

ADRIA MATRIX M680SL



Words and Pictures by Dave Hurrell



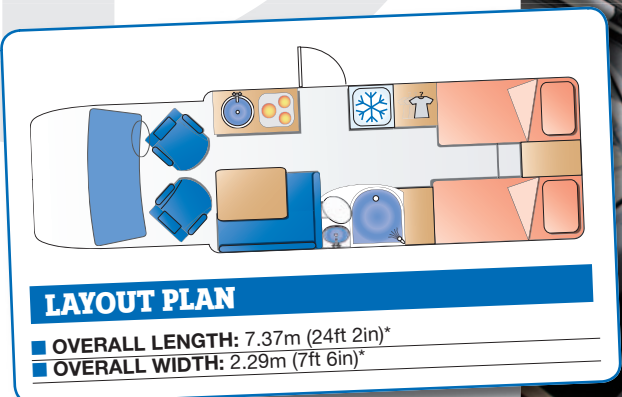
UPSTAIRS DOWNSTAIRS

Low profiles with drop-down roof beds are the latest fashion, offering some of the benefits of bulkier A-class motorhomes



As most motorhome fashionistas will tell you, the low profile coachbuilt with drop-down roof bed is a relatively recent addition to the potentially mind-boggling selection of motorcaravan designs. Drop-down beds are not a new idea - *de rigueur* in A-class 'vans, they also appear in panel van conversions: a new coachbuilt design (in Pilote's Aventura range) even has one lurking above its rear lounge. To the subjects of this

month's twin test, where we find contenders from Slovenia and Germany, blowing raspberries and sticking their tongues out at each other from a safe distance. Burstner is seemingly the originator of the drop-down bed low profile idea. Its Quadro was launched a couple of years ago, but the name didn't last: the word is that Audi took offence (the name sounding too much like Quattro), so the moniker was changed to Ixeo. If you find yourself in the market for a used example, take note. Adria's Matrix is one of the new



- 1 Cab includes twin airbags, while central locking is extended to the caravan door
- 2 Ixeo includes a radio/CD player as well as that welcome passenger airbag



BURSTNER IXEO IT 726G

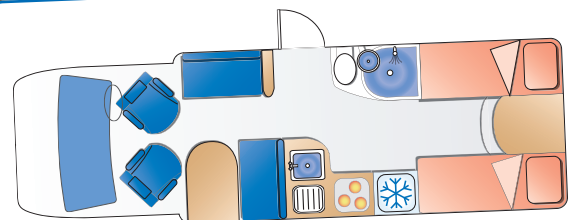


kids on this motorhome block - the range was launched at last year's Dusseldorf show for the 2010 model year.

As is often the norm with Continental motorhomes, fixed beds of most sorts feature in both converters' ranges: Burstner offers six Ixeo variants, with lengthways fixed double, transverse double (over garage), bunks, island double and twin single-bed layouts. Adria's Matrix offers four choices - bunks, island bed, transverse double and twin singles. So, there's plenty of choice if you find you like

the idea. This test looks at the twin single-bed versions of both motorhomes - the Adria so new that I received it in left-hand drive form and fresh off the transporter from Slovenia.

Advertising blurb for the design claims A-class convenience (referring to the A-class in-cab drop-down bed) with better aerodynamics, but is this really true?



LAYOUT PLAN

- OVERALL LENGTH: 7.39m (24ft 3in)*
- OVERALL WIDTH: 2.30m (7ft 6.5in)*



MOTIVE POWER

Fiat first, and both these 'vans are, unsurprisingly, motivated by the ubiquitous Ducato. Both feature Fiat's 2.3-litre, 130 horsepower motor as standard, so six-speed gearboxes come along too. The usual cab paraphernalia consists of electric windows and mirrors, driver's airbag and remote central locking. Ixeo also provides a radio/CD player and ASR traction control, while Matrix extends its central locking system to the caravan door. Passenger airbags were a very welcome sight in both cabs.

It's hands-and-knees time if you want to discover the significant differences between the two base vehicles - a swift gander underneath finds the Matrix's Fiat Camper chassis at home, under the Ixeo lurks an Al-Ko rear frame. The Camper chassis provides a lower frame with a wide track rear axle, but it still rides - like the standard chassis cab - on old-fashioned cart springs.



ADRIA MATRIX M680SL



The Al-Ko version's lower and wider too, but its galvanised ironwork supports more sophisticated independent suspension supported by a torsion bar spring.

ON THE ROAD

All the usual Ducato strengths are there in both motorhomes, but conversion noise is a potential difference. Both proved acceptably quiet: importantly, there was no creaking, squeaking or swaying from either roof bed when travelling. It was noticeable, however that the Al-Ko chassis-equipped Ixeo provided a more compliant ride. Handling too, proved predicable and felt safe, even though both 'vans have considerable rear overhangs. However, I drove a short road test in empty vehicles - load the garages and things may well be less good. Performance proved very acceptable - again with empty vehicles - although I did find myself yearning for the most excellent 3.0-litre 157 horsepower engine. If you want, or need an automatic, Fiat's ComfortMatic system (auto-changing manual gearbox) gives two-pedal driving, but only with the 3.0-litre engine option. Up in the cab, the Ducato norms remain, with comfortable and car-like driving position, light controls and powerful brakes. The big door mirrors give a good rearward view, but as neither Matrix Nor Ixeo has through vision, a rear view camera may be a very good idea: many motorhome accident insurance claims involve damage caused by reversing into the scenery.

Finally, both 'vans offer two belted seats in the rear, both with full-width steel frames supporting their backs. It's the Continental norm, I know, but worth pointing out that these four berth motorhomes provide fully-belted seats for all residents.

LOUNGE AND DINE

Interiors contrast completely - the Matrix is warmly wooded with splashes of white on drawer, locker and step fronts. Chromed, positive locking catches impress, while upholstery follows the enduring trend of neutral beige and cream fabric, helping to support bums and backs. Ixeo offers very pale wood - its catches also lock, but are rendered in matt silver. Upholstery, in part bright blue completes a scene that looks and feels colder than its rival, although it'll probably feel much nicer presented away from the horrible weather I experienced during the test.

Both lounges are raised to bring seating up to the same level as the swivelled cab seats.

With the carcasses of the drop-down beds hanging above the lounges, both lack headroom - the Matrix scores here, with five-foot-eleven, Ixeo has two-and-a-half inches less.

Matrix goes the L-shaped lounge route - a design that sounds good, or it would be if the kitchen were not placed directly opposite. This means there's no offside seating while the side bench opposite is rather narrow and perch-like. The Ixeo provides an unsurprising Euro lounge (this design is a stalwart of many a Continental 'van), where swivelling cab seats, half-dinette and side sofa come together to provide excellent all-round seating. Here, a full-width flat

I LIKED

- Twin airbags
- Central locking extended to caravan door
- Big table
- Half-height stove
- Big, clever fridge
- Kitchen drawer storage
- Proper stairs up to single beds
- Rising single bed-heads

I WOULD HAVE LIKED

- Bigger payload
- All LED lighting

I DISLIKED

- Narrow side bench in lounge
- Small leisure battery

3 View forwards from the bedroom sees the washroom on the left; big, 190-litre fridge opposite

4 Warm wood with splashes of white looks good and feels cosy

5 Big table, but narrow side seat in the lounge

floor and rear seats, with nicely raked backs, are the icing.

Mealtimes in Matrix see a magnificent big (fixed) table do duty. Sliding this way and that, it's also rock solid and height-adjustable for maximum comfort. Six can sit together in this lounge with a full complement of four comfy at dinnertime. The Ixeo's table is, like its lounge, more conventional - some might say better. This is simply because it's removable and could be stashed in the rear bedroom when a group of friends lounge and chat. As an eatery it works well too - a swing out extension to the table top helps provide eating space for five.

COOK'S QUARTERS

Both galleys feature fridges that might be proud to stand in the average domestic kitchen. It's the Ixeo that sports the more conventional - the two-door fridge/freezer offers 150 litres of capacity, and is very similar to many found in modern motorhomes. Conventional yes, but it's also part of maker, Dometic's, Tec Tower product - a unit that combines fridge, and above, an oven/grill. All fine and dandy, and very neat looking, but it does place the oven rather high up for easy access. Aft of the kitchen, the Matrix cooler is one of the latest from Dometic. Offering no less than 190 litres of space inside its single door, it does more, as the (large) freezer compartment is removable. Clever stuff, this, as you have the choice of a large freezer, or - the obvious option - lots more room for cold beer!

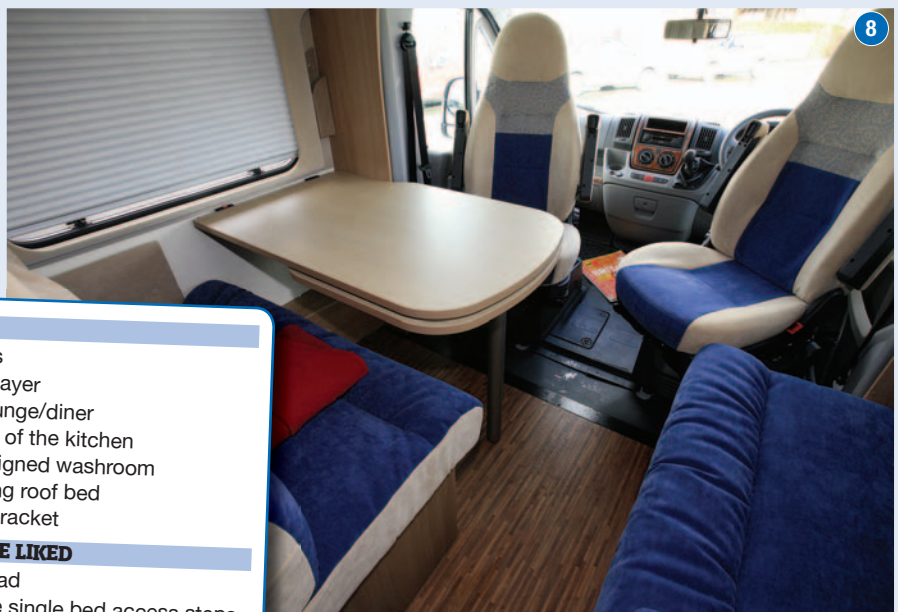
Back to the main kitchen units, and the Matrix linear arrangement does battle with Ixeo's classic L-shaped set-up. Neither has much in the way of worktop - both, unsurprisingly, sprinkled with glass lids that can do duty. The Matrix galley's position scores points here, as the big dining table is close by, and (able to slide towards the kitchen) perfect as a working surface. Of course, cook may feel the need to chase folk out of the lounge during operations.

Matrix's sink lacks a drainer, but its Triplex stove is a winner. This half-height unit offers three hob burners (one a high speed device) and sensibly sized oven/grill. All have electronic ignition. Ixeo sports a sink and separate drainer - a plastic chopping board dropping into either. The hob is of the type found in many a Continental 'van, and like many found there, lacks push-button ignition of any kind. This feature - or lack of it - is beyond my ken, especially when electronic ignition is a few-pounds option.

As someone who can make a 'because you're worth it' bottle of shampoo last for five years, and with an increasingly creaky back, I can appreciate the three good-sized drawers in the Ixeo kitchen: less bending and delving into head-banging cupboards. Matrix goes one better, with better drawers and a fourth. 'Odd, but interesting' prize goes to the dinky lift-out bin set into the Matrix kitchen top. Vegetable peelings, leftovers for the dog, what's it for? Filled with ice, it might be a good home for a bottle of Chablis. Oh, and by the way, there's a more sensible waste bin mounted on the inside of the caravan door.

BURSTNER IXEO IT 726G

6



- I LIKED**
- Twin airbags
- Radio/CD player
- Excellent lounge/diner
- The position of the kitchen
- Cleverly designed washroom
- Easy-lowering roof bed
- Pop-up TV bracket
- I WOULD HAVE LIKED**
- Bigger payload
- Easier-to-use single bed access steps
- I DISLIKED**
- High-set oven
- Small leisure battery

6 An L-shaped kitchen stands aft of the Ixeo's Euro lounge

7 Light-coloured wood and bright blue cloth give a colder feel to the interior

8 Classic Euro lounge provides all-round seating and good dining facilities

On Test Adria Matrix M680 SL & Burstner Ixeo IT 726G

Given the locations, spaces and compromises, here are two good kitchens that should work in a satisfactory manner.

BATHING SPACE

Washrooms offer a conventional approach in one, and more than a loofa's-worth of innovation in the other.

A semi-separate shower dominates the Matrix bathing space, while the basin's vanity unit stands, solidly constructed. The loo is Thetford's C250 unit - its biggest advantage the fact that its cassette is mounted on wheels for wheeled suitcase-style, back-saving trips to the dump point. There's plenty of legroom when sitting on the toilet, although shoulder space is at a premium. Room to stand in front of the basin too (once the loo's bowl has been swivelled out of the way), and the shower - with its semi-circular screen and bi-fold panel - is okay for those of average proportions.

Ixeo is the innovative one - its VarioBad system provides a bowl-style washbasin that swings over the toilet, leaving a good-sized, rigid

screen-enclosed, showering area behind. The downside here is the fact that the shower head doubles as the basin tap - fixed on its low-level bracket and potentially a bit fiddly to use. The loo is another Thetford item - this time the older C200 type, with wheel-less cassette. Plenty of space to sit on the throne in here, but keeping

the loo's lid raised (when swivelled) proved tricky. Lastly, Burstner has blessed the Ixeo with a super big washroom storage cupboard.

The Matrix washroom is nicely made and well equipped, but squeezes rather a lot in a small space. Ixeo uses clever design to make the best use of its volume.



9 Drawers and cooker are the stars of the galley

10 The washroom is well equipped, but compact

HEAD-TO-HEAD DATA

ADRIA MATRIX M680SL

PRICE

- From: £47,299 OTR
- As tested: £56,849 OTR

BASICS (*manufacturers figures)

- Berths: 4
- Three-point belted seats: 4
- Warranty: Base vehicle 2 years, conversion 3 years, water ingress 6 years
- Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant: Yes
- Construction: Low profile coachbuilt, alloy clad sandwich construction, alloy skirts, ABS/GRP mouldings
- Length: 7.37m (24ft 2in)*
- Width: 2.29m (7ft 6in)*
- Height: 2.80m (9ft 2.5in)*
- Wheelbase: 4.03m (13ft 2.5in)*
- Rear overhang: 2.40m (7ft 10.5in)
- Maximum authorised weight: 3500kg
- Payload: 473kg (after the vehicle in working order)

THE VEHICLE

- Chassis: Fiat Ducato Camper chassis cab
- Engine: 2.3-litre TD producing 130bhp
- Transmission: Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive
- Brakes: Servo-assisted discs all round with ABS
- Suspension: Front: independent on coil springs. Rear: rigid axle on leaf springs
- Features: Remote central locking extended to caravan door, electric windows and mirrors, cruise control, driver and passenger airbags, cab air-conditioning

INSIDE

- Layout: Swivelling cab seats ahead of nearside L-shaped lounge, offside kitchen, nearside washroom - fridge and wardrobe opposite, twin single beds over garage in rear. Caravan door on UK offside
- Insulation: Floor 31mm, walls 41mm, roof 31mm
- Interior Height: 1.98m (6ft 6in) max; lounge: 1.80m (5ft 11in)

KITCHEN

- Sink: Circular stainless steel bowl with hinged glass lid & internal folding mixer tap. No drainer
- Cooker: Spinflo/Thetford Triplex half-height stove with hinged glass lid, three-burner hob, grill/oven, all with electronic ignition
- Fridge: Dometic three-way with Automatic Energy Selection, removable freezer compartment. Capacity 190 litres

WASHROOM

- Toilet: Thetford C250 swivel-bowl electric-flush with wheeled cassette
- Basin: Oval plastic vanity bowl with chromed mixer tap, cupboard below
- Shower: As part of washroom semi-circular screen encloses, single-outlet tray, mixer, riser rail, shower head, shelf

BEDS

- Drop-down in-lounge double
- Length: 1.94m (6ft 4.5in)
- Width: 1.40m (4ft 7in)
- Headroom: 750mm (2ft 5.5in) max

Rear singles

- Nearside
- Length: 1.98m (6ft 6in)
- Width: 865mm (2ft 10in)
- Headroom: 900mm (2ft 11.5in)

- Offside
- Length: 1.89m (6ft 2.5in)
- Width: 865mm (2ft 10in)
- Headroom: 900mm (2ft 11.5in)

Alternative double

- Length: 1.67m (5ft 6in) min
- Width: 2.11m (6ft 11in)
- Headroom: 900mm (2ft 11.5in)

EQUIPMENT

- Fresh water tank: Inboard, 110 litres (24.2 gallons)
- Waste water tank: Underslung, 85 litres (18.7 gallons)
- Water and space heater: Truma Combi boiler with blown-air, gas-mains operation
- Leisure Battery: 85 amp hr
- Gas: 2 x 11kg cylinders
- Lighting: Lounge: 4 halogen downlighters, 2 LED downlighters. Drop-down bed and area outside washroom: 2 multi-LED lamps. Kitchen: 2 halogen downlighters. Washroom: 3 halogen downlighters. Bedroom: 2 halogen reading lamps. Awning lamp, 2 lamps in garage
- Sockets: 230V: 3 (in lounge, kitchen, TV locker), 12V:1 (in TV locker)

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Fitted to test vehicle

- Base: Metallic paint with colour-matched bumpers (£3490), CP3 pack - cab air-con, cruise control, passenger airbag (£1990), as part of Matrix SE package - electric heated door mirrors, radio and speaker wiring (pack price, see below)
- Conversion: Matrix package 2 - Polyvision windows with aluminium frame, Pleated blinds in living area, rooflight above drop-down bed, Midi Heki rooflight in rear bedroom, additional garage door, L-shaped lounge seating, height-adjustable table leg, 190-litre fridge, Spinflo Triplex stove with oven, stainless steel sink with glass cover, light in garage and wardrobe (£1790). Matrix SE package - rear corner steadies, entrance door with window, gas/mains heating/hot water, additional leisure battery, TV bracket, side window blinds to cab, bed covers and cushions, fabric covers for cab seat pedestals (£1690, see also SE pack items above), roof rack and ladder (£590)

Other options

- Base: Cab air-conditioning (£1185), Alloy wheels (£907), ASR traction control (£429), 157bhp engine upgrade (£TBA), ComfortMatic auto gearbox - only with 157bhp engine (£2370), Climate control (£1884), front fog lamps (£420), heavy duty alternator (£205), 4-tonne MAW chassis upgrade (£1500)
- Conversion: Alarm (£700), leather upholstery (£1290), rear view camera (£740), satnav (£1500), spare wheel and holder (£312), towbar (£690)

E&OE

BEDTIME

Beds are the unique selling point of these 'vans - both from the point of view of the drop-down roof bed concept and the twin singles aft. First on the list, is the ability of both Matrix and Ixeo to offer instantly available sleeping spaces - no heaving of supports and cushions come bedtime

- the four-berth credentials are completed simply, using the muscle power required to deploy each over-lounge, drop-down double bed.

Buyers will want this arrangement, but buy these particular models for their single beds aft. Bear in mind that alternatives are on offer here - island beds, lengthways doubles and

over-garage transverse doubles among them.

Before I get started on the detail of these sleeping spaces, a word about the concept. Billed as giving A-class convenience in a low-profile coachbuilt - the drop-down beds here don't quite hit the mark. First, is the fact that these beds don't drop down as low as the average A-class, in-cab bed, so access is always going to require a deal more agility. Secondly - and again unlike A-class designs - deploying these beds renders the lounges (and in the case of the Matrix, the kitchen also) unusable. So, if you're a parent, or grandparent planning to post the little ones upstairs at bedtime, bear in mind that you'll have no lounge to sit in (and possibly no kitchen to cook in) once this has occurred. Of course, if you're agile enough, the kiddies can get to bed aft, while the adults relax in the lounge - seeing their bed descend at slumber time.

Aft to the bedrooms, where both 'vans offer convenient, comfortable, his and hers beds riding on sprung slats. I say his and hers because they are of unequal lengths. Even so, none is particularly short - smallest is in the

HEAD-TO-HEAD DATA

BURSTNER IXEO IT 726G

PRICE

- **From:** £54,550 OTR
- **As tested:** £57,582 OTR

BASICS (*manufacturers figures)

- **Berths:** 4
- **Three-point belted seats:** 4 (incl. driver)
- **Warranty:** Base and vehicle conversion 2 years, water ingress 5 years
- **Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant:** No
- **Construction:** Low profile coachbuilt, Alloy clad sandwich construction with alloy skirts, ABS/GRP mouldings
- **Length:** 7.39m (24ft 3in)*
- **Width:** 2.30m (7ft 6.5in)*
- **Height:** 2.85m (9ft 4in)*
- **Wheelbase:** 4.05m (13ft 3.5in)
- **Rear overhang:** 2.30m (7ft 6.5in)
- **Maximum authorised weight:** 3500kg
- **Payload:** 410kg (after deduction for weight of driver, plus 90 per cent fuel, water, gas)

THE VEHICLE

- **Chassis:** Fiat Ducato Al-Ko chassis cab
- **Engine:** 2.3-litre turbo-diesel producing 130bhp
- **Transmission:** Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive
- **Brakes:** Servo-assisted discs all round with ABS and ASR
- **Suspension:** Front: independent on coil springs, Rear: independent on torsion bar
- **Features:** 'Wood' dash trim, driver and passenger airbags, cab air-conditioning, Blaupunkt Malaga radio/CD player, cruise control, electric windows and mirrors, remote central locking

INSIDE

- **Layout:** Swivelling cab seats ahead of nearside half-dinette with side seat, drop-down transverse double bed above, nearside L-shaped kitchen, offside washroom, twin single beds above garage in rear. Caravan door on UK offside
- **Insulation:** Floor 50mm, walls & roof 25mm
- **Interior Height:** 2.00m (6ft 7in); Lounge: 1.74m (5ft 8.5in)

KITCHEN

- **Sink:** Rectangular stainless steel bowl, chromed mixer tap, separate rectangular stainless steel drainer, plastic cutting board drops into either
- **Cooker:** Cramer three-burner hob, hinged glass lid, no ignition, Dometic grill/oven (as part of Tec Tower) with electronic ignition
- **Fridge:** Dometic three-way fridge/freezer (as part of Tec Tower) with Automatic Energy Selection. Capacity 150 litres

WASHROOM

- **Toilet:** Thetford C200 swivel-bowl electric-flush cassette
- **Basin:** Circular plastic unit shares shower mixer/head as tap, swings over toilet to leave showering area free for use
- **Shower:** As part of washroom, tri-fold door and hinged panel enclose showering area. Single outlet tray, storage cabinet, shelf, riser rail, mixer/head as above,

BEDS

- **Drop-down in-lounge double**
- **Length:** 1.90m (6ft 3in)
- **Width:** 1.42m (4ft 8in) max. At head and foot: 1.19m (3ft 11in)
- **Headroom:** 750mm (2ft 5.5in) max
- **Rear singles**
- **Nearside**
- **Length:** 2.00m (6ft 7in)
- **Width:** 750mm (2ft 5.5in)
- **Headroom:** 830mm (2ft 8.5in)
- **Offside**
- **Length:** 1.87m (5ft 10in)
- **Width:** 750mm (2ft 5.5in)
- **Headroom:** 830mm (2ft 8.5in)
- **Alternative double**
- **Length:** 1.66m (5ft 5.5in) min
- **Width:** 2.08m (6ft 10in)
- **Headroom:** 830mm (2ft 8.5in)

EQUIPMENT

- **Fresh Water Tank:** Inboard, 120 litres (26.4 gallons)
- **Waste Water tank:** Underslung, insulated 90 litres (19.8 gallons)
- **Space and Water Heater:** Truma Combi boiler with blown-air, gas-only operation
- **Leisure Battery:** 90 amp hr
- **Gas:** 2 x 11kg cylinders
- **Lighting:** Lounge: 8 halogen downlighters, LED strip to caravan entrance grab rail. Drop-down bed: 2 LED downlighters. Kitchen: 3 halogen downlighters, triple halogen lamps to adjacent wall. Washroom: 2 halogen downlighters. Bedroom: 4 LED downlighters, 2 rail-mounted, sliding halogen reading lamps. Wardrobe light, awning light
- **Sockets:** 230V: 4 (in lounge, kitchen, TV locker, bedroom); 12V: 2 (in kitchen, TV locker)

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Fitted to test vehicle

- **Base:** Chassis Pack - passenger airbag, electric mirrors, cab air-conditioning, cruise control (£1360), As part of Design Pack - alloy wheels, special paint in 'Fire' (£1627)
- **Conversion:** As part of Design Pack - Novalife upholstery (price as above)
- **Other options**
- **Base:** Passenger airbag (£208), 157bhp engine upgrade (£2050), ComfortMatic auto gearbox - only available with 157bhp engine (£1552), 3700kg chassis upgrade (£370), spare wheel (£492),
- **Conversion:** Nearside garage door (£404), rear corner steadies (£239), cab blinds (£408), safe (£109), leather upholstery (£1183), outside shower (£139), extra socket (£43), Mains operation upgrade for Truma Combi heater (£457)

E&OE



11 L-shaped kitchen is better positioned, but the oven is high above the fridge/freezer

12 The washroom features a clever swivelling basin and big storage cupboard. The basin swings across over the toilet, leaving a good-sized showering area

13 **ADRIA MATRIX M680SL**



13 Single beds benefit from stairs and rising heads

14 Bed infill completes a giant double

15 Big garage, here, with twin doors

16 Roof bed is roomy, but accessed by a conventional ladder

Matrix, at six-foot-two-and-a-half, while the Ixeo caters for would-be basket ball players with one bed no less than six-foot-seven inches long.

Getting in, and sitting up in bed see the Matrix a hands-down winner. At first I was impressed by the Ixeo's neat foldout access steps, concealed within a cupboard between the beds. However, the Matrix offers an ever-ready set of (carpeted) stairs that sees you easily to bed. In the Matrix, midnight tinkle activities should be easy.

Like to get propped up in bed with a drink or book? Well, I do, and at first you might think that this is pretty difficult in both bedrooms, as the overhead lockers loom low over the heads of the beds. However, the Matrix deals its last killer blow, as its bed heads rise to the occasion, providing propped up support. There are flat surfaces between the beds for night time necessities - the Ixeo providing a couple of fiddle-railed shelves too. Although, single-bed layouts usually make motorhomes longer (than the equivalent transverse double bed version), they often have a distinct advantage, as infill cushions, placed between single beds can create big, cuddle-friendly doubles. In both Matrix and Ixeo, slide-out sections support the infills that complete the doubles, both of which allow transverse sleeping for the tallest folk. It's worth bearing in mind, though, that access steps are now covered, so owner alternatives will have to be provided.

Both - reason-to-buy - roof beds are very similar. Both are comfy and offer three-quarters of a metre of headroom. Ixeo steals a lead here, with an easy-to-use, push-button latch that sees the bed descend and rise with an easy pull-push action. Pull open a floor-level kitchen drawer and you discover that it conceals a surface that makes an access step. The Matrix in-roof double uses a pivoting handle to un-latch and deploy, and this proved stiffer and more awkward to use. Of course, it may just have needed adjustment to make it work more smoothly. This bed also uses a conventional access ladder to get you aboard: not as convenient, or clever as the Ixeo.

STORE ROOM

Aside from the usual overhead lockers (made small in both lounges, by the presence of the overhead beds), both 'vans come with lots of internal storage solutions. Matrix offers no less than three wardrobes (one is under the offside single bed), while Ixeo's underbed wardrobe is joined by a big, dual-access (from inside and via the garage) cupboard.

And so to the garages, where both offer loads of space, and big, side-hinged doors (the tested Matrix had two, one being an extra-cost option).

All of which, brings me to payload. Neither motorhome has a big carrying capacity - the Ixeo is better though, thanks mainly to the fact that its figure is quoted after an allowance for the weight of the driver, fuel, gas and water. Add to that the long rear overhangs of these vehicles and overloading could be easy. This is because a heavy load placed further to the rear will transfer more weight (using basic principals of increased leverage) from the front axle to the rear, possibly threatening to overload the rear axle. Four motorhomers on board could also easily use up to 300kg of payload. Those who are licensed to drive same should seriously consider a chassis upgrade above the 3500kg standard maximum authorised weight, especially if the carriage of motorcycles or mobility scooters is planned. If in doubt, get the loaded 'van weighed (with residents on board) - overall and individual axle weights included.



LIFE SUPPORT

It's all pretty conventional stuff in the watered, warmed and illuminated departments, with one or two caveats. Both 'vans feature nice, simple control panels that are easy to use. However, leisure batteries are rather paltry (85 and 90 amp hr) - something I find puzzling. Maybe the bean-counters have the upper hand at Adria and Burstner, but the relatively cheap cost of extra 12V capacity means that both 'vans could easily have bigger batteries as standard. Lighting, too puzzled, as both are fitted with a mix of halogen and LED lamps - almost as if Adria and Burstner are nervously dipping their toes into the 'dangerous pool' of new, low-energy lighting technology. All-LED lighting please guys, if only to give those little leisure batteries more of a chance.

Heating is provided by Truma's Trusty Combi in both Matrix and Ixeo - the Adria stealing a lead here, with (optional) mains/gas operation to the tested Burstner's gas-only device. Bear in mind that dual-fuel heating/hot water is also on the Burstner options list. Tanks are standard Continental fare; of good capacity - the fresh water containers are inboard, under the lounges, waste containers underslung.

TV watchers are well provided for in the Ixeo, as the side sofa armrest conceals a pop-up bracket that'll hold your flat screen set at just the right height for viewing. Matrix soap fans get a locker located above the fridge that's probably only good for watching the box while in bed.

CONCLUSION

Apart from peering at them at shows and new model launches, this was my first opportunity to look at the roof-bed-equipped low-profile motorhome in depth.

Both Adria's Matrix and Burstner's Ixeo are good representations of the breed, and having an ever-ready roof bed tucked away when you don't need it is a great idea. The Adria's basic price makes it several thousand pounds cheaper, but both (and especially when desired extras are added) sit firmly in the £50k price bracket. Matrix and Ixeo are almost the same size and look very similar - quite good to my eye.

It's in the rear bedroom where the Matrix scorers - its 'proper' access stairs and raising bed-heads make a big difference to convenience and comfort.

However, the Burstner sports a better lounge, better-placed kitchen and superior design in its washroom. You will need to spend around seven grand more to become owner of an Ixeo. Were either of these motorhomes to be mine, I'd desire the 157 horsepower engine for its extra oomph (and the possibility of an auto gearbox), but insist on a MAW chassis upgrade to make travelling with four-and-their-kit both legal and safe. ■

BURSTNER IXEO IT 726G



17



18



19



20

17 Single beds are accessed via foldout steps

20 Garage is big, with access to one of the indoor cupboards

19 Like its rival, an infill completes a giant, cuddle-friendly double bed

20 The drop-down bed is served by a clever pullout step

VEHICLES LOANED FOR

EVALUATION BY:

Adria Matrix M680 SL
Adria Concessionaires, Hall Street,
Long Melford, Suffolk CO10 9JP
(tel: 08707 740007;
web site: www.adria-mobil.com)

Burstner Ixeo IT 726G
Timberland Motorhomes, Limber Road,
Kirmington, North Lincolnshire, DN39 6YP
(tel: 084500 99998 or 08001 456456;
web site: www.timberlandmotorhomes.com)

