

## MARQUIS NEW LIFE 46



Words and pictures  
by Dave Hurrell

# ITALIAN JOBS

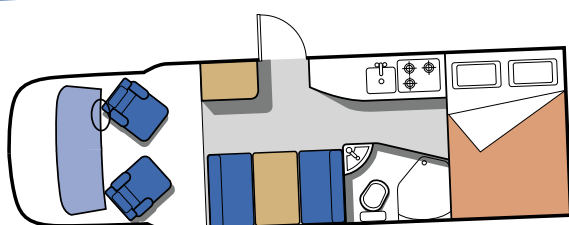
*Two medium-sized  
Romanesque coachbuilds  
offer similar facilities  
but very different  
rear ends*



This month's coachbuild comparison sees two seven-metre-long 'vans very similar up front, but offering a very different approach to how they arrange their nether regions.

One is a classic Continental design, the other a Continental-built motorhome aimed squarely at the UK market in both obvious and less obvious

ways. Significantly, although these 'vans are built in Italy, both brands are part of large organisations that have more than just a passing interest in the UK. The Marquis New Life, built by SeA, is named for the multi-branch dealership, which was, alongside sister company Auto-Sleepers, until very recently part of the SeA Group of companies (a management buyout this summer saw the Auto-Sleepers Group returned to British



### LAYOUT PLAN

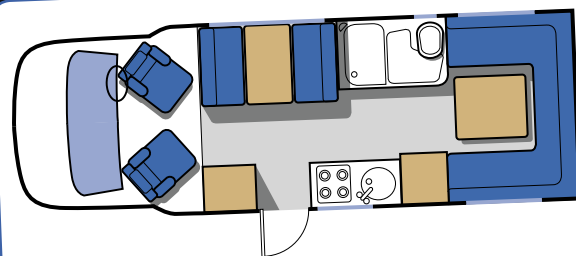
- OVERALL LENGTH: 7.02m (23ft 0.5in)
- OVERALL WIDTH: 2.37m (7ft 9.5in)

1 The fixed roof makes gaining the cab a bit of a squeeze

2 A lack of seat swivels improves cab comfort



## ROLLER TEAM ATESSA 746



### LAYOUT PLAN

- **OVERALL LENGTH:** 7.43m (24ft 4.5in)
- **OVERALL WIDTH:** 2.24m (7ft 4in)

ownership). Meanwhile, the Auto Roller Atessa comes from a stable that includes Grimsby-based, Auto-Trail - the mighty Trigano Group is the parent here, and one of the biggest in Europe. The significance of this (and especially in these trying times) is that after-sales back up should be up to par and that dealers should know the product well.

To the vehicles in question: both have traditional coachbuilt looks that are unsurprising

and functional - no moulded GRP shells here, although the Atessa's overcab has the better quality look about it. The significant detail is that Atessa's caravan door is located - unlike its rival - on the UK nearside. Inside, the layout is handed to suit: Roller Team has invested in the British market by building the whole (four model) Atessa range to suit our needs.

Step aboard both contenders and you

discover overcab double beds ahead of Pullman dinettes, while kitchens and washrooms stand amidships. The big difference is in the rear, where a similar-sized space provides a Brit-pleasing lounge in the Atessa, or a gear-swallowing garage (with permanent double bed over) in the New Life.

Motive power and foundations are, unsurprisingly, courtesy of Fiat's much-used Ducato - both fitted with the excellent 2.3-litre 130 horsepower motor and the much less excellent six-speed gearbox. Regular readers will know of the Fiat's transmission problems (vibration, or worse, while reversing) and either be fed up with reading about it or - like some readers I've met - of the opinion that we motorhome hacks aren't writing enough on this thorny subject. The problem is that the vibration emanating from the drive-train is variable, even from 'van to 'van, with the same engine/gearbox combination: some are better, some worse. Indeed, Fiat has stated as much, but promised to rectify the problem if it affects a particular vehicle. The solution for us customers is to test drive the vehicle you're about to buy before you accept it.

### MOTIVE POWER

Access to the cabs is the first difference that strikes you when approaching from the rear. Funny enough, it's your head that *won't* be







## MARQUIS NEW LIFE 46



3 Front end features a Pullman dinette and wardrobe

4 The New Life rear accommodates a garage, with double bed over

5 There's only dining space for four in this six-berth motorhome

struck in the Atesa, as the cab roof is cutaway and the bed base above rises out of the way of the old napper when getting into the driving department. The New Life's fixed overcab bed base makes it a bit of a squeeze. Once settled in any of the cab seats here, you discover that they can easily be set at a very comfortable height. This is, in part, because they play no part in the living area and so have no (height-adding) swivels fitted.

Both cabs have the expected electrics - windows, mirrors, remote locking etc, and both have driver and passenger airbags - something that's a less common standard fitting. The New Life packs a value-punch with a radio/CD player, ASR traction control and - pause for a rousing cheer - a spare wheel. The More expensive Atesa lacks even the spare wheel, preferring to provide the - Fix and Go - 12V compressor and can of tyre sealant gunk. I've had few punctures in the past thirty years, and every one has ruined the tyre by the time I've managed to stop. It's at this point that the Fix and Go kit will start to look almost the same as a chocolate teapot.

Finally, make sure your driving licence entitles you to drive these motorhomes: both have excellent payloads - in part, due to the fact that they both ride on chassis with a maximum authorised weight of 4000kg. Younger, and older, drivers may well find that their licence only entitles them to drive a vehicle with a MAW maximum of 3500kg.

### ROAD MANNERS

Settled comfortably in either driver's seat, you're presented with the familiar visage of the most-used motorhome base vehicle's dash. The modern Ducato cab is nice place to be and big door mirrors give good rear vision - there's through-view in the Atesa, but not much. In the New Life, the garage means no through view to the rear. Aft, the dinette seats are almost identical in providing two three-point belts on the forward-facing section and two lap strap-only belts on the rear-facing pew. Thus, these six berth 'vans only provide (including those in the cab) a total of four three-point belted travel seats.

On the road, performance proved to be almost identical, with good handling: the Ducato's light steering, powerful brakes and easy gearchange making these 'vans a real pleasure to drive. Conversion noise was much of a muchness too, but the Atesa's full-sized cooker rattled more than the New Life's separate hob and oven set-up. Performance

#### I LIKED

- Twin airbags
- Spare wheel
- Roomy overcab
- Spacious kitchen
- Added value of ICE Pack
- Comfy over-garage bed
- Big, well equipped garage
- Internally located leisure battery

#### I WOULD HAVE LIKED

- Better design of dinette bed
- Low-level oven
- Ignition for hob
- Rigid door for shower compartment

#### I DISLIKED

- High-level TV locker

**I LIKED**

- UK handing of conversion
- Spacious overcab
- Big, comfy lounge
- Two tables
- Full cooker
- Rigid doors on shower compartment
- Washbasin with vanity counter

**I WOULD HAVE LIKED**

- A spare wheel
- Better design of dinette bed

**I DISLIKED**

- Externally mounted leisure battery

provided easy legal-limit speeds, with the high ratio top (sixth) gear a good motorway cruiser. Do bear in mind though, that a heavily laden 'van and a strong headwind will compromise things quite a bit.

**LOUNGE AND DINE**

There's a very similar feel to the interiors, with unsurprising mid-brown furniture coupled with silver detailing. The more expensive Atessa has the edge style-wise, with a few more curves, silver panels on its overhead locker doors and a cool neutral cloth that contrasts with the New Life's more jazzy upholstery.

It's the lounging opportunities - or the lack thereof - in these 'vans that provide their unique selling points. The Atessa plays its trump card here and one that's directly designed to appeal to us Brits, big time. Atessa is a bit less than half a metre longer than its rival, and uses this extra length to help provide a very nice U-shaped lounge in the rear. Six or seven folks can get comfortable in here, while a couple can have a feet-up sofa each.

The adjacent kitchen unit is equipped with mains, 12V and aerial sockets - a much better location for a TV than a neck-straining high-level locker. In the New Life lounging and dining is confined to the dinette, although post-lunch snoozes could be easily be taken on the fixed bed in the rear. The New Life lends itself to a relaxing-outdoors lifestyle, although it'll probably be the desire to carry lots of gear (in the garage) that prompts the buying decision.

Six berths, but only dining for four in the New Life's dinette, while in the Atessa, a second table emerges from a dedicated locker at the aft end of the kitchen to slot into the lounge. Here, it'll make a good diner for two - maybe somewhere to get away from the kids.

**COOK'S QUARTERS**

At first glance the cooking departments appear remarkably similar - layouts are almost the same. Biggest plus is the fact that both have a big slab of working surface, paid for in part, by the lack of drainers on the sinks. The most overt difference is the Atessa's super-duper full-sized cooker - another feature that'll appeal to British buyers. In the New Life there's the expected glass-lidded, three-burner hob (strangely, but as is usual, devoid of spark ignition for its flames) with a Smev mini oven/grill mounted above. Ovens mounted at high level are common in Continental motorhomes, but that doesn't make them any safer to use. At five-foot-ten,

**ROLLER TEAM ATESSA 746**

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6 Atessa's interior has the edge on quality

7 UK-handed, the Atessa has its caravan entrance on our nearside

8 The comfy rear lounge will be the reason to buy Inset: A second table makes sure all can eat in comfort



# On Test Marquis New Life 46 & Roller Team Atessa 746



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I'd struggle to use this one without burning the toast or worse. One of those fold-flat steps available at shows would seem to be an essential bit of kit - raising the cook high enough to be able to use the oven and grill effectively and safely.

Fridges are both adequate rather than enormous, while some storage space is robbed, in each, by water and space heaters located in, and on, the kitchen unit. Sadly, high-level lockers in both kitchens lack shelves - something I would add at the earliest opportunity. Another of my pet subjects is drawers, and they can be found here, in the shape of decent cutlery containers that also have enough space for some utensils. Both kitchens achieve 'good' status, although the Atessa's superior (and safer) cooker sees its galley breast the tape first.

## BATHING SPACE



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9 The kitchen is spacious, but loses marks thanks to the over-high oven

10 The washroom lacks counter-top and a rigid door for the shower

The ablutions on offer see both Atessa and New Life providing washrooms with separate showers. The other thing they have in common is translucent windows (good) but no blinds or flyscreens (bad). Bad, because although it could be argued that a blind is superfluous, a flyscreen is not. The one thing you will need to do is open the window in hot weather and without a flyscreen in place you'll probably be able to hear the 'hand-rubbing' glee of the flying bloodsuckers queuing outside the 'van. Luckily, it's probably quite easy to retrofit a blind/flyscreen, as from Aberdeen to Agadir, you will need to banish midges and mozzies.

Both washrooms are provided with identical examples of Thetford's venerable swivelling loo, both are mounted low enough for comfortable enthronement.

Approaches to furnishing are different, with a more plastic-y look in the Atessa thanks, mainly to its wet-room main floor

## HEAD-TO-HEAD DATA

## MARQUIS NEW LIFE 46

### PRICE

- **From:** £33,995 OTR
- **As tested:** £33,995 OTR

### BASICS (\*manufacturer's figures)

- **Berths:** 6
- **Three-point belted seats:** 4 (including driver) plus 2 lap-only belts
- **Warranty:** 3 years base vehicle, 2 years conversion
- **Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant:** No
- **Construction:** GRP clad overcab coachbuilt with ABS/GRP mouldings
- **Length:** 7.02m (23ft 0.5in)\*
- **Width:** 2.37m (7ft 9.5in)\*
- **Height:** 3.10m (10ft 2in)\*
- **Wheelbase:** 3.80m (12ft 5.5in)\*
- **Rear overhang:** 2.18m (7ft 2in)
- **Maximum authorised weight:** 4000kg
- **Payload:** 985kg (after the vehicle in working order)

### THE VEHICLE

- **Chassis:** Fiat Ducato chassis cab
- **Engine:** 2.3-litre turbo-diesel producing 130bhp
- **Transmission:** Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive
- **Brakes:** Servo-assisted discs all round
- **Suspension:** Front: Independent with coil springs. Rear: Rigid axle on leaf springs
- **Features:** Driver and passenger airbags, radio/CD player, ASR, remote central locking, electric windows and mirrors, door bins, central storage locker, trip computer, spare wheel

### INSIDE

- **Layout:** Overcab bed ahead of offside wardrobe and kitchen, nearside dinette and washroom. Transverse double bed over garage in rear. Caravan door on UK offside
- **Insulation:** Floor 72mm, walls 32mm, roof 40mm
- **Interior height:** 2.12m (6ft 11.5in)

### KITCHEN

- **Sink:** Rectangular stainless steel bowl with chromed mixer tap, no drainer
- **Cooker:** Smev three-burner hob with hinged glass lid, no ignition. Smev mini oven/grill with ignition and interior illumination
- **Fridge:** Dometic three-way, with freezer compartment. Capacity 117 litres

### WASHROOM

- **Toilet:** Thetford C200 swivel-bowl electric-flush cassette
- **Basin:** Plastic corner unit with mixer tap, mounted atop cupboard
- **Shower:** Separate compartment with twin-outlet tray, mixer tap/head and shelves, all enclosed by nylon curtain

### BEDS

- **Overcab double**
- **Length:** 2.10m (6ft 10.5in)
- **Width:** 1.48m (4ft 10in)
- **Headroom:** 670mm (2ft 2.5in)
- **Dinette double**
- **Length:** 1.82m (5ft 11.5in)
- **Width:** 1.22m (4ft 0in) max
- **Rear fixed double**
- **Length:** 2.14m (7ft 0.5in)
- **Width:** 1.27m (4ft 2in)
- **Headroom:** 1.00m (3ft 3.5in)

### EQUIPMENT

- **Fresh water tank:** Inboard 100 litres (22 gallons)
- **Waste water tank:** Underslung 100 litres (22 gallons)
- **Water heater:** Truma boiler, gas-only operation
- **Space heater:** Truma convector with blown-air, gas-only operation
- **Leisure battery:** 85 amp hr
- **Gas:** 2 x 13kg cylinders
- **Lighting:** Halogen downlights in overcab bed, lounge, kitchen, washroom, rear bed. One ceiling-mounted 2D fluorescent light in lounge
- **Sockets:** 230V: 3 (1 in TV locker, 2 in kitchen). 12V: 1 (in TV locker)

### OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Fitted to test vehicle (note: ICE Pack of extras included free. Value quoted at £2500)

- **Base:** None
- **Conversion:** As part of ICE Pack - oven/grill, cab seat covers

#### Other options

- **Base:** As part of ICE pack - electric mirrors, alloy wheels, painted front bumper
- **Conversion:** As part of ICE pack - living area air-conditioning, beer keg cooler, wine bottle cooler, bike rack

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and plastic high-level cabinet. The New Life features carpet on the deck and a wooden high-level shelf unit with - quite clever - sliding bottle retainers. Basin-wise, the Atessa wins, with a unit that includes a 'vanity' surface for your cosmetics. The New Life's dumping surface-free washbasin will probably see you heap your stuff on the top of the toilet while you carry out cleaning and cosmetic essentials. Both showers are quite compact, and the New Life that could really do with its rival's rigid door - the nylon curtain found here will probably let water onto its carpeted floor if you're not very careful. Atessa's deep shower tray and semi seat could well make it suitable as a semi-bathing area, especially for mud-spattered kids.

More of a plastic place its true, but Atessa washroom has the edge.

## BEDTIME

Sleeping spaces start with overcab beds and both are spacious. Plenty of room in each and both have good ventilation - the Atessa a window on one side and - unusually - one at the front, the New Life a window and a roof vent. Important, these features, as in hot weather a poorly ventilated overcab bed will be like an oven. Atessa shows its quality with a bed base on sprung staves - the New Life mattress rides on a solid base.

And so to the dinettes, where the oft-found mishmash of lowered tables infill panels and cushions claim to make usable double beds. Both fell short of the mark, with seemingly too many infill cushions and support boards that failed to fit in the Atessa. Here (as is often the case) the full double also impeded use of the overcab bed's ladder. The New Life's full double does not compromise use of the overcab ladder, but its infill cushions failed to function convincingly. During my years trying

## HEAD-TO-HEAD DATA

## ROLLER TEAM ATESSA 746

### PRICE

- **From:** £40,990 OTR
- **As tested:** £40,990 OTR

### BASICS (\*manufacturer's figures)

- **Berths:** 6
- **Three-point belted seats:** 4 (including driver) plus 2 lap-only belts
- **Warranty:** Base vehicle 3 years, conversion 2 years, water ingress 4 years.
- **Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant:** No
- **Construction:** GRP clad overcab coachbuilt with ABS/GRP mouldings
- **Length:** 7.43m (24ft 4.5in)\*
- **Width:** 2.24m (7ft 4in)\*
- **Height:** 3.20m (10ft 6in)\*
- **Wheelbase:** 4.03m (13ft 2.5in)\*
- **Rear overhang:** 2.40m (7ft 10.5in)
- **Maximum authorised weight:** 4000kg
- **Payload:** 905kg (after deductions for driver @ 75kg, 90 per cent fuel)

### THE VEHICLE

- **Chassis:** Fiat Ducato chassis cab
- **Engine:** 2.3-litre turbo-diesel producing 130bhp
- **Transmission:** Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive
- **Brakes:** Servo-assisted discs all round
- **Suspension:** Front: Independent with coil springs. Rear: Rigid axle on leaf springs
- **Features:** Remote central locking, electric windows and mirrors, cruise control, trip computer, driver and passenger airbags, central storage locker, door bins, no spare wheel (Fix and Go puncture repair sealant/compressor kit)

### INSIDE

- **Layout:** Overcab bed ahead of offside dinette, washroom, nearside wardrobe ahead of kitchen. U-shaped lounge in rear. Caravan door on UK nearside
- **Insulation:** Floor 70mm, walls and roof 30mm
- **Interior height:** 1.98m (6ft 6in)

### KITCHEN

- **Sink:** Circular stainless steel bowl with chromed mixer tap, no drainer
- **Cooker:** Spinflo Caprice slot-in stove with four-burner hob, grill, oven, all with electronic ignition. Pan store in base
- **Fridge:** Dometic three-way, with freezer compartment. Capacity 110 litres

### WASHROOM

- **Toilet:** Thetford C200 swivel-bowl electric-flush cassette
- **Basin:** Vanity unit moulded as part of cupboard with mixer tap
- **Shower:** Separate compartment with single-outlet tray, enclosed by rigid bi-fold door, shelves, moulded seat, mixer/head

### BEDS

- **Overcab double**
  - **Length:** 2.10m (6ft 10.5in)
  - **Width:** 1.43m (4ft 8.5in) max
  - **Headroom:** 690mm (2ft 3in)
- **Dinette double**
  - **Length:** 1.87m (6ft 1.5in)
  - **Width:** 1.26m (4ft 1.5in)
- **Lounge double**
  - **Length:** 2.16m (7ft 1in)
  - **Width:** 1.53m (5ft 0in)

### EQUIPMENT

- **Fresh water tank:** Inboard, 100 litres (22 gallons)
- **Waste water tank:** Underslung, 105 litres (23.1 gallons)
- **Water heater:** Truma boiler, gas-only operation
- **Space heater:** Truma convector with blown-air, gas-only operation
- **Leisure battery:** 85 amp hr
- **Gas:** 2 x 13kg cylinders
- **Lighting:** Swivelling single-tube fluorescents in dinette, kitchen, lounge. 2D fluorescents in dining area, kitchen, lounge, washroom. Filament lamp in luton
- **Sockets:** 230V: 3 (dinette, kitchen, TV locker). 12V: 2 (TV locker, kitchen)

### OPTIONAL EXTRAS

*Fitted to test vehicle*

- **Base:** None
- **Conversion:** None

*Other options*

- **Base:** 157bhp engine with ComfortMatic auto gearbox, ESP, leather-covered steering wheel and gearlever (£2960)
- **Conversion:** None

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11 Star of the spacious kitchen is a full-sized cooker

12 Washroom earns marks with a superior basin and rigid shower door



## MARQUIS NEW LIFE 46



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**13** Over-garage double bed works well

**14** In the top of the wardrobe, the TV locker is less than ideal

**15** Super garage has two doors and access from inside



this type of bed, I've found more dodgy ones than good examples, and most are best used as a single bed. Just leave all those extra cushions and planks in the loft.

Aft in the New Life, a short ladder will see you gain a comfy (again on a solid base) generous double bed that's ever ready. A rear-located window provides natural light and there's space to sit up. Adjacent, the kitchen unit makes a good night table: all in all a good over-garage bed with plenty of headroom. The Atessa lounge makes into a big transverse double. Removal of the - quite heavy - rear seat section (you stash this underneath on the floor) allows seat bases to meet and backrests to drop in and create a bed that's very good indeed. It's worth noting that during good weather - when you may be spending most, or all of your time lounging outside - you could leave the lounge bed made up, ready for instant use.

### STORE ROOM

The internal layouts of both these 'vans place the wardrobes up front and directly aft of the cabs. Both are capacious - the New Life's features pigeonholes in its side, the Atessa's a shallow cupboard at its base. Rear-facing dinette seat bases provide more room, although this is the home of the Atessa's water heater. Away from the kitchens, the overhead locker count is nine in the Atessa (many in the lounge), three in the New Life.

Many folks will buy the New Life, wanting a motorhome with a garage and here the space is the star of its show. With two external doors, internal access door, tie-down rails and even a scooter ramp, The New Life garage is very good.

In the Atessa lounge there's lots of space under the seating, while internal and external hatches impress. In here you should find a home for outdoor kit, tools, leads and wedges, bearing in mind that bedding can easily be stored on the overcab bed during the day.

### LIFE SUPPORT

Plumbing first, and as is normal with Continental 'vans, both fresh water tanks are inboard and snugly located under the dinette seats. Capacities are good too (100 litres), as are the sizes of the underslung waste tanks. Underneath the Atessa, the leisure battery is mounted on an easy-access, swing-out cradle, but very vulnerable to low winter temperatures that could affect its performance. The New Life's leisure battery is in a location that's more usual - under the driver's seat and its performance should be better in the warmer interior.

Heat for both space and water is the same in each motorhome with Truma convectors warming the internal air, and Truma boilers making hot water. Both run just on gas (not on mains electricity), but both gas lockers accept 13kg cylinders, so there should be plenty of energy available to power them. The convectors can run alone, generating almost the silent heat that's great for chilly nights, but they also have heat-boosting blown-air distribution that also warms the washroom.

As previously mentioned, the Atessa provides TV watchers with a sensible perch for their set on the kitchen unit. New Life has a TV locker above the wardrobe - a tambour door hiding a slide-out bracket that's designed to take a flat screen set. Unsurprisingly, this locker is really too high for comfortable TV watching and I would use it for storage, installing a dedicated bracket at a lower level. An extra bit

of wiring (probably done by the dealer) could also allow the fitting of sockets (and bracket) at the foot of the over-garage bed.

At time of writing the New Life 46 came with a package of extras named 'ICE Pack.' Claimed to be worth £2500, the pack includes some rather poorly made cab seat covers, but also desirable things such as alloy wheels, bike rack and (mains powered) living area air-conditioning. Slightly bizarrely, you also get beer keg and wine bottle coolers - I guess the name 'ICE' says it all. Bear in mind that some of the extras - alloys, air-conditioning etc, were not fitted to the test vehicle, as Marquis retrofits these prior to sale.

## CONCLUSION

Classically styled Italian motorhomes have been part of the UK market for many a year and these two are good examples of the breed. Very much mid-market products, they both exhibit simple styling outside and ride on the most-used European motorhome chassis that also happens to be one of the best to drive.

Inside, front-end layouts are almost identical, although it's the Roller Team Atessa 746's UK nearside caravan entrance that marks the beginning of a design specifically aimed at UK buyers. The Marquis New Life 46, meanwhile, is the epitome of the Continental Garage-equipped motorhome. Both 'vans claim six berths, but the presence of only four three-point seatbelts and less than successful dinette double beds make them far more suitable as four berth machines. Sporty types (or those wishing to carry a scooter) could find the New Life perfect, while families could share this model - mum, dad and two kids getting loads of holiday value from it, grandparents touring out of the school holiday periods. The Atessa is built more for all-year-round comfort, with the opportunity to achieve near fixed (downstairs) bed status - leaving the lounge bed up in good weather, and when lounging is mostly outside.

In the service sectors, it's the Atessa that shows its mettle, with a superior kitchen and washroom - the bed bases' sprung slats showing that its good quality is more than skin deep.

Finally, we come to value for money, and with the New Life nearly seven grand cheaper than its rival it seems to offer excellent value. Add the Ice Pack goodies to the equation and it looks even better.

The final analysis sees the New Life potentially offering an extended family great of fun, while lounge-loving motorhomers who still want to take the grandkids away with out cramping their style, should take a good look at the Brit-friendly Roller Team Atessa. ■

## ROLLER TEAM ATESSA 746



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**16 The lounge makes a big comfy double bed**

**17 There is good access to big under-lounge storage**



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### VEHICLES LOANED FOR EVALUATION BY:

**Marquis New Life 46**  
Marquis Northants, The Causeway,  
Great Billing, Northampton NN3 9EX  
(tel: 01604 402888; web site:  
www.marquismotorhomes.co.uk)

**Roller Team Atessa 746**  
Roller Team Motorhomes, Trigano  
House, Genesis Way, Europarc,  
Grimsby, North East Lincs DN37 9TU  
(tel: 01472 571075; web site:  
www.rollerteammotorhomes.co.uk)