

Pearson's plentiful options

Australian-based tester Malcolm Street returns to a favourite theme when he reviews UCC's latest offering in Christchurch.





Based in Christchurch UCC isn't the largest motorhome manufacturer in New Zealand yet offers an interesting variety of layouts. All are based on either a European cab chassis (like Mercedes Benz) or Japanese cab chassis (like a Mitsubishi Fuso). The difference for the most part being that the former comes with a walk through cab and the latter does not. Which is why in many respects, I have a preference for something like UCC's Benz-based Pearson, which does just happen to be the subject of this review.

THE VEHICLE

Based on a Sprinter 516CDI cab chassis, the Pearson is available in two models – my review model being a Lowline, sans a luton peak, and the other being a Highline, naturally with a luton. As you might expect the Lowline is quite a streamlined looking motorhome, at least from the front.

Like many of its contemporaries from other manufacturers, it still looks a bit boxy from the rear.

Like many a motorhome build, the Benz has its roof and rear cut out to accommodate the internal cab access. That's actually how the Sprinter leaves the Mercedes factory, as a 'motorhome' spec'd model. That even includes a bleed off the main diesel tank for the motorhome diesel fired heater. About the only modification that UCC does is an extension to the chassis at the rear.

Construction-wise, the motorhome walls have a fibreglass exterior, aluminium framing with insulation inserted with ply for the interior, which is all vacuum-bonded together. Above, the roof is a full composite structure. Entry is via a Dometic hour glass style security screen door. Unlike many a manufacturer, tinted sliding glass windows are used all round.

Like some of the other UCC designs, there are plenty of external storage bins

– two along the near-side, one at the rear, and three along the offside. Although one of those is for the gas cylinder and the other is part taken by the Truma water heater and water pump. It is though an excellent place to store the power lead. Both the 95Ah house batteries are fitted to a slide-out tray beside the entry door.

ON THE ROAD

Although the 2.2 litres might sound small to many ears, the common rail 120kW/360Nm turbo diesel delivers a surprising (and relatively economical) punch. It performs as well as or better than its contemporaries but anyone desiring a bit more grunt for mountain country could opt for the three- litre V6 turbo 140kW/440Nm engine. With the smaller engine, the Sprinter comes with a full automatic six-speed gearbox but if you move up to the V6, then you get an extra gear as well – 7GTRONIC in Mercedes speak.

For the most part, everyone else's gearbox are Automated Manual Transmissions (AMTs) (except the Transit which only has had a manual shift) which work fine as an automatic changing system but are wanting for some drivers who desire snappy shifts every time. However, in recent times Iveco has finally moved to a full auto gearbox and I'm thinking it won't be long before its Italian stablemate, Fiat moves that way too.

Along the road, in the Pearson were a few squeaks and rattles that come with any motorhome. They weren't excessive and my driving pleasure wasn't ruined by any surprises. Very handy was the rear view camera screen fitted to the right hand side of the dashboard.

The Gross Laden Weight (GLW)/Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM) – maximum legal loaded weight- of the Pearson is 4490kg making it legal to be driven on a New Zealand car driver's licence. With the tare weight coming in at 3600kg, giving it a very good load capacity of nearly 900kg depending on the accessories fitted.

LIVING INSIDE

In some ways the Pearson layout is more orientated to a rental motorhome layout, than a private owner. It's been designed to have two living areas, one behind the driver's cab with two sideways facing lounges and one at the rear with its club style lounge. In between is the kitchen along the offside wall and the bathroom between the nearside rear lounge and the entry door.

The internal decor definitely has an emphasis on light and airy, with (in this case) the general white/beige colour scheme offset nicely by the bright blue inserts in the upholstery. Adding a nice touch are the Roman blinds fitted to all the windows, except the kitchen which has a slimline venetian fitted.

LOUNGING AROUND

Well as noted above, there are two living areas to relax in but I have to say the rear one wins the prize for best view, with the full surround windows. It does come with a two pole mounted table if needed,

as well as drawers under the seats and overhead lockers all round above. What you also get here is small upper and lower that are butted up against the bathroom wall, along with a flat screen TV that is mounted on the upper cabinet.



Up front, the two cab seats swivel around, thus creating a second lounge area at the front. A Lagun swivel arm mounted table can be used easily from either the cab seats or the sideways lounges. Under the nearside seat is to be found a small safe, along with some storage space and on the opposite side, although the lower under seat area is taken by the Eberspacher diesel heater and assorted electrics, a fitted shelf does neatly offer the available air space.

Although having two separate lounge/dining areas might seem a bit generous, it does offer considerable flexibility in the layout but I'll get to that in a moment.

TIME TO EAT

Compared to the rest of the motorhome, the kitchen bench layout



-  • Generous external storage
- Very flexible internal layout
- Two living areas with tables at either end
- Club lounge set up in rear with scenic windows
- Well set up electrics
-  • Smallish kitchen
- Beds have to be made up every night





Specifications

Base vehicle	Mercedes-Benz Sprinter
Engine	2.2L turbo diesel
Tare weight	3600kg
GVM	4490kg
Towing capacity	2000kg
Passengers	6
External length	7.4m
External width (incl awning)	2.25m
External height	3.2m
Internal height	2.2m
Water tank	170L
Grey tank	180L
Gas cylinders	1 x 9kg

does look on the small side. However, it does have all the essentials - three burner hob and grill, stainless steel sink with smoked glass lid and at the forward end, a Dometic 190-litre fridge with microwave oven above. Bench top

working space isn't exactly prolific but the multiple and variously sized drawer storage space certainly is. Overhead lockers fill the air space above the kitchen bench, whilst above the microwave oven, the cabinet there has been utilised for wine bottle storage.

AFTER HOURS

Here is where the layout versatility comes in. Both the front and rear lounges areas can be made up into beds. The rear bed, when made up, measures 2.1 by 1.83 metres and the front bed measures 2.1 by 1.0 metres. So for two people, if prepared to sacrifice the rear view, then the bed in the rear could be left made up during the day. For four people, like two adults and two children then obviously both beds will have to be made up. Unless of course, the luton peak version of this Pearson motorhome is opted for, then that gives a fixed bed above the cab.

KEEPING CLEAN

I'm not a fan of oversized bathrooms in a RV but I do like room to swing around

without bumping elbows. So the Pearson's bathroom with a Dometic cassette toilet, variable height, flexible hose shower and smaller corner wash basin does suit rather well. It also comes with a wall mirror, opening and frosted window and a towel rail.

WHAT WE THINK

I noted above that the Pearson has something of a rental motorhome layout. That does not, I should point out, make it impractical or user unfriendly. In fact just the opposite because it does offer a number of variations for living and sleeping, especially if a luton peak is added into the picture. Also it can be used by more than two people, although I suspect having six on board might be a little crowded. In short, it's a very versatile layout. ■

For more information contact UCC Motorhomes, 7 Foremans Road, Islington, Christchurch, Phone: (03) 348 2247 or visit uccmotorhomes.co.nz