

Still going strong

Murvi's Morello has won a Caravan Club Design and Drive award, adding to its crowded trophy cabinet. We take a look to see why it's so good

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VAN ON TEST

Murvi Morello

£41,546 OTR



This is the third time I've tested a Murvi Morello for this magazine; the first time was in the mid-1990s and now here I am again over a decade later, putting the latest version through its paces. The Devon-based converters Murvi has actually been producing the Morello for over 20 years and rather like Volkswagen with the Beetle in the 1960s and 1970s, they have constantly evolved its design rather than making radical changes.

One of the main reasons for the Morello's success in the first place is its spacious interior layout, which has hardly changed over the years. For a van conversion, it has always offered a spacious lounge area with easy access and a well-equipped kitchen.

The market for large van conversions seems to have grown in recent years, with many companies now building on the long-wheelbase Fiat Ducato and Peugeot Boxer. When the Morello was launched, coachbuilts were the preferred choice for anyone wanting a larger motorhome. However, people have now realised that a large van conversion can offer all the luxuries of a coachbuilt but in a smaller, easier to drive vehicle.

EXTERIOR FEATURES 8/10

Being a van conversion, most of the exterior style comes from the Fiat Ducato itself rather than any motorhome bodywork additions. However, one stylish touch from Murvi is the fact that the plastic covers for the fridge vents, and even the external locker door for the cassette toilet, are sprayed to match the coloured bodywork. Metallic paint is an extra-cost option. Standard specification also includes a 700mm-wide electric step for the sliding side-entry door.

Murvi has designed the Morello with wild camping in mind, making it suitable for those who like to go off the beaten track. So instead of fitting a gas bottle locker, they have fitted an under-floor LPG gas tank with a 10kg capacity.

In addition, the Morello's standard equipment includes the superb Webasto Dual Top system, which heats the hot water and the van's interior using diesel from the vehicle's tank, instead of LPG gas (it also works on mains electric when you're hooked-up). This means that the LPG gas is really only used for the cooker and the fridge (when in gas-powered mode), so in effect your full 10kg tank should last for ages.



A sporty cab with red seats and side panels

ON THE ROAD 8/10

As standard, Morello comes with the 120bhp, 2.3-litre turbo-diesel engine, but the version I tested was three-litre, at an extra-cost of £1100. Opt for the three-litre with ESP (£340) and you can choose Fiat's Comfort-Matic auto for an extra £1155.

The Morello handled well on the tight Devon lanes that formed part of my test route. One advantage of a van conversion compared to a coachbuilt is that you don't have to worry about the extra width of the coachbuilt bodywork on country lanes.

Visibility is quite good on the Morello, since there's some vision of the road behind in the rear-view mirror, thanks to the window at the back of the kitchen on the nearside.



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Murvi Morello

From £41,546 OTR
with standard 2.3-litre, 120 bhp HDi engine



8ft 4in (2.54m)

19ft 7in (5.99m)



6ft 9in (2.05m)

BASE VEHICLE

Fiat Ducato LWB High-Roof van, 2.3-litre (120bhp) TD engine

BERTHS

2 travel/2 sleeping

MTPLM

3500kg

PAYLOAD

500kg

GAS

Under-floor 10kg LPG tank

BATTERY

Twin 110Ah leisure batteries

FRESH WATER

16 gallon in-board tank

WASTE WATER

10 gallon under-floor tank

BED DIMENSIONS

Large double bed measuring 6ft 4in x 4ft 6in

BASE VEHICLE

As above. Test van was fitted with the optional three-litre, 157bhp TD engine

CONSTRUCTION

Van conversion with original steel panels of the High Roof LWB Ducato. Side windows are double-glazed Seitz units, rear door windows are original glass units

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Remote-control central locking for all doors; electric cab windows; Dometic CTLP ceramic bowl cassette toilet with electric flush; Dometic 60-litre fridge; two cantilever-leg tables, Smev four-burner hob, gas oven and grill, Webasto Dual Top diesel-powered water and blown-air heating

MANUFACTURER

Murvi Motorcaravans Ltd, 4 East way, Lee Mill Industrial Estate, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 9GE

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RIVAL MODELS

Swift Mondial GT, Timberland Endeavour, IH Oregon R, La Strada Regent L

FOR

A spacious, high-quality motorhome within the confines of a van conversion bodyshell

AGAINST

It's not the cheapest motorhome you can buy and resale values are high. Carpeted interior walls

PRACTICALITY

9/10

The Morello is a very practical vehicle, which manages to provide a decent kitchen, large washroom and spacious lounge/dining area, all within the confines of a van conversion. None of these areas are really compromised in any way and the large lounge area puts many luxury coachbuilts to shame.

Another practical design feature is the access to the washroom through one of the rear doors. You won't want to be interrupted during a shower of course, but those who want to put wet swimming costumes in the washroom will appreciate this access. The other rear door can be opened to give easy access to the back of the fridge and the inboard fresh water tank, which helps when it comes to servicing.

One the negative side, the Morello doesn't have any exterior lockers for deckchairs or hook-up cables, but these are quite rare in van conversions, due to the problems of cutting away the structural steel in the walls.

DINING 9/10

Murvi provides two table tops with each Morello, which fix on to a specially-designed, demountable leg. This gives you the option of setting up the smaller table top between the cab seats, once they are swivelled to face each other. This might be a good use of space if you want to keep the lounge area as it is and just have a quick snack, seated at the cab seats.

If you're planning a larger meal, the big rectangular table top can be set up in front of the settee, where three people could sit to dine in comfort. With this table in place, there's still good access to the kitchen and washroom.

When not in use, the larger table top stores in the wardrobe, while the smaller one slots in behind the settee.

LOUNGING 10/10

This is one area where the Morello excels. The L-shape settee is really comfortable and gives plenty of space to sprawl out and read your favourite magazine. Both cab seats are on swivel bases and can be turned to face the settee, increasing the lounging space if you have guests visiting.

The lounge is also very spacious, with a large empty space between the settee and the sliding side door. Compared to most van conversions which tend to feel overcrowded with furniture, this feeling of space has always been something I've loved about the Morello.

There's also plenty of lighting in the lounge area, with two LED spotlamps and three LED striplamps above the settee, plus three LED spotlamps on the opposite wall. There's certainly plenty of light for me to sit here at night with my laptop to write this feature!



For a quick cup of tea for two this space is perfect...



...for a family meal get the main table



Striplights run along the edges of the settees so you can enjoy a book

These adjustable reading lamps create an ambience when the main lights are off

The red settees are cleverly covered in a modern-looking and hard-wearing fabric

Top lounging on the L-shape sofa



Lots of galley worktop space

STORAGE 7/10

Like most van conversions, the Morello doesn't offer much in the way of exterior lockers, to store hook-up leads etc. However, there's plenty of storage inside, including a deep open locker in the area above the cab. Bedding stores neatly under the large settee and there's a large wardrobe next to the bathroom on the offside.

The kitchen boasts plenty of storage cupboards and I suspect some of these will become filled with non-kitchen items such as shoes or books etc.

There's a small cupboard in the washroom for all your cosmetic items, plus three roof storage lockers in the lounge, above the settee.

NIGHT-TIME 7/10

The Morello's large double bed is perhaps not quite as good as the large settee it derives from. To form the bed, the main section of settee pulls out from the wall and then folds down, thanks to a rock-and-roll mechanism. Like most rock-and-roll beds this is slightly awkward to set up and might be a bit of a strain for anyone who has a bad back. If anything, I found it a bit harder to fold away in the morning than it was to pull out at night.

If you want, Morello is available with two twin beds, rather than this settee-derived double bed and these are both 6ft 2in long.

Once made up, the double bed is large and very firm so I had no problems sleeping. I also had the Webasto heating on during the night, on a low setting and powered by the mains electric, and found this to be both quiet and easy to use – the temperature controls are at the end of the bed, so are very easy to reach during the night if you need to.

Murvi has opted for LED lighting throughout the Morello and this should prove to be both long lasting (no need to replace the bulbs) as well as drawing very little current from the twin leisure batteries when in use.



After an awkward set up the bed was fine to sleep on



A Morello signature is the well-equipped kitchen with plenty of space for manoeuvre

KITCHEN 9/10

The kitchen has always been part of the special alchemy that has made Morello such a success over the past 20 years. Just how do they manage to fit such a good kitchen in such a small space? There's plenty of storage space, a good level of equipment and that most rare of motorhome features – a large area of work surface. It's a work of pure magic.

As standard, the Morello comes with an average-sized 60-litre Dometic fridge. Above this there's a Smev four-burner hob, with oven and grill under. However, customers have the opportunity to have a larger 85-litre fridge and just have a hob and grill. Then there's the option to have a high-level oven fitted which is another extra-cost option.

There are three or four roof lockers above the kitchen, depending on whether you opt for the high-level oven or not, plus four separate cupboard units under the worktop. For washing-up there's a small, but perfectly formed stainless steel sink with a built-in drainer. Murvi also includes a four-place melamine crockery set, plus cutlery and a chopping board, as well as a plate drainer and vegetable basket. Handy for those budding chefs out there.

Thanks to the Caravan Club and its helpful wardens for the use of its Broad Park site in Devon during this test.

BUILD QUALITY

9/10

It's hard to fault the Morello when it comes to build quality. The furniture is solid and well built and includes features such as the solid wood worktop in the kitchen, instead of cheaper laminate. All the locker doors work well and everything seems well screwed together. One aspect that some people won't like about the Morello is the use of a carpet-type material for the wall lining in the lounge area. This is something that was popular in the 1980s and 1990s but seems to have gone out of fashion. Murvi has stuck with it and explained to me that it's more expensive than alternative wall coverings. It does give a warm feeling to the van's interior and it has become part of Murvi's unique style, which really grows on you when you stay in the van.



We've teamed up with Shield to give you an idea how much it would cost to insure a new Murvi Morello.

Premium indication £386.98

Our premium indication is based upon a 55-year-old man living in Harrogate and driving on an insured and spouse basis, with unlimited mileage and a £400 excess.

**For a personal quote contact
0844 847 4478 or**

www.shieldyourmotorhome.co.uk



The washroom is also spacious and airy

WASHROOM 9/10

Morello's washroom now boasts a ceramic bowl Dometic cassette toilet, with electric flush. There's also a small washbasin with hot and cold water, plus a neat little liquid soap dispenser on the wall next to it.

To shower in the Morello, you just have to lift the section of carpet in the shower tray and close the curtain that covers the rear door area. For a van conversion, there's a reasonable amount of space to have a shower in, but the shower curtain doesn't surround you totally, so the toilet, handbasin and walls will all get wet when you have your shower. One nice touch, however, is the trigger action to the showerhead, meaning you can stop and start the water flow on the showerhead itself, rather than turning off the mixer tap when you stop to soap yourself.

Motor Caravan says

Staying in a Morello again after so many years was a bit like visiting the house of an old friend. Has it been redecorated or changed?

Well, I can tell you that everything has been upgraded but the overall feeling of spaciousness and practicality remain the same. It's a super motorhome that makes a great alternative to a medium-size coachbuilt. Morellos hold their value well and Murvi itself is keen to buy back good secondhand examples and resell them.

Exterior features	8/10
On the road	8/10
Lounging	10/10
Dining	9/10
Night-time	7/10
Storage	7/10
Kitchen	9/10
Washroom	9/10
Practicality	9/10
Build quality	9/10
Overall mark	85/100

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