

Feature

Roadtrek SS-Ideal

New Rear-Slide Design Establishes an Innovative Class B Motorhome

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MotorHome
 May 2010



The **Daimler Sprinter** story has become a new chapter in the RV evolution tome for its abilities and economies and judging by the enthusiastic reception of dealers and owners alike, it figures to remain a significant player in the Class B arena.

Roadtrek revealed its latest and most ingenious Sprinter-based design, the **SS-Ideal** (which incorporates a slide into the 144-inch wheelbase) at the National RV Trade Show in Louisville, Ky., in December. It received runner-up honors in the “Best of Show” category by RV Business — no small feat in light of the competition from manufacturers of coaches, some more than twice the size of the comparatively diminutive SS-Ideal.

In travel form, the SS-Ideal bears no trace of Roadtrek designers' latest innovation, maintaining Daimler's highly recognizable tall aerodynamic shape, panoramic windows and signature fall-away hood. However, in camp, much to our amusement, there was a jaw-dropping reaction by passing campers as we swung open the rear doors, exposing what appears to be a second rear wall. With onlookers' curiosities now piqued, the wall extended with a flick of a switch to create a whole new exterior look. After closing the weather-resistant rear doors against the slide and securing them with a retaining strap, we added 3 feet of additional interior floor space by day and a comfortable 54-by-74-inch bed by night. Creating the amenities of a 22-plus-foot coach in just 19½ feet was a Roadtrek design goal nicely met. The slide also houses a large full-width exterior compartment for oversize items. Unfortunately, our SS-Ideal did not come equipped with the (must-have) optional (\$416) “Continental”-style fold-down spare tire mount.

THE TOUR



Opening the large sliding side door truly brings the outdoors in and reveals features that make this coach something special, beginning with the enlarged bathroom. This is the largest bath of any Roadtrek floorplan and it works well. Additional shoulder and hip space has been provided when privacy is needed and also allows for a standing or sit-down shower. A new fixed basin with countertop space replaces the Pullman-style pullout basin setup found in the SS-Ideal's brother, the SS-Agile. Watertight storage and plumbing access is provided under the sink and the handy molded shampoo and soap ledge can also provide some personal support while maneuvering in this wet bath. Drawing the exterior sliding door curtain and opening the double bath doors into the aisle can create a more private dressing area to step into after a shower, and a small but powerful exhaust fan handles humid conditions and aids in drying the shower and curtain. A macerator pump is built in for convenient holding tank dumping without having to store a bulky 3-inch hose.

Opposite the bath is the galley module, where Roadtrek has recently partnered with **Granite Transformations** to produce an engineered-surface countertop. The man-made surface, which is composed of natural stone, quartz, recycled glass and a polymer binder, looks like granite but is lighter than the real thing. It passed our unexpected strength test when the single-basin sink cover accidentally slipped from wet hands and survived a fall to the floor without even a chip.



The galley base cabinet module is divided to conveniently store a pair of reclining lawn chairs on the sliding-door side of the cabinet. A pantry provides general galley storage on the aisle side. A single but useful-size drawer is provided for cooking and serving utensils, with another under the fridge. What can't be packed in the galley cabinets can be stowed in one of the overhead cabinets and cubbies that rings the interior. The construction and handsome finish of the cherry cabinetry has the appearance and operation of cabinetry we've seen in high-end coaches.

Excellent task and general lighting is provided as well as an over-counter task and night light combo fixture not often offered. A double-burner range is protected by a recessed glass cover when not in use, providing additional countertop space. A multi-speed **Fan-Tastic** fan in the roof pulls double duty as range hood and general ventilator. The convection/microwave oven resides above the new 5-cubic-foot three-way power refrigerator. It completes a compact but very functional galley capable of allowing two chefs to work side-by-side. The optional (\$2,860) LP-gas auxiliary AC generator suspended behind the rear axle can supply 120-volt AC power when it is not available at the campsite.



Roadtrek offers two seating arrangements in the SS-Ideal, which we endorse for any compact rig. The optional (\$611), manually adjusted, OptimalLeather cockpit captain's chairs swivel to face the cabin; a floor socket is provided to set up the single-leg pole table. Another floor socket in front of the rear couch creates meal or game seating for up to four with a pair of fold-down end seats using cushions from the bed.

Audiovisual entertainment comes in the form of an optional (\$910) 19-inch flat-screen TV connected to the (standard equipment) home theater system. The system includes 5.1 surround sound, dual center speakers, DVD, CD, AM/FM stereo and dual-use rear speakers that can be switched between the home theater system and in-dash stereo system when traveling. The TV rests in an AV cabinet above the wardrobe, which neatly arranges all AV switches and cable/antenna connections for easy access and DVD storage. The TV slides out on a swivel mount, allowing viewing from either seating location, then stows out of the way.

Preparing the bed is a simple matter of removing the seat back cushion, sliding the couch seat bottom out, folding down the seat back and then filling in the cushions to create a very comfortable 6-foot-long bed. The 38-inch-deep by 55-inch-wide slide is equipped with a pair of overhead reading lamps, and thanks to the 54-inch height, three windows and white walls, it doesn't feel like you're sleeping in a cave. Two fold-down plastic drink holders are supplied on each side wall for couch use and can serve as a makeshift nightstand, but we hope that Roadtrek will add a more convenient and durable shelf for eyeglasses and other small items. Toss in a couple of TV pillows and you have the best seat in ... the ... Zzzzzzz.

Driving the Sprinter is a pleasure. It's so quiet and responsive, you might not believe you're driving a diesel until you roll down the window, lean out and listen closely for the

Mercedes-Benz heartbeat. Add the paddle shifter for the five-speed automatic transmission and you have a spirited ride across town or across the continent, with the added ability and benefit of a second family vehicle. Stability control increases driver safety and makes independent braking corrections whenever the system senses an under or oversteer situation that might negatively alter your intended course.



Excellent visibility, heated mirrors, comfortable seats with optional (\$871) in-dash navigation and rear camera (\$234), iPod/MP3 connections with Bluetooth cell phone connectivity and superb fuel economy (22.5 mpg) make the journey easy to enjoy.

We couldn't ask for a motorhome with better road manners — even with minimal buffeting from passing commercial truck traffic — and we had no trouble handling grades of 7 percent.

With features and conveniences of a larger rig and the ability to travel off the beaten path to destinations larger coaches can't venture to, the SS-Ideal is not a rig that you can load and load ... and load. With very specific total cargo capacity maximums, savvy owners will always be cognizant of weight. They'll need to strike a sensible and safe balance between cargo loading and water supply, the two items having the greatest impact on weight yet easiest to adjust, compensating for the weight of extra passengers and/or trailer hitch weight.

Will the new slide design morph to other Roadtrek models? Roadtrek isn't talking. Regardless of that, the SS-Ideal will provide a premium outdoor experience. With a feature-rich list of appointments, a novel slide, Mercedes-Benz reliability and talented craftsmen, Roadtrek has proven again you can leave a smaller travel footprint wherever you go without sacrificing creature comforts.

Our thanks to Rick Vara and the staff of the beautiful full-service **Newport Dunes Waterfront RV Resort and Marina** in Orange County, Calif., for their hospitality during our stay.

2010 ROADTREK SS-IDEAL

WHAT'S HOT

Novel rear slide; roomy bathroom; good task and general lighting; responsive, quiet Mercedes-Benz turbodiesel

engine; excellent visibility; heated

mirrors; 5-cubic-foot refrigerator.

WHAT'S NOT

Fold-down spare tire mount offered only as an option; large tabletop that impedes seat to entry aisle use; lack of convenient, durable shelf near the bedside.

SPECIFICATIONS

PERFORMANCE

fuel economy: 22.5 mpg

acceleration

0-60 mph: 16 sec

40-60 mph: 10.1 sec

CHASSIS

manufacturer: Mercedes-Benz

model: Sprinter CRD 2500

engine: 3.0-l V-6 turbodiesel

sae hp: 154 @ 3,400 rpm

torque: 280 lb-ft @ 1,200 rpm

transmission: 5-speed automatic axle ratio: 4.10:1

tires: LT245/75R-16E w/pressure monitoring system

wheelbase: 144"

brakes, f/r: Disc w/ABS and stability control

suspension, f/r: IFS/Longitudinal Leafs

fuel cap: 26 gal

warranty: 3 yrs/36,000 miles

COACH

ext length: 19' 5"

ext width: 6' 8"

ext height: 9' 7"

int width: 5' 9"

int height: 6' 4"

construction: steel skin and roof, fiberglass and composite wall and roof insulation

freshwater cap: 30 gal

black-water cap: 20 gal

gray-water cap: 11 gal

water-heater cap: 6 gal

lp-gas cap: 10 gal

furnace (1): 16,000 Btu

air conditioner (1): 11,000 Btu w/heat strip

refrigerator: 5 cu-ft

inverter/Charger: 750 w/45 amp

battery: (1) 12-volt chassis, (2) 6-volt coach

ac generator: 2.5 kw LP-gas

msrp: \$97,100

msrp as tested: \$106,236

warranty: 4 yrs/48,000 miles

wet weight (water and heater, fuel, lp-gas tanks full; no supplies or passengers)

front axle: 3,700 lbs

rear axle: 4,360 lbs

total: 8,060 lbs

CHASSIS RATINGS

gawr, f/r: 3,970/5,360 lbs

gvwr/gcwr: 8,550/13,550 lbs

OCCC: 490 lbs

gawr: gross axle weight rating

gvwr: gross vehicle weight rating

gcwr: gross combination weight rating

occc: Occupant and cargo carrying

capacity rating

Roadtrek Motorhomes Inc.

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