

# LIVING WITH A...

## ...2010 IH Motor Campers Tio RL

*David and Pamela Lloyd found their 'perfect' motorhome... again!*



David Lloyd with his latest 'perfect' motorhome



Readers of MMM with long memories may recall that in 2006, and after a long search, we thought we had found our ideal motorhome (see Living with a... Knaus Sun Ti 650MF, MMM October 07). But due to

changing family requirements, we found ourselves changing to a car and caravan combination. But the moment this form of camping was no longer required, the race was on to get back into a motorhome!

This took form in the shape of a 2005-model IH Motor Campers Tio R, which really suited us. There were things about the 'van, its design and construction, that made it stand out from other van conversions, but it just lacked that little something. After a visit to the IH stand at the Peterborough Show we finally put our finger on it: the rear U-shaped lounge was a tad small

and meant having a transverse bed arrangement. But there on the show field stood a nice shiny Tio RL, built on the latest extra long Fiat Ducato. Its enhanced length gave a much bigger lounge and the option of twin single beds or a massive double. Once again we thought may have found our ideal motorhome. But the short time with the smaller Tio R had given us food for thought, and one major advantage of buying new from a converter like IH is that the firm is willing to make adjustments to accommodate your own ideas. We were about to test that particular theory out...

### IN THE BEGINNING

A little wary of the continuing 'reverse judder' issue on the new Sevel-built base, we decided to opt for the 3.0-litre engine with Comfort-Matic auto gearbox. And boy are we glad. The 'box's manual option and ASR (traction

control) worked brilliantly to get us out of 12 inches of snow on our very first trip in December. This Ducato is more comfortable, quieter, more spacious and much more car-like to drive – especially with the smooth automatic 'box. The cab has bags of storage, with big door pockets, glove box, dash-top box and a lockable space that can take a laptop. Thermal insulation, by the converter, is improved as – during that long cold winter – we remained warm inside.

The built-in seat swivels no longer raise the seat too high to see easily out of the



### AT A GLANCE

- PRICE NEW TODAY: £55,995
- BERTHS: 2
- BASE VEHICLE: Fiat Ducato
- LAYOUT: Rear U-shaped lounge van conversion
- ECONOMY: 27mpg

windscreen and the seats themselves (half-leather as standard) are very comfortable with good adjustment. The Tio comes with Remis cab blinds as standard. These can reduce visibility slightly on the door pillars, but the large door mirrors (electrically adjustable, with separate blind-spot mirrors) give good rearward vision. The 3.0-litre motor is smooth and powerful and with just 3,100 miles on the clock it's returning an average of 27mpg.

The 'van has a natural 'nose down' stance. Measuring from cant rail to ground-level, it's 100mm (4in) higher at the rear than the front. The effect is obvious: on level ground the 'van is never level. Fortunately, many pitches have a slight back to front slope to aid drainage, so parking nose-in usually gives fairly level pitching.

I could have added full air suspension with levelling facility, but for now, I use the Milenco levelling blocks I won in MMM's Top Tip section.

## INSIDE STORY

There are two main features of the Tio RL that make it stand out above other similar van conversions. The first is the front swivel seat arrangement. The driver's seat turns to face a drop-down flap attached to the side wall of the wardrobe – the passenger seat swivels to face a lift-up flap on the side of the sink unit. This gives a useful separate area for dining or working, without the need to set up the dining table in the rear lounge.

The second is the (exclusive to IH) one-piece GRP panel that replaces the rear doors. Not only does this increase security, but it also cuts down on draughts and ingress of road dust. It allows a full U-shaped lounge with a large underseat 'boot' area. However, we have ideas on how to improve this (more later).

An electrically-operated step gives easy access into the side sliding door. Immediately to the right is a unit with stainless steel sink and matching drainer. Next to this is housed the Smev four-burner hob, grill and oven, all with electronic ignition. Appliances are hidden away beneath hinged worktops that are divided to give a variety of options for working in the kitchen.

Another feature that we love is the inclusion of drawers instead of cupboards. There's a large one beneath the oven and three more below the sink. Above the hob is a cupboard with a full set of melamine crockery for four.

Opposite, we had extra (230V and 12V) sockets fitted, so that we can make full use of the aforementioned drop-down table – using the laptop. Next along this wall is the fridge, which has a reasonable 90-litre capacity.

### WE LIKED

- Car-like base vehicle
- Comfort-Matic auto gearbox
- Spacious, bright and airy interior
- Single beds option
- Large, user-friendly kitchen
- Cab dining area
- Plentiful storage options and rear boot
- Drawer units
- Excellent build quality
- IH's willingness to incorporate our ideas

### WE WOULD HAVE LIKED

- Air suspension

### WE DISLIKED

- Nose-down stance of Ducato base vehicle



Above, there is usually a bespoke cutlery drawer, but we changed this making the drawer slightly deeper to house a plastic cutlery tray – and we now have sufficient room in here to store the other utensils necessary for *haute cuisine* preparation.

Above is the wardrobe, with another change: it's shelved out to take folded camping clothes rather than a hanging rail for the ball gowns and dinner suits that we found we were using less and less when away! The wardrobe houses the main fuse boxes, battery charger unit, TV aerial booster and the Status 530 aerial mast. On the front is the control panel, giving all the essential information.

Adjacent to the wardrobe is the washroom. Not huge, but big enough and, with the benefit of wet-room floor, separate shower head with trigger operation and drop-down washbasin (with shelved, mirror-fronted cupboard above). There's no window in here, but the Mini Heki rooflight provides ample daylight and ventilation. The room comes with attachments that other converters sometimes overlook: toilet-roll holder, soap dispenser, tooth brush glass and holder, towel rail, robe hook, another mirror... you get the idea. And it's equipped with the desirable Thetford C400 bench-type toilet, which has electric flushing and a wheeled cassette with a larger capacity than that found

on the swivel-bowl variety.

Both water tanks are underslung and insulated and we had 12V tank heaters fitted. Both fresh and waste tanks have large drain taps that are high enough off the ground to allow the use of a portable waste tank when conditions are really cold.

## PERFECTING THE DESIGN

Most manufacturers have an optional extras list when buying new, but IH takes that flexibility further as it listens to ideas and is prepared to consider if and how they can be incorporated within the design. This proved invaluable to us as we created the specification for our Tio RL. The lounge is where we made most design changes, with the help of the driving force and founder of IH Motor Campers, Ian Hartley.

The standard design of the Tio RL has twin sofas, separated by a large padded box located beneath the rear window. Its lift-up lid houses the TV, but this means you must sit with your back to the sink unit or washroom wall for feet-up lounging. We found the box slightly intrusive when trying to get comfortable in the rear corners of the lounge. To accommodate two 7kg gas cylinders beneath, the seat bases are quite high. We found this obstructed our view out of the windows, so we asked Ian to lower the whole

- 1 Looking forward from the lounge, the kitchen is on the nearside, washroom and wardrobe opposite
- 2 The decent-sized fridge is located below cutlery drawer and wardrobe
- 3 Swivelled cab seat and hinged tables add versatility and a second dining space
- 4 Drawers in the kitchen save grovelling and bad language
- 5 Lower seat height and relocated TV make the lounge a much more comfortable space
- 6 The washroom benefits from Thetford's excellent bench-type loo

seating arrangement by about 120mm. This was achieved by fitting an underslung (22-litre) gas tank – replacing the cylinders. Removing the rear TV box, allowed the creation of a true U-shaped lounge, with all-round seating. This meant a complete redesign of the cushions, allowing the backrests to be higher, giving a much comfier position to rest against.

I had spotted the TV arrangement in IH's J1000 coachbuilt, which uses an electrically-powered descending mount, so I asked if this could be incorporated on the washroom wall. Ian Hartley likes a challenge and eventually came up with a solution (replacing the offside overhead, perspex-fronted display cabinet) that fits in neatly.

An added bonus to removing the gas cylinders is that we now have a full-width boot, with shelves at either side. The space under the lounge floor is usually accessed via

the rear boot, but we had this closed off and purpose-built hatches made in the floor, thus giving access to what has become a good shoe store. The normal pole-leg-and-socket-type dining table has been replaced with a free-stander that can also be used outside.

IH installed small corner shelves at the rear, and we had a drop-down shelf added, which is a useful place for the kettle without the need to move it to access the hob beneath the worktop.

The combi boiler (mains-gas operation) takes up half the space beneath the offside sofa, but the rest is for storage and the full nearside sofa space adds a place for bedding. Above, the high-level lockers are large enough to take most of our light clothes. There are two more overhead lockers in the kitchen, a handy locker above the cab and a long flip-top locker built into the step between the cab and the rear. There is LED lighting throughout.

## FACTS AND FIGURES

- **Conversion:** 2010 IH Motor Campers Tio RL
- **Base vehicle:** Fiat Ducato extra long high roof panel van
- **Power plant:** 3.0-litre turbo-diesel producing 157bhp, six-speed automatic gearbox, front-wheel drive
- **Gross vehicle weight:** 3,500kg
- **Payload:** 600kg
- **Layout:** Swivelling cab seats ahead of nearside kitchen, offside wardrobe and washroom, U-shaped lounge in rear
- **Exterior measurements:** Length 6.36m (20ft 10in), width 2.05m (6ft 8.5in), height 2.61m (8ft 7in)
- **Berths:** 2
- **Bed sizes:** Lounge double 1.98m x 1.88m (6ft 6in x 6ft 2in), alternative singles 1.98m x 635mm (6ft 6in x 2ft 1in)
- **Length of ownership:** 1 year
- **Supplied by:** IH Motor Campers Ltd
- **Mileage covered:** 3,100
- **Average fuel economy:** 27mpg
- **Accessories/extras:** 160 Multijet engine and Comfort-Matic gearbox, alloy wheels, acrylic wind deflectors to cab windows, cruise control, passenger airbag, Kenwood radio/CD player, reversing sensors, colour-coded wind-out awning, colour-coded rain drip strip above sliding door, 22-litre underslung refillable gas tank, 12V heaters to fresh/waste water tanks, additional 230V/12V sockets, 16-inch TV/DVD/CD/MP3 player with electrically-operated drop-down mount
- **Base vehicle service:** N/A
- **Price new today:** £55,995
- **Cost of similar aged 'van today:** £48,000
- **Recalls:** None
- **Insurance:** N/A
- **Habitation service:** £288
- **What went wrong:** N/A
- **Further reading:** N/A
- **Contacts:** IH Motor Campers Ltd, Great North Road, Knottingley, West Yorkshire, WF11 OBS

## MAKING THE MOST OF IT

We have found that the Tio RL performs more like a small coachbuilt than a van conversion.

The lounge is extremely comfortable, light and airy, and there's ample kitchen space for the cook to prepare even the most complex multi-course meals.

The 'van is slightly over six metres long, but we've not found this a problem and the narrow body width is great for even the smallest backroads.

Storage is good for a van conversion: we've yet to use all the available locker space and the rear boot is big enough for the usual camping paraphernalia and reclining chairs.

We use the cab seats for relaxing, dining and working in a completely separate area, which adds to the Tio RL's flexibility.

You know, we may just have found our perfect motorhome... once again! ■

## WANTED

## TELL US ABOUT OWNING YOUR MOTORHOME

We want a report on your motorhome. Let your fellow readers know the good, the bad and the statistics. You could earn yourself £250 if your report is chosen for publication. Once you have used your 'van for at least six months, send us up to about 2,000 words (including an 'I like', 'I would have liked', 'I dislike' panel) and details for our facts and figures box, plus a dozen or so good quality photographs - including one of yourself with the 'van (sharp prints, slides or best quality digital pictures on CD are all acceptable), and leave the rest to us! Send your report to MMM, PO Box 88, Tiverton EX16 7ZN.