

AT YOUR SERVICE

An annual habitation service is vital to keeping you and your van safe. Sarah Wakely visits Marquis Leisure to find out exactly what's involved

YOU'VE NO DOUBT paid a lot of money for your motorhome, so you want to keep it in fine working order – but do you take it for an annual habitation service? Some motorhome and campervan owners don't bother, but if you choose not to do so you risk shortening the life of your vehicle at best, and – in the very worst-case scenario – putting the safety of you and your touring companions at risk.

A motorhome habitation service is quite straightforward: a trained motorhome engineer will fully assess every aspect of your vehicle's accommodation area,

including the gas, water and electric systems, and much more, to check that they're working properly. Notes are made of anything that doesn't work correctly – no matter how small – which you can then decide to fix (or not). Think of it as an MoT for your habitation area, giving you peace of mind for the 12 months ahead (note that this is separate to a standard MoT or annual servicing for your vehicle, which should be maintained regardless). If you have a warranty on your vehicle, an annual habitation service might also be required to keep this valid.

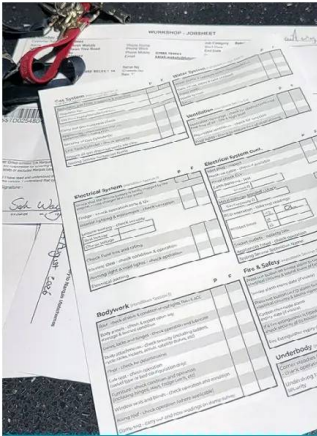
I bought my own motorhome – a 2017 Swift Autocruise Select 144 – last year, so it recently became time for it to have its first habitation check under my custodianship. I decided to take it to Marquis Leisure's Berkshire branch, which isn't far from where I live. This is an Approved Workshop under the NCC's scheme (see panel, p92) – members are required to follow a strict code of practice, so I knew my 'van would be in safe hands.

I was allowed to follow the service as it progressed; here, I've highlighted just a few of the steps involved.

COST OF MARQUIS HAB SERVICE
From £249 (or
£199 on Marquis's +3
Loyalty Scheme)



My motorhome parked up at the service area at Marquis Leisure's Berkshire branch, near Newbury. It's one of 12 Marquis branches across the UK, and habitation service appointments can be made online. A typical habitation service takes around three to four hours



A form is used for each vehicle, detailing what needs to be checked along the way. The motorhome technician adds comments and notes where required



The water tank is filled to capacity, to check the reading of the water level indicator, and the 'van is plugged into the mains so electrics can be assessed



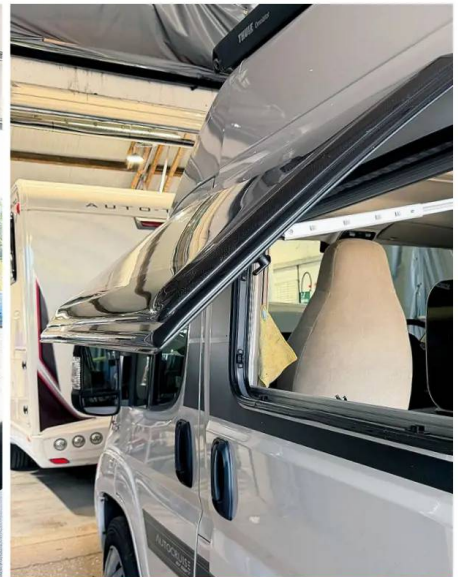
Our assigned trained technician, Kyle, checked that the RCD unit was working correctly. He also ensured that all of the fuses are of the correct amperage, and that they would trip properly and quickly in the event of any fault



Both the smoke detector and CO detectors are checked, including their expiry date. The CO detector in my 'van didn't have one, so Kyle recommended that it is replaced as soon as possible



The awning is wound out to check its condition, and all the habitation windows opened to ensure that they stay open properly as required



The underside of the vehicle is checked for any loose or damaged pipework; Kyle then climbs up onto the roof to check everything is secured correctly

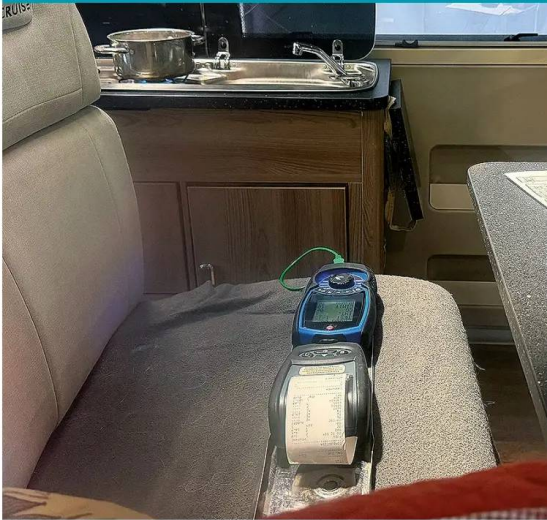


My motorhome is fitted with refillable gas cylinders – the entire gas system undergoes a vital check to ensure that there are no leaks and that all is operating as it should. The boiler flue's emissions are also checked, and a results print-out made



All of the doors and windows are shut, and a pan of water on the hob is brought to the boil. A device placed inside the 'van measures CO levels, to ensure that they remain at safe levels in a scenario where you might, for example, be cooking during cold weather. The hob safety shut-off is also tested.

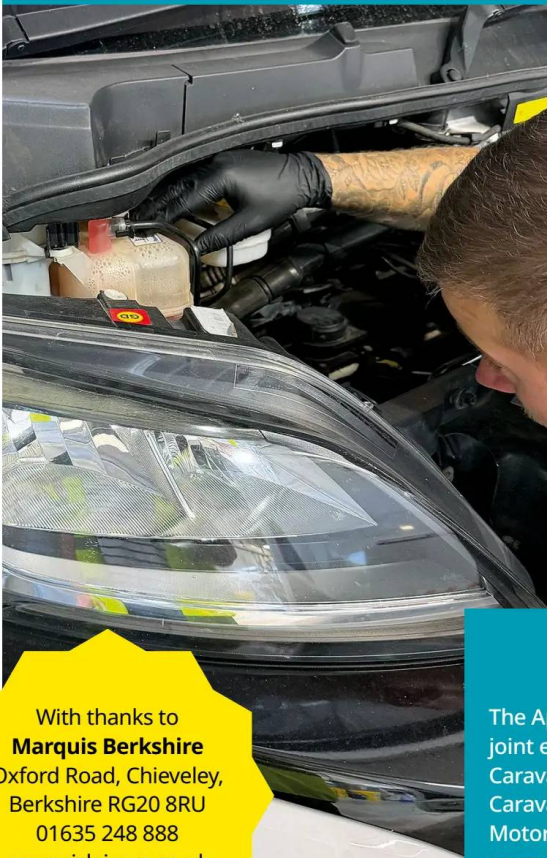
The motorhome's heating system is also thoroughly tested, but this was tricky on the day I visited due to very warm weather - 30°C-plus temperatures meant that it proved difficult to get the heating system to kick in



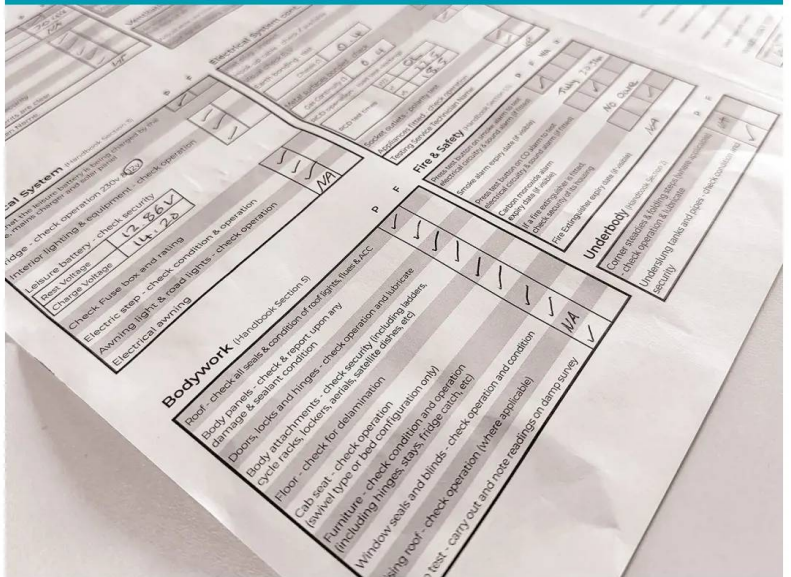
The floor is checked using a damp meter. Kyle finds a couple of apparently damper spots, but concludes that the meter is likely being triggered by bolts underneath the chassis - my 'van gets a clean bill of damp health



Not all habitation services include a vehicle check, but Marquis's does. My motorhome's lights, tyres, screenwash, number plates, mirrors and more are all given the once over



The service is completed, and the form - which I get to keep - is fully filled out with everything I need to know. Kyle identified a couple of small niggles - my CO detector needs replacing, and there's a loose rooflight cover in the washroom - but everything else got a clean bill of health



WHAT IS AN APPROVED WORKSHOP?

The Approved Workshop Scheme is a joint enterprise between the National Caravan Council (NCC), the Camping and Caravanning Club and the Caravan and Motorhome Club - it began almost 50 years ago and today is supported by every major manufacturer. The scheme has a high set level of standards that workshops must reach on their

independent annual inspection, so visiting one for your vehicle's service helps ensure that habitation and other servicing is carried out correctly.

There are currently 550 fixed and mobile Approved Workshops, including the Marquis Berkshire branch that I visited; you can find your nearest by visiting approvedworkshops.co.uk.

With thanks to
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