



FORETRAVEL **IH45**

COMPLETELY REDESIGNED MOTORCOACH TAKES ITS NAME AND LUXURY FROM THE OLD RAILROAD DAYS OF ELITE TRAVEL AND ITS QUALITY CUES FROM FORE FAMILY TRADITION

by BOB LIVINGSTON

Lyle Reed loves trains. He spent most of his career as an executive for a number of railroads and retired from his CEO post in 1996. He's also a motorhome enthusiast who bought a specially built 42-foot Foretravel in 2003 (not his first) and by 2005 he led a group of investors that bought the company. Reed named his latest endeavor the "Iron Horse" in reference to the railroad days (hence the "IH" designation), and what resulted is a gorgeous motorhome that echoes the romanticism of the Old West when the wealthy traveled in private, opulent railroad cars. "Iron Horse" is the name Native Americans gave the locomotive when they first saw it crossing the plains.

While Foretravel motorhomes haven't been around quite as long as the railroad lines that helped settle the frontier, the name-

plate was established in 1967 and the company has built a long-standing reputation as one of the best in the business. Today's Foretravel motorhomes exude precision craftsmanship while integrating systems and appliances representative of the high-tech world. What rolls off the assembly line in its Nacogdoches, Texas, plant are coaches that appeal to discriminating buyers who actually have a heavy hand in the manufacturing process.

We took a look at the IH 45 Quad Slide, which represents the company's first completely redesigned coach in 25 years. It's a magnificent creation that easily satisfies anyone's desire for extreme luxury and comfort, as long as one can afford the seven-figure price tag.

Obviously, a widebody coach with 45 feet of length and four



slides to augment interior spaciousness affords great latitude for the designer and prospective buyers, who work as a team. For the test coach, a relatively conservative floorplan — although extremely popular and well proven — zeros in on the bath-and-a-half concept complemented by a front living room salon, center kitchen and master bedroom just forward of the rear main bathroom — all under a sculpted ceiling of exceptional beauty.

First impressions are everything when entering any luxury coach. Well-placed, flush-mounted LED ceiling lights supported by accent lighting and wall fixtures illuminate the inside in grand fashion. When privacy is not necessary, the power MCD shades can be lifted, allowing in plenty of ambient lighting that contrasts perfectly with the handsome laminate structures and finely upholstered furniture in the test coach. Walnut, cherry and maple wood finishes are standard fare but potential owners can opt for more exotics like Bubinga and African mahogany. Flooring is also a matter of personal taste, and for this coach

wood was used throughout, except for the bathrooms. When tile is chosen, radiant heat is part of the package.

Opposing slides really open up the front living area. Couches are placed in each slide on flush-fitting floors. Curb-side, a table on an electrically operated pedestal can be used for dining. Once the cockpit chairs are turned, the front becomes an even nicer conversation area with plenty of elbowroom that has “entertaining” written all over it.

The galley, positioned about mid coach, is not exceptionally large but it does have all the necessary accouterments for planning most meals. Sink covers improve the counter space, made of natural quartz, and since it's an all-electric coach, the cooktop is flush mounted, providing additional room when the burners aren't needed. A high-end microwave/convection oven can be used for the majority of cooking chores. The sink has special strainer attachments, making food prep and clean up more convenient.



Above: Opposing front slideouts add space to the living room salon. **Far left:** Flush-mounted cooktop and sink covers improve counter space. **Left:** A SlumberEase mattress occupies the master bedroom suite.

Across from the galley is a home-type double-door refrigerator with the customary water and ice dispensers built in the front panel. A large freezer drawer below the double doors provides sanctuary for frozen foods. If that's not enough, a 100-pound capacity freezer is mounted in one of the storage bays. The rest of the foodstuff can be stored in the various surrounding cabinets and the pullout pantry with carpet-lined shelves. Just about any kitchen appliance/accessory can be ordered, including the dishwasher and finely crafted faucets and fixtures in the test model.

Before entering the master bedroom suite, the half bath can be accessed on the curbside. Inside is a vacuum-flush china toilet, just like the one used in the rear master bath. Most 45-footers are equipped with the half-bath feature, which keeps guest traffic out of the bedroom.

An electrically operated SlumberEase mattress sits proudly in the bedroom, accentuated by the massive headboard and surprisingly small nightstands. Remote controls are used to position the bed for sleeping or reading. On the opposite wall, the dresser and cabinet



PHOTOS: FORETRAVEL

From left to right: The rear master bathroom boasts plenty of cabinet and drawer storage while another section of the closet houses the stackable washer and dryer. A well-appointed vanity is next to the vacuum-flush china toilet.

water system will see to that.

Clothing and shoes are easily swallowed up by the quasi-walk-in closet with hang-up rods, shelves and drawers, cleverly positioned for easy access. Another section of the closet ensemble houses the stackable washer and dryer. The tastefully appointed bathroom vanity is adjacent to the second vacuum-flush toilet. Properly placed lighting

and other electrical componentry, but the electrical package in the test coach provides plenty of self-sufficiency when untethered from hookups.

Part of the fun of owning a coach like the Foretravel IH 45 is driving it. The proprietary chassis is powered by a 600 HP Cummins ISX engine with 1,950 lb-ft of torque. The Allison 4000MHR transmission moves the power fluidly and the excellent power-to-weight factor provides smooth sailing on any highway, regardless of grade. The 304-inch wheelbase is a comfortable fit for this coach and the 54-degree wheel cut allows good maneuverability in close quarters.

Exceptional fit and finish, inside and outside, temper any rattles and creaks, leaving the driver a quiet cockpit without the annoyance of wind noise and extraneous cacophonous distractions. An active air suspension system will smooth away most bumps and combined with the front independent configuration gives the coach great road-hugging manners.

"PART OF THE FUN OF OWNING A COACH LIKE THE FORETRAVEL IH 45 IS DRIVING IT."

structure (with direct and accent lighting) add the right touch of class to the bedroom; a TV is built into the upper portion of the structure.

The bathroom is definitely the eye candy. A walk-in, glass-enclosed shower is graced with beautiful, custom tile work and an adjustable showerhead. You might not want to leave this shower too quickly; the Aqua Hot comfort heating and hot

fixtures and mirrors allow any user to luxuriate in this bathroom. All the lighting throughout the coach is controlled by a multiplex switching system with redundancies throughout the coach.

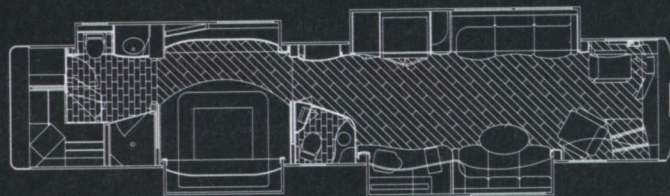
Electrical needs are serviced by a 20 kW diesel generator and a massive battery bank tied to dual 2,800-watt inverter/chargers and a solar charger. Owners can enhance capacity by adding solar panels

SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: TRAVELRIDE II
ENGINE: CUMMINS ISX 600 HP
FUEL: DIESEL, 200 GAL
GVWR: 54,000 LBS
LENGTH: 45'
WIDTH: 8' 6"
HEIGHT WITH A/C: 13' 2"
INTERIOR HEIGHT: 7'
WHEELBASE: 304"

FRESHWATER CAP: 135 GAL
HOLDING TANK CAP: 145 GAL
LP-GAS CAP: N/A
BASE MSRP: \$1,175,000
MSRP AS REVIEWED: \$1,201,370

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Driver comfort and visibility are excellent and the Silverleaf glass dash incorporates all the information necessary for piloting a coach this complex, and for keeping tabs on key systems. The passenger seat is equipped with its own goodies, including an articulating screen to help with GPS navigation or to simply while away the miles in personal electronic entertainment.

"Smooth" is the operative word when describing the exterior of this coach. Striking graphics and flush-mounted windows, slides, awnings, baggage and entry doors — and even the step compartment — are aesthetically kind to the eyes. Massive below-floor storage lockers will accommodate just about anything an owner wants to take along. All the accessories and hardware sharing these compartments are neatly organized, including the utility center. Here, stainless steel shrouds the necessary utilities like an outside faucet and water, electrical and sewer hookups. The 50-amp power cord and water hose are on electrically operated take-up reels. Outside entertainment can be accessed on the patio side and the generator slides

out of the front via a push of a button. Rear access to the engine is excellent.

As part of the buying experience, prospective owners can become intimately involved with the process or choose one of the company's existing — and more popular — floorplans. Regardless of how the owners elect to become involved, the company encourages them to spend several days in the area after delivery. Most new owners and even some repeat customers spend a number of nights on premises in one of the factory's adjacent campsites, and almost everyone is exposed to at least three to four hours of training per day. Foretravel staff members will spend as much time as needed to ensure that the ownership experience is positive. That's a trait inherited from the Fore family and continued by Reed and his staff.

While the IH 45 is not restricted by tracks like its brethren of yesteryear, the freedom of exploration and luxury of the mighty railroads of the past are certainly instilled in the Foretravel coaches of today. That's what keeps railroad man Lyle Reed smiling. ♦

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