

CONCORDE COMPACT



Words & pictures by Andrew and Rona Bromley



SISTER ACT

Sibling rivalry is the name of the game this month as related Teutonic high tops shape up for a roof-bed rumble



Drop-down beds have always been a major selling point for big, A-class 'vans, offering ready-made sleeping accommodation which simply pulls down from the ceiling at night and is pushed up - containing all the bedding - out of sight and out of mind in the morning. The layout has been rare in panel van conversions, but with

possible increasing demand for four berths in a modestly sized shell, some ingenious designs have appeared.

Here we test two right-hand drive imports from Germany, both incorporating drop-down beds under distinctive, jutting, high tops.

Both 'vans were supplied for testing by Black Country Motorhomes of Cradley Heath near Halesowen in the West Midlands. The company is the main UK agent for



¹ Citroën's Relay is almost identical to Peugeot and Fiat equivalents. Compact's cab is very well equipped

² Vario's Fiat Ducato base provides 120 horsepower too, but from a 2.3-litre motor

GLOBECAR VARIO



Globecar and a local family concern of long standing. Helpful senior partner, Paul Richardson, explained the 'vans' complex genealogy. Although both came via Pössl, (part of Hymer's empire), Compact bears the prestigious Concorde name, commonly associated with high-end A-class motorhomes, and so is also available in the UK through Concorde dealer, Southdowns Motorcaravan Centre. Based on the medium-

wheelbase Citroen Relay, this 'van certainly lives up to its Compact name. The other, a long-wheelbase Fiat, rejoices in the moniker of Globescout Vario - Globecar being a Pössl brand. Pössl commissions many 'vans made by other Hymer-family members, for example, Dethleffs. However, both these two high-



line high tops are built for Pössl by Heinrich Reisemobile. Confusing, nein?

These rivals are, therefore, sisters, converted at the same German factory. Their base vehicles, Citroen Relays and Fiat Ducatos, all differing only in minor detail, are built at the Italian Sevel factory, along with close-relative Peugeot Boxers.

Family antecedents aside, can either 'van overcome the challenge of cramming extra, usable, berths into relatively small vehicles, without undue penalties in space, weight and cost? Vario is pricier than Compact, at around £45,000 (rather than £41,000), but offers a longer base vehicle and 3500kg MAW chassis, whereas Compact has the lighter 3300kg base (as standard issue) and slightly less payload.

Both are very tall vehicles (over three metres) with big, GRP high roofs added. The longer (and higher) Globecar Vario looks better - Compact seeming slightly top-heavy in comparison. Family resemblance extends to the dark-blue decals, which looked more appropriate on the bigger 'van. They

CONCORDE COMPACT



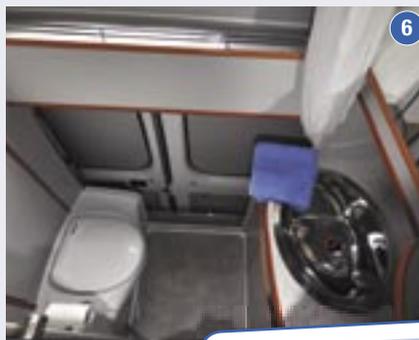
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3 The washroom sits at high level across the rear

4 A typically basic Continental-style kitchen, but it offers more worktop than its rival

5 The Pullman dinette-based layout means that only the cab passenger seat swivels

6 Washroom features classy stainless basin and desirable bench-type loo

WE LIKED

- Spacious kitchen
- Massive storage
- Practical size - easy to park
- Dinette bed excellent for one person
- Good headroom in upstairs bed
- High quality finish

WE WOULD HAVE LIKED

- Separate showerhead and bracket
- Dedicated flush water supply for loo
- Less-shaped dinette seatbacks
- Drainer and Combi oven/grill
- Thicker curtain behind cab

WE DISLIKED

- The upholstery design

dominated the Compact, particularly the heavy stripes on the windowless rear doors - a characteristic of Concorde 'vans. However, both looked quite trim, even with protruding foreheads - the high roofs integrating neatly with the steel panel van beneath. Colour-wise, silver is available, at an eye-watering £1770 extra: blame the price on the cost of 'pigmenting' the high roofs' GRP. I'm guessing the ones you see will all be white!

Externally similar they may be, but it's a different story inside. Compact has a UK nearside sliding door, and you enter to be greeted by a blaze of square-patterned blue, grey and beige upholstery; very seventies! Fortunately, other patterns are available, and there's nothing controversial about the remaining décor: blue-grey, classy furniture, edged with tan wood, grey mottled floor vinyl and off-white silky curtains framing acrylic windows (with Seitz blinds). Behind the doorway (and covering part of it) is the kitchen, and opposite, the Pullman dinette (with wall-mounted table) has two forward-facing belted travel seats. The cab passenger seat swivels to face the lounge, the driver's being fixed. The washroom sits across the rear of the 'van at high-level, accessed via a step and translucent sliding door. Above the lounge and cab (leaving over two metres (6ft 7in) of headroom when raised) is the drop-down double bed.

Vario's sliding door, (on the UK offside), reveals a more conventional décor, with creamy, beige and tan faux-suede upholstery, buttermilk curtains, pale woodwork and off-white plastic mouldings to the walls. Flooring is speckled vinyl, and work surfaces and tabletop are contrasting dark slate-effect, with wooden edging. Both cab seats swivel to face a half-dinette set on a raised floor, around a wall-mounted, extendable table. The drop-down bed lives above. Again, the kitchen unit extends partly across the side door opening, with a vertical shiny metal pole extending from the unit top: anyone for dancing? Aft of the dinette (and opposite the kitchen), the washroom seems conventional at first glance, but has hidden secrets. Across the rear, a transverse fixed bed can be raised to create an enormous storage space.

MOTIVE POWER

Our Compact had Peugeot/Citroen's 2.2-litre 120bhp engine, the larger Vario used Fiat's 2.3-litre motor, also giving 120bhp - although the radiator grille (confusingly and erroneously) boasted the Power badge, that denotes the

fitting of the (157bhp) 3.0-litre engine. This biggest motor is an optional extra available on both 'vans. Six-speed manual gearboxes are standard. If you wanted the excellent ComfortMatic auto gearbox - only available with the 3.0-litre engine - then the base vehicle would have to be a Fiat: Citroen and Peugeot didn't join Fiat in the development of this 'box, and so don't offer it. Although this Compact was based on a Citroen Relay, it would simply be built on a Fiat Ducato, if you required ComfortMatic transmission.

ROAD MANNERS

I was interested to see how these 'vans would handle - being concerned that the heavy drop-down beds might raise their centres of gravity, causing lurching on bends. I'm pleased to say this wasn't the case at all. Probably the stiffness of the Sevel chassis helps, but the Shropshire test route was fast and twisty, and both 'vans coped excellently (when unladen). However, given the number of high-level, large-capacity cupboards, if you filled them with heavy gear, it would almost certainly worsen the handling characteristics. As always, try to store the weightiest items as low down as possible. The interiors of both were relatively quiet on the move, with very few rattles.

The driving experience in both medium and long wheelbase 'vans was the usual balance of power, sweet handling, good gearchange, and comfortable seating now expected from motorhomes converted on Sevel-built vehicles. Both reversed uphill well, seemingly having the new, lower ratio reverse gearing fitted. The Compact's Citroen supplied the useful steering wheel-mounted radio controls, which Fiats lack. The only other difference was Vario's novel cab-window blinds - effective, but the passenger side blind obscured part of the nearside door mirror. No such problem with the Compact, which has no cab blinds, just a flimsy curtain that draws across behind the front seats. Neither 'van had that useful shelf above the cab - just above head level for me - that's a shame, as I always find it handy for maps and hats, but I know many 'head-bangers' will rejoice.

Both 'van cabs were highly equipped - as befitted their prices - with twin airbags, cab air-conditioning, fully adjustable seats and electrically operated, heated mirrors. Compact had a standard-fit radio/CD player, whereas Vario had a gaping slot: 'music' will be included in the delivery price, improved specification equipment being an optional extra. Vario had cruise control, which this Compact lacked - however, we were told it will be standard in UK-specification 'vans.

LOUNGE AND DINE

Vario's seating is very comfortable with plenty of elbow and foot room for everyone. The extendable table is accessible from the cab seats, and also forms an extra kitchen work-surface. Two halogen lights and a high-level LED cluster give illumination.

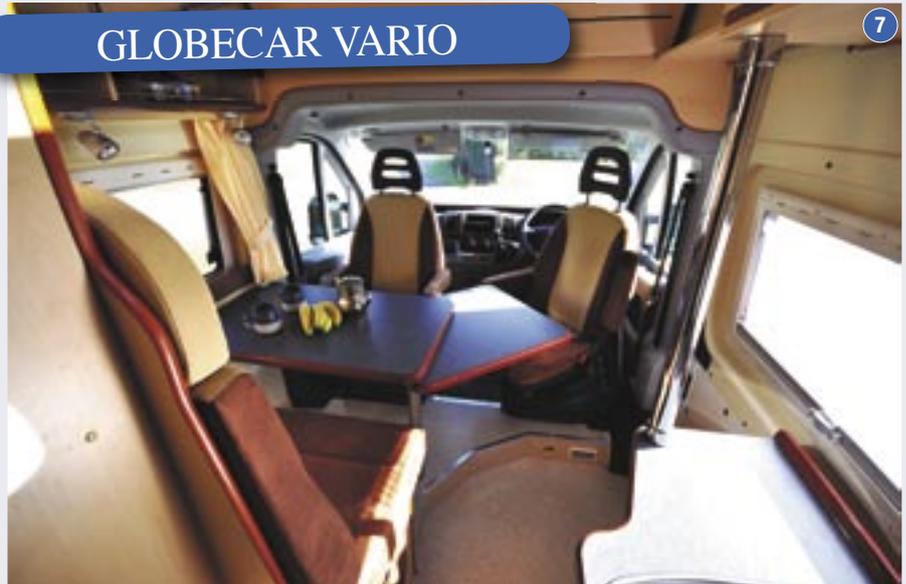
Compact's dinette was... compact! It's a little cosy for four, but with adequate legroom and a generous table. Seatbacks are heavily shaped (Rona felt excessively so, I found them fine), while the swivelled cab passenger seat is somewhat isolated. Lighting is from two under-cupboard halogens and a high-level fluorescent.

We preferred Vario's décor and its really comfy half-dinette seating, although Compact's is pretty good if you can live with that upholstery!

COOK'S QUARTERS

Like most Continental 'vans, kitchen facilities are sparse. Neither has an oven, just a two-burner hob, sink and fridge. However, there are

GLOBECAR VARIO



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7 A comfortable lounge with adequate foot room: the extendable table serves all seats

8 Kitchen lacks worktop, but offers plenty of storage space

9 The rear is home to a transverse double bed

WE LIKED

- Massive, flexible storage
- Extremely comfortable beds for four
- Comfortable lounge area - unusual for half-dinette layout
- Well-equipped base vehicle
- High quality finish

WE WOULD HAVE LIKED

- More headroom for upper bed
- More kitchen work surface
- A drainer and oven/grill
- Dedicated flush water supply for loo
- Separate showerhead and bracket

WE DISLIKED

- Shower arrangement

On Test Concorde Compact & Globecar Globescout Vario



huge amounts of cupboard space in both.

Rona felt Vario's worktop was low (860mm, 2ft 10in). Vario's Dometic stainless steel hob and sink are integrated, the hob doubling as a drainer (when raised, its glass lid covers the power sockets behind). Work surface is marginal. There's a useful railed shelf, and above, high-level cupboards (and I do mean high!) with halogen lights underneath. Under-hob storage comprises a big cutlery drawer and two massive cupboards - one shelved. Behind the kitchen, the three-way Dometic fridge has electronic ignition and 80 litres of capacity.

Compact has a separate stainless steel sink and hob with draining hole. Workspace is better than Vario's, including an extra pullout surface. There's good storage, with cutlery drawer, large shelved cupboard (including rubbish bin) and a shelved larder unit. Below the cutlery drawer is a 60-litre 12V compressor-driven fridge. Underneath the overhead lockers are two fluorescent strip lights.

Allowing for the limitations of the Continental-style equipment, Rona preferred Compact's kitchen. It had more, and better located work-surface, with room for a freestanding microwave or Remoska cooker to augment the Spartan facilities. These could be situated conveniently close to the mains socket.

BATHING SPACE

Vario's washroom is amidships, with domestic-style door and a novel feature. As you enter, the Dometic (ceramic-bowl) toilet is straight ahead, the vanity unit (containing plastic washbasin and cupboards) to the right. There's a mirrored, shelved cupboard over the basin and plenty of other storage, a toilet-roll holder and soap dispenser. Here's the novelty: the shower tray pulls out - drawer-like - into the van's central aisle - privacy provided by a voluminous curtain. Great in theory, but in practice, sharp bends in the track obstruct pulling the curtain, while no bracket for the extendable washbasin tap/shower head means you can't shower hands-free. And how do you dry that huge curtain afterwards? A

10 Although quoted as a double, the dinette bed is just grand for one

11 Top bed is accessible with dinette bed made up, while downstairs headroom is good

HEAD-TO-HEAD DATA

CONCORDE COMPACT

PRICE

- **From:** £42,033 OTR
- **As tested:** £42,033 OTR

BASICS (*manufacturer's figures)

- **Berths:** 4
- **Three-point belted seats:** 4 (including driver)
- **Warranty:** 3 years base vehicle, 1 year conversion, 5 years water ingress
- **Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant:** No
- **Construction:** Steel bodied high roof panel van with GRP roof extension
- **Length:** 5.45m (17ft 10.5in)*
- **Width:** 2.05m (6ft 8.5in)*
- **Height:** 3.03m (9ft 11.5in)*
- **Wheelbase:** 3.45m (11ft 4in)*
- **Rear overhang:** 1.04m (3ft 5in)
- **Maximum authorised weight:** 3300kg
- **Payload:** 515kg (after the vehicle in working order)

THE VEHICLE

- **Chassis:** Medium wheelbase Citroen Relay
- **Engine:** 2.2-litre turbo-diesel producing 120bhp
- **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, electric mirrors and windows, trip computer, cab air-conditioning, driver and passenger airbags, adjustable steering column

INSIDE

- Swivelling cab passenger seat ahead of Pullman dinette (drop-down double bed above), nearside kitchen, washroom across rear. Side sliding door on UK nearside
- **Insulation:** Floor 22mm, walls 10-20mm, roof 20-35mm
- **Interior Height:** 2.44m (8ft 0in) max; 1.68m (5ft 6in) min (bed lowered)

KITCHEN

- **Sink:** Smev stainless-steel bowl, hinged glass lid, mixer tap, no drainer
- **Cooker:** Smev two-burner draining hob, hinged glass lid, push-button ignition
- **Fridge/freezer:** Kissmann 12V compressor type. Capacity 60 litres

WASHROOM

- **Toilet:** Thetford C403L bench-type, electric-flush, wheeled cassette
- **Basin:** Stainless steel bowl and mixer tap in vanity unit
- **Shower:** Integral, with shower tray floor, nylon curtain, pull-out washbasin tap functions as shower head

BEDS

Dinette double

- **Length:** 1.94m (6ft 4.5in)
- **Width:** 850mm (2ft 9.5in) max, 785mm (2ft 7in) min

Drop-down double

- **Length:** 2.10m (6ft 10.5in)
- **Width:** 1.55m (5ft 1in)
- **Headroom:** 650mm (2ft 1.5in) max

EQUIPMENT

- **Fresh Water:** Underslung, 100 litres (22 gallons)
- **Waste Water:** Underslung, 100 litres (22 gallons)
- **Space and Water Heating:** Truma Combi 4 boiler with blown-air, gas-only operation
- **Leisure battery:** 75 amp hr
- **Gas:** 2 x 11kg cylinders
- **Lighting:** 2 halogen reading lights over dinette, 2 wall-mounted fluorescents over drop-down bed, two fluorescents in kitchen, two halogen lights in washroom
- **Sockets:** 230V: 1 (in kitchen), 12V: 2 (in washroom and kitchen)

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Fitted to test vehicle

- **Base:** None
- **Conversion:** None
- Other options available
- **Base:** Upgrade to 3500kg MAW chassis (£715), metallic paint (£1770), upgrade to 157bhp engine (£1245), ComfortMatic auto gearbox - only on Fiat chassis with 157bhp engine (£1588)
- **Conversion:** Additional 75 amp hr leisure battery (£293), Secumotion on-road gas system (£230), Duo-Control automatic gas changeover - (£239), Winx-Bed system with wave profile (£533)

E&OE



HEAD-TO-HEAD DATA

GLOBECAR GLOBESCOUT VARIO

PRICE

- **From:** £46,819 OTR
- **As tested:** £46,819 OTR

BASICS (*manufacturer's figures)

- **Berths:** 4
- **Three-point belted seats:** 4 (incl. driver)
- **Warranty:** 3 years base vehicle, 1 year conversion, 5 years water ingress
- **Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant:** No
- **Construction:** Steel bodied high roof panel van with GRP roof extension
- **Length:** 5.99m (19ft 8in)*
- **Width:** 2.05m (6ft 8.5in)*
- **Height:** 3.11m (10ft 2.5in)*
- **Wheelbase:** 4.03m (13ft 2.5in)*
- **Rear overhang:** 1.04m (3ft 5in)
- **Maximum authorised weight:** 3500kg
- **Payload:** 600kg (after the vehicle in working order)

THE VEHICLE

- **Chassis:** Long wheelbase Fiat Ducato
- **Engine:** 2.3-litre turbo-diesel producing 120bhp
- **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, electric mirrors and windows, trip computer, cab air-con, cruise control, driver and passenger airbags, adjustable steering column

INSIDE

- **Layout:** Swivelling cab seats ahead of half-dinette (drop-down double bed above), offside kitchen, nearside washroom, transverse fixed double bed in rear - converting to load area. Side sliding door on UK offside
- **Insulation:** Floor 22mm, walls 10-20mm, roof 20-35mm
- **Interior Height:** 2.44m (8ft 0in) max; 1.73m (5ft 8in) min (bed lowered)

KITCHEN

- **Sink and cooker:** Dometic Stainless steel combination unit with bowl, folding mixer tap and two-burner draining hob, hinged glass lid, no ignition
- **Fridge:** Dometic three-way with manual energy selection. Capacity 80 litres

WASHROOM

- **Toilet:** Dometic CTS 3110A, ceramic-lined bowl, electric flush, wheeled cassette
- **Basin:** Fixed plastic bowl with mixer tap, mounted in vanity unit
- **Shower:** Shower tray slides into main aisle, nylon curtain encloses, pull-out washbasin mixer tap doubles as shower head

BEDS

- **Rear transverse double**
 - **Length:** 1.95m (6ft 5in)
 - **Width:** 1.41m (4ft 7.5in) max; 1.23m (4ft 0.5in) min
 - **Headroom:** 660mm (2ft 2in) min (at head, beneath cupboard)
- **Drop-down double**
 - **Length:** 2.13m (7ft 0in)
 - **Width:** 1.33m (4ft 4.5in)
 - **Headroom:** 600mm (1ft 11.5in) max

EQUIPMENT

- **Fresh Water:** Inboard, 100 litres (22 gallons)
- **Waste Water:** Underslung, 100 litres (22 gallons)
- **Space and Water Heating:** Truma Combi 4 boiler with blown-air, gas-only operation
- **Leisure battery:** 75 amp hr
- **Gas:** 2 x 11kg cylinders
- **Lighting:** 2 Halogen reading lights over dinette, high-level LED light over table, 2 halogen lights under kitchen shelves, dome fluorescent light above end of drop-down bed, 2 halogen lights in washroom, 4 halogen ceiling lights and two reading lights in rear bedroom
- **Sockets:** 230V: 2 (in kitchen and washroom), 12V: 2 (in kitchen and washroom)

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Fitted to test vehicle

- **Base:** None
- **Conversion:** None
- **Other options**
 - **Base:** Metallic paint (£1770), 157bhp engine upgrade, (£1245), front fog lights (£159)
 - **Conversion:** Additional 75 amp hr leisure battery (£293) Secumotion on-road gas system (£230), Duo-Control automatic gas changeover - (£239)

E&OE

potentially messy business, methinks.

Compact's rear washroom has the excellent Thetford bench-type toilet, easily serviced via the back doors. Behind the loo is a large wardrobe, and opposite, a vanity unit with imposing stainless steel washbasin. Above is a mirror-doored, shelved cupboard, three corner shelves and two halogen lights. The shower tray is central, with more conventional showering arrangements looking fine. However, the combined mixer tap/showerhead (again with no bracket) encourages water to run down outside the shower curtain. A separate shower mixer/hose/head unit (and more waterproof moulded plastic cupboards and fittings) would give splendid showering facilities.

Both washrooms are very good, given reservations about the practicality of showering. However, we preferred Compact's more straightforward ablutions.

BEDTIME

This is where these 'vans score over standard high top rivals: time to use the words, 'unique selling point.' - the roof beds are the main reason why folks will buy either of these motorcaravans.

Vario's two-section, drop-down bed lowers smoothly on gas struts (above the lounge and cab), leaving 1.74m (5ft 8.5in) of headroom underneath - more than sufficient for sitting and moving around. The bed's mattress sits on a fully sprung, slatted and ventilated base that's supremely comfortable. High-level windows, rooflight, ceiling lamp and LED reading lights are all accessible. A metal access ladder lives in a cupboard under the downstairs rear bed. Perfection? Not quite: maximum headroom is just 600mm (1ft 11.5in), making it a little claustrophobic.

Vario also boasts a rear-located, transverse bed with an extremely comfy and thick, three-section mattress. There's only 660mm (2ft 2in) headroom under shelves at

12 Main washroom area features Dometic's swish ceramic-lined loo

13 Unusually, the shower tray pulls out into the centre of aisle

14 Rear bed boasts an extremely comfy three-section mattress

CONCORDE COMPACT



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15 More headroom upstairs than its rival

16 Big storage lurks under the washroom floor

17 Just a flimsy curtain provides cab blackout



the head: remove these, and there'd be oodles of sitting-up room below the wall-cupboards - enabling full use of the reading lights.

Compact has approximately the same size drop-down bed, but no gas struts; as I discovered when dropping it on my head! The two-section ladder stores on the back of the wardrobe, just accessible from within the washroom, without having to open the rear doors. In both 'vans, learn by my experience, and resist the temptation to leave a fully constructed ladder on an upper bed: when the bed is raised, the ladders slide all the way to the fronts, and out of reach! The mattress sits directly on the base, without springs or ventilation. A Vario-style bed base is an attractive optional extra. Again, lamps, rooflight and windows illuminate, and it's all very comfortable. What's noticeable is the huge psychological improvement, which comes from having even only slightly greater headroom (650mm) in the upper bed. Downstairs headroom is slightly reduced (to 1.68m, 5ft 6in), but we found this still perfectly acceptable, despite us both being tall.

Compact's second bed - made from the dinette - uses the table and an extra cushion (stored upstairs), quickly making a comfy billet (1.94m x 850mm, 6ft 4.5in x 2ft 9.5in) that's very narrow for two people. However, it's fine for one, while the drop-down bed's ladder remains usable.

Compact's lightweight behind-the-cab privacy curtain wouldn't be sufficient to keep out the light on midsummer mornings: that wouldn't affect those sleeping upstairs, of course, but might wake anyone slumbering downstairs.

Despite Vario's superior drop-down bed specification, we preferred Compact's extra headroom. However, with a larger downstairs bed, Vario can accommodate four people comfortably.

STORE ROOM

Fortunately, these 'vans have adequate payloads (515kg for Compact and 600kg for Vario) because storage capacity is enormous.

Vario is bigger, and with the rear bed raised (or removed entirely), offers a huge storage area. There's a slide-in transverse aisle-divider, which would retain dogs or luggage. Above are large (very high-level) cupboards - one a wardrobe, another over the aisle (above the shower's ceiling), plus a shelf above the rear doors. Inside the offside rear door, there's a cubby for cables, and in the lounge, a concealed area under the raised floor. Aft of the fridge is a large shelved cupboard (oddly, with hanging rail) and above that, yet another big cupboard. In these 'vans, the roof is 2.5 metres high, and storage goes all the way up: how you'd reach it is another storey (sic)!

Likewise, Compact has lots of storage: the washroom boasts a big under-washroom boot-like space, wardrobe/cupboard behind the loo and railed shelf under the rear window. The dinette has three overhead lockers, with two big corner cupboards above, another locker under the forward dinette seat and a dinky slide-out shoe-rack behind the driver's seat.

Both 'vans have formidable capacity but for us, Vario's extra versatility - as removal van, bike store, or dog pen - wins the day.

LIFE SUPPORT

As expected, these two are well-specified. Compact has underslung 100-litre fresh and waste water tanks, Vario's fresh water tank

lives in the offside rear under-bed cupboard, allowing more - frost free - winter use.

Both have Truma Combi 4 water and space heaters, with blown-air outlets. These, however, are solely gas-fired, though combined mains electric/gas heating is available as an option. Vario, especially, has ample blown-air outlets - a total of six; in the washroom, dinette (two), under the rear bed, in the rear of the dinette seat and in the stepped floor under the driver's seat. Compact's three vents; one in the washroom and two in the dinette, seem paltry in comparison, but I'm sure these would keep the Compact's interior satisfactorily warm. Both have lamentably small 75 amp hr leisure batteries.

In Compact's case, this is of particular concern (away from hook-up), given its potentially power-hungry compressor fridge. Moreover, there isn't room in the dedicated locker under Compact's rear dinette seat for a second, leisure battery, whereas Vario could accommodate another battery in its box under the dinette seat - that's if one could raise the lid, which, for us, proved impossible without resorting to surgery! Gas lockers each carry two 11kg cylinders and creditably, both have (easily accessible) spare wheels underneath the 'vans, and fitted as standard. Vario's two mains sockets (one of which, is in the washroom, where it does not meet UK electrical safety regulations), are currently (sorry!) European type. However, I'm assured they will be changed before delivery. Compact's sockets were to British specification - one located over the kitchen unit, the other in the forward-facing dinette seat base.

CONCLUSION

Compact is just that - a medium wheelbase motorcaravan that fits standard parking bays. It's not a four berth (the lower bed's too narrow), but three people could sleep very comfortably, while its enormous storage is nicely arranged. Feet-up lounging isn't available, but the dinette is reasonably comfy. Lastly, it's less expensive than its big sister.

Vario has wonderful flexibility (courtesy of that lift-up rear bed), and will properly sleep two twosomes. The dinette is very good, and one person can lounge - feet-up - across the cab. Against that, the drop-down bed is more claustrophobic (with less headroom), while the vehicle is bigger and less wieldy for town centres and when parking.

We were unconvinced by either 'van's showering facility, but for us, that's not a major consideration, as we just about always use campsite facilities. Our choice would have to be the Vario, but the Compact is still a very clever camper, designed with flair and imagination. ■

VEHICLES LOANED FOR EVALUATION BY:

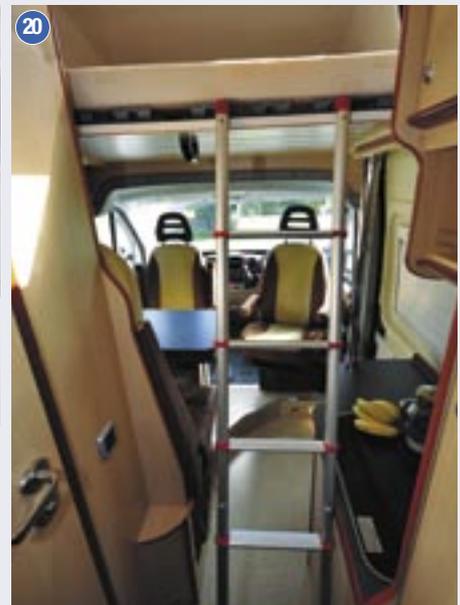
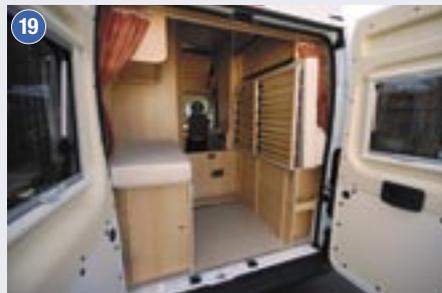
Black Country Caravans and Motorhomes, Corngreaves Road, Cradley Heath, West Midlands B64 7DA (tel: 01384 413336; web site: www.blackcountrycaravans.co.uk)

THANKS TO:

Stanmore Hall Touring Park, Stourbridge Road, Bridgnorth, Shropshire WV15 6DT (tel: 01746 761761; web site: www.morris-leisure.co.uk)

GLOBECAR VARIO

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18 Upstairs bed has a slat-sprung ventilated base, but headroom is limited

19 The central bed section can be removed altogether - you could even carry a canoe

20 A light metal ladder leads upstairs to bed

