



With its clean lines the Sapphire IV looks smart and modern

KIWI AUTOHOMES KIWI SAPPHIRE IV

First look at an all-new, Kiwi-built luxury motorhome

When it comes to designing an all-new motorhome from scratch, Paul and Keran Miller – the father and son team that head up Kiwi Autohomes Ltd – are able to draw on decades of experience within the motorhome rental market.

Kiwi Autohomes is a family-owned business that has now been operating for close to 20 years, and in that time they've established an enviable reputation as a company that provides a friendly and truly professional service to their customers.

It's an approach that has worked well for Paul and Keran and their close involvement with customers, carefully listening to their comments – and the odd complaint – means that they have a deep and genuine understanding of the motorhome market.

So, when they decided that the time was right to design and build their very own motorhome, they were able to draw upon all that experience to ensure that they got everything right the first time.

The result is the Kiwi Sapphire IV, a four-berth luxury motorhome designed and built in New Zealand by local craftsmen for local conditions.

Using the Chinese-built LDV cab chassis as a base, Kiwi Autohomes



A place to for relaxing – under the shade of the Sapphire IV's inbuilt awning



Pivoting overhead lights add a touch a class



Camec turbo-extractor fan includes inbuilt lighting



Well-designed cabin offers plenty of space and easy-to-use controls



Plenty of overhead storage space and smart features such as a recessed sink

Ltd commissioned Chris Cunard of Auckland Coach & Motorhomes to build the Sapphire IV's neat, well-designed composite body. Fully insulated throughout – including the floor – the Sapphire features a smooth and beautifully finished exterior and interior. Inside the motorhome that equates to easy, wipe-clean surfaces.

From the moment you step inside the Sapphire, it's easy to spot the attention to detail that has been lavished on the vehicle – we were

immediately impressed by the motorhome's sensible, spacious layout and by the interior's light and airy feel. All the custom-built cabinetry is manufactured from precise, manufactured from marine-ply throughout, and all surfaces are overlaid with a light wood-grain veneer that wouldn't be out of place in a home kitchen. Indeed, the Sapphire's utility area is built to the same modular fashion as that employed in home kitchen designs.

The kitchen is finished off with the addition of a Waeco fridge/freezer, a microwave and a Smev oven/grill with both gas and electric hobs. With two 4kg LPG bottles as standard and the ability to switch to electric operation when on a powered site, there's no danger of running out of onboard cooking abilities.

Up top, a solar panel provides more than enough juice to power the 12v electrical items, with automatic switching to 240v when plugged into a fully powered site.

The Sapphire IV features a compact, combined shower/vanity/toilet, in effect a wet-room. At first glance, the arrangement might seem a little too compact but Paul and Keran know what they're doing. Once again, drawing upon long experience in the motorhome rental business, Paul commented that many of his customers admitted to having never used the onboard toilet facilities in their rental motorhomes. And, even those who did avail themselves of the bathroom, probably only spent 15-20 minutes performing their daily ablutions. As a result, both reckoned that, while a bathroom was a must – you never know when you'll be caught short – there seemed little reason to sacrifice more frequently-used living space simply for a separate toilet and shower. It's another example of the eminently practical – and totally sensible – thinking that has gone into the design of this motorhome. The Sapphire carries 110 litres of fresh water along with 110 litres of grey water storage.

Moving from the Sapphire's utility area, the rear of the motorhome features more windows – complete with built-in blinds – to provide an airy feel for those relaxing in the U-shaped lounge. When night draws in, the seating can be re-arranged to provide two single beds or, by sliding out the adjoining slats, one double bed. Up front, a Luton provides the other two berths.



All the RV's electronic controls are well labelled and easy to access

As we're now at the business end of the motorhome, it's time to take a quick look at what lies beneath this vehicle's skin – the Chinese-built LDV cab chassis. For full details of this unit, refer to Allan Dick's full review in *RV Travel Lifestyle* (#54, Sept/Oct 2015).

For those who missed that feature, here are the highlights.

Although the name LDV may not be one that's too familiar with readers, a few memory cells will undoubtedly be sparked to life when you understand that the name stands for 'Leyland DAF Vans.' Those two companies originally merged back in 1987 but soon got into financial difficulties. To cut a long story short, following Russian involvement, the company was eventually taken over by SAIC – the Chinese corporation



Compact bathroom facilities

that also owns the naming rights to iconic British marques such as MG and Rover.

The front-wheel drive LDV cab chassis is powered by a VM Motori 2.5-litre turbo diesel engine that delivers 100kW along with a generous measure of torque - 300Nm. The engine, an Italian-design built under licence in China, is mated to a five-speed manual transmission – a six-speed auto is also available.

Although conventionally sprung – MacPherson struts up front and leaf springs at the rear – most reviewer's report that the LDV drives well, noting that the Italian-designed turbo diesel motor provides four-star rated economy. And, as the LDV cab chassis is very well priced on the New Zealand market, it provides an excellent base for a very competitively priced motorhome.



With all the blinds drawn, privacy is assured...



...and on a summer's day, room with a view

Access to the actual cab requires a spot of head ducking as you step down from the motorhome's interior. For those taller than six-foot (or, like me, somewhat lacking in flexibility), access is probably easier via the more conventional method allowed by the cab's doors. However, once settled in, everything falls to hand, including the dashboard-mounted gear lever. The cockpit includes a glove-box and a pop-out cup-holder and change drawer but, apart from the door side-pockets, there's not a lot of space for stowing stuff away. However, the seats – while fairly firm – are supportive and should provide a good level of comfort even during long drives.

Although the LDV doesn't come with a GPS unit as standard, Kiwi Autohomes provide a top-of-the-line aftermarket satnav unit as standard with the Sapphire.

The Sapphire IV you see here is the first example built by Kiwi Autohomes and we feel that it's very competitively priced at \$139,995. Kiwi Autohomes Ltd anticipate a build period of around ten weeks from initial order to final delivery, and they've already taken their first order. Also on the cards is a simpler version of the Sapphire designed specifically for rental use.

Kiwi Autohomes will be present at this year's COVI SuperShow, so don't just take our word for it – check out this terrific motorhome for



Large windows are a vital part of the Sapphire IV's overall design



With the pedestal table removed, pull-out slats transform the seating into a comfortable double bed

yourself and take the time to chat with Paul and Keran Miller about your requirements. As well, they tell us that they'll be offering the Sapphire IV at a very special price for those who order during the show.

It's certainly tempting – perhaps one of these great looking, competitively priced units might be your next (or first) motorhome? [RV](#)

KIWI SAPPHIRE IV STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS

EXTERIOR BODY:

- (standard features for walls and ceilings)
- Aluminium framing
- High density polystyrene insulation
- Vacuum formed
- Fiberglass interior and exterior
- External gel coat finish
- Insulated and lined fiberglass luton

FLOOR CONSTRUCTION:

- Steel framed
- Insulated
- Fiberglass under liner
- Fully sealed
- Vinyl covering

EXTERIOR FIXTURES:

- Lockable electric cable locker
- Lockable gas bottle locker
- Lockable toilet cassette locker
- Lockable under-bunk storage locker
- Techno pull-out step
- Grey water valve
- Domestic entrance door model

PLUMBING AND GAS:

- Recessed stainless steel sink with drainer
- Hot/cold sink tap
- Surflo 4009 45psi 12v water pump
- Insulated hot/cold water pipes
- 11L fresh water storage
- 110L grey water storage
- Tank breathers
- 2 x 4kg LPG bottles
- Insulated gas lines with internal safety shut off valves

ELECTRICAL:

- JRV tank monitor
- 2 x 240V double power points
- 7 x LED cabin lights
- 2 x LED reading lights
- 1 x LED awning light
- USB charging port
- House battery volt meter
- LED overhead lighting
- Exterior marker lights
- Standard LDV taillights
- Power Lead
- RCD circuit breakers
- E-NEX 100AH deep cycle house battery
- Power Train PTC 1220 smart charger

FURNITURE:

- Double laminate ply
- Overhead storage lockers
- Hettich hinges and stays
- Push-button locks with handles
- Standard interior layout
- Laminate bench tops
- Laminate pedestal table
- Under-bunk storage with internal/external access
- Pull-out adjustable pantry

UPHOLSTERY:

- (prices for upholstery may vary depending on which fabric type and foam type you choose)

- Standard 120mm high density bedding foam
- Standard 2 tone squab covers
- Standard decorative window curtains
- Fitted carpet
- Luton and cab opening curtains

BEDS:

- 2 x singles in rear
- 1 x rear double
- 1 x luton
- Rear bed pull out slats

APPLIANCES:

- Waeeco CR1110 12v/240v fridge/freezer
- Camec O4 1439 microwave
- Camec 12v turbo extractor fan with lights
- Smev CU401PE Gas/electric hobs with oven/grill
- Suburban 240v/Gas auto light hot water
- Proplex 2kw gas central fired heater

WINDOWS & VENTS:

- Seitz double laminate acrylic awning windows with integrated fly screens and blinds
- Rear window 1450mm x 700mm
- 2 x side rear windows 1200mm x 700mm
- Kitchen window 900mm x 550mm
- 2 x luton windows 500mm x 300mm
- 3 x Heike roof vents with integrated fly screens and blinds

OTHER STANDARD ACCESSORIES:

- Shower/toilet
- Separate hand basin in shower
- Standard hand-held shower wand on side rail
- Waterproof toilet roll holder
- Standard mirror front shower door
- 12v Camec O4 1738 19" TV combo
- Wineguard manual satellite aerial
- 160w Solar panel with controller
- Domain radio/cd player
- Pro guarded roof joins
- Cutlery/crockery holders
- Flama F455 awning
- 2 x forward facing lap belts in rear

OPTIONAL EXTRAS:

- Fresh water filter
- Ceiling liner
- Larger fridge/freezer
- Diesel heating
- Roman blinds
- External shower
- BBQ
- Bike rack
- Electric step
- Automatic satellite dish
- Extra house battery
- Floor safe
- Inverter
- Uprated reverse camera
- Air conditioning in rear
- Standard bench seat in driver's cab
- Adjustable passengers seat in driver's cab.