

CHERRY'S CHILD

Murvi Morocco on 3.0-litre Fiat Ducato

Born of the ever-popular Morello, the latest Murvi offers more versatile sleeping arrangements



Single beds in a two-berth van conversion may not, at first sight, seem to be the best use of the available space. However, everyone's needs are different: a flexible bedding arrangement might be a smart idea for a more diverse range of users. The clever one with the cameras doesn't think much of the idea, but I think that single beds have many advantages...

Single beds can be a great option for couples when the weather's very hot, while the Morocco - cleverly - also has the option of shunting the beds together for when it's cooler or the, um, 'mood' takes you. Bed flexibility also makes it ideal for families where, perhaps, dad and male friend might go fishing, walking, or climbing for a week. For the next holiday, mum and dad can go for the more cosy alignment during their salsa weekend. Lastly, mum and a friend might use the single beds on their art appreciation course.

Sounds a good idea, but unlike its mother motorhome, the Morello, this Morocco has no rear belted seats.

Murvi has won countless awards over the years, partly due to its refining - to the

nth degree - of its conversion designs. The company doesn't do regular restyling/revamps, but instead concentrates on allowing new designs and technologies time to prove their worth before adopting any. A reluctance to flit to any new fashion without careful consideration particularly benefits serious travellers. This caution also allows Murvi to deliver industry-beating customer care. Murvi is certainly my converter of choice: our present motorhome is a Morello, and this made me particularly interested in viewing the possibilities of the Morocco.

DAKAR RALLY

Murvi only offers the Morocco on the Fiat Ducato chassis, as there wouldn't be room for two single beds if built on the Mercedes Sprinter (though the Morello is available on the Merc). The test vehicle had the optional 3.0-litre engine and ComfortMatic (automated manual) gearbox fitted. A control unit operates the clutch and decides when to change gear for you, but you can override ratio changes when in auto, or switch to complete manual.

Previously, I've been rather anti auto boxes and I can partly blame my parents for this. It's the mean-gene effect, which persuades

me that if I've a choice between a more frugal manual system or an auto one, which uses more fuel, my 'gene' kicks in and I'll opt for the manual 'box'.

However, I've quite recently had a conversion, and our own motorhome is fitted with the ComfortMatic. Now on long or difficult drives - with less work to do - I find I arrive fresh as the proverbial daisy. In the Cornish



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Words by Di Johnson, pictures by Pete Johnson

1 At Noss Mayo Creek, South Devon

2 Swivelling cab seats and long side sofa make a big comfy lounge

3 Living quarters are mega-spacious

4 Optional flush-fit TV sits next to the life support controls - all mounted into the forward wardrobe wall



Surfers at Trevone Beach, Cornwall

AT A GLANCE

■ PRICE FROM: £45,576 OTR

■ BERTHS: 2

■ LAYOUT: Swivelling cab seats ahead of offside sofa, wardrobe, washroom, nearside L-shaped kitchen

■ ECONOMY: 25.7mpg



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lanes, in hot weather, it was a real boon. You might choose to beat the 'robot' to a quick down-change when a sudden ascent presents itself, but this is rare.

Our chosen testing route was just that - testing. I think we found every tortuous narrow and steep lane on the north Cornish coast. More time seemed to be spent selecting reverse than the forward gears, as oncoming tourists were not used to stone 'hedges' and feared for their paintwork.

Amazingly, fuel consumption averaged 25.7mpg, and this was despite the cab air-conditioning being used for most of the time due to blazing sunshine. This figure demonstrates the efficiency of the robotised manual over a traditional torque-converter-based automatic. The Fiat acquitted itself very well, with those tiny lanes having no bar to this van conversion. It also ate the vicious hills with gusto.

My description of the external paint colour would be champagne, but I believe it's called White Gold - posher I suppose. The colour made a pleasant change from the more-usual silver. I'm a fan of the Fiat Ducato's overall design. I adore the vehicle's 'zingy' lamp clusters and assertive nose.

FATIMA'S ABODE

Mounting through the big nearside sliding door (using the comfortably-wide external electric step), a vision in green presented itself. With a name like Morocco, I half expected to see Arabian embroidery and arabesque calligraphy decorating the interior. Much more practically, all upholstery was in forest green with contrasting oatmeal/hessian coloured cushions - two of the cushions pillow-shaped. Pop a couple of pillowcases on and they're ready for night use - a useful space saver.

The walls and all the doors are finished in serviceable grey, with worktop in solid beech. Carpet in the lounge was a mixture of greys and subtle apricot flecks, with practical glitzy vinyl covering the kitchen floor.

The colours added up to an interior with a restful ambience, while it looked as if the upholstery would stand some use and resist the inevitable soiling, which results from frequent use. It's an inescapable fact that the smaller the motorcaravan, the more use it gets. When the choosing upholstery, robust fabric is a wise move and Murvi offers a wide selection of fabric and carpet designs.

With a long settee ranged along the offside,

opposite the sliding door, there's comfortable seating for six if you include the swivelled cab seats. Loungers can all enjoy the view via the open sliding door and this arrangement produces a sociable seating space. Facilities are all to the rear, with kitchen ranged along the nearside, wardrobe and washroom opposite, and near identical to the Morello.

I've always found the Morello has a desirable feeling of spaciousness due to the many windows, the big sliding door and the Heki rooflight.

The Morocco, however, felt positively capacious. If you're at all claustrophobic it's worth a visit to Murvi's Devonshire home (or one of the many motorhome shows) to see if it's uncluttered interior appeals to you. I can't think of a motorhome of this size that feels as spacious, and there are many twice the size that don't.

A 17-inch LCD television is set neatly, and flush into the side of the wardrobe. A square of the upholstery fabric covers it when not in use, hiding it from avaricious eyes.

With the four cushions on offer, it's possible for one viewer to get supremely feet-up comfortable, the other ensconced on a cab seat with feet-up on the other front pew.

5 Two can dine side-by-side at the freestanding table and enjoy the view

6 Via the offside rear door, the washroom can be used as a second entrance

7 The kitchen features solid wood worktops that provide plenty of space for the chef to work

8 Morocco's single beds allow easy access to the facilities aft

9 It's easy to slide the singles together, instantly creating a double bed

COUSCOUS ON THE TABLE?

You have choices where and how you dine in the Morocco, as there's a choice of two tables. One is an all singing, all dancing freestander, with easy length adjustment on all four legs and free-swinging pads on the base of each leg. It can serve two diners, seated along the settee and as it's adjustable, you choose the height. Outside use sees it able to take the ground, no matter how uneven your picnic site. Additionally, there's a cranked-arm table with a choice of two socket positions between the cab seats. Which suits you today sir? Both tables stow in the wardrobe. I found the big table a bit heavy, but its flexibility outweighs this disadvantage.

Pete, the clever one, said: "You're being a wimp again, it's as light as anything you'll find." So that put me in my place!

MAKING A TAGINE SUPPER

Kitchens are something Murvi excels at. There's often more worktop in its van conversions than in many coachbuilds. Let's start with the nearside cooking facilities. A Smev four-burner hob and grill, with spark ignition, is situated across the rear, ahead of one of the rear doors. There's an LED strip lamp above and a window behind. Overhead is a three-speed, two-way extractor fan, beneath, a 106-litre three-way fridge.

Above the hob, and at a height that even I can just manage, a mains-operated microwave/grill was fitted. I've always decried these devices for anything other than warming plates, but I'm beginning to think they have



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I LIKED

- Wonderful feeling of spaciousness
- The auto 'box, horsepower and suspension
- The high levels of standard equipment
- Plenty of storage
- Battery-saving LED lighting
- Flexible sleeping arrangements
- Quality fixtures and fittings
- The restful colour scheme
- Preparedness for winter travel

I WOULD HAVE LIKED

- A waste bin
- Somewhere to hang a tea towel

I DISLIKED

- No rear belted seats

their place when camping with hook-up. The microwave's an optional extra, so you might opt to save money and have a locker here instead. To the right of the hob is a section of worktop, running into the corner.

A couple of inches lower and running forwards on the nearside, is another section of beech worktop with a stainless steel sink/drain set into it. It makes life so much simpler to have a draining area. There are only human dishwashing machines in motorhomes, so converters, please find space for one of these make-life-easy fixtures in all your new models and make this lady happy.

Two capacious cupboards are fitted beneath the sink, with a narrower third where the gas isolation taps are sited. Under one of the shelves is a partitioned tray provisioned with a set of Murvi cutlery. Three overhead lockers are provided, with one kitted out with Murvi's blue and white melamine crockery, plus four glasses sunk into shaped fixings.

One of the two rear speakers is sited on the front of a locker, and above the worktop

are two opening windows and three LED strip lamps: a superbly lit space for the cook to prepare the evening's collation. Icing on the cake comes to mind when I mention there's a further flip-up worktop at the end of the run, near the side door. Beside the rear window, suspended from the bottom of the overhead lockers, is a natty kitchen roll holder. Little details such as this are important in a motorhome. I'd have liked a rubbish bin too, but I have to admit I usually prefer one of my own choosing. Lastly, a posh teak chopping board, plastic coated wire plate drainer and vegetable basket come supplied as standard.

FIT FOR A CALIPH?

Washrooms in most motorcaravans are subject to compromises. Here, I think Murvi has hit the right balance. There's enough space to throw your arms around a bit, without the alternative - stealing too much room from the kitchen. There's also more than adequate storage space.

An overhead vent/rooflight and an opaque window in the rear door provide natural light. The rear door opens to allow entry into the washroom from outside - in wet weather gear, should the need arise. It's also sensible to enter this way if you've made up the beds before sloping off to the pub for the evening. The forward wall has a large mirror, while the washbasin is set atop a cupboard large enough to take wash-bags, hair dryers, brushes, makeup and the various chemicals necessary for serving the Dometic toilet. This cupboard used to be the gas locker, before an underslung gas tank was fitted (as standard),

so you get some idea of its size.

The (rather high set) toilet has a ceramic bowl, electric flushing and a cassette fitted with wheels and an extending handle. The floor is also a shower tray, but has a square of removable carpet to keep your tootsies warm in winter. When it's time for a shower, kick out the carpet, set the separate adjustable-height showerhead to your preference, draw the curtain, and away you go. The shower has a mixer tap, plus a trigger on the showerhead itself. This clever feature gives you good control of flow and enables conservation of precious water. If you find it difficult to manage you can simply lock the trigger to the on position.

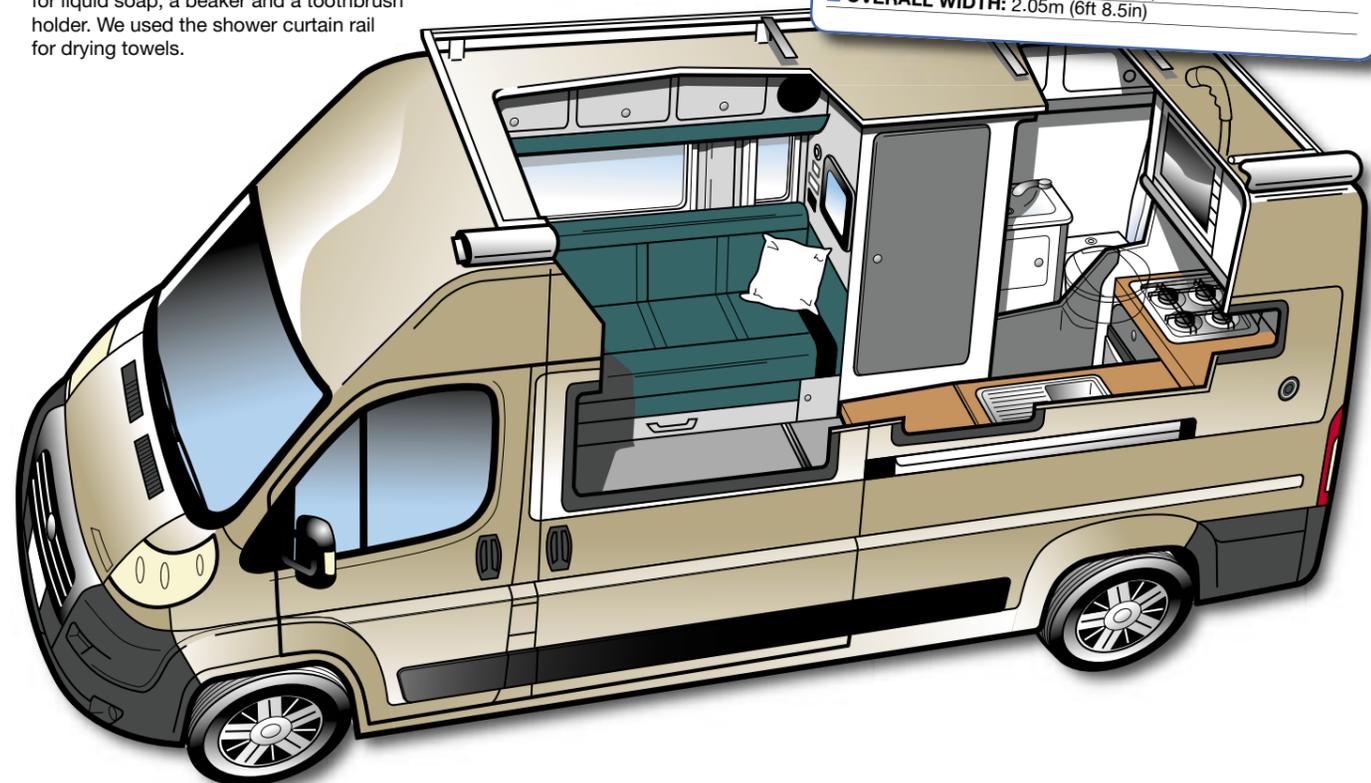
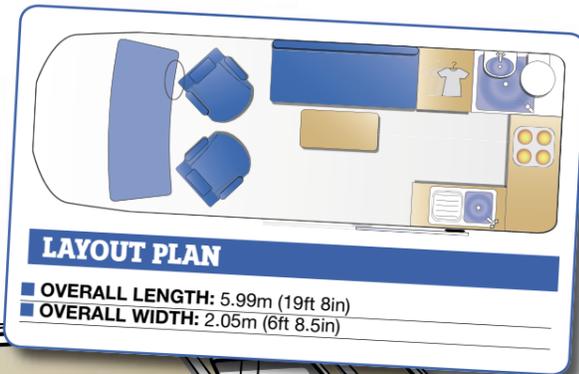
Above the sink are two small lockers where I managed to secrete a surprising amount of stuff. I like these small separate spaces, as it's easier to find things. There is a toilet roll holder, two hooks, a towel ring, a dispenser for liquid soap, a beaker and a toothbrush holder. We used the shower curtain rail for drying towels.

NAM JEYID: SLEEP WELL

Now for the really exciting bit: how easy would it be to make the settee into two single beds? Well, supremely, is the answer. There's a small cupboard at floor level on the right of the settee. Open this and push an over-centre lever away from you to release the settee base. Now grasp the handle on the base of the settee and pull it a little towards you. Pause, and step (or crawl if you're my height) over the base and into the space behind. Once you're there nudge the base over to the sliding door side with your knees. Now twist the turnbuckle on the strap on the top right of the settee back. This releases it to hinge forward and down into the space where the

base was. That's it, two single beds are made. It's now time to liberate your bedding from the overcab. Should you be feeling frisky or it's a tad cold, push beds together to make it a double. You might need a wedge to ensure they don't drift apart - alright you lot, stop smirking!

The cranked-arm table can be



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erected between the front seats to receive your bedtime cocoa. A trip to the facilities is required in the small hours for many of us, especially after one too many evening libations. You'll be 'relieved' to hear then, that there's a gap wide enough between the beds for the person in need to traverse without disturbing their neighbour.

Puzzlingly, I found the bed to be a touch firmer than in our Morello. Rex Kneebone, main man at Murvi, couldn't explain this as he said it was the same foam. I have to admit I slept well despite this difference. Thankfully, Seitz Duette cab blinds were fitted. Once you've had experience of these it's difficult to go back to faffing about with curtains or blackout screens.

ROOM FOR MY FEZ

The differences between the Morocco and the Morello don't only lie in the bedroom. When the nearside single bed rolls over, part of it fills the space where there's a cupboard in the Morello. Also, in the Morello, there's L-shaped seating, with the short side of the L pointing towards the kitchen: the space under here that's also lacking in the Morocco.

To make up for this loss various extra cubbyholes have been created. To the left of the settee is a space, revealed when the single bed is rolled away. It's a long slot-shaped cavity, suitable for storing cans and such. The space beneath the back of the settee has two openings. In the centre is a compartment housing the two (110 amp hr) leisure batteries. Either side are voids large enough for something such as the hook-up cable; the bottom of the wardrobe is actually a more practical place for it, but this gives you some idea of size.

In the overcab, there's room enough for duvets and four pillows. Thankfully, due to the two cushions that double as pillows, you shouldn't need two of them. The cavernous space under the settee base accepted our outside chairs with plenty of room for more clobber.

Despite being home to the two tables, the large wardrobe can consume masses of kit. Our big solid camera case, laptops and loads of clothes were shovelled in with ease. A space under the shelf in the bottom of the wardrobe is good for segregating muckier stuff. Lastly, beneath the passenger seat is a strongbox for passports and other valuables.

WORKINGS OF THE SOUK

There are several aspects of the Murvi's list of accoutrements that make it desirable for the more demanding traveller. A comprehensive array of LED lights will save precious battery power when away from a 230V supply. By dint of sheer numbers (15 by my count), there is



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enough illumination for whatever job you're trying to do. The Webasto DualTop 6kW diesel space and water heater uses the fuel from the vehicle's tank, thus saving precious gas. You can also run this heater while on the move - important in the chilly months.

The Webasto incorporates a 230V element (with a choice of 1kW or 2kW output), so you have choices when hooked up, depending on the amount of juice that the site can supply. This feature provides space heating and hot water. You can also program the heater to warm the interior and water before you get up to make a brew. Another useful feature is the ability to drain the boiler from the control panel, which is conveniently situated on the wardrobe wall.

Due to the refillable underfloor gas tank (10kg capacity) you don't need to worry too much about running out of gas while abroad - you can fill up at any garage offering autogas. There's a reassuring gas level indicator on the dashboard. We've seen plenty of places to refill while touring on the Continent however, a tank-full lasts a long time when you're only using gas for cooking and refrigeration.

Three 230V sockets are provided, and there's a 16-gallon freshwater tank and a 10-gallon waste tank. The 12V control system includes a voltmeter, ammeter, digital clock, internal and external temperature sensors, fresh and waste water level indicators, and also allows charging of the vehicle battery when leisure batteries are being charged from the mains or, perhaps, a solar panel. A safety pack comprises a carbon monoxide detector, smoke detector, fire extinguisher, fire blanket, first aid

kit, warning triangle and vehicle spare bulb kit. I think it has got most things covered...

BETTER THAN A CAMEL

The Morocco was a great 'van to spend time in due, in no small part, to the comprehensive list of standard fittings. However, it was the exceptionally spacious feel to the interior that won me over. A downside is that there are no rear belted seats, though (with only two people able to travel) some might look upon this as an advantage. I couldn't possibly comment!

As a motorhome for a family with differing needs, the Murvi Morocco has clearly got considerable advantages: the sleeping arrangements are flexible and effective, and it's a feat of design to successfully squeeze two singles into a panel van conversion of this size. All this is achieved while preserving easy access to the kitchen and toilet. That it can all be engineered without resorting to a jigsaw of cushions with uncomfortable ridges and hollows is to be loudly applauded. ■

10 Behind the base of the settee is some extra cubbyhole-based storage

11 The base of the settee easily took our own colour-matched chairs

12 Masses of storage space in the wardrobe, even though it is home to the two tables

13 Beneath the passenger seat is the strongbox, behind a drop-down footrest

14 The underslung gas tank frees up cupboard space and makes replenishing the supply easy



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VEHICLE SUPPLIED BY

Murvi Motorcaravans Ltd, 4 East Way, Lee Mill Industrial Estate, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 9GE (tel: 01752-892200; website: www.murvi.co.uk)

WE STAYED AT

St Agnes Beacon Caravan Club Site, Beacon Drive, St Agnes Cornwall TR5 ONU (tel: 01872-552543; website: www.caravanclub.co.uk)

LIVE-IN TEST DATA

TYPE

High top

PRICE

- From: £45,576 OTR
- As tested: £51,875 OTR

BASICS

- Vehicle: Fiat Ducato 35 LWB panel van
- Berths: 2
- Three-point belted seats: 2 (incl. driver)
- Warranty: 3 years base vehicle, 2 years conversion

CONSTRUCTION

All-steel-bodied high roof panel van with full-height side sliding door and twin side-hinged rear doors. Caravan entrance on UK nearside

DIMENSIONS (*manufacturer's figures)

- Length: 5.99m (19ft 8in)*
- Width: 2.05m (6ft 8.5in)*
- Height: 2.54m (8ft 4in)*
- Wheelbase: 3.45m (11ft 4in)*
- Rear overhang: 1.03m (3ft 4.5in)
- Gross vehicle weight: 3,500kg
- Payload: 315kg (after deductions for weight of driver and essential habitation equipment)

INSIDE STORY

Swivelling cab seats ahead of offside sofa, wardrobe, washroom, nearside L-shaped kitchen

- Insulation: Floor 13mm, walls and roof 50mm-100mm
- Interior height: 1.91m (6ft 3in)

THE VEHICLE

- Engine: 3.0-litre turbo-diesel, producing 115.5kW (157bhp)
- Transmission: Six-speed automatic gearbox, front-wheel drive
- Fuel consumption: 25.7mpg overall
- Brakes: Servo-assisted discs all-round
- Suspension: Front: independent on McPherson coil-sprung struts. Rear: leaf-springs on rigid axle
- Features: ABS, ASR, ESP, Hill-holder, cruise control, driver and passenger airbags, remote central locking, immobiliser, electric windows, height and rake adjustable swivelling cab seats, headlamp height adjustment, two 12V sockets, variable rate intermittent wiper control, multi-function trip computer, radio/CD player, door bins, recesses and receptacles for phones and oddments on dashboard, deep lockable bin for laptop/maps. Safety pack comprises

carbon monoxide detector, smoke alarm, warning triangle, fire blanket, fire extinguisher, first aid kit, vehicle bulb kit. Spare wheel

LOUNGING & DINING

Swivelling cab seats with table on cantilever arm support, front offside settee and freestanding table. Carpet or vinyl flooring option

KITCHEN

L-shaped, with wood-block worktop and drop-down extension. Lockers above include crockery set, cupboards below include cutlery tray, teak chopping board, plastic draining rack and vegetable basket. At rear, hob and grill above fridge, high-level microwave oven

- Sink: Inset stainless sink and drainer with brushed alloy mixer tap
- Cooker: Smev four-burner gas hob and grill, with spark ignition. 230V microwave and grill
- Fridge: Three-way with manual energy selection. Capacity 106 litres

WASHROOM

Inward opening door, full shower tray, vanity unit with rectangular plastic bowl and brushed alloy mixer tap above cupboard, twin overhead lockers, large mirror, toothbrush holder, soap dispenser, toilet roll holder, towel hooks. Separate stainless shower head on riser will reach outside through 'van rear door for external use. Shower curtain. Dometic ceramic-bowl electric-flush cassette toilet with wheeled cassette and extending handle. Five-way roof vent, large opaque window with roller blind

BEDS

- No 1 single
- Length: 1.96m (6ft 5in)
- Width: 710mm (2ft 4in) (or wider with in-fill cushion option)
- No 2 single
- Length: 1.81m (5ft 11in)
- Width: 690mm (2ft 3in)
- Alternative double
- Length: 1.96m (6ft 5in) (max)
- Width: 1.40m (4ft 7in) (or wider with in-fill cushion option)

STORAGE

Lounge: Overcab, four overhead lockers and within full-length settee base, strongbox below passenger seat. Full-height wardrobe with hanging rail and shelf. Kitchen: two overhead lockers, three cupboards below worktop. Washroom: two overhead lockers, one cupboard below basin

MURVI MOROCCO

LIFE SUPPORT

- Fresh water: Inboard, 73 litres (16 gallons)
- Waste water: Underslung, 45 litres (10 gallons)
- Water and Space heater: Webasto DualTop 6kW boiler with blown-air, diesel/230V operation
- Leisure battery: 2 x 110 amp hr
- Gas: Underslung fixed tank. Capacity 10kg
- Lighting: All LED apart from fluorescent strip light in Heki roof light. Cab: two spots. Lounge: three reading spots, two spots above sliding door, three strip lamps below lockers. Kitchen: three strip lamps below lockers, one strip lamp above hob. Washroom: one strip lamp below lockers
- Sockets: 230V: 4 (two in lounge, one in kitchen, one in wardrobe connected though inverter). 12V: 3 (in lounge)
- Control panel: CBE PC-200T control unit for 12V functions, mounted on wardrobe wall. LED display and click-touch switches monitor fresh and waste water, batteries and air temperatures
- Blinds/curtains: Cab: Seitz Duette cassette pleated blinds. Lounge and kitchen: Seitz cassette blinds and flyscreens, Venetian blind in kitchen rear window. Washroom: roller blind. Roof vents: All fitted with blinds and flyscreens
- Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant: No

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

- Fitted to test vehicle:
- Base: 3.0-litre 157bhp engine upgrade (£1,100), ComfortMatic Auto gearbox with ESP - only available with 157bhp engine (£1,184), air-conditioning (£855), metallic paint (£349), passenger airbag (£195), cruise control (£159), mud flaps (£62)
 - Conversion: Wind-out awning (£650), 17-inch LCD TV (£550), Teleco directional aerial and amplifier (£195), 230V microwave oven (£220), 106-litre fridge - in lieu of 95-litre fridge or oven/60-litre fridge options (£100), Seitz cab blinds (£295), roof rail (£385)
- Other options:
- Base: Maxi chassis upgrade (3,500kg GVW) with 16-inch wheels (£300), GVW increase to 3,900kg (£200), alloy wheels (£441), heated seats (£236)
 - Conversion: Alarm (£385), living area air-conditioning (£1,100), Satellite TV system (£1,600), external gas point (£120)

Note: options list is extensive, please contact converter for full details

