

OUR MOTORHOME



Three gas rings, one electric hotplate, and there's ample workspace in here

2008 AUTO-SLEEPER COUNTY HAMPSHIRE £56,995

What we liked

- ➔ The vast living space made it feel like home. Moving around even when one of us was cooking was a breeze.
- ➔ Excellent kitchen with great hob (three gas rings and one electric hotplate) plus the oven and microwave
- ➔ The Mercedes 150bhp CDI diesel provided an excellent, enthusiastic drive. Powerful enough to get up steep Cornish hills with ease, and when the wind wasn't blowing it was easy to think we were in a car.
- ➔ Although large and wide, the Hampshire handled extremely well for a vehicle of this size. It also had good visibility and mirrors. A driver's pleasure.
- ➔ Cruise control. Simply put, it's brilliant.
- ➔ The Frolexus orthopaedic electrically adjustable beds were extremely comfortable and could be raised and lowered to help make them level, not to mention turn them into comfortable chaise longues.

What we didn't like

- ➔ We'd have preferred a double bed to two singles.
- ➔ Not entirely convinced by the build quality of the wood effect interior, and the carpets kept popping out of place.
- ➔ Sink was very slow to drain.
- ➔ Although we loved the generous size of the Hampshire, something a bit smaller would have suited the small Cornish roads.



There's plenty of room to stretch, though on reflection, maybe sand wasn't great for the carpet

Biggest attraction of the Auto-Sleeper Hampshire? Start with that large, unmissable roundel on the bonnet. Sorry Fiat, you may account for some three-quarters of all motorhome base vehicles across Europe (your figures), but you've still got many a mile to travel when it comes to the comforting prestige of the Mercedes three-pointed star.

When the Marquis Motorhomes dealer network wanted something even more exclusive from its sister manufacturing company Auto-Sleepers, it started with the Mercedes Sprinter chassis, subsequently developing the seven-model County line-up of overcab coachbuilts – and the motorhoming public were soon trading in their Auto-Trails, Bessacarrs and the like with aplomb. Interestingly, Marquis reports there have also been a lot of “no part-exchanges”, suggesting these County models are reaching out to a new type of motorcaravanner.

The Hampshire we used for our Cornwall adventure acquitted itself well. You need an engine with oomph, and the 150bhp version

has it – holding a steady 70mph (where permitted, of course) thanks to the joys of cruise control. Hills sometimes required a bit more work – be careful when it comes to uphill overtaking. Also, these Sprinters tend towards a softer suspension than their rivals, which means more body roll when cornering but also a smooth ride over potholes etc.

It has a particularly well-appointed cab. Most buyers go for the Anniversary Option Pack, as on our test vehicle, which offers cab air conditioning, cruise control, alloy wheels and automatic transmission – all for a thoroughly reasonable £3000.

Strictly two-berth (there are no rear travel seats), the Hampshire's living quarters boast the kind of luxury most couples could easily get used to. If you like to sprawl out, this is the layout for you.

Take a deep breath and say it... Frolexus Orthopaedic Electric Bed System. Supremely comfortable twin single beds at the back are the key aspect of this layout, with the bonus of electrical operation, ideal for sitting up in bed, raising yourself to a semi-prone TV-watching position or just (literally) putting your feet up.

Similarly, the kitchen is a minor motorhome marvel, with a 88-litre fridge that takes more than a few Cornish pasties...

Act fast. This 2008 ex-demonstrator is for sale at Marquis for a fiver under £50,000, a £7000 saving on brand new. It's done 3,419 miles, most of them down to us at Go Motorhome. There may be some other bargains to be had, too, as Mercedes is set to unveil its latest engine, to Euro V specification – cleaner and greener it will, of course, also mean a price hike.

The Auto-Sleeper County range is only available through Marquis Motorhomes
0800 026 7777
www.marquismotorhomes.co.uk