

MMM TEST REPORT EXTRA



CONTURA CONTOURS

Eura Mobil Contura C652SB on 2.8JTD Fiat Ducato 15 Al-Ko

Jonathan Lloyd enjoys this stylish low profile

Eura Mobil started making touring caravans for the domestic (German) market in the 1960s and built their first motorcaravan in 1983. Motorhomes proved so successful

(more than 2000 sold in Europe last year) that they stopped producing tourers. Thanks to Westcroft, Eura Mobils are now available to British purchasers in right-hand drive.

Low rider

How low can you go? The Contura 652 is not as low as some Ducato/Al-Ko-based low profiles (it has a double floor) but the difference is marginal. The benefits of having all that extra storage and easy access to the fresh and waste water tanks more than make up for any increase in height.

The white high-gloss finish to the cab extends to the residential coachwork, with a high-level grey stripe echoed by a similarly coloured low-level one that includes the rear wheel arches, skirts, and tail light mouldings. Blue and yellow waist-height side stripes add interest, while a colour coordinated front bumper, plus stainless steel cab steps, send out all the right messages. Not so the unadorned wheels: this is a vehicle that cries out for a set of alloys. That kind of thing doesn't usually worry me, but I think I may have been influenced by just how good alloys look on the 'vans pictured in the Eura Mobil brochure.

Living space

Here, the 652 is very much the high stepper. Once inside, visitors began to see the reason why these 'vans are always popular with show-goers. The brick-coloured suede-like high-nap fabric, highlighted by patterned brown/black/grey striped inserts, certainly caught the eye. I thought it was quite arresting, and complemented the Avia Cherry



Looking forward we see a comfortable lounge. Soft furnishings are unusual.

EURA MOBIL CONTURA C652SB ON 2.8JTD FIAT DUCATO 15 AL-KO

woodwork and grey shadow-stripe voile curtains well.

Something that also worked extremely well aesthetically was the two different colours of removable carpet. They did need fixing down, though, as I nearly came a cropper a couple of times (and no, I hadn't been partaking of a dram or two). Equally stylish was the granite finish to the high-gloss laminate work surface and tabletop. It looked terrific, though it did seem to mark easily.

Lounging and dining

This two-berth motorcaravan offers four travel seats, comprising a two-seater forward-facing rear bench, and the cab seats. The bench, together with swivelled cab seats, makes up the lounge and dining area. There was a considerable height difference between the cab and caravan seats, though I found that all were comfortable when dining. The extending dining table remained stable and could be slid fore and aft to optimise the space. Warmed



Sturdy table pulls away from wall to enable an extension piece to be inserted. The matching holder unit is ideal for bottles/vases/ other circular items.



Oh dear. Not what is expected in a test 'van' - everything did work though.



Current needs are well taken care of by two 105 amp hr leisure batteries accessed via a hatch in the floor. The 12V control panel has a digital display.

air arrived in the lounge area via several blown-air outlets. Both air and water are heated by the thermostatically controlled (gas only) Truma Combi boiler.

As an avid reader with ageing eyes, I would have welcomed the addition of an overhead light. It's not that the halogen downlighters were at all gloomy, it's just that there was no direct light over the table or cab seats.

Current needs

Even if all the halogen lights are on, it should take quite some time for the leisure battery power to give out - there's not one, but two 105 amp hr beauties for your delight and illumination. Compare that with a flagship model from another leading converter I recently tested - that had just one measly 60 amp hr battery. Mains juice is delivered via a hook-up, consumer unit, and three switched sockets. The (unlabelled) 12V fuse box is conveniently situated on the bulkhead behind the driver's seat.

It was disappointing to find that this particular motorcaravan (as provided for a live-in test to be reported in Britain's most widely read and most authoritative motorcaravanning magazine) had wiring hanging out, no hook-up lead, water, gas cylinder, UK regulator, handbook or fuel. Still - mustn't grumble!

Catering

The amidsthips kitchen was a nice light and airy place in which to create culinary masterpieces, or, as in my case, to open cans. Equipment consists of an AES fridge with full-width freezer compartment, a three-burner hob, sink, and an extractor fan - which, while undertaking my 'tissue test' seemed devoid of suck. I did wonder whether I should have removed an external cowl somewhere, but then forgot to look - sorry!

There is plenty of worktop, a useful waste bin, and four very useful drawers: one for cutlery; one for access to the gas taps; an enormous one for pots and pans; and one that was really a two-shelf slide-out larder. Top marks to Eura Mobil for the provision of such thoughtful storage.



L-shaped kitchen majors on storage but has no oven or grill - I liked the central locking for the drawers (control knob visible above sauce bottle).



Washroom

That should be rooms actually, as the first one has the swivel-bowl cassette loo and washbasin, plus (hooray) clothes hooks, a towel rail, light and heat. A mirror-fronted cupboard over the sink was well illuminated for shaving or applying make-up, though I did find it got in the way a tad when cleaning my teeth.

The second 'room' is a walk-in shower cubicle with glazed doors. Cubicles such as

these, with their posh sliding doors instead of a clingy curtain, usually feel less restrictive, and this one was no exception.

The shower itself worked well, with easy temperature adjustment, plenty of elbow room, somewhere for the shower gel, and a decent light. I think that covers everything!

Storage

'More than enough' it is suggested, especially when one considers the adequate (but not

over-generous) 400kg payload. Do give some thought to specifying the (£2100) chassis upgrade to 3850kg. But please be aware that this does have implications regarding European speed limits and some UK driving licences.

There are several exterior doors to storage lockers - including one to the lit and heated cavern under the bed. There is also a door



Well-equipped washroom has an electric-flush swivel-bowl loo and a vanity sink inset into a smart wooden cabinet.



The separate walk-in shower compartment features glazed sliding doors.

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Cutaway cab roof features useful high-level storage.



There is certainly no shortage of exterior storage. Hatch immediately behind the caravan allows access to the Truma Combi boiler (should save a few skinned knuckles at habitation service time).

just to enable easier servicing of the Combi boiler - good thinking.

Inside there are more roof lockers than you could shake a stick at. These have a variety of door styles, giving the cabinetwork the suggestion of a bespoke build. The doors are horizontally-radiused over the kitchen, vertically-radiused over the lounge, and flat around the cab.

Sweet dreams

It would have been a neat trick if Eura Mobil could have guaranteed sweet dreams - of course they can't, but their comfortable bed should at least ensure a restful night. The main benefits of a permanent bed are that there is an end to the twice-daily chore of seat-to-bed and bed-to-seat conversion, and a join-free mattress of appropriate firmness.

The argument that is sometimes voiced against corner beds - concerning the inside partner being next to the cooler wall - should not apply here as the bed is insulated from the wall by a panel with air gap behind. If the heating vent in the underbed storage is opened, then warm air should circulate between these panels and the walls. The cut off corner to the mattress wasn't a problem either, as the inside occupant has extra mattress length to compensate. The snake-style reading lights were particularly appreciated.

Clever eh?

There are lots of areas in which careful thought has been given in the design and manufacture of this motorhome - a few caught my eye. Firstly, there is just one key for everything on the conversion. Secondly, a single knob controls the locking mechanism for the kitchen drawers and the slide-out larder. Thirdly, multi-point switching for the lights and radio mean not having to get up just as you've settled your feathers!

We've had a look at the convenience of the washroom (pun intended), but equally impressive was the method of panelling in the shower cubicle itself. Eura Mobil has overlapped the ceiling moulding over the walls (instead of just abutting the joint, squirting some sealant in, and hoping for the best). Such a joint cannot leak unless the motorcaravan is upside down, and, by then, shower room joint integrity will be the least of your worries.



Rear double bed will be luxurious for two, but was positively indulgent for one!

◀ Individual multi-adjustable halogen downlighter not only looks stylish but works well.

Cause for concern

The Contura wasn't all joy, though. I was very concerned by the bench seat seatbelt route - the belts have been routed behind the backrest cushions, not inside the central pillar. Once expanded, they didn't retract. After leaning forward to pick up a piece of Lego,

our seven-year-old back seat driver was only held by a lap belt - and would have been likely to have hit his head on the extremely solid table in front of him in a front-end collision. (I gave up trying to remove the table, and there is no dedicated storage for it anyway.) The seat design itself has no anti-submarine braces and would benefit from further development. Also, for any country that prides itself on having some of the toughest safety legislation in the world, it seemed puzzling to produce a motorcaravan without either a fire blanket or extinguisher fitted.

Driving the Ducato

Eight (nearly nine) years ago I drove the first of this generation of vehicles with fascia gear levers (the idea has been around a few years - it's not so different from a 1960s Renault 4!).

With this, and the offside location of the handbrake, Sevel (Fiat/Peugeot/Citroën) revolutionised light commercial vehicle design. All the other manufacturers thought it was a five-minute wonder, but now most have a similar gearshift! Fiat hasn't rested on its laurels though, and the new strengthened gearbox is even slicker than ever.

Brakes, clutch, and steering were all spot-on, with not much effort being required (but with plenty of 'feel' always available). In short, it's a very engaging vehicle to drive and the Ducato Al-Ko combination gave pin sharp handling at all times - though the ride could get a bit jiggly over some poor road surfaces.

I did find (even more so than usual because of the driver's seat swivel) that the seating position was far too high, with the result that my eyeline was actually level with the top of the windscreen. The resultant stooping meant my back and right hip were in agony after a 130-mile motorway drive - not something I ever suffer from the cab of my own 1998 VW LT. If this stylish motorcaravan were mine, the height of the seat boxes would have to be reduced. (This must be undertaken by a skilled engineer, and any alteration may affect the warranty.) It has to be said that other MMM testers find these standard cab seats supremely comfortable, so perhaps I'm a funny shape? On second thoughts, don't answer that. Ignorance is bliss.



The by now familiar Ducato cab - flip-up map holder was found to be very useful by the navigator.

Too many Euros for the Eura?

Quite a few of my campsite neighbours enjoyed a tour of this 'van (I'm thinking of charging for test 'van tours), but some felt that it is a little overpriced compared to many rivals. I suppose it might be, if you just do an equipment comparison - there is no grill, oven, microwave, panoramic rooflight, flyscreen door, roof rack or ladder (items that many £45,000 classmates do provide). It's not that simple, though, as (with the notable exception of the

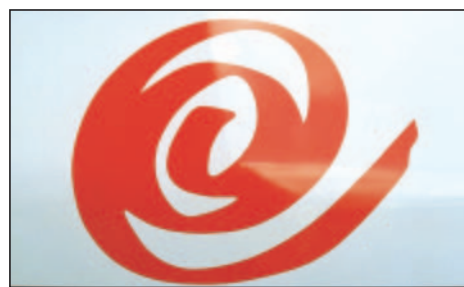
rear passenger seat) I thought the Contura felt better built than many rivals. The use of those stylish fabrics means extra expense too (not only to purchase the materials, but also in the method of production).

The most important difference is that Eura Mobil uses the torsion-sprung fully-galvanised Al-Ko chassis for this motorcaravan; many rivals build on the much cheaper Ducato LWB chassis. Yer pays yer money and takes yer choice!

Fret not

A sensible warranty means that any little glitches should be dealt with quickly and without charge. Surprisingly, the biggest problem affecting both new and pre-owned motorcaravans - generally speaking - is still that of water ingress. Eura Mobil's six-year warranty against this should calm any fears in this direction. After all, if it hasn't leaked in six years...

On a slightly different tack, I'm amazed at how many people buy a new motorcaravan without looking at the actual model they have chosen. The premise that 'it's just the same as model X only with a different lounge' is not a good one on which to base a decision. It is, therefore, particularly pleasing to note that Westcroft don't subscribe to this way of thinking. Instead of stocking only a couple of models from oodles of manufacturers, they have chosen to represent a couple of manufacturers (Damon from the USA and Eura Mobil from Germany) in a very comprehensive way. It is also worth noting that Eura Mobil consistently does well in European magazine Promobil's annual survey of owner satisfaction - which is encouraging. □



Stylish rear 'bumper' moulding looks the part. Smooth rump of Contura has fixings for a bike rack.



The spare wheel cradle has been relocated for easier retrieval; corner steadies are standard.

In brief

Base vehicle: Fiat Ducato 15 with Al-Ko rear chassis

Engine type: 2.8-litre JTD common-rail turbo-diesel

Output: 94kW (127 bhp) @ 3600 rpm

Gearbox & drive: Five-speed manual gearbox, fascia-mounted gear lever, front-wheel drive

Make & model: Eura Mobil Contura C652SB

Body type & construction: Low profile coachbuilt, GRP-clad sandwich construction

Conversion badged as EN1646 compliant: No

Electrical equipment: 230V hook-up and consumer unit, 2 x 105 amp hr leisure batteries, charge management systems

Lighting: Halogen downlighters, two swivel spotlamps and two reading lights over double bed, halogen downlighters in washroom, one luminaire in shower cubicle

Cooking facilities: Smev stainless steel electronic ignition three-burner hob, sink, extractor fan

Refrigerator: Dometic RM6405 AES, 98.5-litres

Water heater and space heater: Truma Combi unit, gas fired only, blown-air distribution

Fresh water tank: Between floors and heated, capacity 135 litres

Waste water tank: Between floors and heated, capacity 120 litres

Gas locker capacity: Two 13kg cylinders

Rear restraints: Two forward-facing seats with three-point inertia-reel safety belts

Additional features: Double floor, exterior-access lockers, permanent rear bed, walk-on double-skin roof, electrically-

operated step, awning light, rear steadies, electrically-operated cab windows, and mirrors, key central locking, cab seat swivels, stereo radio/CD, extra heater matrix and fan for rear passengers, first aid kit, warning triangle, one key for everything Eura Mobil

Dimensions

(* data supplied by manufacturer)

Overall length: 6.58m (21ft 7in)*

Overall width: 2.30m (7ft 6.5in)*

Overall height: 2.89m (9ft 6in)*

Interior height: 1.93m (6ft 4in)*

Bed dimensions:

(permanent rear bed)

1.95m x 1.32m (6ft 5in x 4ft 4in)

Max authorised weight: 3500kg*

Load capacity: 400kg*

Price (all prices include VAT)

Standard model (as tested):

£43,890 on the road (including three-year whole vehicle warranty and six-year water ingress warranty)

Optional extras

Base vehicle options: Upgrade to 3850 kg (£2100)

Caravan options: (small selection given) Generator (£3250), Heki 4 sunroof (£835), 230V air-conditioning (£1195), 3.5m awning (£650), 75W solar panel and controller (£776)



Eura Mobil Contura C652SB kindly offered for evaluation by: Westcroft Motorhomes Ltd, Cannock Road, Wolverhampton WV10 8QU (tel: 01902 731324; web site: www.euramobiluk.co.uk)