

Evaluating

Sportscoach Motor Home

DICK MORCH, ROAD TEST
NANCY SCHLENZ, INTERIOR EVALUATOR



FOR OPENERS, the Sportscoach is an exceptional road vehicle. Make no mistake, it does just fine in camp too. But what really sets it apart from so many other motor homes in any price category is its road performance.

It was made for the road, of course. Based on the Chevrolet chassis with front disc brakes, independent front suspension, and a 402-cubic-inch V8 engine, the Sportscoach stops phenomenally well, accelerates swiftly, cruises smoothly at 65 mph, and rides like a passenger car.

A light, aerodynamic body, excellent weight distribution, and a good fit between vehicle weight and drive train add up to some of the best gas-mileage figures Trailer Travel's Test Team has ever recorded.

In addition to its handling and performance virtues, the Sportscoach is a very well-constructed vehicle. The company's unique construction method consists of polyurethane-foam-sandwich panels which are mechanically bonded to aluminum beams in the walls and ceiling. These panels and beams are anchored at the front and rear of the coach to steel roll bars that rise from Sportscoach's all-steel perimeter frame. With walls, floor and roof thus tied together in tension, the Sportscoach body is, in effect, a shell — an astoundingly strong shell, at that. And, of course, polyurethane foam is the best insulator available.

So much for getting to camp safely, economically, and effortlessly. Once in camp, the interior comfort of the Sportscoach comes into play. Here, again, the Sportscoach is somewhat unique because all those features that make camping comfortable — air-conditioners, furnaces, generators, carpeting, tape decks, and on down the option list — are standard features on the Sportscoach. In fact, the only option on our test unit was the 402-cubic-inch engine.

Besides the list of standard features, Test Team interior evaluator Nancy Schlenz found several other unusual things inside the test vehicle — like the side-bath floor plan. Side-bath floor plans tend to fare poorly in Nancy's evaluations because they usually look cramped and cluttered, and they usually come with tiny, cramped bathrooms.

While it did not have the pleasing, open look of a rear-bath floor plan, the test vehicle offered evidence that Sportscoach had dealt effectively and imaginatively with the traditional problems presented by the side bath. The bathroom itself was small, but definitely not cramped. It was also *dry*, thanks to a track-mounted shower curtain that worked efficiently to keep the rest of the room dry when the shower was in use.

Another problem area in most side-bath floor plans — the cramped aisle outside the bath — was not only



solved by Sportscoach, but it was turned into a feature that genuinely impressed Nancy. By locking the bathroom door — and the closet door across the aisle — in their open positions, the aisle converted into a private dressing room served by a three-way light and a shelved closet. With the two doors closed, the aisle had a comfortable width.

This efficient use of space was evident throughout the coach, as was the willingness of Sportscoach designers to correct flaws commonly found in motor homes. In the rear lounge/bedroom area, for example, Nancy thought the optional fold-down bunks looked suspiciously too near the ceiling to be comfortable. This isn't uncommon in motor homes, since it's not a malady usually noticed on the showroom floor. In the Sportscoach, it turned out not to be a problem; with a 15-inch clearance between bed and ceiling, the space was a little tight, but an unusually large skylight kept the area cool and well ventilated.

As a lounge, the rear area had a U-shaped seating configuration and could be used as a dining area by installing a 24 by 40-inch dinette table. As a bedroom, the couches converted

to 75 by 32 by 5-inch twin beds or into a single, king-sized 88 by 62-inch bed. The bunks overhead could be converted to storage space by removing the mattresses and anchoring them in their traveling position.

The galley and another dinette composed the front portion of the test unit where, again, several examples of imaginative use of space were in evidence. The dinette was set on the roadside wall in an L-shaped configuration that allowed the swivel-type driver's seat to be a part of the forward living area when in camp. By virtue of a simple, fold-down, fold-out operation, the dinette easily converted into a 72 by 40 by 5-inch bed.

Across the aisle, the test unit's kitchen was equipped with all the right appliances — a four-burner range with a power range hood; a self-cleaning eye-level oven; and Dometic's two-door refrigerator/freezer.

Counter space was another luxury in the Sportscoach kitchen, with a huge breadboard pulling out from beneath the range and a fold-up counter extension supplementing the normal amount of counter space surrounding the stainless-steel double sinks. The counter extension, by the way, extended across the doorway, thus utilizing the normally empty space taken by an entry aisle. Its use, of course, would have to be limited to those times when no one is entering or leaving the coach.

Throughout the interior, Nancy found excellent craftsmanship. The cabinetry was solid and expertly finished, doors and windows opened and closed easily, and the window and privacy curtains had grip fasteners that kept them closed securely.

Decor was pleasing, with walnut woodgrain used on tabletops, countertops, appliance exteriors and cabinets. The walls were done in easy-care vinyl, and the floors were covered with shag carpeting. Nancy did take exception to the fabric Sportscoach used for their upholstery — a plush material that seemed difficult to maintain once it became damp or soiled.

Storage space in the test unit was sufficient for a traveling family of four, with the usual assortment of

MODEL: Sportscoach (side bath, L-shaped dinette) Sportscoach, Corp. of America, 9134 Independence Ave., Chatsworth, CA 91311

FLOOR PLAN: Side bath w/rear U-shaped lounge/dinette, front L-shaped dinette.

PRICE INFORMATION: Suggested retail for basic coach, \$18,395; as tested, \$18,790; options on test unit include 402-cu.-in. V8 engine (\$395).

EXTERIOR DIMENSIONS: length 25 ft. 6 in., bumper to bumper; width 7 ft. 3½ in.; height 8 ft. 8 in., road to roof.

WEIGHT: total 10,010 lbs.; right side 5080 lbs., left side 4930 lbs.

CONSTRUCTION: foam sandwich Astro-temp panels mechanically bonded to steel and aluminum framework for walls and roof; molded fiberglass front and rear caps; aluminum-foam-wood floor above a perimeter steel frame.

CHASSIS: 11,800-lb. GVW-rated Chevrolet chassis w/independent front suspension rated @ 4000 lbs., front coil springs rated @ 4000 lbs., full-floating rear axle rated @ 7200 lbs., rear coil springs rated @ 4150 lbs. each. Front tires 9.50-16.5(8-ply) rated @ 2780 each at 60 psi; rear tires (4) 7.00-16(6-ply) rated @ 1815 each at 45 psi. Power-assisted front disc brakes, rear drum brakes. Power-assisted steering. 64-gal. fuel capacity.

SLEEPING: front dinette converts to 72 by 40 by 5 bed; rear lounge converts to either twin 75 by 32 by 5 beds or one 88 by 62 by 5 bed; twin fold-down bunk beds 72 by 24½ by 2½.

COOKING AND COOLING: Trav'ler 4-burner range w/eye-level, self-cleaning oven; 7-cu.-ft. Dometic refrigerator/freezer; stainless-steel double sink w/sink covers.

BATHROOM: Aqua Magic Galaxy 40 flush toilet; shower; washbasin w/medicine cabinet and mirror; heat duct, skylight, power vent; towel bars, soap dish, paper holder, removable carpeting.

HEAT AND LIGHT: 30,000-btu forced-air furnace w/thermostat; 3-way lights w/12v converter system, 4000-watt Onan generator, and 25-ft. power cord; 110v double outlets in rear lounge, kitchen, and dinette.

WATER: 51-gal. pressure-demand water system w/6-gal. Bowen water heater; dual holding tanks w/50-gal. total capacity; water purifier.

VENTILATION: 2 double, slide-opening, screened windows; 4 skylights; power fans in bath and kitchen (range hood); 14,000-btu 12v automotive-type air-conditioner; 13,500-btu 110v, roof-mounted air-conditioner.

FLOORS, WALLS, CEILING: wall-to-wall shag carpeting; cloth-laminated formica walls and ceiling.

ROAD TEST

OPERATING TEMPERATURES: Temperatures measured after operating at constant indicated speed for 20 miles. Ambient temperature at the time of the test: 43°

	55 mph	65 mph
Crankcase	251°	260°
Transmission sump	235°	238°

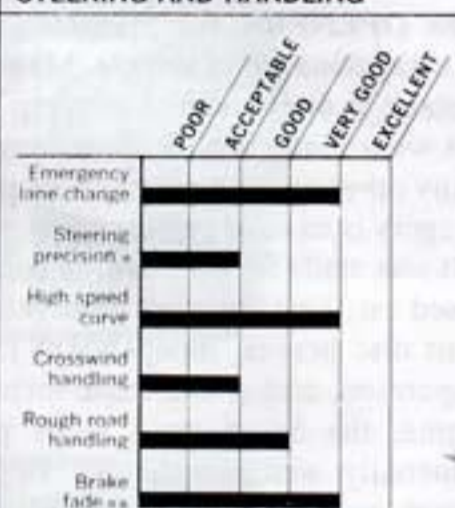
MANIFOLD VACUUM READINGS:

Speed	Manifold Pressure
45 mph	13.00 in. Hg.
50 mph	12.00 in. Hg.
55 mph	11.00 in. Hg.
60 mph	10.00 in. Hg.
65 mph	8.50 in. Hg.

BRAKE FADE:

15 fpsps (.47g) from 60 mph
Maximum pedal effort, first stop: 48 lbs.
Maximum pedal effort, fifth stop: 78 lbs.

STEERING AND HANDLING



*Amount of steering correction needed to maintain straight course.

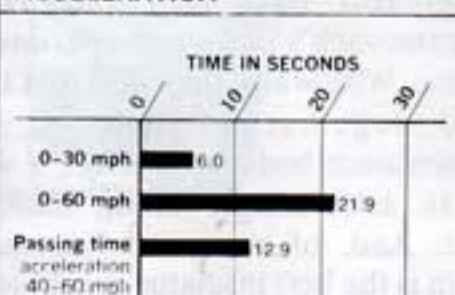
**Based on brake pedal effort required for fifth stop of car-trailer combination in final stop of 5 stop, 60-0 mph, 15 fpsps series.

FUEL ECONOMY

Air speed indicator, not speedometer is used to determine road speeds. Use of this instrument eliminates effects of wind. Results are equivalent to operating vehicle in still air.



ACCELERATION



Sportscoach

continued

cabinets and drawers placed according to convenience. One large closet provided all the clothes-hanging space available in the coach and also housed the dinette tables and poles, the latter items being snugly secured by an elastic band to prohibit bouncing and banging during travel.

The fact that the Sportscoach interior — side bath and all — stood up so well under Nancy's scrutiny became even more remarkable as Dick Morch, the team's test driver, prepared the vehicle for the road-test phase of the evaluation. Measuring the vehicle out, Dick found it was about four inches lower and about six inches narrower than most of the motor homes he has worked with. While Nancy didn't notice this size differential in her interior evaluation — another testimonial to the professionalism of Sportscoach's interior design — Dick did notice it in his road tests.

At highway cruising speeds, the smaller silhouette of the unit combined with an aerodynamic design and a good fit between weight, chassis and drive train to produce excellent fuel economy and manifold-vacuum readings.

Dick found that the test unit did some other things very, very well. For one thing, it passed the brake-fade test — a phenomenon in motor homes that occurs about as frequently as fish swim in the desert. In fact, after Dick put it through the brake-fade criterion he uses for motor homes — five stops from 60 mph at a deceleration rate of 15 feet per second per second (fpsps) — he ran the test again, this time at a deceleration rate of 20 fpsps, the rate at which he usually dares to test only passenger cars.

Even in this second test the Sportscoach made all five stops, though the fifth stop was possible only at a rate of 16 fpsps. For an encore, Dick ran the Sportscoach up to 70 mph and tried another stop at 20 fpsps. Stop it did, and with a respectably low amount of foot pressure on the brake pedal.

Acceleration, like deceleration, is a

category that motor homes built on Chevrolet chassis usually do well in. Sportscoach was no exception, averaging an excellent 21.9 seconds for 0 to 60 mph, 6 seconds for 0 to 30 mph, and 12.9 seconds for the 40 to 60 mph passing test.

Because the test vehicle performed so well in just about everything else, Dick was shocked when it faltered a little in the crosswind-handling event. Later, a telephone call to the manufacturer provided the information that the test vehicle was one of several Sportscoaches to slip off the assembly line without a rear stabilizer bar. The Sportscoach people assured Dick that the rear stabilizer bar is now standard equipment on all models and that its addition would cure the crosswind-handling problems he had detected.

The wandering tendency, by the way, can also result from poor wheel alignment, and any owner who observes this trait in his motor home should get it in to his dealer for servicing.

Elsewhere in the road test, while the Chevrolet 402-cubic-inch engine ran well, it also ran very hot. During Dick's testing, which took place on a day when the ambient temperature was only 43°, he found crankcase temperatures running 260° at 65 mph. This, of course, leaves room for doubt about the engine's performance on a day when the temperature hits 80°. Part of the problem, Dick thought, was the crankcase's meager oil capacity; at four quarts it seemed awfully small for an engine that would be pulling over 10,000 pounds of motor home along the road. The people at Chevrolet had a different suggestion — an auxiliary engine oil cooler. This item, presently a recommended, dealer-installed option, will be standard on all 1973 Chevrolet motor-home chassis. Meanwhile, Sportscoach owners would do well to have the item installed before embarking on a long summer cruise.

Once the cooling problem is solved, the Chevrolet drive train, like the rest of the Sportscoach, would seem to be a good bet for an unusually long life in motor-home service. In fact, those engine temperatures

turned out to be the only major problem the Test Team could find on the coach.

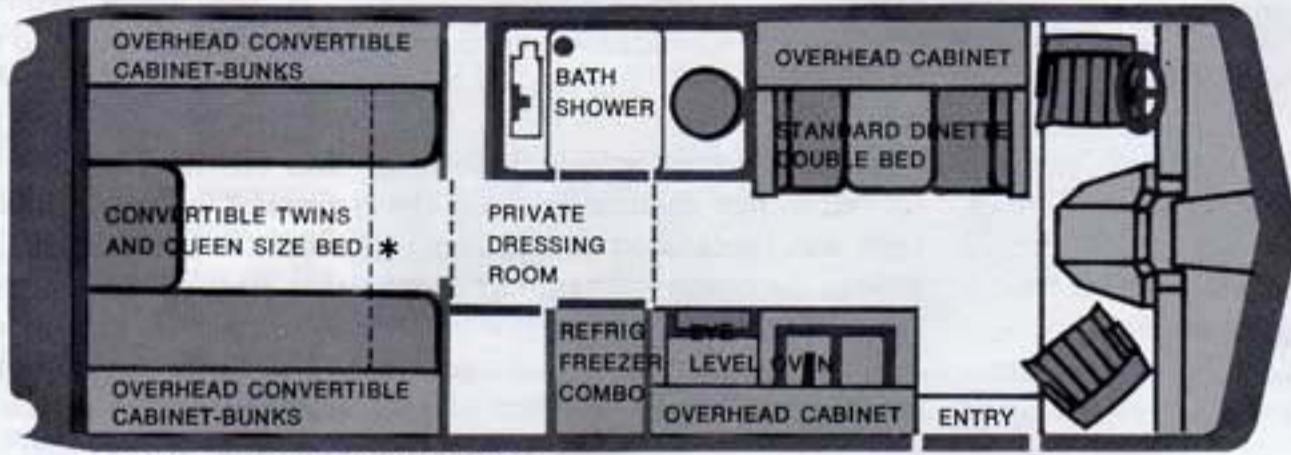
In the minor problem category, Dick took exception to the use of two different sizes of tires — 9.50-16.5, 8-ply tires in front and 7.00-16.0, 6-ply tires on the dual rear wheels — because of the aggravation and expense a flat tire could cause. And he found that starting the Sportscoach in the morning was sometimes a problem because the engine battery was also used to run the furnace fan, an extra-curricular activity that left it depleted on more than one morning. While it was rather simple to jump it by using the generator battery, Dick felt that it would have been more to the point to run the fan off the generator battery in the first place.

But these are very mild criticisms when compared to some of the things Sportscoach did so well. Longevity, for example, gets a shot in the arm from what Dick termed "the best side-to-side weight distribution we have ever found in a motor home." With only a 100-pound difference between right and left sides, the Sportscoach suspension promises to last a long time without ever developing the list to one side or the dangerous handling characteristics that come from the drastic weight imbalance — sometimes as much as 1000 pounds — observed in many motor homes.

Like Nancy, Dick could find no evidence of lapses in craftsmanship or quality control in the unit. In seeking such evidence, he only found more proof that Sportscoach had built our test unit with the idea that it was going to be around for a long time. From the side-to-side balance to the metal beam and sandwich construction to the beautifully installed plumbing and electrical systems, Dick found integrity even in areas where few motor-home buyers ever look.

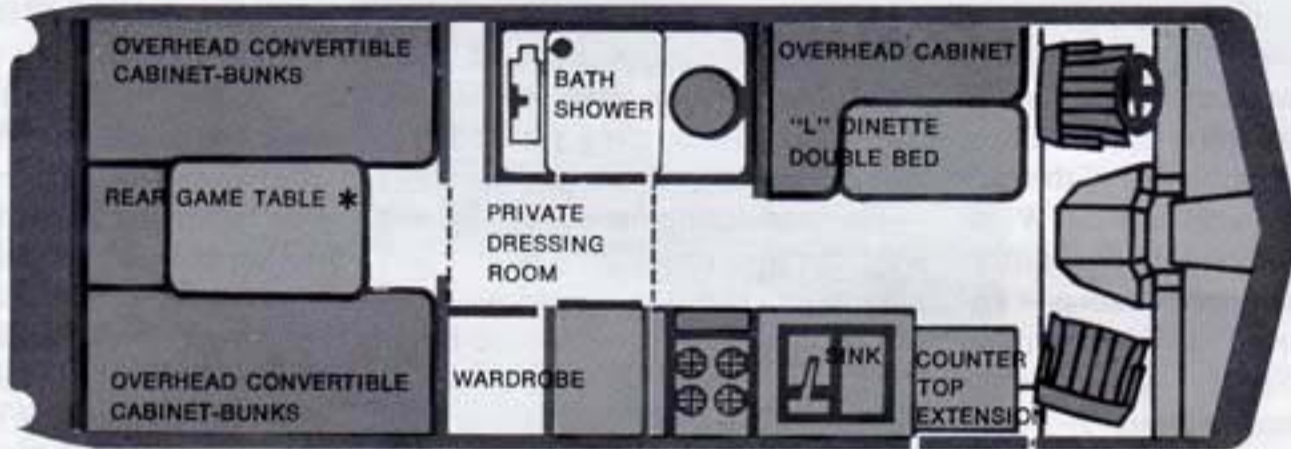
With its beautiful ride, imaginative and problem-free interior, and excellent capability to both start and stop rapidly, the 25-foot Sportscoach test unit succeeded in showing the Test Team \$19,000 worth of comfort, performance and structural integrity.

1973

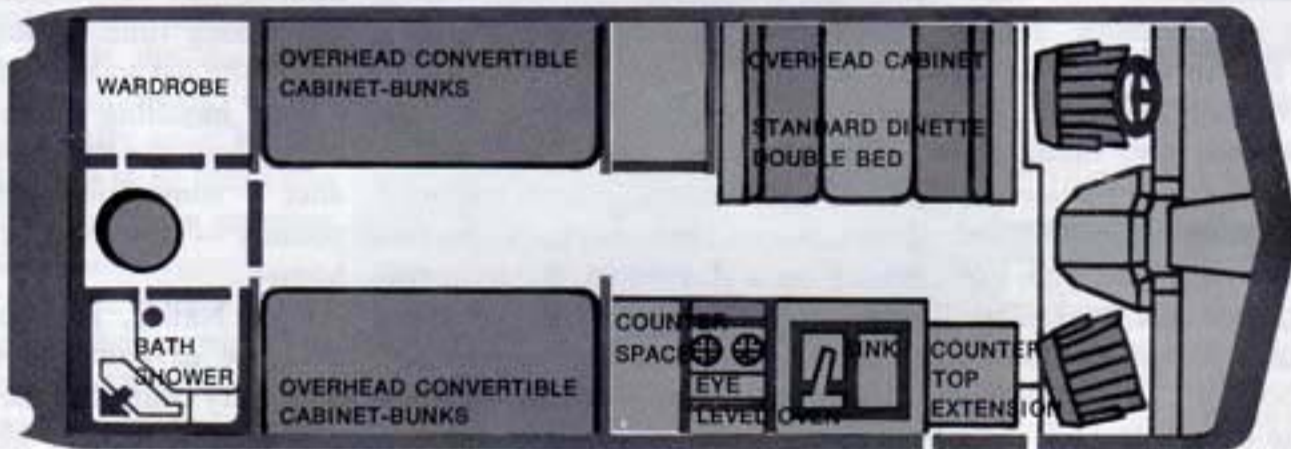


25 FOOT SIDE BATH, STANDARD DINETTE.

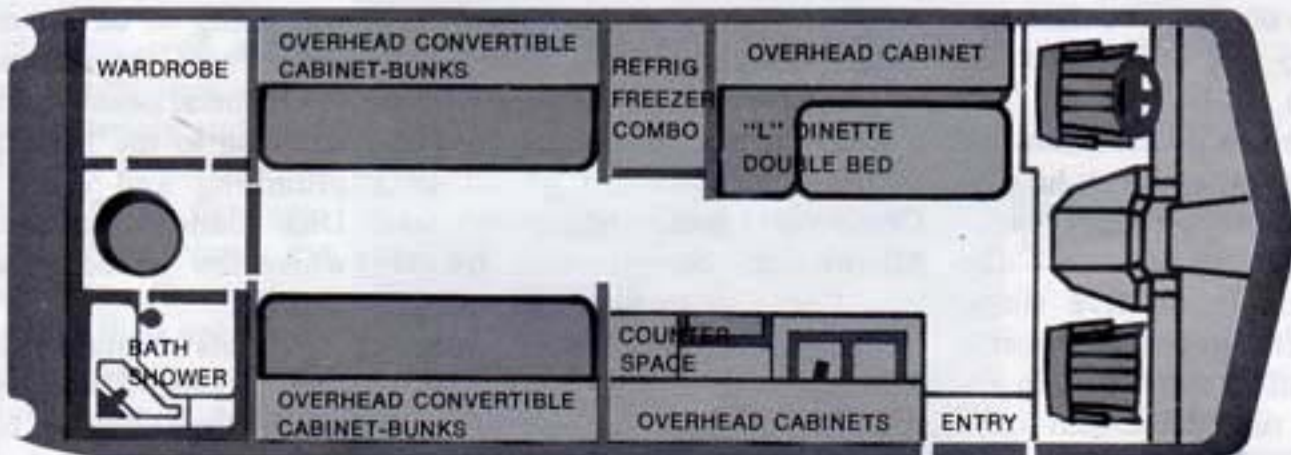
* GAME TABLE, TWIN BEDS AND QUEEN SIZE BED ARE STANDARD IN ALL SIDE BATH MODELS.



25 FOOT SIDE BATH, "L" DINETTE.



25 FOOT REAR BATH, TWINS, STANDARD DINETTE.



25 FOOT REAR BATH, TWINS, "L" DINETTE.