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**FLEETWOOD
DISCOVERY 40G
& NEW POWER
BRIDGE CHASSIS**



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ADULT LUXURY, FAMILY FUN

by BOB LIVINGSTON

Fleetwood's Discovery 40G satisfies grown-up tastes while adding a touch of comfort and convenience for youngsters



Seasoned RV owners usually view big diesel-pushers as coaches designed for two people. And for the most part, they are right. It's usually the empty nesters who prefer the luxury of 40 feet and the associated amenities that prevent homesickness. So what was Fleetwood thinking when it added two bunks and introduced its Discovery 40G? Grandkids, of course.

The new-for-2009 40G model utilizes the front section by opposing the kitchen and living room, then adds two bunks on the curbside and a pass-through bath on the streetside. The rear is devoted to the bedroom and full-width wardrobe. To make this plan work, almost the entire curbside wall slides out, and the kitchen is expanded on the other side via the second slide. The result is a very roomy plan, and a coach that is totally usable even when the slides are retracted. When the slide is extended, a hallway is created that runs along the bunks and into the bedroom.

Occupants get to the bedroom by using the hallway when the slide is out or by going through the bathroom, which is fitted with three doors: one in the rear for access to and from the bedroom; one at the end of the galley for access from the front of the coach; and a third door that slides opens to the adjacent bunks and storage drawers when the slide is in travel mode.

My past reaction to bunks in a luxury Class A has been to shun it because it seems to waste living space. Now that I have my first grandchild on the way, I can see the value more clearly. By the end of the test journey, I found the additional space useful for storing bulky items, and even for taking a nap without disheveling the bed out back. When the bunks are used for the kids, individual, flip-down video display screens can be called into action — with private headsets — to conquer any “are we there yet” whining.

Having the kitchen up front is an acquired taste. In the test rig, it provides a very large galley counter flanked by the cooktop and sinks; the four-door refrigerator butts up close to the driver's seat — without restricting legroom or the ability to recline the backrest for a comfortable driving position. Adjacent to the galley structure (toward the rear of the coach) is the entertainment center that features a Samsung 32-inch flat-screen TV. In the cabinet above are the switching box for operating the rear flat-screen TV and the components for the DVD player and home theater. Visibility to the wide screen is good from the couch and from half of the U-shaped dinette.

This page, clockwise from top, right: Driver conveniences include a color back-up monitor and a tilt/telescoping steering wheel. The bathroom features a curved, glass shower and skylight. The optional grill/kitchenette makes a fun exterior entertainment center. Washer/dryer combo in the bedroom is another handy option. Opposite page: Black Cherry is one of five full-body paint schemes available. With slideouts extended, there's plenty of room inside the 40G.



2009 DISCOVERY 40G

WHAT'S HOT

Power Bridge Chassis. Large freshwater tank. Swing-out compartment doors. Patio storage center with power outlets. Luxurious bed and bath areas. Power visors in cockpit.

WHAT'S NOT

Wind noise on the driver's side. Small dash table in the cockpit. Oddly placed towel bar inside shower.



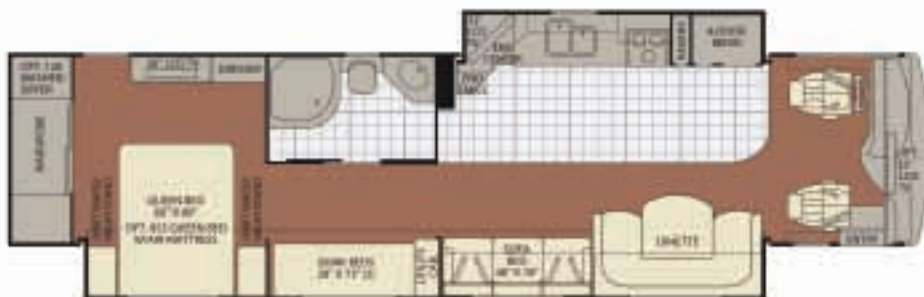
Above: A pillow-top innerspring mattress makes the queen-size bed comfy. In the next room, bunk beds are great for the kids or as extra storage space. Below: The Discovery made a perfect home base for my son's wedding at Sycamore Ranch RV Park in California.

The front kitchen plan limits the number of people who can socialize in the living area, but the cockpit seats swivel when extra company is on board. Overall, the living room is a very comfortable place to lounge and dine.

There's just the right amount of room devoted to the bathroom. Curved sliding doors enclose a shower stall that is simply luxurious. Plenty of shelves are provided for soap and shampoos (something that's often overlooked by designers), and the showerhead provides a great spray. I would like to see a cut-off valve as part of the package because even though the coach has a large 105-gallon freshwater tank and 75-gallon gray-water tank, there's no sense wasting water. Installing the towel rack inside the shower was a little puzzling, because there was no way to isolate it from the water stream. We had to throw our towels on the toilet until everyone was done showering. Creative placement of towel rings on the limited wall space can fix this problem.

Even if you're a pack rat, or have too many clothes, you'll find it hard to fill up all the drawers and closets in the bedroom, although the 4,000-pound loading capacity (with passengers) will allow owners to give it a good shot. Some of this space is occupied by the washer/dryer combo that's hidden nicely behind louvered doors. The aforementioned bedroom TV is also a Samsung flat screen and is easily viewable from the optional Select Comfort bed.

Fleetwood touts this new coach as a driver's machine attributable to the new Power Bridge Chassis that uses a Freightliner rail as its core. The coach is powered by a Cummins ISB 350 diesel engine and has a 55-degree wheel cut, which makes this coach very maneuverable for a 40-footer. The end result is a smooth ride, even on less-



SPECIFICATIONS

PERFORMANCE

FUEL ECONOMY: 9.97 MPG

ACCELERATION:

0-60: 33.40 SEC

40-60: 19.72 SEC

CHASSIS

MODEL: FREIGHTLINER

ENGINE: CUMMINS ISB 6.7-L

SAE HP: 350 @ 2600 RPM

TORQUE: 750 LB-FT @ 1800 RPM

TRANSMISSION: ALLISON 3000MH 6-SPEED

AXLE RATIO: 4.78:1

FRONT TIRES: 275/70R22.5LRH

REAR TIRES: 275/70R22.5LRH

WHEELBASE: 276"

BRAKES: AIR

SUSPENSION: AIR BAG

FUEL CAP: 100 GAL

WARRANTY: 3 YEARS/50,000 MILES

COACH

EXT LENGTH: 41' 4"

EXT WIDTH: 8' 6"

EXT HEIGHT: 12' 10" W/AC

INT WIDTH: 8'

INT HEIGHT: 7'

CONSTRUCTION: ALUMINUM TUBING WITH VACU-BOND WALLS WITH SMOOTH HIGH-GLOSS EXTERIOR TUFF-COAT FIBERGLASS

FRESHWATER CAP: 105 GAL

BLACK-WATER CAP: 50 GAL

GRAY-WATER CAP: 75 GAL

WATER-HEATER CAP: 10 GAL

LP-GAS CAP: 37.5 GAL

AIR CONDITIONER (2): DUAL HIGH-EFFICIENCY

FURNACE (2): 20,000/25,000 BTU

REFRIGERATOR: 12 CU-FT NORCOLD

INVERTER/CHARGER: 2,000 WATTS/100 AMPS

BATTERY (2): 12-VOLT CHASSIS, (4) 6-VOLT COACH

AC GENERATOR: 8 KW

MSRP: \$214,200-\$225,400

MSRP AS TESTED: \$232,988

WARRANTY: 1 YEAR, 15,000-MILE COACH;
3-YEAR, 50,000 STRUCTURAL

WET WEIGHT

(WATER & HEATER, FUEL, LP-GAS TANKS FULL;
NO SUPPLIES OR PASSENGERS)

FRONT AXLE: 9,520 LBS

REAR AXLE: 17,560 LBS

TOTAL: 27,080 LBS

CHASSIS RATINGS

GAWR, F/R: 12,000/19,000 LBS

GVWR/GCWR: 31,000/41,000 LBS

OCWC: 3,920 LBS

(DEDUCT WEIGHT OF PASSENGERS FOR
NET CARGO CAPACITY)

GAWR: GROSS AXLE WEIGHT RATING

GVWR: GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING

GCWR: GROSS COMBINATION WEIGHT RATING

OCWC: OCCUPANT AND CARGO CARRYING CAPACITY

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CIRCLE 213 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

than-perfect highways and a reasonable amount of power, as long as you're not bugged by not making it up the grades first.

We crested California's infamous Grapevine (7 percent grade) at 55 MPH allowing the Allison transmission to do its own thing. We had slowed to 50 MPH halfway up the grade, but traffic forced us to slow down to 35 MPH. By the time we hit the top — and the slow trucks made their way over to the right lane again — we were once again at 55 MPH, although the pedal was to the metal. The engine brake held the motorhome back to 61-64 MPH without the use of service brakes on the backside of the grade. Maybe the coach was a little slow up the hill, but even with hill climbing as part of our first fuel economy test, it got around 10 MPG. We'll take the mileage. Dual fuel fillers make taking on diesel very convenient.

The coach handles very well and the cockpit makes long hours on the road pleasant. Electric and heated Ultraleather seats provide super support that are easy on the driver's and co-pilot's backs; instrumentation is ergonomic and the one-piece windshield provides excellent visibility. Those who like to munch while driving (that's me) may find the table built into the dash structure a little small.

Maneuverability gets high marks. We used the 40-footer as a base for my son's wedding that took place in a meadow in Sycamore Ranch RV Park (Browns Valley, California). The campground used to be a membership park and has been recently converted to a park that's open to the public. The new owners are working on improving access for large rigs, but in the meantime, we found ourselves thankful the Discovery was surprisingly nimble.

Power visors, which help block the sun, double as privacy shades when the rig is closed up for the evening. Curtains on each side stop at the end of the power visors. I like this idea, particularly because it limits the amount of heavy curtain needed to bunch up at the cockpit seats when on the road. I'd recommend adding a power shade to the driver's side window.

Visibility to the sides and rear of the coach is supported by large mirrors that were fitted with optional cameras. When the turn signal was activated, the view to the side is seen in the color-screen back-up

monitor. It's a nice feature, but I still can't get used to looking at the screen when changing lanes. Nevertheless, it's a good safety feature for people queasy about trusting the view afforded by side-view mirrors.

While these mirrors provide exceptional views to the rear, the driver's housing mounted on the side wall (the passenger's mirror is mounted to the front edge of the coach) might be responsible for the wind noise that emanated from the front corner of the cab. At times — depending on wind direction — it was loud enough to drown out the stereo.

A big asset of the new Power Bridge Chassis is the available storage space nestled within the framework. Swing-out doors make access to the compartments easy and much less difficult when the slides are deployed. Pass-through storage can be made more versatile with an optional pullout tray and the compartments are tall enough to store bulky items. One of the compartments is devoted to a patio storage center, which allows owners to store outdoor tools on an instantly accessible pegboard. Outlets are also provided for working 12-volt DC or 120-volt AC tools and accessories.

Outdoor entertainers will really appreciate the optional exterior grill and kitchenette that's built into an up-front compartment on the patio side. When pulled out and set up, everything needed to party is conveniently under the awning.

The coach is loaded with all the amenities that allow users to stay on the road for long periods of time. The electronics (including the batteries) and accessories provide all the comforts expected of a rig in this class — and they are robust enough to stay unplugged when necessary.

Interior décor is very luxurious and inviting; lighting is well placed and provides good visibility. Exterior graphics, part of the full-body-paint package, are handsome and accented by the bright aluminum wheels and mirror housings.

Overall, it's a well-thought-out coach for those who need the additional sleeping for young guests — and one that will look and feel good in any campground setting or tooling down the highway. ♦