

Living like royalty

The exquisite surroundings of Blenheim Palace were the ideal place for **MATTHEW EASTLAKE** to test an exclusive motorhome

This motorhome, built by Auto-Sleepers to Marquis Motorhomes' own specification, was put to the test at the largest annual event of its kind in the country, the Camping and Caravanning Club's

National Feast of Lanterns. The Surrey didn't look out of place in the grounds of the impressive Blenheim Palace, the Oxfordshire home of the Duke of Marlborough and a suitable venue for this year's event.

The fold-down digital TV unit was faultless. As soon as it's deployed the unit starts to tune. It identified more than 30 channels at Blenheim Palace. The main factory-fitted radio/CD player was of good quality and the additional speakers towards the rear of the cabin make for excellent all-round sound.



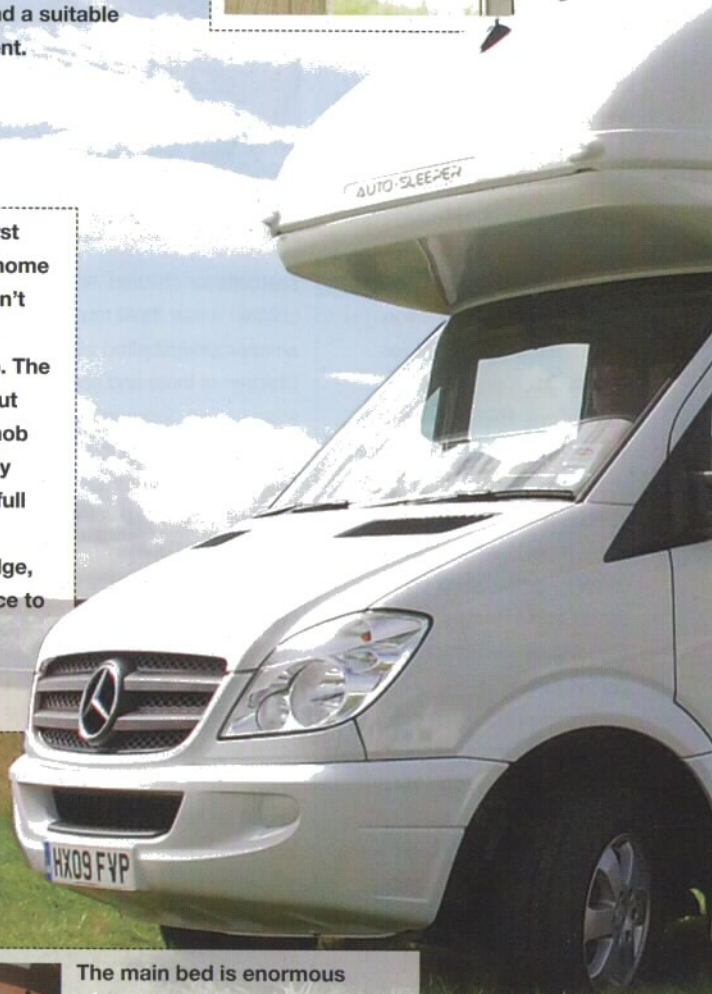
At last! This is the first 'mainstream' motorhome I've tested that doesn't have the microwave directly over the hob. The kitchen is well laid out and the impressive hob and oven could easily cope with serving a full Sunday roast. The

extendable work surface, tucked away neatly just above the fridge, provides substantial additional space and is in just the right place to rest items coming from both the oven and microwave. Storage space is plentiful and easily accessible and it's also possible to use the often-redundant space just below the sink bowl.



The main bed is enormous when it's put together, occupying the central section of the motorhome. It's also comfortable, although a mattress topper would ensure no gaps where the cushions meet. The bunks over the cab are a little tight and perhaps better suited to children. The

roof is low at this point and the person closest to the sloping front over the cab may get a little claustrophobic. Since the washroom and kitchen are tucked away to the rear, it doesn't feel as if you're sleeping in the kitchen.



The roof is high and the main living space uncluttered, hence no shuffling or squeezing between cupboards and compartments. The washroom is simply wonderful and the modern shower unit is easy to keep clean and makes the very best use of space – you can move the sink to create a shower cubicle in seconds.



The fact that the kitchen and washroom are well designed and equipped, yet still compact, means the living area is maximised. It's possible to stretch out along each of the two sofas, a welcome change from a bench seat and table arrangement.



Auto-Sleepers Surrey

The build quality is good with the only noticeable exception being the plastic catches inside each cupboard – arguably just a small incremental cost would guarantee a tight and secure fit. The Surrey generally oozes quality and I had to listen hard to hear any rattle or squeak when driving.

Just before handing back the motorhome I spotted a neatly-positioned safety deposit box, but you'll have to buy a Surrey to find out where it is!



at a glance

Auto-Sleepers Surrey

Price as tested £52,995

Club Care insurance: £349

Base vehicle Mercedes Sprinter MWB

Engine as tested Euro 5 163bhp diesel automatic gearbox

Cooker Three-burner hob; grill; oven; microwave oven

Fridge/freezer Capacity 88 litres

Heating Gas and electric heater; gas and electric water heater

Electrics Two 230V sockets and one 12V socket

Gas locker Space for two 15kg cylinders

Freshwater tank 71 litres

Length x width x height 6.45m x 2.26m x 3.13m

Berths Four sleeping/four travelling

Bed sizes Over-cab 1.9m x 1.18m; double bed 2.1m x 1.92m

Maximum Technically

Permissible Laden Mass 3,880kg

User payload 642kg

Warranty Three years' base vehicle and three years' conversion

Supplier Marquis Motorhomes, The Causeway, Great Billing, Northampton NN3 9EX

Tel 0800 026 7777

Web marquismotorhomes.co.uk (see County Range)

Verdict: This prestige motorhome combines quality with thoughtful design, though it might be a little tight for four sleeping inside.

The Mercedes cab supports a commanding driving position. This, combined with the quality of the coachbuilt body, leaves the driver feeling confident and safe. Visibility is excellent with a clear view through the rear window. Like most of the motorhomes I've driven,

the radio seemed to suffer from electrical interference when the motorhome was moving.

The 163bhp engine was adequate and motorway driving effortless, helped by cruise control. However, around town and on smaller roads I found the automatic box couldn't decide which gear to be in and the frequent gear changes became irritating.

