



ITALIANO S'IL VOUS PLAÎT

Mobilvetta Kimu 102 on 3.0dCi Renault Master

Technical wizard, and enthusiastic motorcaravanner, Dave Newell collects our latest long-termer and discovers every man's dream - a motorhome with a shed!

There was definitely a spring in our steps as my wife, Jackie, and I set out for Southampton to take possession of MMM's latest Long-Term Test motorhome from Marquis Hampshire. This was to be our first road test, our first dealer handover (all our previous 'vans have been home converted or private buys), the first 'van we've tried with a permanent bed, and our first encounter with the new Renault Master chassis.

THE HANDOVER

We were collected from Southampton airport railway station by Dennis from Marquis who also took us through the handover. We were

treated with politeness and courtesy throughout and I have to say that overall it was a pleasant experience.

Politeness and courtesy aren't the whole story though. Dennis did his best to be thorough in explaining the various systems to us but I'm sorry to say a lack of product knowledge let us all down a bit. I do take some responsibility, as I confess to being a bit keen to get going on the long journey home. Once we had set off we only got about a half-mile before a loud rhythmic tapping started from the passenger's door area. On pulling over, the noise vanished but as soon as we hit 30mph it started again. Thankfully it was nothing more serious than



The Mobilvetta was ready and waiting for us at Marquis' Hampshire branch near Southampton.

AT A GLANCE

- PRICE FROM: £49,995 OTR
- BERTHS: 5
- BASE VEHICLE: 3.0dCi Renault Master chassis cab



the nearside-mounted radio aerial flapping in the wind and hitting the A-pillar. Jackie simply pushed the aerial in and the racket stopped.

Marquis fits a VDO Dayton radio/MP3/CD player as part of their 'on-the-road' package and it's a real cracker, but it was let down by the fact that the aerial lead had not been plugged in properly. For the entire 150-mile journey home we couldn't get anything on the radio and so resorted to buying a couple of cheap CDs from a motorway service area for en route entertainment. Also included in the package are a Status TV aerial, a wind-out Fiamma awning, and carbon fibre-effect dash trim (yuk). The cab

seats have semi-loose covers, which match the caravan upholstery but look rather poor. I would have been happier to see properly fitted matching seat covers on this upmarket 'van. These same covers also obscured the seat's levers and had to be unhooked before we could adjust them.

ON THE ROAD

When I first turned the ignition key I was a bit taken aback by the serious diesel growl that emanated from under the bonnet - it sounded decidedly truck-like. My fears were completely unfounded though, as once we were moving the engine's beefy sounds faded into obscurity. With

the Master's six-speed gearbox your left hand is going to be busy, and first and second gear disappear with amazing haste, while the speedo needle climbs rapidly with even gentle prodding of the loud pedal (or in this case the not-so-loud pedal). The gearchange is superb, it's a dash-mounted unit, as is the fashion these days, and has a comfortable, short throw and smooth movement through all six forward cogs.

I felt the dashboard was all a bit grey and noncommittal, but inoffensive at the same time. The instruments provide clear and concise information and I found the driving position to be supremely comfortable. At the end of our

ABOVE LEFT: The cab seat covers had to be partially removed in order to get at the adjustment levers.

ABOVE MIDDLE: The Kimu's cavernous garage offers every red-blooded bloke's dream - a motorhome with a shed!

ABOVE RIGHT: Slide back two silver tambour doors below the rear bed to reveal a set of access steps and a portion of the garage.

RIGHT: Fully-moulded GRP construction makes the bodywork strong and stylish, if a tad on the heavy side.

RIGHT MIDDLE TOP: The Kimu's Renault Master cab was supremely comfortable - one of the best vehicles I've driven.

RIGHT MIDDLE BOTTOM: Dennis not only collected us from the station, but also carried out the handover procedure.

FAR RIGHT: The sculpted rear panel features a ladder, though I was not too impressed with its fixings.



WE LIKED

- Excellent Renault base vehicle
- Driving comfort
- Gearchange
- Lack of on-road noise (both base and conversion)
- Rear 'shed' or garage

WE WOULD HAVE LIKED

- Cab seats upholstered rather than loose covers
- Wider steps to rear bed
- Reading lights for fixed rear bed
- Spark ignition for hob
- Easier access to fresh water tank drain valve

WE DISLIKED

- Clear window in bathroom
- Unfixed base cushion to forward-facing dinette seat

150-mile journey I felt fine, with no aches or pains and no significant tiredness.

I would go as far as to say this is the most comfortable vehicle I've ever driven - and I've driven lots!

On-road noise was virtually non-existent; in fact it was so quiet we started noticing really minor little creaks from the seats and the dash area, but once we got some music on we lost them altogether. The Kimu was so quiet at 70mph we were able to chat at normal levels, and we didn't need to turn up the CD player to listen comfortably. There wasn't a single rattle from the caravan side of things either. It will be

interesting to see if it stays like that over the coming months of the test.

Cruising at 60mph was fairly effortless but only just possible in sixth gear on the flat, any sign of a hill required a change down to fifth, but then sixth is such a tall ratio it's unreal. 60mph equates to just under 2000rpm and 70mph comes up at just 2150rpm. I didn't do any acceleration tests as I don't see the point, but the Kimu accelerates easily up to sensible speeds and is very capable of keeping up with traffic flow. The only detail I felt was missing on the Renault side of things was cruise control; I understand Renault offers this feature as an option for the Master, so presumably you could order your Kimu with a factory-fitted system. First fuel consumption checks suggested around 26 mpg achieved, which is quite impressive for a large, and relatively heavy, motorhome.

STYLE AND SUBSTANCE OUTSIDE

The body is a one-piece GRP moulding, which gives great structural integrity and virtually eliminates the possibilities of water leaks. The downside of this super smooth coachwork is weight; with full fuel and water tanks and myself on board, the Kimu weighed in at a hefty 3360kg on my local weighbridge. Thankfully, the chassis is uprated to 3850kg maximum authorised weight, which leaves nearly half a tonne of payload.

Taking a walk around the 'van we find the fuel filler on the offside B-post and the gas locker (capacity two 13kg propane cylinders) just to the rear. Next we have the caravan door, which has two-point locking, top and bottom. The caravan door has a window which slides down into the door for added ventilation, and on its inside surface is a rather flimsy waste bin. Next up we find the toilet servicing hatch

for the ubiquitous Thetford swivel-bowl loo. Last on the driver's side is the large door giving access to the cavernous garage, or 'bike shed' as I prefer to call it.

The rear panel has some style to it with a moulded-in recessed area. There is a sturdy ladder on the left of the rear window giving access to the roof but it's attached to a cross-rail of the roof rack, which, as I discovered, allows a little too much flexibility to the ladder for my liking.

Continuing our tour we find the nearside has another door allowing access to the 'shed', making it even more useful. Moving forward we find the fridge vents, then there is the flue for the Truma water heater and the fresh water tank filler. Last is the mains hook-up point before we arrive back at the nearside of the cab.

The exterior is very, err, white, and at seven metres long there's plenty of it to be seen. The whiteness is, however, broken up a little with some intriguing graphics in dark grey, while light grey skirts and bumper surround the 'van.

STEP INSIDE

Entering through the solid-feeling caravan door you're faced with the kitchen sink. On the immediate left is the washroom, more of which later.

Passing down the alley created by the washroom and kitchen we find a decent-sized wardrobe on the offside with a cupboard beneath. At the rear is a transverse double bed above the 'shed'. In the garage wall below the bed there are two silver tambour doors facing you. The right-hand door provides access to the garage, while opening the left-hand one reveals a foldout double step, provided to aid access to the bed.

We found these steps were a bit too narrow and tall for comfort but better than nothing. I



was quite surprised to find no reading lights in the rear bedroom, especially considering that the overcab bed has three.

Attached to the wall on the nearside was a cloth-covered panel with a strange kind of pocket, a mirror, and two upside-down coat hooks. When we collected the 'van we had noticed this trim was a bit loose, and on our first night in the 'van it fell off altogether. The screws fixing it, it seemed, were too short to hold it in place.

KIMU CUISINE

But what of the kitchen? Well, the catering manager assures me that it is fine despite looking rather small. This compact galley has a three-burner Smev ignition-less hob (an oversight surely on a near fifty-grand 'van), a neat and effective extractor above, and two sinks moulded into a one-piece worktop below. We really liked the look of the worktop in its dark granite-effect finish but I wondered how it will fare at picking up scratches, as it's a GRP moulding.

There's a Dometic three-way fridge under the hob that dictates the height of the worktop, which, at 950mm, is unusually high - but not, it turned out, uncomfortably so.

Marquis had originally said it would fit a combined oven/grill unit to every 'van, but in the Kimu 102 there simply isn't a place for one to go!

Under the sink is the cutlery drawer which slides out diagonally from the curved section, which houses it. This diagonal slide makes the drawer an odd shape and our cutlery tray would not fit. Beneath the drawer is a deep cupboard that also houses the Truma water heater. I'm just glad I didn't have to service the boiler, as it's nigh on impossible to get at.

UPFRONT

In front of the kitchen is a half-dinette whose forward-facing seat has two three-point belts. Sadly, the base cushion isn't fixed, and is therefore prone to sliding off, making it less than ideal for rear passengers in an accident. The seat base houses the water tank and, for some reason, the drain valve is hidden down the far side of this tank, making it very difficult to get to.

The passenger seat swivels but is then too far away from the table for comfortable eating. There is a side-facing seat just behind the driver and the table neatly extends to meet this so that four people can eat together. Above this seat is the TV locker.

The upholstery is in a pleasant dark blue patterned fabric that looked hardwearing, but we found the cushions to be very firm and not entirely comfortable. The dinette also makes up into a single bed, making this a five-berth 'van for sleeping but only a four-berth for travelling.

Mobilvetta has opted for the Webasto Airtop blown-air heating system and it is very simple to use and a super-efficient unit (but noisy). This heater uses diesel from the vehicle's tank for fuel so it won't eat into your gas supply, but if you use it a lot it will make a difference to your perceived on-road fuel consumption. I have to admit to wondering about the wisdom of using diesel to heat the 'van. At around a pound per litre it could be more expensive than using domestic gas.

WASHROOM

So what of the little room? Well, it sort of works, as there's a reasonably-sized basin and a separate shower with a sliding door, but the clear window failed to impress me. The window is right next to the toilet so you must pull the blind up to protect your modesty. There is a wind-up roof vent but unless it's open it doesn't let in any natural light.

We found the actual toilet area cramped for those of us who are better upholstered and the loo roll holder is in a ridiculous place. You do get a toilet brush though! I found the shower to be OK, and certainly useable - although the sliding door was quite stiff and difficult to open or close.

KIMU CONCLUSION

Overall I think the Mobilvetta Kimu 102 is well screwed together and I was very impressed with the Renault base.

I have to say I'm not a fan of the internal layout, as it leaves no comfortable lounging area. But if you take lots of holidays abroad in hot weather, where you can spend more time outdoors, then I feel it would be fine. It is worth noting that there are other layouts available in



the Renault Master-based Kimu range (both overcab coachbuilt and low profile).

Finally, what is certain is that if I was in the market for a new motorhome, the Master chassis would definitely be high on my personal wish list. □



DATA FILE

MOBILVETTA KIMU 102

- **Price:** £49,995 OTR
- **Base:** Renault Master chassis cab
- **Engine:** 3-litre turbo-diesel producing 135bhp
- **Gearbox:** Six-speed manual, dash-mounted gearlever
- **Length:** 6.95m (22ft 10in)
- **Width:** 2.27m (7ft 5in)
- **Height:** 3.09m (10ft 2in)
- **Berths:** 5
- **Belted seats:** 4 (including driver)
- **Fresh water:** 110 litres (24.2 gallons)
- **Waste water:** 100 litres (22 gallons)
- **Space heating:** Webasto Airtop 3500 diesel-fired blown-air
- **Water heating:** Truma gas-fired boiler, capacity 10 litres (2.2 gallons)
- **Layout:** Transverse overcab double bed, half-dinette with swivelling cab seats ahead of nearside L-shaped kitchen, offside separate-shower washroom, transverse double bed above garage in rear

LEFT: This mirror-and-hook equipped panel soon became detached from its mountings outside the washroom.

LEFT BELOW: The big cutlery drawer was unable to accept our own knife and fork tray.

RIGHT: The washroom features a separate shower but I was less than impressed by this revealing clear window.

BOTTOM LEFT: The kitchen features stylish moulded-in GRP sinks, but alas no ignition for the hob.



KIMU 102
© Mobilvetta 2006

LAYOUT PLAN

- OVERALL WIDTH: 2.27m (7ft 5in)
- OVERALL LENGTH: 6.95m (22ft 10in)

motor caravan comprehensive insurance

www.lifesure.co.uk



MCIA ensure owners complete protection

CLOTHING & PERSONAL EFFECTS UP TO £2000 • CONTINENTAL GREEN CARD FOR UP TO TWELVE MONTHS • AWNINGS & TOILET TENTS UP TO £1000 • NEW VEHICLE REPLACEMENT FOR MOTOR CARAVANS LESS THAN 12 MONTHS OLD • REPLACEMENT TRANSPORT IN THE EVENT OF A NON-FAULT ACCIDENT • 'FIRE & EXPLOSION' OF GAS BOTTLES • FIXTURES & FITTINGS • WINDSCREEN & WINDOWS • 24/7 LEGAL DEFENCE & HELPLINE • 24/7 CLAIMSLINE WITH CLAIMSPUS • OPTIONAL CONTINENTAL BREAKDOWN COVER (3500KG MAX) • PAYMENT BY MONTHLY INSTALMENTS

NO FORMS TO COMPLETE WE DO IT FOR YOU

GOING ON HOLIDAY? WE OFFER THE LOWEST RATES ON MULTI-TRIP TRAVEL INSURANCE SAVE £££££'S

No call centres. Only trained professionals.

0870 366 1245

Authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority



MCIA

A member of the Lifesure Group of Companies

MCIA Ltd • 34 New Street • St Neots • Cambs PE19 1NQ • Fax: 0870 366 1299

ALL DRIVERS MUST BE 25 OR OVER AND USE THE VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL, DOMESTIC OR PLEASURE PURPOSES ONLY. MAX SUM ASSURED £40,000. OFFER NOT AVAILABLE TO RESIDENTS OF N. IRELAND OR EIRE.