

WHICH 2010 motorcaravan winner ➔ **Chausson Welcome Suite** awards

AWARDS JUDGE ➔ **PETER VAUGHAN**

» Chausson's designers started afresh with the floorplan and came up with this innovative new layout



Wheelhome's tiny Skamper with its huge – and hugely clever – elevating roof. We also admired Swift Group's ingenuity in adapting the best-selling French bed layout, as seen in so many coachbuilts, to fit in a van conversion (the new Mondial FB and sister model, the Autocruise Alto). And we love the idea of a low-profile motorhome with a classic rear lounge but no need to make up a bed at night (Pilote Aventura P626 UA). But when push comes to shove, none of them match the Chausson Welcome Suite for its wealth of original thinking.

Of course, low-profiles with drop-down roof beds have proliferated since we gave the Bürstner Ixeo this award last year, but whereas so many rivals have simply aped

the Ixeo's typical motorhome layouts and simply raised the roofline to incorporate that upper bed, Chausson have made the drop-down berths into the main bed. Then they've powered it electrically, so you just extend a forefinger to lower or raise it rather than huff and puff or rely on gas struts for help. And by deleting high-level cupboards from the equation altogether they've allowed the bed to come down to just 820mm above the floor.

But the Suite is not just about its bed. Just look at the layout. Up front the lounge consists of two swivel cab seats, two individual side-facing seats and a forward-facing bench with armrests. In the middle, with walkways on either side!

We have reservations about a few details, but as an innovator it is without peers

Backing onto that settee is an island kitchen. Chausson's designers didn't just tweak an existing floorplan, they started afresh. And you have to say that what they've achieved is pretty remarkable in such a compact space – this little low-profile is just six metres long, the same as many high-top campers.

Then there's the rear washroom, right across the full width of the van. It has one

of the biggest showers we've ever seen, incorporates one of the two wardrobes and has masses of floor space for you get changed in. And that wardrobe also includes an external locker for your outdoor chairs and table.

We still have some reservations about a few details of the Suite (as revealed in our exclusive test in the December issue) but as an innovator it is without peers.

CHAUSSON fact file

- Make:** Chausson
- Model:** Welcome Suite
- Base vehicle:** Fiat Ducato 35L wide-track chassis-cab
- Engine:** 2.3-litre Multijet (130bhp)
- L/W/H:** 5.99m, 2.30m, 2.89m
- Gross weight:** 3500kg
- Payload:** 606kg
- Berths:** 2+2
- Travel seats:** 4
- Price from:** £38,600

