits from Isotek construction, which features L-shaped aluminium profiles which 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 structure 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.

A polyester skin under the chassis provides the vehicle with perfect waterproofing under the body itself. As a result, a five-year body integrity warranty is offered. Windows are high quality and flush fitting, thanks to the aluminium anti-intrusion frames, and are double-glazed to further improve thermal insulation and safety.

Also standard is the chassis extension, which means your chassis won't sway at the rear. With its resistant structure, your storage area can support considerable weight, ensuring your towing capacity is optimised. All storage area doors feature a double seal and compression locks to ensure perfect waterproofing and insulation.

## THE CAB

The large cab windscreen offers panoramic views, but the driver can also see an object less



The Fiat cab offers all the usual goodies, with carpet, cup holders, Captain's chairs that swivel and are height adjustable, and electric windows

than 80cm tall situated one metre from the front bumper, which is great in a vehicle this size. A pull-down privacy blind covers the windscreen, and side blinds complete the evening privacy package. The external wing mirrors are large bus size, are electrically adjustable and heated. The large boot storage in the rear is accessible from both sides.

The internal cab area is great with plenty of cup holders, storage for both the driver and the passenger; entry to the front cab is via a large opening door on the passenger side, and entry to the rear living is via a full-sized door behind the driver's side lounge area. The AGUTI swivel seats have two height-adjustable armrests that offer very comfortable extra seating in the living area.

## INTERIOR

Stepping into the interior via the electric step, the living/dining space is to the right behind



The toilet en suite is separate to the shower area; double partition doors offer a private changing area as required

the cab area, kitchen opposite, fridge/freezer and storage to the left, bathroom is mid-ship with en suite toilet on the right side, separate shower to the left. The bedroom is at the rear with island bed, two drawers under the bed as well as lifting the bed to access extra storage space. Wardrobes on each side, overhead lockers for more storage and a nice upholstered headboard. There are privacy doors that can be used between the bedroom and the bathroom areas that create a whole dressing room space when using the shower area.

Often in these European A-class models there's a pull-down bed in the front cab ceiling



The passenger side has a large entry door; here you can see the passenger seat swivel around to complement the seating in the dining/lounge area. The table drops down to convert the dining area into a sleeping berth



The rear bedroom offers the ever-popular island bed, storage drawers underneath and the bed lifts offering more storage. Wardrobes each side and overhead cupboards take care of your personal storage needs. Check out the nice headboard as well

space. Gary and the team at DeLuxe have selected this model that doesn't have that ceiling bed, because they like the clean open space feeling of this model that has extra overhead storage cupboards instead. To offer a second berth area, the dining table goes down and the seating converts to a good-sized double bed. Excellent for those couples that really won't travel with regular visitors or grandchildren. It means they get the extra storage and feeling of spaciousness, but retain the ability to comfortably sleep guests as required.

You can order the standard model if the ceiling bed is something you like or need. There is a range of floor plans that offer French beds, single beds, drop-down beds or no permanent bed options – you can really get what you want with this range.

The flooring is vinyl and all the windows are fitted with fly screens and privacy blinds, with decorative curtains to finish.

The kitchen is compact – as are the majority of European or UK model motorhomes. The hob has three gas rings, and there's a gas oven with internal grill fitted under the bench. Kitchen storage is a utility drawer and a larger storage drawer with fitted rubbish bin, a drawer under the oven, two overhead cupboards, and opposite that a pot drawer under the fridge, and a large open cupboard above the fridge. With the extra cupboards around the whole front cab area, there are plenty more options



Under bed storage, and drawers in front. Note the slatted bed frame

## SPECIFICATIONS

7400mm length, 2300mm wide, 2850mm height. GVM 3500kg, this model offers 395kg payload. Fresh water 130L – Grey 95L. Two 105 ah deep cycle house batteries with 18a charger, 150w solar panel and regulator. Automatic three-way 149L fridge/freezer unit. 4Kw Truma combi gas heating and hot water system. Reversing camera and satellite dish come standard, as does cruise control driving, central locking and remote locking of all the doors.

DeLuxe offers a three-year WOF, 12 months registration, 1000km RUCs paid up, two-year Fiat mechanical warranty, and a five-year factory-backed water tightness warranty.



Now we're having fun – I think this couple loved the bedroom! Measuring 1500 x 2050mm, it's a good size bed for most

for all your kitchen needs, as well as some storage under the seating.

Entertainment-wise, a flat screen TV is mounted on a sliding rail system so you can adjust the height to suit, a great idea I reckon because some of the TV positions in motorhomes just put your neck out trying to see them.

The bathroom offers a separate toilet area with vanity, storage, a heated towel rail behind the swivel Thetford electric toilet and a nifty toilet roll holder, which took my eye, as it is upright so the toilet roll literally can't come off – a great idea. The shower is opposite and is full-sized.

There's ducted central heating throughout, including the bathroom areas. Privacy doors turn the area between the bathroom and toilet into a changing area separate to the front living and the rear bedroom if required. **RV**