



Rachel, family and friends enjoyed the great outdoors and the comfort of our Marquis Majestic 196



## It's love at first site...

I was annoyed at how nervous I was about going on my first motorhome tour. I've driven minibuses and hire cars abroad. I love camping, I love the outdoors. So why was the thought of this weekend away weighing so heavily?

It was a combination of driving a big vehicle, and the challenge of pitching and hooking up (all new to me). Plus, I was going with my two children, and a friend and her two children.

Two adults, unpracticed in electrical hook-ups, toilet emptying or bed building, plus four children, all under 10 years old, almost bouncing off the walls with excitement. What could go wrong?

Well, to my delight, the answer was 'nothing' – our introduction to motorhome life was inspiring. We all returned converted, which was down to three things. First, the practicals were easy

to master. I had borrowed the 'van keys and been given a 'how to' before we set off. After a test run around a car park, we hit the road to Sandy Balls Holiday Village, in the New Forest.

This campsite was chosen to minimise the risk factor. If it all went wrong, every facility we needed was close by. There was a shop on site, so if I forgot any essentials, I wouldn't need to drive to the shops in our six-berth 'van.

But in reality, it was simple – electric hooked up, gas bottle opened, master switch on, water tank filled... We checked everything was running off the electricity

**Marquis Majestic 196**  
Price From £51,629 OTR  
Mileage 873  
Economy 27mpg  
Faults Sticky door lock  
Expenses None

inside the 'van, then made up the beds. The lounge bed was a bit of a jigsaw puzzle at first, but seeing the kids' excitement when the drop-down bed lowered from the ceiling was pure joy.

The smugness of cooking bacon in the dry, while the campers under canvas struggled in the rain, was unsurpassable. Reversing the pitching-up process when we left was easy, too.

The second element I loved was the camaraderie. When I wanted to empty the grey-water tank, my

**+** **LIKES**  
**Surprising amount of space; child-delighting electric drop-down double bed**

**-** **DISLIKES**  
**The accommodation equipment was a bit ratty on the road**

neighbour showed me where to go. When the tent opposite us caved under the rain, we went over to help re-peg it.

Most enjoyable were the waves from other 'van drivers on the road. Most shaming were the gesticulations of a campervan driver on the M3: 'You left your skylight open!' Cue swift motorway exit and situation rectified.

But best of all was being outdoors. The sense of achievement when all of us, including the six-year-old, did a 10-mile bike ride.

Eating pizza cooked in the 'van's oven. Drinking beers under the stars, with the kids tucked up inside.

I loved the Majestic 196: it's such a great family motorhome. I loved its comfort, and I loved seeing the kids' excitement. For them, it beat staying in a hotel any day of the week.

**Rachel Middlewick**