



The full service

Employing a professional to convert your base vehicle is a stress-free solution to anyone who is allergic to DIY.

There are quite a few ways of owning a motorhome. Buying a new or used is one of them, and doing your own conversion is another. But if you are not particularly handy, there is the option of buying or owning your own vehicle and getting the conversion professionally done.

That's exactly the service that Adventure Motorhome Conversions offers. Adventure Motorhomes is based at Oak Flats on the south coast of NSW. Owners Mick and Debbie Briggs leave the sourcing of a vehicle to the prospective motorhome owner and just do the conversion work. Toyota Coasters are a favourite base vehicle but Nissan Civilians, Mercedes Sprinters, Ivecos and in fact anything up to about 36ft are possibilities. Fit out takes about five or six weeks and although there are some 'standard' layouts, everything is custom built.

CUSTOM COASTER

Mick and Debbie have been in the motorhome conversion business for a number of years. Their first project was a conversion completed for Debbie's father. Subsequently, another person ordered a similar conversion and so the business was born.

Mick is a carpenter and joiner by trade and has a background in marine work. Like many others, he discovered that boats and motorhomes are very similar to fit out.

The couple not only builds motorhome conversions, they are also keen motorhome travellers. The motorhome MHG looked over is their current demonstration unit and recreational vehicle, when the pair can afford the time away.

When MHG asked what sort of people buy mid-sized bus conversions, Debbie told us that most had previously owned recreational vehicles. Some were former caravanners or motorhomers who no longer wanted a bed in the Luton peak.

For this review, the base vehicle was a Toyota Coaster LWB, with a 4.2L non-



turbodiesel motor (the same one fitted to LandCruisers) and a five-speed manual gearbox. The diesel motor certainly powers the Coaster along well enough – in my brief travels it didn't quite have the performance of late model Euro turbodiesels but once up to speed gave the impression of being able to keep going forever.

The manual five-speed gearbox was the typical truck-style changing pattern, with the first gear being on the left and back (rather than the usual forward). Mick told me that on the open road, the Coaster averages 18-20mpg (14-15L/100km). Although the Coaster is quite easy to manoeuvre around, I did appreciate the convenience of a rear vision camera – it makes parking a breeze.

Toyota Coasters, as a conversion vehicle,





Clockwise from above: Comfy chairs in the cabin; Tasmanian oak finish throughout; neat table between the beds.

Mick is clearly a craftsman of the first order because all the timberwork, both panels and doors, is beautifully finished in Tasmanian oak. This includes the unseen framework, which is all completed using 40mm x 20mm timber.

All the windows have venetian blinds, as well as full curtains and the ceiling is fully lined – indeed there is no real clue that this fit out has been done to an older vehicle. Piano hinges are used on all doors, together

interest quite a few people because they are large enough to make a relatively small almost A class motorhome, but are not quite as expensive.

I say almost, because the front engine location, doesn't quite make them flat floor and Coasters and their ilk are slightly narrower than a more conventional A class motorhome. A downside for some people is that a Light Rigid truck licence is necessary to drive a Coaster, but it's MHG's humble opinion that an LR is something not difficult to obtain and considerably expands the motorhome range available.

Externally, the Adventure Motorhomes Coaster is a very smart vehicle, with its two-tone paint scheme and graphics along the side. Given the large amount of window space, the tinted windows are a welcome feature. Stainless steel security screens are fitted to the windows. Externally, there are three lockers – one for the two 4kg gas cylinders, one for the Dometic toilet cassette and one for items like hoses and power cords. There is a bit more storage available though if you open the back door – the under bed

area. Topside items include a Fiamma F45 awning, Dometic air-conditioner and Saturn TV antenna.

PERSONALISED INTERIOR

Adventure Motorhome conversions are all custom built but there are number of 'standard layout' designs that can be used. This particular layout has two single beds/lounges in the rear, a kitchen bench along the nearside with fridge and bathroom opposite. A second lounge seat behind the driver's seat and a large wardrobe fills the gap between the entry door and the passenger. Getting to and from the driver's cab is not really a problem, even though there is the slight hump of the engine cover.

with metal struts where needed. There is the usual storage underneath the rear seats accessible by top hatches, which have piano hinges and metal struts to keep them open.

In the rear, the two single beds are a generous 7ft x 2ft 4in (2.13m x 0.71m) and upholstered in a slightly different way to usual. There are two layers of foam, the top layer being soft and the second layer being much firmer, thus giving a bed/seat that is comfortable but doesn't give way either. Between the beds is a simple-looking cabinet but one which contains a clever little bi-fold table.

Above the bed/lounges are overhead lockers all round, plus an entertainment unit that drives the surround sound speakers fitted

MICK IS CLEARLY A CRAFTSMAN OF THE FIRST ORDER; ALL THE TIMBERWORK IS BEAUTIFULLY FINISHED



Smev cooktop and round stainless steel sink. A Dometic fold-down tap is used because, curiously that's not standard with the Camec supplied sink.

Under the bench is a full size Smev grill/oven, plus two drawers, a floor locker, small and large cupboards. The latter has been practically fitted with wire basket drawers. Fluorescent light fittings, including ceiling and under-locker fitted plus the slimline rangehood halogen, supply all the necessary illumination.

On the other side of the aisle are two other kitchen essentials, a 150L three-way fridge and a full height slide-out pantry. It's features like the latter that clearly indicate when a motorhome has been designed by a user. Above the fridge is an excellent place to mount the flatscreen TV – it can be seen easily from the bed/lounges in the rear.

In the bathroom are a wash basin, flex hose shower, bathroom and, a little differently, a Dometic Vacuflush toilet. An advantage of this style of toilet is that the tank does not have to be directly connected to the toilet. Additional features in the bathroom include a large towel rail and a window, if you want a loo with a view.

Up front, the sideways-facing offside passenger seat does have two seat belts and its own small table and overhead light, whilst the wardrobe opposite has two levels of hanging space and easily passes the 'coat hanger' test.

SUMMING UP

As mentioned earlier, Adventure Motorhomes will convert a range of coaches and buses into motorhomes, so there is quite a variety of design possibilities.

Although this particular Coaster was 10 years old, Adventure will convert new vehicles as well – whatever the customer's vehicle of choice is.

If our review Coaster was any indication, then the conversion work is certainly of a high standard and there's a very impressive list of options, so there's a design for every taste and budget.

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throughout the motorhome. Lighting is quite generous with three Ellipse fluorescent lights plus two halogen reading lamps.

In the catering department, the kitchen bench comes with a combined three-burner

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