



FACTSHEET

LIFE IN A MOTORHOME COULD IT BE YOUR REALITY?

When choosing a motorhome that best suits your lifestyle, there is a lot more than just the fittings

My ultimate, now, is to sit on the dam at Twizel, with my fishing rod and e-Reader, looking at Mt Cook in the distance,” says TrailLite owner Smillie Henderson - quite a contrast from her previous life in marketing and interior design.

Smillie and Grant Henderson have been freedom campers, virtually full time, since health issues caused them to reassess their lifestyle in 2004.

They traded in their house for a motorhome and currently live in a 7.3-meter custom-made TrailLite model with all the accoutrements for comfortable living — television, a washing machine and separate kitchen, bathroom and sleeping areas. “It’s like a mini apartment,” says Smillie.

What are the challenges?

Living in a relatively confined space requires compromise. “If I buy two new pairs of jeans, I have to throw two pairs out,” says Smillie.

Smillie says that people’s perceptions can be funny. Often when Smillie and Grant say they live in a motorhome, people assume that they can’t afford a house. However, when they learn about the couple’s lifestyle, most say that it’s their “dream to live like that one day.”

Lack of a physical address can sometimes be an issue. Smillie says that when she orders products online, too large for a PO Box, she gets them delivered to friends’ addresses. Also, to avoid unnecessary travel, time management is important. For example, the couple only check their PO Box about every six weeks.

What are the costs?

A benefit of living on the road is that you don’t pay rates, rent or electricity. However, because Smillie and Grant rely on mobile broadband and cellular phones, communication can be costly.

Fuel is also an expensive consideration. Smillie and Grant spend anywhere between \$150 per month to as much as \$890, depending on how much they have travelled.

So where can you stay?

For a cost of \$220 (\$130 joining fee plus a \$90 annual subscription), the New Zealand Motor Caravan Association (NZMCA) provides a book that lists over 3000 places to park, varying from no cost to normal market rates, throughout the country. Within this listing are over 300 park-over properties (POPs). “Staying at a POP means we can park on someone’s private paddock or front yard for pretty much a gold-coin payment,” says Smillie.

The Auckland City Council also provides an annual self-containment pass for \$128, allowing freedom campers to stay in parks around the Auckland region.

Things to consider when looking for a motorhome

The type of motorhome and features you’ll need, of course, is dependent on whether you plan to use your motorhome for holidays, or like Smillie and Grant, as a permanent home.

For Smillie, good solar panelling is a must. “You can buy a motorhome with all the ‘bling,’ but you need to be able to power it,” she says. Smillie and Grant have a power generator, but only use it a few times a year, when there hasn’t been enough sunshine for their solar panels.

If your motorhome can’t cope with wet and condensation, consecutive rainy days can be very unpleasant, so weather tightness and effective air ventilation is a must.

You may also wish to consider an alternative form of transport. Smillie and Grant tow a small Suzuki car behind their motorhome, giving them the freedom to make quick trips without having to “pack up camp, just to buy a bottle of milk.”

One last thing...

If you don’t enjoy your travelling partner’s company, spending long periods of time in a motorhome isn’t a great idea. “You must be good friends with each other,” says Smillie.

Please note all prices and all information is subject to change at any time and was accurate at time of printing. Please do not use this information as a complete resource, always do your own research. TrailLite has researched this information and is a guide only.

We’ve thought of everything

