

THE WANDERER

AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST RV CLUB MAGAZINE



BALLINA BOUND

Horizon's compact 2WD Melaleuca proved perfect for touring the winding roads of NSW's north coast

STORY BY ALI MILLAR; PHOTOS BY MATT FEHLBERG



ounging in the back of Horizon's Melaleuca with the rear doors flung open, watching surfers cruise the waves from the lookout above the tiny north coast NSW town of Lennox Head, I realised this was my kind of motorhome: compact and cosy but fully equipped and self-contained. And after speaking to the team at Horizon, I don't think I'm alone – the Melaleuca is just as popular with the Ballina-based manufacturer's staff as it is among its clientele.

Built into a long wheelbase Fiat Ducato and coming in at just under 6m (20ft) long, the Melaleuca is the smallest model in Horizon's range and fits snugly into most standard car spaces, making it an easy tourer for stopping and exploring whenever the fancy takes you – which it did, a lot, while touring the eclectic towns and ever-changing countryside of NSW's beautiful Northern Rivers region. This compact size was also a bonus as we negotiated the overflowing carpark at Cape Byron Lighthouse – filled to the brim with backpackers and tourists visiting this iconic attraction on the easternmost tip of the Australian mainland.

The 2.3L 150hp turbodiesel engine served us well on the region's narrow,



winding hinterland roads, despite the occasional clunkiness of the six-speed automatic gears as they shifted to climb the steep hillsides. The Melaleuca is easy to drive though and handles much like a large car on the road.

It carries two passengers in the comfortable cab up front and sleeps two at the rear, where the lounge converts into a bed (or beds), depending on how you like to travel and who you're travelling with. For solo travellers, there's the option of a king single that can stay permanently set up while still leaving enough seating for two around the dinette



Clockwise from top left: The Horizon Melaleuca handles like a large car on the road; the 2.3L 150 hp turbodiesel engine did well in the winding hinterland; a small table can be set up between the cab seats; concertina style blinds are fitted to the cab windows; the comfortable cab features swivelling seats.



table. Alternatively, couples can opt to lower the removable Lagun dinette table and make the entire lounge area into a massive double bed – perfect for sprawling on and watching the wall-mounted flatscreen TV on rainy days, or enjoying the view out the rear doorway (this I highly recommend!). There's also the option to make the sideways-facing lounges into two single beds if you're travelling with a mate, or you simply prefer your own space.

Up the front, the Fiat's cab seats both swivel around to provide extra seating, with a small, single-pole-mounted table that can be set up in between. Although this table wouldn't be ideal for eating a meal at, you could opt to leave the rear area set up as a bed and just use the front for lounging. Either way, the variety of sleeping and seating options available to you is a real bonus, particularly in what is by most standards, a pretty small motorhome.

FUSS-FREE FACILITIES

After a long day of exploring, we pulled into North Coast Holiday Parks Massey Greene, right on the banks of the Brunswick River in Brunswick Heads. The rain had set in, so being able to drive onto our grassy site and walk straight through to the comfort of the rear lounge and a glass of red was very appealing.

The Melaleuca's cosy interior has all the essentials for life on the road and given its size, still manages to feel quite spacious. Although, if your travelling companion is at the kitchen bench cooking and you want to use the bathroom, it requires a bit of shuffling about.

Kitchen facilities include a three-burner gas cooktop, fuelled by two 4kg gas cylinders, and a sink with a flick mixer tap and a separate filtered drinking water tap on the small nearside bench. Both have glass lids that create precious bench space, and for food preparation there's an additional bench that lifts up next to the sink, out across the doorway. Next to this bench are the main light switches – nice and easy to get at before you even step inside.

Under the cooktop is an LG microwave and an array of variously sized drawers. Opposite the entry door is the 136L Waeco 12V/240V





compressor fridge-freezer, with a cupboard above that houses the removable table for the swivelling cab seats as well as providing both shelving and hanging space.

Beside that is the mirrored door to the combination bathroom, which includes a cassette toilet and a small corner sink with a tap on an extendable hose, which doubles as the showerhead, clipping onto a height-adjustable arm for hands-free use. While the bathroom is inevitably small, having these facilities on board is a definite bonus and allows you to be fully self-contained, providing more flexibility on the road.

CLEVER INCLUSIONS

Despite its small stature, the Melaleuca excels with its well thought-out storage. The main compartment is under the lounge/bed area at the

rear, and is accessed from outside via the rear double doors. There's also a small hatch which allows this space to be accessed from inside, although clever packing is required to make sure you can easily get to what you need. Overhead lockers line the upper reaches of the lounge area and there's even a narrow drawer underfoot where the floor is stepped – every available space has been utilised!

There are also a number of thoughtful touches throughout the Melaleuca that I really liked. Firstly, all the fuses, switches and monitoring panels are labelled neatly and tucked away in one of the overhead lockers. Then there are the LED reading lights, conveniently located at each corner of the lounge/bed area as well as over the front cab seats. And while there's no air-conditioner fitted in the body of the motorhome, an adjustable Sirocco fan is mounted to the roof at the rear to keep you cool, along with a vented roof fan. There are also plenty of 240V powerpoints as well as 12V and USB charger points throughout. And there are several pockets mounted to the



Clockwise from top left: For a relatively small motorhome, the Horizon Melaleuca is well laid out; open the rear doors to take in the views as you relax; food preparation is easy, with an additional bench lifts up next to the sink; cooking's a breeze on the three burner gas cooktop.

walls for storing magazines, papers or other small items for easy access.

Up the front, the cab windows are fitted with clever, concertina-style blinds that pull up across the windows and hold in place with a magnet, while the windscreen has a pull up blind for privacy. The rear windows and roof hatch have adjustable split flyscreens and blinds, allowing you to easily adjust the flow of air, while keeping out the bugs. There are two small, opening windows on the rear doors that allow additional

PROS & CONS

WE LIKED

- Easy to drive and park
- Versatile layout – suited to singles, couples or even friends
- Large rear double bed
- Practical storage

COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER

- Minimal kitchen bench space
- Smoother gear changes in the Fiat
- Having to make up the bed each night may become an inconvenience



Left. There's plenty of extra storage under the bed, accessed from the rear doors.
Below. The thoughtful layout of the Horizon Melaleuca uses the compact space well.

airflow if you need to keep the doors closed for this reason, although optional flyscreens are available for both the rear and side doors, which is something I would definitely recommend taking up.

Things are kept simple outside, with the main features being the nearside wind-out Fiamma awning – the perfect spot for your morning coffee – as well as an external shower on the offside, which was very handy for cleaning sandy feet after a wander along the beach at Brunswick Heads.

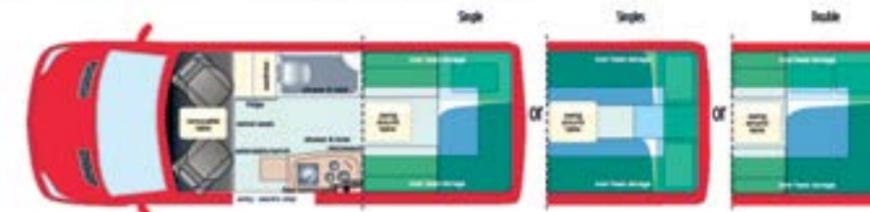
THE BOTTOM LINE

I must admit I'm a bit of a fuss-free camper and I like things to be simple and convenient. In this sense, the Melaleuca holds a lot of appeal with its compact size, considered inclusions and neat aesthetic. Of course, size is a matter of opinion and how much space you require will depend on your style of travel.

For me, the ability to easily pull over and find a park – whether at the supermarket or a busy tourist attraction – is a massive plus. And being fully self-contained with a combination bathroom on board makes the Melaleuca an even more attractive proposition. I think these benefits easily balance the compromise required on living space and the need to potentially make up the bed each evening.

For anyone travelling solo, it's a convenient and liveable design that allows you to pull up at camp and get yourself sorted for the night without ever having to step outside, which is sometimes exactly what you want.

The versatile layout and flexible sleeping arrangements make it well suited to singles, couples or even two friends, and having spent a couple of days travelling in the Melaleuca, I would be quite happy to continue to do so for longer periods! 🚐



SPECIFICATIONS

VEHICLE

- Manufacturer** Horizon Motorhomes
- Model** Melaleuca
- Base Vehicle** Fiat Ducato
- Tare weight** 3150kg
- GVM** 4250kg
- Licence** Car
- Passengers** Two

MECHANICAL

- Engine** 2.3L, 150hp Multi-Jet Turbo Diesel
- Power** 110kW @ 3600rpm
- Torque** 380NM @ 1500rpm
- Gearbox** Comfort Matic
- Brakes** (front and back)

DIMENSIONS

- External length** 5.99m (19ft 8in)
- External width (incl awning)** 2.05m (6ft 9in)
- Travel height** 2.75m (9ft 1in)
- Internal height** Main section 1.90m (varies throughout)
- Read Bed Size** Single 1.87x0.66m; king single 1.85x1.22m; double 1.87x1.85m (foam mattress)

EQUIPMENT

- Cooktop** Three-burner
- Fridge** Waeco 136L
- Microwave** LG
- Lighting** 12V LED
- Batteries** 200Ah house battery
- Solar** Optional
- Air-conditioner** Optional
- Toilet** 19L
- Shower** Combination shower over toilet
- Hot water heater** Gas
- Heater** Optional
- Fresh water** 55L
- Grey water** 55L
- Gas** 2x4kg

OPTIONS FITTED

400W pure sine wave inverter, gas bayonet, fabric inserts in cabin seats, Sirocco fan

PRICE AS SHOWN

\$115,800; base price \$112,500 (on-road, NSW)

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