



A MILLER'S TALE

Miller New Jersey on MWB 2.8HDi Peugeot Boxer



A short Italian with a big family in mind



Words by Di Johnson,
pictures by Pete Johnson

A reasonably-priced Italian-manufactured 19-foot (5.78m) six-berth luton-bodied coachbuilt in modern colours and fabrics would seem, on the face of it, to have desirable attributes for the family sector of the motorhome market.

Miller motorhomes are made in Tuscany in the same factory as the Mobilvetta brand (SeA Group). The New Jersey has a kitchen and twin bunks on the offside, overcab double bed, nearside dinette and spacious rear washroom. The dinette converts into a second double. Sacrifice an odd youngster (or unload each night) and the lower bunk swings up to create a 'bike shed' storage locker. Walls and roof are GRP-clad, while a goodly thickness of insulation adds comfort. This all sounds fine, but has this compact motorhome the ability to keep a family safe and happy?

PEUGEOT FOR PULLING

I must admit I expected a bit more pulling power from the five forward gears and the 2.8 litres that the New Jersey's Peugeot Boxer base provided. Pulling will be important when fully loaded with a couple of teenagers, their friends and provisions.

The use of fifth gear was strictly limited in the rolling hills of mid Wales. With only 20 miles on the clock when we picked it up, perhaps it was asking a lot. With a few thousand miles under its belt the New Jersey should perform with noticeably more alacrity as the engine loosens up.

For all that, the gear lever is smooth in operation and its position out of the way on the dash facilitates a quick exit to the rear when required. The out-of-the-way offside-mounted handbrake helps too. The 'old-style' Boxer now looks a tad dated and it will be interesting to see what the New Jersey will look like built on the brand-new Peugeot Boxer. How the new engines perform on the road will also be of huge significance. Exciting times lie ahead.

DRIVING THE FAMILY

The majority of the squeaks and rattles, as we made our way along windy B-roads towards Wales, were coming from the high-mounted

grill (more of that later). Other than that, all was surprisingly quiet in the New Jersey, despite the absence of cab carpet.

Lutons and 'aerodynamic' are not to be mentioned in the same sentence, and fuel economy isn't going to be impressive. However, they do provide a spacious overcab bed, so it's worth the sacrifice if you've a family to transport. The other advantage of a luton is the fact that they make effective sunshades. Driving along on a hot sunny summer's day, the cab is a haven of shade when compared to a low profile or panel van conversion.

The two forward-facing seats of the dinette are fitted with three-point seatbelts, while the two rearward-facing seats have just lap straps. It goes without saying that full seatbelts are best, but here the provision for belts is better than many 'vans which provide numerous berths but only belts for the cab seats.

Entry is on the (UK) offside, which, if you have a young family, must be borne in mind when stopping at the side of busy roads. The New Jersey provided for the test had a double external step with a warning buzzer that squeaked if it was left extended when you turned the ignition on.

The aforementioned buzzer also made small complaining squeaks as we drove over bumps. This increased in volume to a squeal when cornering smartly. We rang SeA. They told us to remove the fuse (a faulty switch seemed to be the problem) if it became too much of an annoyance. The risk of moving off with the steps out is much worse than putting up with the squeak, so we decided to ignore it.

The step treads were fine on entry, but I would have preferred more surface area to land my feet on when leaving the 'van.

SCRABBLE ON A RAINY DAY

Pale wood-effect cabinetwork and a very pleasing mixture of colours on the upholstery (pale blue-grey, mid-blue and ochre) immediately create a good ambience when entering the 'van.

Worktop is a wood-edged silvery colour in the kitchen and blue (similar to the upholstery)



AT A GLANCE

- **PRICE FROM:** £31,393 OTR
- **BERTHS:** 6
- **BASE VEHICLE:** Peugeot Boxer
- **LAYOUT:** Overcab double bed ahead of dinette and kitchen. Washroom and longitudinal bunks in rear
- **ECONOMY:** 25.5mpg overall

BELOW: The familiar Boxer cab features a clear central floor for easy access to the living area.

BELOW RIGHT: The step alarm protested as we wound our way around the twisty roads of Wales.





for the dining table. The overall effect is contemporary and I believe the furnishing design will still be acceptable a few years hence. Pete, my husband, thought that the colours and patterns were more sophisticated than is usually found in the 'more affordable' priced motorhome. Removable bound-edge carpets cover snazzy, metallic patterned vinyl. In summer, carpets can be left at home, but for winter trips they do cosy-up the living area.

A big Heki rooflight over the table and a picture window bestow loads of natural light to the interior. When the sun disappears over the hill, two directional spots, over-locker lights, and some Heki frame-located lamps, will allow your family to read their Scrabble score with ease.

A dinette is not a lounge but, in this conversion, I found that (with a couple of pillows) I could just about get into a feet-up position. With a full complement you'd be struggling to seat all conveniently as the cab seats lack swivels.

The table can be slid fore and aft and it has a slide-on extension, which provides room for six to eat *en famille*. Likewise the seats can also be extended, but this requires quite a bit of irritating messing about with additional cushions and drop-down flaps. And, of course, this restricts the aisle space for the cook as the kitchen is opposite. Feeding and sleeping six in a 'van this compact is never going to be easy, but it should nevertheless be possible with a cooperative crew.

There's little storage in the lounge. Only three overhead aircraft-style lockers will have to absorb tee-shirts, shorts, fleeces and bits-and-bobs for six. There is also a traditional TV cupboard with pullout support for the goggle box. Its high-level location means that the overcab bed would be the best place to watch from.

A COOK'S TALE

A messy cook, like me, will struggle in the Miller. Other than the glass cooker lid and table, there's no worktop. While you have a nice big sink, don't bother looking for a proper draining area - like most Continentals the New Jersey doesn't provide such conveniences. A tray and wire plate drainer would be my first purchases.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
The view forward shows a roomy luton. The cab seats play no part in providing on-site seating.

A family-friendly layout in a small 'van leaves no room for formal lounging space.

I found the sink was too far back for me to use comfortably. Position of the high-level grill could do with a rethink.

A spacious showering area is the icing on the cake.

The New Jersey's washroom is one of its best features.

The dinette normally seats four but extensions to seating and table are supplied for those occasions when six are eating.

As I tackled the washing up, I found that the sink was rather too high and positioned a long way back into the worktop. This I found uncomfortable. After giving some mucky saucepans a good scrub, I was looking for something to stand on to give me a better reach. I admit, a taller person would not have had a problem, but I resigned forthwith as washer-upper.

Good in parts could be an accurate description of the kitchen.

An extractor fan over the cooker scores points, however its vent to the outside, through the only overhead cupboard, takes up a good chunk of precious storage. A nice big opening window lies behind the hob and the Heki's positioned overhead, so I think I'd rather have the space.

There's a grill - great! Tantalisingly, I found it was way out of my reach. The situation was made worse by the unit's drop-down door. I'd have to call for assistance, or a ladder, to make toast. Joking apart, it could be hazardous for all but the tallest to use this grill.

A respectably sized fridge, with plenty of room for 'tinnies' to quench your thirst on hot days, takes up the space under the hob. There's a cutlery drawer and cupboard under the round stainless steel sink.

Lighting is brilliant, literally. There are two spots over the sink and a further two under the cooker hood. One of the two 230V sockets hides under the grill. Beside it is a 12V socket. I found the sockets difficult to reach as they're obscured

by the angled spotlight assembly. I had to insert the plug by feel. The water pump we judged noisy, by normal standards, and the kitchen and washroom sinks were slow to drain.

RABBLE RINSING

Built in the rear corner, the washroom is one of the best features of the 'van. Not only is it spacious, it's also well lit by two spots, with natural light aplenty provided by a large window positioned centrally on the rear wall. I'm not one to worry about windows letting in the cold - as I like plenty of light and, more importantly, ventilation.

Talking of which, a wind-up vent (which due to the raised floor I could reach) is installed in the ceiling. Heating comes via an outlet situated



I LIKED

- The ambience
- Colours of wood and fabrics
- Flexibility of layout
- Large well-appointed washroom
- The bottom bunk's dual use

I WOULD HAVE LIKED

- More general storage space
- A dedicated area for draining dishes
- More kitchen worktop
- A separate, easily stored, or built-in, ladder for the top bunk
- Provision for a flat screen TV rather than wasting precious locker space

I DISLIKED

- The high-level grill
- Difficult-to-access storage under dinette
- The position of the spare wheel
- Jigsaw puzzle of cushions and panels necessary to make up the dinette bed



under the basin. My showers were relaxing, due to all the space and nooks and crannies to keep creams and potions: excellent.

Despite two separately drained floor compartments in the shower and main area, plus an effective curtain, Pete managed to get water into the basin area where, of course, he'd left his clothes on the floor. He's a bloke! What else would you expect? It's worth noting that the toilet rolls stayed dry.

The New Jersey boasts a loo brush holder (attached to the wall), a double toilet roll holder (how good is that!), a towel rail fixed to the door, a couple of hooks, and enough mirrors

and cupboard space to keep me happy. This is a real family washroom.

I find cupboard doors in some Continental washrooms difficult to open and the New Jersey has two of these tricky handles. For me, opening cupboards fitted with this kind of moulded handle is next to impossible when my hands are damp or coated in hand cream - as they have no grippy surface to get hold of.

SLEEPING IN THE STATES

Once again this 'van scores points. Those clever Italians have managed to shoehorn six berths into a nineteen-foot body length! If

you wish to sleep six you can start with the overcab bed, which is a large and reasonably comfortable berth.

Access is via a ladder, though I found that I could scabble up (in an unladylike way) from the dinette. There is reasonable, but variable, headroom and an opening window on either side. There are two (separately-switched) lights for the bedfellows, and two acrylic pockets for bits and pieces. This all contributes to making this a suitable bed for folk who don't mind ladders and don't wish to sit up in bed. The best part is you don't have to make it up each night and the one-piece mattress is comfy too.

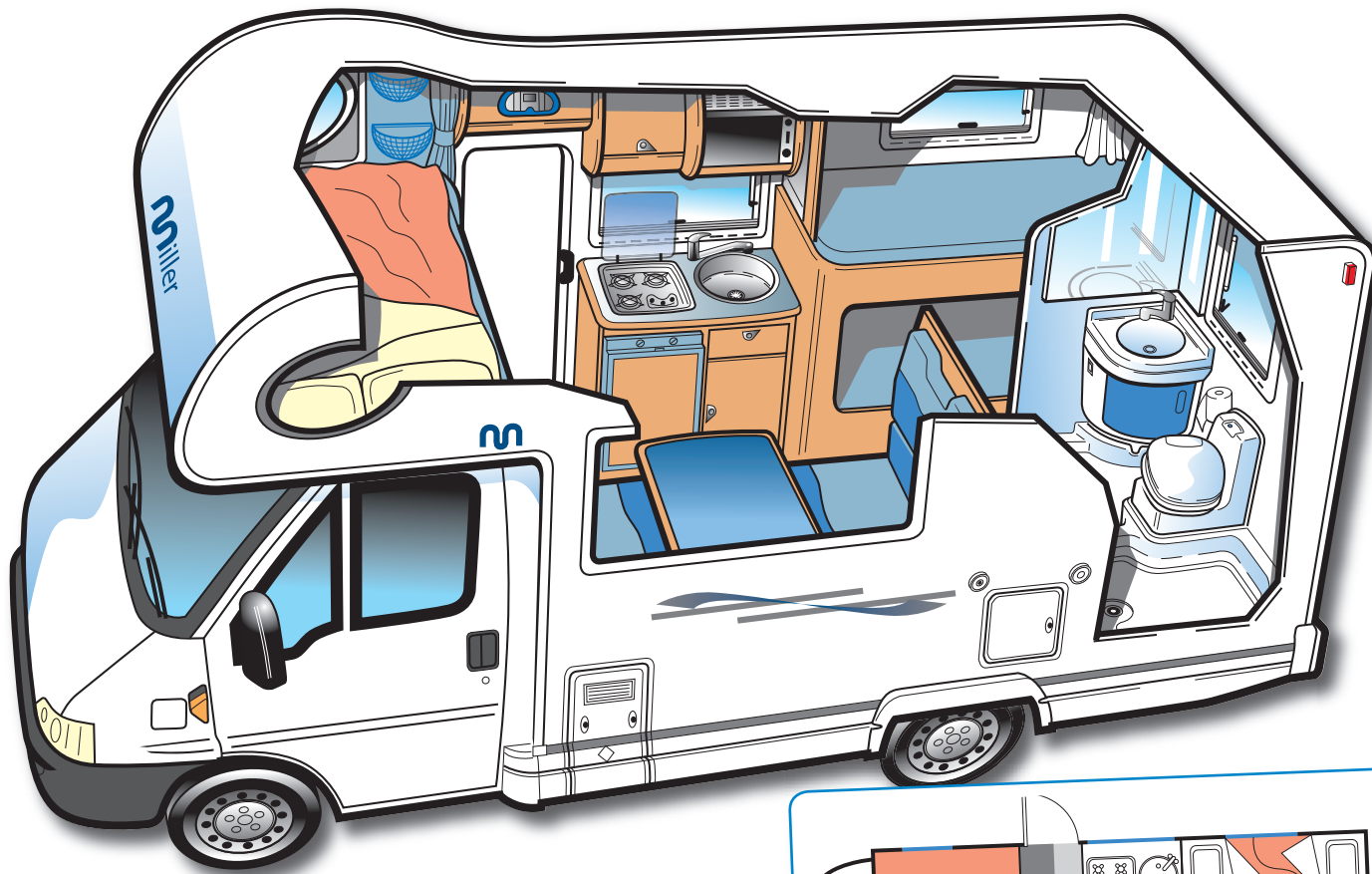
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: I slept well in the overcab, but we didn't manage breakfast in bed as headroom is limited.

Each bunk bed has its own window although no top deck access ladder was supplied.

A big external hatch and hinge-up bottom bunk create a load of space for family-sized kit.

Four cushions and three infills help create the dinette double berth.

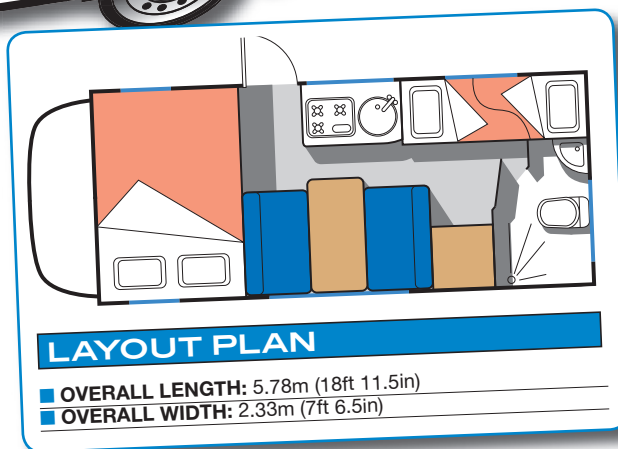




The offside-located bunks also don't require making up every night and are both of an adult length. The top bunk sported a notice pointing out that it's 'not suitable for children of inferior age of six to sleep here without an adult' (sic). I was glad to see it comes with a safety net. A substantial long shelf and up-stand, running along near the ceiling, gives this bunk some stowage space.

It was at this point I noticed that there were no fixings for an access ladder and there was only one ladder aboard. Hmm! I stood on the lower bunk, grasped the substantial up-stand

and, without too much effort, tumbled into bed. I found after several trips, up and over, I only needed to use my knee to lever myself up. Taller youngsters would find it a breeze and if I can manage, at just 5ft 2in, most could handle it. Both bunks have windows, but the lower has no curtain, just a blind. A perforated satin-finish aluminium-coloured panel



separates the top bunk from the kitchen.

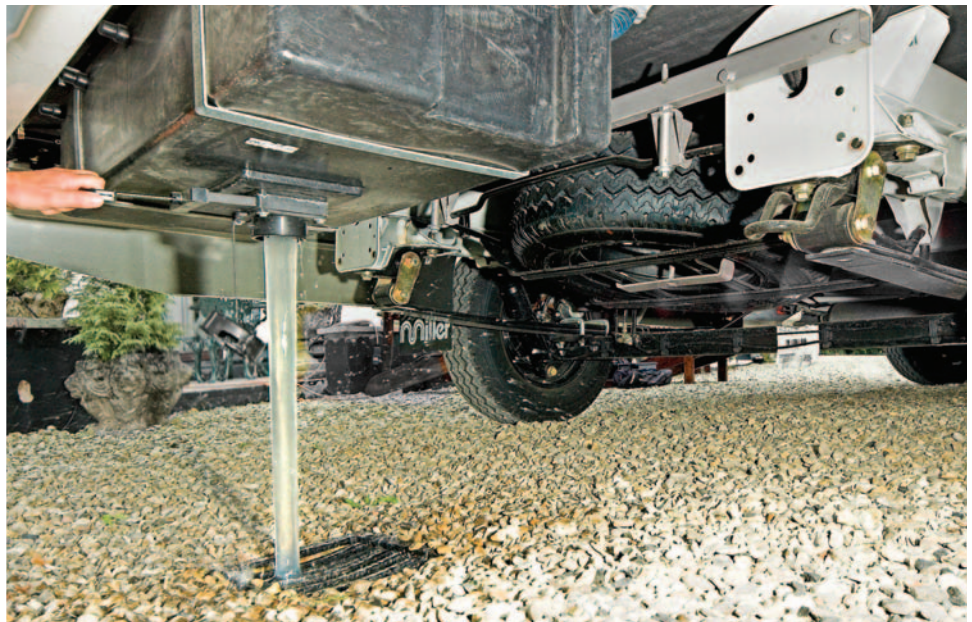
Turning the dinette into a double berth necessitates a lot of faffing about. The table, and its extension, has to be dropped onto a ledge with the leg folded to provide a support. Next, remove the base and back cushions; this is a confounded nuisance as there are many bits of Velcro and the seatbelts to fight with. Swing the base of the seats up and then out and hinge down two infill flaps.

Now you can start filling in the jigsaw puzzle with seven cushions. I'm sure this operation would get easier once you've done it a few times, but at the end of each day you might start dreaming of fixed beds!

Nevertheless, a spacious and surprisingly flat bed awaits you. Access to the washroom is viable for both overcab and dinette sleepers as the luton's ladder can be left in situ, and there's enough of a gap at the side of the dinette bed to move past.

STASHING THE CLOBBER

Here is one area where the New Jersey is going to be struggling to meet expectations. There is little storage for six. The kitchen only has one compromised (by the extractor fan) top locker, one base cupboard and a cutlery drawer. The wardrobe is vast, but a few shelves in the base



would help to organise shoes and jumpers - an addition I'd make.

Just three overhead lockers above the table don't provide much storage space for six. One of the potential storage areas under the dinette is denied by the presence of the inboard freshwater tank. The rearward-facing dinette seat has storage under, but this can only be accessed from above which means removing the seat cushion. Velcro and seatbelts must be fought with again to get at the smallish lift-out lid that provides access. A complete hinged lid would be so much easier.

The washroom achieves better marks for tucking things away. If two are travelling, you can take everything you want - as there's plenty of room. But keep everyone down to one wash-bag apiece if there are six motorhomers to be accommodated.

The lower bunk can perform a nifty and mega-useful trick. Externally on the offside is a small locker door. The small door is part of a larger lifting door, which is supported by gas struts and gives access to the lower bunk area. This can be transformed into luggage space by removing the bunk's mattress, lifting the base inboard, and securing it with two turnbuckles. This then becomes a decently sized garage (or 'bike shed') and storage area. I would need to attach a strap to the bottom of the big door as I was unable to reach it once it had reached its balance point.

The New Jersey has a good payload (750kg) but with six people on board you must be careful not to carry too much additional heavy kit. Five passengers will use up around 375kg (75kg per person) of payload.

APPARATUS

The 110-litre freshwater tank resides (as mentioned) under a dinette seat and is well away from frost risk. A large diameter screw cap allows easy access for cleaning. Unfortunately, this had been replaced with the seal unseated. We wondered where the flood was coming from!

Under the rear of the 'van, and in the centre, lies the waste water tank, which sports a large-bore dump valve. You won't have to twiddle your thumbs while you wait for the tank to trickle empty, it's more of a whoosh! The valve is operated by a grab-handle under the rear bumper.

The spare wheel is badly positioned between the waste water tank and the rear axle. If I had a puncture I think I'd have to ring for help. Picture a rainy night in the middle of winter; it doesn't bear thinking about.

Reversing the positions of the waste tank and spare wheel would make things much better, but as the spare wheel carrier is factory fitted by Peugeot I don't think this is likely to happen.

Space and water heating is taken care of by a Truma Combi unit, with blown-air outlets in the washroom, the dinette and opposite the wardrobe. The water pump resides under the dinette and one 66 amp hr leisure battery lives under the driver's seat.

The big Heki rooflight in the main living area is furnished with a pleated blind while the rest of the 'van has roller blinds and flyscreens. Some windows have net curtains with coordinating blue decorative fabric sewn either side. The luton bed, cab and top bunk are provided with substantial blue curtains.

Finally, an easy-to-use control panel makes communication with the New Jersey's life support systems easy.

CONCLUSION

'Good in parts', I would say. Friends we visited during our time with the 'van couldn't think why anyone would want such a small motorhome with six berths. I had to agree it's a lot to ask of nineteen feet, but not everyone has vast amounts of parking space. Also, many need to take into account neighbours or drive length.

The 'van is also short enough to take to a supermarket car park, which - to an extent - obviates the need for secondary transport. Not many youngsters are fond of traditional oak and chintzy fabrics, and a younger buyer (or a possibly more enlightened oldie) would find the interior design will suit them with its light wood and modern colours.

So, motorcaravanners with limited parking space, who either want to take their children or grandchildren (or, for that matter a group of friends) away for a long weekend, might find that the design of this affordably priced New Jersey makes their aspirations achievable. There are not many 'vans of this length that can sleep six, but compromises have to be made when trying to get a quart into the proverbial pint pot.

The use of side bunks, which convert into large storage areas, is a great idea. Cooking facilities, however, are limited. If the weather is good you can always cook outside. And, of course, there are many people who enjoy doing little cooking and prefer to eat out while on holiday.

For a small family the Miller New Jersey has some major attractions. A keen sports enthusiast could store bikes and loads of kit in the adaptable lower bunk. Transporting friends to a music concert or beach for a few days is something that this 'van would be very good at. Capacity and adaptability comes at the expense of limited storage, kitchen and lounge space. I'd rather think of this 'van as a highly versatile and expandable four-berth motorhome. □

ABOVE LEFT: Some shelving would transform the wardrobe into a more family-friendly storage space. Note easy access to the Truma Combi.

ABOVE RIGHT: Waste water is discharged in a flash thanks to a big dump valve. I wasn't so impressed by the position of the spare wheel.



WE STAYED AT
A private estate in mid-Wales. Aren't we lucky!

VEHICLE SUPPLIED BY
SeA UK, Orchard Works, Willersey,
Worcestershire WR12 7QF
(tel: 01386 834538;
web site: www.miller-camper.com)

MMM LIVE-IN TEST DATA

TYPE

Overcab luton coachbuilt

PRICE

- From: £31,393 OTR
- As tested: £33,000 OTR

BASICS

- Vehicle: Peugeot Boxer MWB chassis cab
- Berths: 6
- Three-point belted seats: 4 (including driver), 2 lap-only belts on rearward-facing dinette settee
- Warranty: 2 years base vehicle and conversion

CONSTRUCTION

Sandwich construction GRP-skinned coachbuilt body with GRP rear bumper and wheel arches, aluminium skirts. Caravan entrance at front (UK) offside

DIMENSIONS (*manufacturer's figures)

- Length: 5.78m (18ft 11.5in)*
- Width: 2.33m (7ft 6.5in)*
- Height: 3.00m (9ft 10in)*
- Wheelbase: 3.20m (10ft 6in)*
- Rear overhang: 1.68m (5ft 6in)*
- Maximum authorised weight: 3400kg*
- Payload: 751kg*

INSIDE STORY

Overcab double bed ahead of dinette and kitchen. Washroom and longitudinal bunks in rear

- Insulation: Roof 32mm, floor 70mm, walls 32mm
- Interior height: 2.12m (6ft 11.5in) max*

THE VEHICLE

- Engine: 2.8-litre turbo-diesel, producing 93.5kW (127bhp) @ 3600rpm
- Transmission: Five-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive
- Fuel consumption: 25.5 mpg overall
- Brakes: Servo-assisted discs all round
- Suspension: Front: independent. Rear: leaf



springs on rigid axle

- Features: ABS, electric mirrors and windows, one armrest on both cab seats, adjustable height driver's seat, radio/CD player, headlamp height adjustment, driver and passenger door bins, height-adjustable top seatbelt mounts

LOUNGING & DINING

Dinette for six doubles as lounge, extendable table slides fore-and-aft on wall-mounted rail, benches extend with double-bed cushions to seat three on each side

KITCHEN

Offside-located unit with cutlery drawer and cupboard below, single locker above. Extractor hood with task lighting above hob

- Sink: Stainless steel round bowl with long-spouted mixer tap. No drainer
- Cooker: Cramer three-burner hob, manual ignition. Smev high-level grill unit with spark-ignition
- Fridge: Dometic RM7401 three-way with full-width freezer compartment. Capacity 88 litres

WASHROOM

Thetford electric-flush cassette toilet with swivelling bowl, corner basin and mixer tap with storage under and large mirrors above, wall-mounted cabinet and wet-room floor, curtained-off separate shower with mixer tap spray-head and riser rail

BEDS

- Overcab double
 - Length: 2.02m (6ft 7.5in)
 - Width: 1.35m (4ft 5in)
 - Headroom: 720mm (2ft 4.5in) max.
- Dinette double
 - Length: 1.85m (6ft 1in)
 - Width: 1.30m (4ft 3in)
- Rear bunks
 - Length: 1.85m (6ft 1in)
 - Width: 700mm (2ft 3.5in)

- Headroom: Upper: 720mm (4ft 4.5in), lower: 640mm (2ft 1in)

STORAGE

Large locker with top access under forward dinette seat, TV cupboard and three overhead lockers above dinette, large wardrobe with transverse hanging rail, externally accessed lower bunk area converts to a large longitudinal locker/garage

LIFE SUPPORT

- Fresh water: Inboard. Capacity 110 litres (24 gallons)
- Waste water: Underslung. Capacity 100 litres (22 gallons)
- Water heater: Truma Combi boiler, gas-only operation
- Space heater: Truma Combi blown-air, gas-only operation
- Leisure battery: 66 amp hr
- Gas: Capacity 2 x 6kg cylinders
- Lighting: Four filament lamps in Heki rooflight frame, two striplights above nearside overhead lockers, two swivelling spotlights above dinette, two in washroom, two above sink, two fixed spots in kitchen extractor hood, two filament lamps in overcab bed, one adjustable stalk-light in each bunk
- Sockets: 230V: two (above kitchen sink, in TV cabinet), 12V: one (above kitchen sink)
- Control panel: Mounted above caravan door, liquid crystal display, monitors/operates all caravan functions
- Blinds/curtains: Pleated blind and flyscreen in Heki rooflight. Roller blinds and flyscreens to all caravan windows. Net curtains to upper bunk and dinette. Privacy curtains to luton bed, upper bunk and at rear of cab. Internal insulating screens for cab windows
- Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant: No

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

- Fitted to test vehicle
 - Base vehicle: 2.8-litre engine upgrade (£1607)
 - Conversion: None
- Other options
 - Base vehicle: None
 - Conversion: None

E&OE

