

WINNER Best compact motorhome

The French manufacturer packs in plenty of inventive ways to make the most of the living space in this four-berth coachbuilt

Chausson Flash 610



- Price £42,995 OTR
- Sleeps 4
- Belts 4
- Base vehicle Ford Transit
- Engine 2.2-litre turbodiesel, 155bhp
- L/W/H 6.68/2.3/2.9m (21'11"/7'7"/9'6")
- MTPLM 3500kg
- Payload 512kg (est)
- Water (fresh/waste) 122/100 litres
- Leisure battery 95Ah
- Gas 1 x 13kg
- CONTACT www.chausson-motorhomes.com (UK dealers: <http://po.st/AViXoM>)

If ever there were ever a compact motorhome that didn't feel in the least bit compact, this is it. Nor does it feel like a 'van that can be yours for a whisker under £43k. The sense of space, quality and specification makes it feel like it belongs in a league far above what its affordable sticker price suggests.

Let's talk space first of all. Like so many Continental motorhomes, the French-built Flash 610 features a large, bicycle-friendly rear garage; unlike most of its rivals, however, the Chausson has not one, not two, but three large access doors – so wherever you park, you'll have access to your gear. There's also a practical non-slip floor and a pair of 230V sockets – ideal for charging your toys!

Above it, you'll find not a bed but one of the largest wardrobes we've ever seen in a motorhome.

FOR WHEN YOU GO THE DISTANCE

This is clearly a vehicle that is designed with long-term touring in mind: the full-width rear washroom is as impressive as the adjacent wardrobe, providing plenty of space to double as a dressing room.

That's not to mention ample storage and thoughtful touches, such as the frosted window and a huge, fully lined separate shower cubicle with a pair of drains in the tray. There's a generous 122-litre fresh-water tank, too, and diesel-powered blown-air heating.

A common problem among more compact motorhomes, in particular those with the luxury of a fixed bed, is that the lounge may be compromised

by the need for upright belted travel seats. Not so in the Flash 610. In fact, the huge central dining and lounging space is among its best features, with room for up to seven to sit and a sociable kitchen alongside, making this a great motorcaravan in which to entertain.

The kitchen is a little squeezed, with limited worktop space, but it has all of the essential equipment and boasts a vast 175-litre fridge and separate freezer. It is flooded with light thanks to large side windows, the lack of overhead lockers and a panoramic rooflight.

At night, there are four proper berths to choose from. The table drops down – electrically! – so the lounge can be made up into a double bed. Then, at the turn of another key, a second huge double descends from the ceiling, with an easy-access height if there are just two of you aboard, or a higher setting with ladder should you have guests in the double bed below.

CHOICE OF BASE VEHICLES

The 610 is available from the factory in either Fiat Ducato or Ford Transit guises; our test vehicle was on the latter, with the optional 155bhp engine. Its cabin feels car-like and it's a great motorhome to drive, with a supple ride and surprisingly entertaining handling.

The Chausson was up against talented rivals from Swift and Benimar in this category, but somehow it manages to pack in a whole lot more space for less cash. This is truly the consummate all-rounder, and a worthy winner.

Alastair Clements



- 4 The kitchen is squeezed, but it has room for all the essential appliances and it's near the lounge, so you can be sociable as you cook
- 5 Our test 'van was built on a Ford Transit, but it is also available on a Fiat Ducato base

Our testers say:

"Every now and then, a 'van comes along whose sheer brilliance makes you wonder why no one else has come up with the idea before. Seeing the Chausson Flash 610 for yourself in the metal is pretty much guaranteed to slacken your jaw."

'The lounge can be made up into a double bed. Then, at the turn of a key, a second huge double descends from the ceiling'

- 1 The large garage can accommodate bicycles and can be accessed from any of three doors
- 2 You can seat up to seven in the generous lounge
- 3 A drop-down double bed can descend all the way or be stopped midway if the other bed is used

