

WHY CHOOSE A DIESEL-POWERED MOTORHOME



For years there have been multiple options for buying a motorhome. Some will consider the primary option being that of Type A, Type B, or Type C. Type A (also known as Class A) is based on the concept of the bus-like chassis and body in which the body is unitized, no separate cab. Type B, the smallest offering in the motorhome category, is what some people call a “van con-

version” in which the body and chassis, more than likely, are by the same manufacturer with the living, kitchen, and bed area upfitted by another company. The C-class motorhomes cover the broadest range of sizes since they are, essentially, a coach body appended to a cab and chassis by a specific provider. For most of us, the primary option is whether to choose a gas-fueled or diesel-powered unit.

In this article I’ll review opinions held by those of us who own diesel-powered motorhomes. In particular, a Type A motorhome where the driving area is appended to the rest of the house and becomes a natural extension of the living area when parked.

First and foremost, driving a diesel means having an engine with the torque (power) to do the heavy lifting of carrying a load

steadily down the road while towing another vehicle.

The second common reason given by members is total cost of ownership

over the long haul, as in thousands of miles and years of ownership. The third reason is a toss-up between durability and comfort. Comfort, in this instance, has to do with ride and the ability for pilot and co-pilot to talk while



traveling (something gas owners frequently complain about). Durability has to do with the fact that the chassis of a diesel coach is generally heavier than a similarly sized gas chassis. Thus, the bumps along the road are generally absorbed and sustained better than with the alternative.

Owners know that diesel-powered RVs have the torque needed to get up to speed given the amount of weight being moved over a variety of terrain. Not only are diesels better at getting uphill they are better at going downhill. Because of the engine brake available on most models, RV owners can have peace of mind coming down steep grades on the other side of a mountain making a diesel safer since it is less dependent on sheer wheel braking for safety.

These reasons give diesel owners a high level of confidence in knowing they made the right choice. These are the reasons given by DRVC members.

Now, what do other people think? In particular, what about those that are in the market?

Over a year ago I set out to conduct my own informal survey. I asked RV sales people, RV transport drivers, and prospective owners. Each group, when asked, would

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respond with a preference for diesel though one group would append some qualification to that choice.

RV sellers, though responsible for representing both types, know the difference in driving even if only on a limited scope. They feel the difference in the steering wheel as well as in the driver's seat. Of the seven I talked with each preferred selling a diesel over a gas motorhome if cost was not a factor.

Those who most frequently drive gas and diesel both types, delivery drivers, have a good understanding of which coach they'd rather be driving when moving over the roadways of America. The preference, without question, is to drive a diesel. Their primary reason has to do with comfort; they feel less fatigue after a long day of driving because stating they tend to feel more relaxed while making the trip. Each mentioned the steady ride and relative ease of steering a diesel rig, especially a Class A.

Finally, in asking motorhome shoppers (prospective owners) at RV trade shows one will get a variety of answers. If price isn't mentioned, a larger percentage showed an interest in a diesel when talking about a rig in excess of 36 feet. If price is an issue, prospective owners will say they'll probably have to settle on a gas unit simply because the initial purchase price is lower. Though they are aware of the difference in hauling capacity, price is more important since both seem to have about the same amount of space.

At this point the prospective owner should still consider total cost of ownership over the entire projected period of ownership, according to motorhome owners. Due to lower operating RPMs, high energy content of diesel fuel and the efficiency of compression ignition, a diesel engine can provide 20-40% better fuel economy than a comparable

gasoline engine. Consider, also, extended maintenance intervals; from 15,000 to 30,000 miles between oil and filter changes. After years of trips and hundreds of thousands of miles, diesel-powered RVs provide greater longevity of ownership. They also command a stronger resale value than gasoline-powered RVs when it comes time to move on.

All of this isn't surprising. It's when the price for a used unit is under consideration that choosing gas or diesel becomes a better option for some buyers allowing other points of logic to enter the situation. For instance, prospective owners of used units notice the difference in quality of construction between diesel units and gas coaches, which has more to do with pride of ownership.

The durability of diesel is legendary. Since diesel engines typically last up to three times longer than gasoline engines, they are in high demand well past the typical operating life of a gasoline engine making diesel a safe decision.

What about you? What are your reasons? What is it that drives you to your choice?

Byron Songer, Editor



The units pictured in this article include the following.

Upper left, page 8: Entegra Aspire riding on a Spartan chassis with tab axle. Entegra builds only diesel motorhomes.

Lower left, page 8: Palazzo by Thor, a smaller A-type riding on a Freightliner chassis, meets the needs of the size and price conscious.

Top center, page 9: Thor Four Winds, a Type C riding with cab and chassis by Ford with available Power Stroke engine.

Mid-center, page 9: TS Adventerous by Roadtrek on the popular diesel-only Sprinter chassis by Mercedes-Benz.