

after eight

Just £55,000 for a Rapido A-class – are you sure you still want a low-profile?

NEWs of a brand-new motorhome range from a well-respected European manufacturer is always exciting, although in the case of the new Rapido 8-Series launch, the new 'range' sees the introduction of just one model – the 891F. The idea behind the introduction of this new A-class motorhome is that low-profile owners aspire to one day owning an A-class, but the price difference between these two motorhome styles is too great for many to afford. So here's the solution – the new Rapido 891F – which costs a similar amount to many low-profiles, even popular British models like the Swift Bolero and Auto-Sleeper Broadway.

Although more layouts are likely to arrive eventually, here's hoping those same aspirational customers like the 891F's island bed floorplan. And many will. Measuring 7.37m long, this A-class has a big, sociable lounge with a fixed (movable) table in the centre. The forward-facing seat has two seatbelts and a removable section for legroom, making this a true four-berth motorhome – and there's certainly enough space to sit and sleep this number for a fortnight or more's summer holiday.

Then, behind the lounge, is an L-shaped kitchen, followed by a separate shower cubicle on the nearside and a toilet compartment on the offside. At the back is the 1.93m-long, comfortable island bed

with its sprung mattress and slatted base. A divider screen pulls across from just behind the kitchen to separate the bedroom from the living quarters.

The television cupboard, with its roller-shuttered blind, is perfectly positioned just above the fridge, so that most of the lounge occupants can watch in comfort. And it's not far to reach a chilled beer from the 150-litre SES fridge/freezer. The main kitchen unit, on the nearside, has a three-burner hob and circular sink, but no drainer and not a huge amount of worktop space. Storage is extremely generous here, though, with three bottle racks inset into one of the huge low-level cupboards and deep drawers. The upper cupboards, like all those around this 8-Series debutant, have gas strut-equipped doors, so they both open and shut with utter smoothness before being positive locked so that nothing can escape while in transit. Crucially, too, the 891F gets a UK Pack as standard for vehicles sold over here, adding an oven, carpets and mains heating/boiler into the spec.

The two-part bathroom lacks an opaque door for the shower cubicle, so it's always visible from the island bed, but there is a practical pull-out drying rack for wet clothes to compensate. In the toilet compartment opposite you'll also find the washbasin, two mirror-fronted cupboards and a tall mirror, as well as a towel rail on the door, a soap

FACT FILE

PRICE FROM £54,800

PRICE AS TESTED
£54,800

BERTHS 4

TRAVEL SEATS (INC DRIVER) 4

DIMENSIONS 7.37m L,
2.82m H, 2.35m W

INTERIOR HEIGHT
1.98m (maximum)

MAXIMUM WEIGHT
3500kg

PAYLOAD 365kg
(chassis upgrades available)

BEDS Rear island bed
1.93m x 1.40m, A-class
drop-down double
1.90m x 1.40m

FRESH WATER
120 litres (inboard)

WASTE WATER
120 litres (underfloor)

LEISURE BATTERY
100Ah

MAINS SOCKETS 1

BASE VEHICLE

FIAT DUCATO WIDE-REAR TRACK CHASSIS

ENGINE 2.3 Multijet
130bhp Euro V

COOKING/HEATING

COOKING 3-burner hob,
plus oven/grill for UK

FRIDGE 150-litre SES
fridge/freezer

GAS 2 x 6kg

HEATING Truma Combi
gas/electric blow-air

BOILER Truma Combi
gas/electric

RIVALS

ADRIA SONIC 700 SC

BÜSTNER VISEO 1 726

holder and an opening window.

Throughout, the upholstery is contemporary, with its brown and cream hue, while the duo-tone grained Pino Varese woodwork is the more modern of the two options – both of which are familiar from the current 6-series low-profile range. There are fabric panels on the underside of the A-class drop-down cab bed to lend some softness to the roofline, while at the windows are nets with fabric panels at each side. Certainly, the décor doesn't point to this 8-Series' budget status, so what does? Actually, very little. It comes as standard with Fiat's 130bhp Euro V engine and wide-track chassis, while 148bhp and 177bhp variants are optional, as is a Comfort-Matic transmission. Other standard equipment includes cruise control, air-con, twin armrests on the cab seats, and a radio/CD.

Storage is generous, not only in the semi-garage locker beneath the island bed, but also below the floor, where there's a plastic-lined 123-litre locker with an access hatch just inside the entrance door. You may want to opt for the heavier chassis options, though, as the standard 365kg payload figure isn't much when you've got this much storage space to fill.

Of course, Rapido have created this model to fit between their low-profile and A-class ranges, so the price is all-important. At £54,800 it sits around £5k below Bürstner's equivalent Viseo, and £8k less than Adria's stylish Sonic. Despite that, it has a very high level of equipment that saw me searching for things missing, rather than berating its trimmed-down status; from the outside you'd have to be an aficionado to notice that this isn't a more expensive 9-Series. The danger is that they have made this motorhome so good that it'll stop customers buying the more prestigious models, but whatever happens, this is certainly a superb A-class at an excellent price. Here's hoping they add more layouts to the range for 2013.

The price is £55k but it looks a whole lot more



WHICH motorhome says ★★★★★

Priced like a low-profile but a fully fledged A-class from a prestige brand. You'll want a chassis upgrade, though.

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**EXCLUSIVE
FIRST EVER
TEST**



Words & Pictures | Jo Vaughan

