



SIZE MATTERS

Rapido Le Randonneur 709F on mwb 2.8TD Fiat Ducato

Bigger is not necessarily better, and you no longer need to have a big 'van to gain the benefits of a fixed bed, as Peter Vaughan found with the new Le Randonneur

Many of the places that I like to go with a motorhome preclude giant gin-palace-on-wheels vehicles or just make driving them unduly stressful. Country lanes, village parking and turning around when you miss a turning are all much easier when you drive something smaller. But on the other hand, I do like my comforts. And since Doctor Who's Tardis technology has yet to reach the real world, that poses something of a conundrum.

Of course, the right size of motorhome can be influenced by many factors - parking on your driveway or in your garage, how many people you need to accommodate (sleeping and travelling), whether you use your motorhome as a car, and how long you go away for at any one time. Then there are the financial implications of taking a vehicle over 6m long on certain ferries (especially in Norway), as well as reduced speed limits for vehicles over 3.5 tonnes in much of Europe.

Coachbuilts, generally, have been getting longer for years and the latest generation models are often wider too. As customers demand more and more equipment, and ever greater luxury, so bodies have ballooned to cope. And the latest desire for the unarguably superior sleeping comfort of a fixed bed is yet another reason for bulkier vehicles.

Rapido have gone against the trend, however, with the introduction for the 2003 season of the 709F model in their low profile Le Randonneur range. It still has a fixed bed, like all Rapido 7-series models (except the 710F), as well as most of the qualities of its bigger brothers. But this one is for those who believe that the best things come in small packages.

The 709F (the F suffix stands for Fiat) is the same 2.23m (7ft 4in) width

(typical for a modern coachbuilt) as the larger models. Length, however, is a modest 5.56m (18ft 3in) and, combined with a medium wheelbase chassis, rear overhang has been kept within sensible limits. Height, too, is more Ronnie Corbett than Ronnie Barker at 2.67m (8ft 9in). Indeed, this Rapido is very comparable in length and height with van conversions based on the long wheelbase Fiat Ducato panel van.

New look Le Randonneur

The 709F incorporates all the cosmetic changes introduced across the Rapido range for 2003, including new swoopy graphics, snazzy rear lights and a chrome strip over the rear number plate. The base vehicle is, predictably, a Fiat Ducato, but that too is wearing a new visage for the latest season. For this Rapido, the Ducato comes in platform cab form (with steel floor like a van rather than a ladder frame chassis), which allows a lower overall height. It is also a Ducato 15 model, which comes with turbo-diesel engines of 2.3-litre or 2.8-litre capacity and a respectable payload of 565kg (in standard form).

On the road, or on site, the 709F looks small, but its external finish has not been reduced to match its stature. The sandwich construction body has a Polyglace glass fibre outer skin with high gloss American gelcoat finish. It seems smoother and shinier than many rivals do, while the finish is claimed to be less susceptible to the effects of ultraviolet light.

The front bumper is colour-keyed, there are bolted-on wheel trims, marker lights, integral roof rack rails, and new chromed badges identifying

RAPIDO LE RANDONNEUR 709F ON MWB 2.8TD FIAT DUCATO



Nearside has gas locker, fresh water filler, mains hook-up, and access to underbed stowage.



New Fiat cab with colour-keyed bumper and Rapido logo replacing the usual Fiat badge.



▲ New-look Fiat has a number of benefits. Rapido add Aguti chairs and removable carpet. Standard kit includes air-conditioning and CD player.

◀ Caravan door remains on our offside but the door is sturdy, has integral step and internal storage pocket, and is included in the remote central locking.

the model. The one-piece caravan door stays on the Continental side, despite right-hand drive, but this never worried us. Much more important is the remote central locking, which operates all the doors (a feature that no British and few imported coachbuilts achieve).

The caravan door (which closes with a solid feel) has a sliding window (a rare, but welcome addition), as well as an internal storage pocket for magazines. There is no external step as the floor level is low and the single internal step is quite sufficient. And if the door handle looks familiar, think back to that Talbot Express or 'mark one' Fiat Ducato that you once owned!

Continuing to view the offside, you'll find the external shower (hot and cold) just behind the cab, followed by the fridge vents (which are obstructed with the door open). The kitchen extractor vent is over the galley's sliding window, while to the rear of the door is the awning light. Then, right at the back, is the toilet servicing hatch. The easy-to-use waste tank drain is just forward of the door.

The nearside has quite a different look to it, thanks to the two large top-hinged windows. On a practical note, though, you see (from front to rear) the gas locker, Truma boiler vent, lockable fresh water filler, mains hook-up socket, and the hatch for the underbed storage. The gas locker has plenty of room for two 6kg propane cylinders or one 6kg and one 13kg, and a change-over switch adds convenience (especially as we all know that gas only ever runs out in the middle of cooking an evening meal, in the dark, on a cold night). The exterior hatches all have neat, easy-to-use locks and catches and one key operates them all.

The bottom-hinged hatch for the underbed locker measures 590mm (23in) by 395mm (15.5in) and opens onto a vast area that is, of course, one of the major pluses of a fixed bed design. Whilst the underbed area also houses the RCD, boiler, auxiliary battery and a wheelarch, there is still masses of space for outdoor gear (from chairs and tables to barbecues and windbreaks).

At the rear, the optional (£250 extra) ladder looks too high off the ground, but in fact it is two ladders clipped together. Unfasten the outer ladder and it reaches the ground. Up on top, the rear section of roof has a non-slip

surface and roof rack rails on four sides. The intrusion of two roof vents and the heater flue into this area will, however, limit rooftop stowage.

The rear panel also features a sliding window and high-level brake light, while underneath are rear corner steadies (not really a necessity on this size of 'van) and the spare wheel (which is not as buried away as some).

Concluding our external tour at the pointy end, you'll see that the Fiat badge has been hidden by a new Rapido logo. It is also worth noting that Le Randonneurs are true low profiles with a roofline that sweeps back from the windscreen. This French 'van is not simply a standard coachbuilt with cupboards instead of the overcab bed. It is genuinely lower, sleeker and neater than the traditional coachbuilt shape.

Hop aboard

Step into this new-style Ducato cab and you cannot miss the built-in running boards as you do so. Then, once ensconced in the driving seat, I'm sure you'll agree that this is a big step forward from its predecessor. I'll not bore you here with repetition of all the myriad changes, but the highlights include a tilt-adjustable steering column, large door pockets with bottle holders (on both cab doors at last), a flip-up clipboard in the centre of the fascia, lots of fresh air vents, and a selection of storage areas (including a cup holder and lockable glovebox).

Standard Rapido spec includes Aguti captain's chairs, which have adjustable armrests (but no tilt/height adjustment of the squab). The right-hand armrest blocks access to the handbrake, though.

At first I found it difficult to obtain a comfortable driving position, simply because the kitchen restricts rearward travel of the driver's seat, but in the end I found an acceptable compromise. The high-backed chairs are generally supportive (though under-knee support could be improved) and having the steering wheel at its lowest position certainly helped. Drivers taller than my 5ft 10in, however, may not be able to achieve a satisfactory driving position.

The new-look Fiat steering wheel incorporates an airbag, and that's not all you get in the way of goodies in this Ducato cab. The remote central



locking has already been discussed, and it is joined by electric windows (with one touch up and down for the driver, one touch down for the passenger), electrically adjustable and heated double-lens door mirrors, cab air-conditioning, and a Blaupunkt RDS radio/CD player. The instrumentation includes a rev counter, LCD clock, and mileage displays in the new curvaceous binnacle. And removable cab carpet is also standard, although you'll pay £210 extra for a matching carpet in the living area.

En route

A smooth low front, compact body and Fiat's range-topping 2.8-litre common-rail turbo-diesel engine should add up to a class-leading on-road performance from the Rapido. And that is exactly what you get, though our test vehicle (supplied and registered by Brownhills especially for this test) was so new that the engine was still very tight. Nevertheless, motorway cruising at the legal maximum (or up to 85-90mph on the level test track) was effortless, and stability at this pace was exemplary. With a few thousand miles under its belt, the little Rapido should be a real flyer.

Standard power unit for the 709F is the new 2.3-litre JTD engine, which is rather closer to the 2.8 than to the 2.0 in terms of power and torque. I have only very limited experience, as yet, of this new engine but its refinement and performance seemed impressive on a short drive of a brand-new example. Better still, Fiat are claiming that it is significantly more economical (as well as £1230 cheaper to buy) than its larger sibling.

As for the economy of our test vehicle, our first fill-up resulted in a disappointing figure of just 19.6mpg. This we put down to motorway miles with a very new engine (under 100 miles at the start of the test). Touring around Exmoor, despite lots of low gear work, saw an improvement to 26.2mpg on the second fill. And returning to Lincolnshire (mostly by motorway) we again recorded over 26mpg. So the first figure seems to have been a freak.

The 2.8JTD engine is carried over from the pre-facelift Ducato, but it does seem quieter in this incarnation. The gearbox is new (with reverse now alongside first, and a collar that lifts to allow its selection) and the shift



One of the new cab features is this flip-up clipboard - useful for directions to your next campsite!

RAPIDO LE RANDONNEUR 709F ON MWB 2.8TD FIAT DUCATO



▲ General view forward, showing the high back of the lounge seat and the swivel cab chairs, plus useful storage pockets over the cab.

◀ High-backed rear passenger seat is well designed for travel and includes large head restraint and three-point belts.

quality (rarely criticised before) is definitely improved. The other controls, including well-weighted power steering, are much as before.

For those who enjoy driving, the Fiat remains a fine choice of base vehicle. Its ride may be firm (inducing a few minor rattles, although fewer than average for a coachbuilt motorhome, from the Rapido's fittings), but the Ducato's reassuring handling is a good trade-off. On the twisty, narrow roads around Exmoor we simply left her in fourth gear and relaxed. Rain sodden roads and the fallen leaves of winter did little to upset the Fiat's confidence-inspiring behaviour.

So all told, the new Fiat does everything the old one did. It's just that it does some things better and looks more modern. With all the kit of this example (only anti-lock brakes are optional on RHD examples), it will surely stay as the top choice amongst a majority of motorhome manufacturers. Pity about the occasional exhaust rattle on the test vehicle, though.

Neat and tidy

The 709F is not Rapido's first attempt at an ultra-compact fixed bed low profile, but the 708F that it replaces was sorely compromised in the lounge





▲ Looking back from the cab, with the kitchen on left of photo, followed by caravan door, wardrobe and bathroom.

Lounge/diner is ideal for two people and fully integrates the cab into the living area. ►



With the table removed, the lounge area feels usefully more spacious - it's a pity that table is so heavy and bulky.

area. This time, Rapido have fully integrated the cab using swivels on both the front captain's chairs to maximise the space, having minimised the external dimensions.

The fixed bed is a necessity for the success of any new low profile on the Continent and, increasingly, British buyers are flocking to this style of layout. Usually, though, you'll be hard pushed to find a fixed bed in anything this small.

The bed runs lengthways on the nearside, with the bathroom in the corner alongside and the wardrobe forward of that. Then, on the offside, come the caravan door and the kitchen. The layout is completed by a forward-facing passenger seat immediately in front of the bed, which, with a wall-mounted table and the swivel cab chairs, forms the lounge/dining area.

The galley is more compact than in the longer Rapido low profiles and there is no separate shower in the washroom, but otherwise you lose remarkably little.

The decor in our test 'van appeared warm and inviting with rich wood tones, light vinyl flooring and autumnal colours for the upholstery. Three alternative fabric choices are also available.

Better in the back

The rear seat is of a new design this year. It is comfortably shaped, high-backed, and has a pair of lap and diagonal inertia reel restraints. The large head restraint area effectively protects heads from the substantial steel upright mounting for the belts (still a weak point in many coachbuilts) and rear passengers have a good view forwards and via the large side window. The gas locker does, however, intrude into the floor space, though two small adults or two children can still sit side-by-side.

The very high backrest of the rear seat almost totally obscures through vision for the driver via the interior mirror, but those who regularly carry rear passengers will consider their safety more crucial. The driver should also find it easy enough to rely on the excellent door mirrors, though a reversing sensor or camera could always be added.



Table incorporates slide-out extension for anyone sitting in the swivelled driver's seat.

Whether you carry passengers in the back or not, the addition of a rear heater to carry warmth from the engine into the living quarters is definitely a bonus. No longer will those in the back need blankets and fleeces, while arrival on site does not require frantic switching of the space heater to max power. A pair of rotary controls (one for heat, one for fan speed) to the right of the steering column will ensure that the whole motorhome is kept cosy while you travel. We tested the Rapido in the winter and can assure you that the benefits of this additional heating are very real.

Lounging and dining

The front seats twist around quite easily, having first tipped the backrests forward a few degrees. Thus, in seconds, you have a roomy lounge area for three (four at a push). The cut-away cab roof and the latest Heki 3 wind-up sunroof remove any possible feelings of claustrophobia and the table is ever-present for drinks, snacks or games.

Clipped to the wall and supported by a double leg, the table is sturdy and caters well for two diners. Thanks to a raised floor under the table, both forward and rearward-facing diners sit at the correct height in relation to the table, and with legs comfortably able to reach the floor. If a third person is to be fed, no problem, a slide-out extension leaf pulls towards the swivelled driver's seat. Once the table has been extended, though, the cab is rather shut off from the rest of the 'van and the cutlery drawer cannot be opened.

With the table removed, the lounge area feels much more spacious, not least because the rear seat is rather too close to the tabletop, even when it is pushed as far forward as it will go along its mounting rail. The snag is that the table's design makes it heavy to lift and bulky to stow. And, as this is purely a two-berth motorhome, a smaller simpler table would surely suffice.

Telly-addicts are catered for with a choice of TV positions, each with 12V, 230V and aerial sockets. A locker over the driver's seat is one possibility for your portable, but the locker over the end of the bed offers better viewing flexibility thanks to its slide-out swivel TV base. You can then

RAPIDO LE RANDONNEUR 709F ON MWB 2.8TD FIAT DUCATO



High-level cupboards over the rear bed and second TV locker with slide-out turntable base.



The other TV cupboard is over the driver's seat, while open-fronted lockers are ideal for maps etc.

comfortably watch the box from bed or from the luxury of those cab armchairs.

Those who prefer the old-fashioned entertainment of the 'wireless' may note that, although rear speakers for the stereo are not standard, wiring is in situ to make light work of their installation.



Only a two-burner hob to cook with, but plenty of fresh food storage in 103-litre fridge.

Compact cuisine

It has a comfortable working height of 965mm (38in), but in every other way the kitchen is 'bijou' (in estate agent speak). Never mind, if your culinary ambitions are modest, or you use your imagination, you can cope surprisingly well with just a two-burner hob. At least it has push-button



Bijou kitchen is a result of squeezing so much into a very compact 'van. Removable sink cover has safe storage for travel.



ignition (and a hob-top attachment bought years ago solves our morning desire for toast).

Two drawers (one for cutlery, one for larger utensils), plus a large low-level cupboard and two eye-level lockers make up the (just adequate) galley stowage allocation. The fridge, though, is more than you have a right to expect in so small a motorhome - a 103-litre Powerfridge that even has a booster fan for those hot summer days by the Med. This fridge seems so much more capacious than models that are nominally only a little smaller. It has a salad compartment, full-width freezer and plenty of room for bottles in the door pocket (plus half a dozen cans of drink in the shelf above).

The stainless steel sink has no drainer, but the hob has a drain hole, so can stand in for this role. If worktop space is your concern, there is a flush-fitting cover for the sink, or the table is close at hand. The sink lid stores safely for travel, clipped to the forward end of the galley, and a chopping board is also provided.

The galley area has twin halogen downlighters as well as a built-in extractor hood and a 230V power point (UK-style three-pin) just above the fridge. With the TV in the rear television cupboard, that frees up the overcab TV locker for extra storage - and its power point for your mobile phone, laptop or whatever.

Storage - encore

Open pockets above the windscreen were ideal for maps and campsite guides. High-level lockers above the dinette became additional food storage, and the four cupboards (with removable, adjustable shelves) over the bed were ideal for clothes. The wardrobe is a good size for a two-person 'van and, though it has a front-to-rear hanging rail, this pulls out for easier access to the rearmost garments. A pair of coat hooks and a mirror on the front of the wardrobe are an attractive and practical addition, especially as damp coats can be dried by the heater below.



Rear offside corner houses the bathroom and wardrobe (with heater below and mirror and coat hooks on its door).



Wardrobe has front-to-rear hanging rail, which pulls out so you can reach rearmost garments. Plenty of room in here for two people's clothes.



Easy-to-use control panel is adjacent to caravan door, has digital battery condition gauges, and fresh water level gauge, but waste tank just gets a full warning light.

RAPIDO LE RANDONNEUR 709F ON MWB 2.8TD FIAT DUCATO



Vast amount of underbed storage (plus the boiler), but test vehicle had a problem with gas struts that raise the slatted bed base.



Reading lights and useful book/glasses shelf complete the bedroom area.

The rear passenger seat base is home to the 140-litre fresh water tank (if only all motorhomes had such a sensible size reservoir), but all your bulky possessions can go under the bed. Internal access to the underbed locker should have been easy. The whole base tips up and is supported by a pair of gas struts. Or at least that is the theory. The test vehicle's struts seemed incapable of supporting the weight of the bed. Then one of the struts jammed, virtually precluding internal access to the storage. This was just a glitch on the test vehicle, however, as numerous other Rapidos that we have examined have worked perfectly in this regard.

Bedtime

The bed is simply there, ready for whenever you fancy a nap. It sits on a slatted base and has a Bultex foam mattress that seemed to guarantee a night of uninterrupted slumber. It narrows towards the foot end, as most fixed beds do, but the shape is not one that causes a foot to dangle over the end. Sleep well.



Generally well-planned washroom has swivel cassette loo and large fixed handbasin, plus opening window and plenty of storage.



Rear fixed bed is so much more convenient and comfortable than any bed that you have to make up each night.

Reading lights are positioned at the head of the bed, and a roof vent is above. There's even a little shelf for your book and glasses. They've thought of everything.

The front lounge does not make into any form of bed, but there is plentiful halogen lighting throughout. All the windows and blinds have blinds and flyscreens, but the only pleated blind is on the Heki sunroof. Floor-length lined curtains and insulated internal screens should keep the cab cosy, while net and full curtains are fitted at the lounge and bedroom windows.

Bathroom

The good news – plenty of storage, ventilation via a roof vent and opening window, a swivel cassette loo with electric flush, a decent-sized fixed washbasin, two large mirrors, three towel rails and a flannel hook, useful recesses for shampoo and shower gel, and a neat fold-away clothes drying rack.



Clothes drying rack and useful recesses for shampoo etc.

The bad news – the handbasin's mixer tap doubles as the showerhead and has to be hand-held while you hose yourself down, the shower curtain can get a little clingy (they usually can), and there's only one drain hole in the shower tray.

All in all, it's a pretty good bathroom that is adequately proportioned and has all the necessary features, including a duct from the Truma blown-air heating. It's well-finished, too, and blue cupboard doors break up the expanse of white.

Hot water is supplied by a 14-litre gas-only Truma boiler, which has 50 and 70 degree Celsius options. The lack of mains power for the water or space heating is one of the very few omissions in an otherwise very comprehensive range of standard equipment. You even get an English language owner's manual, which beats some other imports.

Conclusions

Everyone has a different idea of the right size for a motorhome, covering everything from Romahome to American RV with twin slide-outs. For a great many buyers, especially those debating the merits of bigger high top campers and smaller coachbuilts, however, the Rapido 709F seems to offer an ideal compromise.

Stick it in a supermarket parking bay and it doesn't fill the three neighbouring plots. Thread it along country roads and into villages and it just feels so much more manoeuvrable (and so much less hassle) than its larger rivals. But when you arrive on site it caters well for a couple, providing they can live with a simple kitchen. The bed, the bathroom and the lounge are as good as (or better than) those in many bigger 'vans.

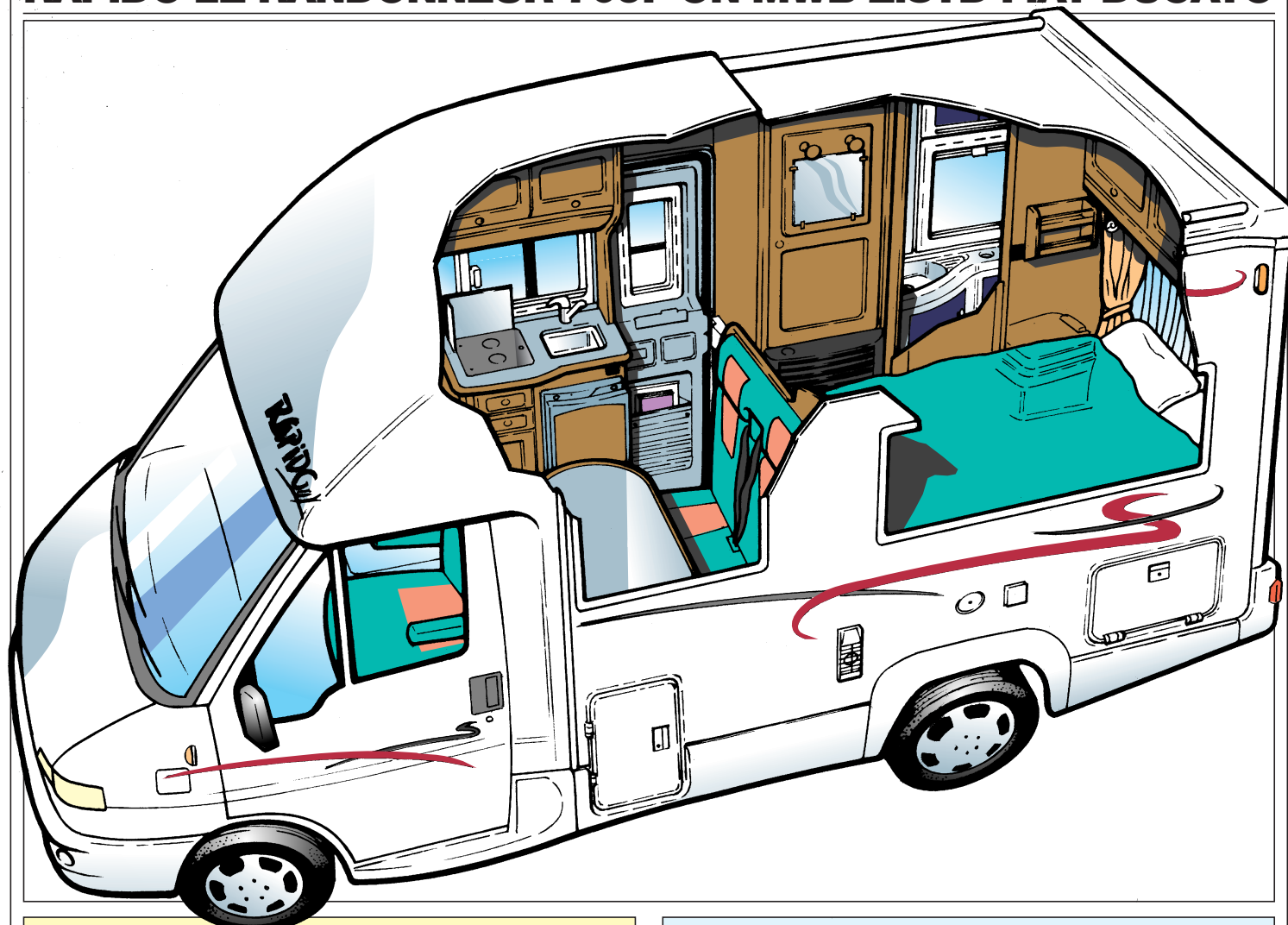
At the same time you get Rapido's really excellent quality of finish (with solid and very homely maple cabinetwork), lots of standard kit (particularly on the base vehicle), and a good-looking exterior that blends cab and caravan neatly together. With an on the road cost starting at just over £32 000, even the price seems right.

So, it's official, Rapido have squeezed a quart into a pint pot (nowadays that should probably be a litre into a 50cl bottle) and it works. It is already one of the company's best-sellers, right across Europe, which is no surprise really. The 709F makes being small an asset which few rivals can match.

The entire Rapido range had a cosmetic makeover for 2003, including new graphics and logos. Le Randonneur means 'the hiker'.



RAPIDO LE RANDONNEUR 709F ON MWB 2.8TD FIAT DUCATO



I liked

Modest overall dimensions with proper low profile shape
 Latest Rapido exterior styling
 Remote central locking of all doors
 Sturdy caravan door with window
 Good quality exterior locker catches
 Two keys for the whole vehicle
 New-style Fiat cab layout, with driver's airbag and cab air-conditioning
 Performance of 2.8JTD engine
 Comfortable lounge using cab seats
 Fixed double bed with Bultex mattress
 Shelf and reading lights by bed
 Warm and inviting interior décor
 Choice of upholstery
 High backed rear seat with three-point belts
 Rear passenger heating
 Heki 3 wind-up sunroof
 Raised floor in lounge for comfortable seat height

Two TV lockers

Large fridge
 Extractor hood for cooker
 Coat hooks and mirror on wardrobe door
 140-litre fresh water tank
 Net and full curtains
 Generally well-designed washroom
 Clothes drying rack

I would have liked

More rearward travel on driver's seat
 Lighter table that is easier to remove and stow away
 Pleated blinds throughout (instead of plain blinds)
 Second shower tray drain hole
 Separate showerhead (not combined with washbasin tap)
 Mains power for boiler

I disliked

Problems with raising rear bed (a glitch on test vehicle)

SPECIFICATION

The vehicle

Base vehicle & engine type: Fiat Ducato 15 medium wheelbase platform cab with 2.8-litre direct-injection common-rail turbocharged and intercooled four-cylinder diesel engine
Output: 94kW (127 bhp) @ 3600 rpm
Max torque: 300Nm (221 lb ft) @ 1800rpm
Compression ratio: 18:1
Gearbox & drive: Five-speed manual gearbox, gearshift on dashboard, front-wheel drive
Brakes: Dual-circuit, direct-acting with servo assistance, load-sensitive proportioning valve on rear circuit. Front and rear self-adjusting discs
Steering: Power-assisted rack and pinion, 3.65 turns lock to lock
Suspension: Front – independent MacPherson struts, offset coil springs, and anti-roll bar. Rear – rigid axle with leaf springs and telescopic dampers
Tyres fitted: 215/70 R15 (Michelin X)
Spare wheel position: In cradle, underfloor at rear of vehicle
Fuel tank capacity/type of fuel: 80 litres (17.6 gallons), diesel
Instruments: Fuel level, coolant temperature, speedometer, LCD trip mileage recorder, rev counter, digital clock
Warning lamps: Headlamp main beam, side lights/dipped beam, hazard warning lights, indicators, handbrake/brake fluid level/brake pad wear, battery charge, oil pressure, coolant temperature, coolant



level, low fuel level, rear fog lamp, water in fuel, service indicator, injection system failure, airbag failure

Windscreen wiper controls: Two speeds plus intermittent and flick wash, stalk control operation

Immobiliser/alarm: Electronic engine immobiliser activated by ignition key. No alarm

Other features: Driver's airbag, remote central locking of all three doors, Blaupunkt Lausanne radio/CD player, in-cab headlamp angle adjustment, lockable glovebox, Aguti captain's chairs with adjustable armrests, removable cab carpet, electric windows, electrically adjustable and heated double-lens door mirrors, height-adjustable upper seatbelt mountings, cab air-conditioning, 180W dashboard power point, dash cup holder, tilt-adjustable steering column, tilting dash-mounted clipboard, rear passenger heating from engine

Performance & economy

Achieved 30-50mph acceleration time: 8.4 seconds (3rd gear)

Fuel consumption during test: 23.2 mpg (12.2 litres/100km) over a test distance of 734 miles (three fill-ups). See text

The caravan

Body type & construction: Sandwich construction sides and rear with Polyglace glass fibre outer skin finished with American gel coat; moulded glass fibre overcab, roof and rear bumper; Fiat steel platform floor

Insulation: 25mm Styrofoam

Conversion NCC approved (badged EN1646): No

Warranty: One year on base vehicle, one year warranty from Rapido, three-year body seal warranty

Number of keys required: Two – Fiat ignition key also operates cab doors and fuel cap, one Rapido key for caravan door and exterior lockers/hatches. Also remote control (built into ignition key) locks/unlocks all three doors

Windows & doors: Double-glazed acrylic caravan windows (two top-hinged on nearside, two sliding and one top-hinged on offside, one sliding window at rear). One-piece caravan door on UK offside with automotive-style door lock, opening window and internal storage pocket

Additional ventilation: Heki 3 wind-up sunroof with pleated blind and flyscreen, two front-hinged wind-up roof vents (over bathroom, rear bedroom – both with blind/flyscreen)

Blinds/curtains: All double-glazed windows fitted with blinds and flyscreens, net curtains at bedroom and lounge windows, unlined curtains at bedroom and lounge windows, lined curtains and insulated screens for cab windows

230V AC system: Mains hook-up, RCD and three MCBs, automatic battery charger, three unswitched three-pin sockets (in overcab TV locker, on front of kitchen unit and in rear TV cupboard)

12V DC system: Auxiliary battery in underbed cupboard, control panel adjacent to caravan door with digital battery condition gauges, fresh water level, lighting and water pump switches, 12V power point

Capacity of caravan battery: 90 amp hr

Lighting: Ceiling-mounted recessed halogen lights (two swivelling over lounge, one fixed over rear bed), one halogen reading light over table, two halogen lights over kitchen, two swivel reading lights over head of bed, two halogen lamps in bathroom, awning light

Cooking facilities: Two-burner Smev hob with flush-fitting glass lid, push-button ignition and drain hole

Extractor fan/cooker hood: Built-in single-speed extractor over hob

Refrigerator: Electrolux RM6401 Powerfridge with full-width freezer compartment, 103-litre capacity, gas/12V/230V operation, electronic ignition, booster fan for hot weather

Sink & drainer: Stainless steel sink with removable cover, mixer tap. No drainer

Water system: Inboard fresh water tank (under rear seat), underfloor waste water tank, water tank filled by external lockable filler, gas boiler. Self-priming water pump serves kitchen mixer tap, washbasin tap/shower

Water heater: Truma gas boiler with 50/70 degrees Celsius variable setting, 14 litres capacity

Fresh water tank: Inboard, 140 litres (30.8 gallons)

Fresh water level gauge: On control panel, push button to read, shown as 1/4, 1/2, 3/4, 1

Waste water tank: Underfloor, 100 litres (22 gallons)

Waste water level gauge: 'Full' warning light on control panel

Space heating: Truma C3002 3kW gas-fired blown-air heating with ducting to lounge and bathroom, on-road heating for rear passengers from engine heat (with separate fan)

Gas locker: Externally-accessed lockable compartment, capacity for two 6kg cylinders or one 6kg and one 13kg; gas cylinder change-over switch

Shower compartment: Walk-in washroom with fixed corner handbasin, mixer tap and combined shower head, three towel rails, cupboards, two large mirrors, Thetford swivel-bowl toilet with electric

flush, roof vent with blind and flyscreen, two halogen lamps, opening window with blind and flyscreen, shower curtain, recesses for shampoo etc, flannel hook, clothes drying rack, heater outlet

Seating: Two Aguti swivel captain's chairs with adjustable armrests, double forward-facing high-backed rear passenger seat

Table(s)/storage: Wall-mounted table with slide-out curved extension leaf for swivelled driver's seat

Berths: Fixed lengthways double bed at rear. Travel seats for four

Rear restraints: Forward-facing rear passenger seat fitted with two lap and diagonal inertia reel restraints

Wardrobe: Front-to-rear pull-out hanging rail, automatic illumination, space heater below, mirror and two coat hooks on wardrobe door

Flooring: Vinyl flooring with (optional) removable carpet over

Additional features: External hatch to underbed storage area, rear brake light and exterior marker lights, two kitchen drawers (one fitted for cutlery), overcab and rear bedroom TV cupboards with 12V, 230V and aerial sockets, rear corner steadies, rear bed with slatted base (lifts on two gas struts) and Bultex foam mattress, external hot and cold shower, wiring for rear stereo speakers, cut-away cab roof with two storage pockets over

Dimensions

(* denotes figure supplied by base vehicle manufacturer or converter)

Overall length: 5.56m (18ft 3in)*

Overall width (excl mirrors): 2.23m (7ft 4in)*

Overall width (include mirrors): 2.51m (8ft 3in)

Overall height: 2.67m (8ft 9in)*

Length of wheelbase: 3.20m (10ft 6in)*

Length of rear overhang: 1.47m (4ft 10in) – 45.9 per cent of wheelbase

Turning circle (kerb to kerb): 11.6m (34ft 8in)

Driver's max leg length: 960mm (38in)

Step-up height to caravan: 325mm (13in), then 250mm (10in)

Door aperture: 1.84m (6ft 0.5in) x 0.52m (1ft 8.5in)

Interior length from dash: 4.09m (13ft 5in)

Interior length behind cab: 3.20m (10ft 6in)

Interior width at waist height: 2.11m (6ft 11in)

Interior height: Lounge/kitchen – max 2.00m (6ft 6.5in), bedroom 1.90m (6ft 3in)

Work surface height: 965mm (38in)

Table dimensions: 1070mm x 635mm (42in x 25in), height 750mm (29.5in), with slide-out extension leaf 635mm x 420mm (25in x 16.5in)

Bed dimensions:

Rear fixed bed:

mattress length: 1.88m (6ft 2in)

mattress width: 1.28m (4ft 2.5in) max, 1.16m (3ft 9.5in) min

mattress depth: 110mm (4.5in)

Shower compartment: 1150mm x 800mm x H 1880mm (45in x 31.5in x H 74in)

Wardrobe: 420mm x 510mm x hanging height from rail 1025mm (16.5in x 20in x H 40.5in)

Gas locker: 350mm x 710mm x H 655mm (14in x 28in x H 26in)

Gas locker door aperture: 545mm x 410mm (21.5in x 16in)

Max authorised weight: 3400kg*

Unladen mass: 2835kg*

Load capacity: 565kg*

Note: Weights quoted above refer to standard model with 2.3JTD engine. Rear ladder fitted to test vehicle adds 8kg to unladen mass.

Price (all prices include VAT)

Standard model: £32 120 on the road (2.3 JTD engine)

As tested: £33 600 on the road (see options below)

On the road charges: Included in list prices

Optional extras (*starred items fitted to test vehicle)

Base vehicle options: 2.8-litre turbo-diesel engine (£1230)*, anti-lock brakes (£510), automatic gearbox – with left-hand drive only (£1840)

Caravan options: Rear ladder (£250)*, Omnistor 2.6m roll-out awning (£430), towbar (£840), motorbike rack – max 120kg (£1300), Fiamma three bicycle rack (£210), AES fridge (£270), living area carpet (£210), choice of four different upholstery styles

Rapido Le Randonneur 709F

kindly supplied for evaluation by:

Brownhills Leisure World,
A1/A46 junction, Newark,
Nottinghamshire NG24 2EA.
Tel: 01636 704201.



E & OE