

**AT A GLANCE**

- **PRICE FROM:** Model no longer available
- **BERTHS:** 4
- **BASE VEHICLE:** Left-hand drive Renault Master chassis cab
- **ECONOMY:** 26mpg
- **COST OF SIMILAR AGED 'VAN TODAY:** £31,000

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**LOUNGE WITH PUZZLE THROWN IN**

The easily adjustable cab seats swivel on arrival (although the driver's seat does tend to catch on the handbrake) and help provide a large living space. During long stays a vibrant throw across the dashboard enhances the whole appearance. This comfy area, with its extendable table, will easily seat four and has, on occasion, accommodated six. The additional table piece (which stows in the wardrobe) is useful when unexpected guests arrive.

The table can be removed and the sofas turn into a double bed, although the configuration of cushions was puzzling when we first attempted to do this - that is, until we realised there was a spare cushion in the garage. The matching upholstery is removable for cleaning and is an aesthetically pleasing beige and brown. We did have carpets throughout the living space, but as we acquired a Spanish pup along the way, they have since been removed, leaving the original, easy-to-clean vinyl flooring. No longer do we have to worry about the - inevitable - sand and grit she imports on regular occasions.

The fresh water tank (which provides us with enough water to sustain our travels for four to five days) is located under one sofa, with the leisure battery. More storage space is situated under the other. We tend to wild camp (we're not connected to mains electricity very often), so a well-used inverter is constantly called upon to charge the computer, phones and other mains powered technical equipment. However, this can tend to drain the battery on the rare days when the sun doesn't oblige and activate the solar panel on the roof. The whole living area offers plenty of cupboard space to house our belongings - four of these being in the lounge. There is a lockable cupboard and shelf under the table - something that keeps our valuables safe, and an important consideration, having experienced a robbery in our Hymer. The pullout TV above the table can



sometimes be difficult to manoeuvre; or maybe it's because we always use it in the evening after a glass or two of the local wine! During cold winter evenings, switching on the efficient heating system for ten minutes keeps us warm and cosy all night. There are four roof vents to give light and air, but we've found these tend to be flimsy in high winds, the washroom one was actually blown off at one point.

- 1 We love to wild camp off the beaten track
- 2 The bike rack was a great addition, as we love cycling forest tracks
- 3 Anna-Marie behind the wheel
- 4 A new addition to the family saw us remove the carpets
- 5 The lounge is roomy, and perfect for romantic evening meals

# LIVING WITH A...

## ...2006 Roller Team Granduca 265P

*Anna-Marie and Norman Blyth found their perfect luxury motorhome in France*



We began travelling around Europe in June 2006, and upgraded from a G-reg Hymer Camp 52 to our Roller Team Granduca 265P in October that year - mainly because making the bed in the Hymer's lounge every night (with bad backs) had become tedious. We had definite requirements for the new 'van and we have not been disappointed. Originally purchased in France (six months before we took ownership), we

had to register the vehicle in the UK before setting off: a fairly straightforward process of completing a form, paying the appropriate fee and having her 'inspected.' This comprised a man walking round and measuring the length - after which, we were presented with a UK registration document.

**A POWERFUL MASTER**

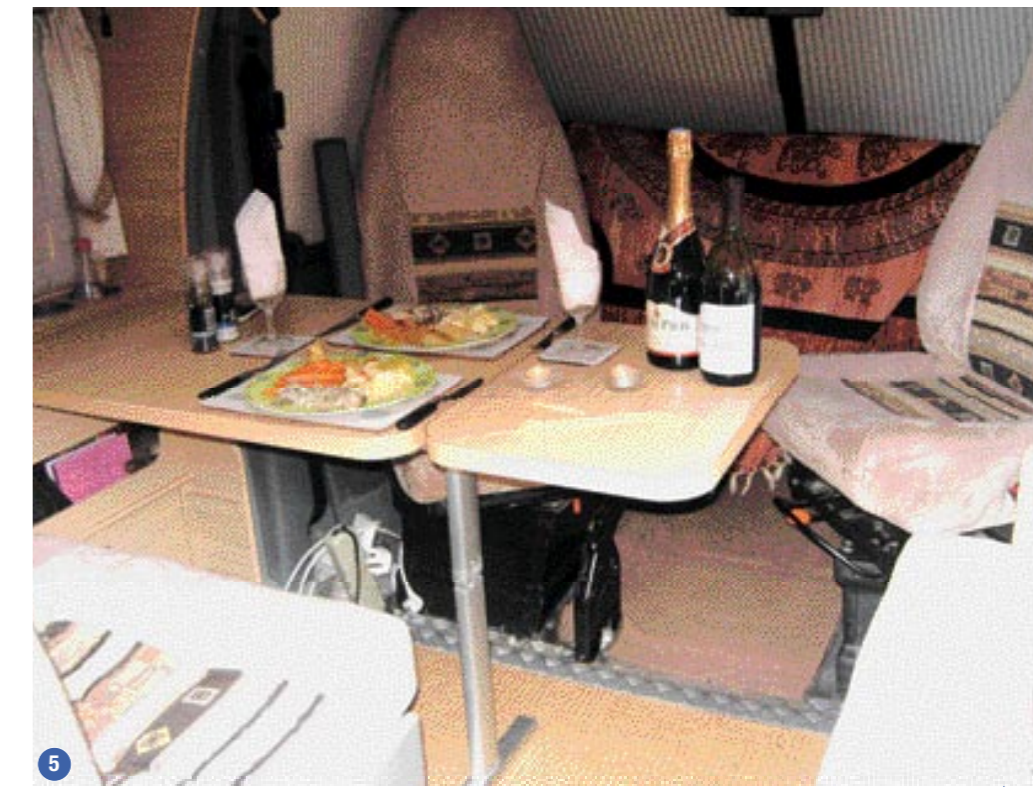
The Italian Granduca, built on the Renault Master base, sports a powerful 3.0-litre turbo-diesel engine. This generates 140bhp, giving

more than enough power to cruise easily in sixth gear at 110kph (68mph), while an effortless 2200rpm ensures a consistent eleven litres of fuel per 100km (26 miles to the gallon). Mountainous, windy roads - of which we've encountered many - prove no problem. However, because of the low-slung body, the rear tended to catch when descending steep slopes. We eventually discovered that pumping up the vehicle's air suspension system could rectify this. The power steering and easy manoeuvrability make the 'van a lot easier for

me to drive than the Hymer. However, I rarely get the chance to lever my husband out of the driving seat as he enjoys it so much.

**LOOKS COOL AND HOT**

Our Granduca has an extremely attractive outward appearance and attracts plenty of envious glances from fellow travellers. The cab is spacious and comfortable (important for us on long days travelling), and has good all-round visibility. The air-conditioning is invaluable in the summer, and the efficient heating system equally so in the winter. There are numerous useful storage compartments, overhead, and in both door sides. These are handy for holding maps, foreign dictionaries, travel books and all manner of leaflets that I collect as we go along - no doubt an environmentalist's nightmare! We've added an easy-to-fit Remis blind system to the front and side windows, because we found the installed curtains clumsy and annoying, as they impeded the swivelled seats and didn't shut out light sufficiently.



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**SIMPLY THE BEST FRIDGE**

The kitchen is situated on the right, and is compact and adequate, but does lack workspace. However, an extra detachable worktop provides much needed extra space whilst cooking. There are only two mains sockets in the whole living space, one in the kitchen and one behind the TV. For some bizarre reason, the plugs tend to jump out! Above the four-burner gas hob is an extractor fan and two good-sized cupboards with lighting underneath. The wiring is hidden behind coordinating glass, but this slips occasionally, exposing it.

Under the sink and hob are three drawers and another cupboard, so there is plenty of storage for kitchen essentials. The best thing in

here is the superb, three-way, full-sized fridge/freezer, which affords ample space for all manner of foodstuffs. However, the catches on its doors (meant to ensure they stay closed whilst travelling), tend to break on regular occasions. These are easily replaceable, but we feel the design needs some modification. The fridge's gas setting has proved problematic, but it was one of the models Dometic recalled last year, and some attention in the workshop seems to have alleviated this snag.

The oven, housed above the freezer, is a luxury I didn't have in the Hymer, but being so high up, it can be difficult to reach into if I am cooking anything heavy. It does have a mind of it's own sometimes, as to whether to stay alight or not, but a carefully placed metal spoon, to ensure a good airflow, helps.

**SHOWERING SUPERLATIVES**

Opposite the kitchen is the - *pièce de résistance* - washroom. With its amply-sized shower cubicle, with sliding doors, it's as good as anything you'd find at home in the space available. The gas problem with the fridge appeared to have affected the hot water system, which beforehand was spasmodic in operation - deciding whether, or not - we took a shower. Now it works properly. Switching it on for twenty minutes provides enough hot water for two refreshing showers. There are convenient shelves for toiletries - as many as any woman could possibly need, a large mirror above the basin and a cabinet to hide any other washroom essentials. The toilet is a standard Thetford swivel-bowl model, but has an outwardly attractive appearance. It is easily emptied from the outside - this job being assigned to my other half!

**COMFY KIP**

Our main requirement on upgrading was a fixed bed, and the one across the rear of the Granduca has complied admirably. It is a large double with a comfortable mattress - plenty big enough for when our six-foot-six friend comes to visit. We have added a sponge topper - not that it was needed, but it does help with our ageing back muscles! The bed is quite high off the floor (to allow for the big locker below), but low enough for both of us to climb into - not to mention easy for the dog to join us whenever she's allowed. There are integral lights, even more cupboards, useful shelving and a wardrobe to the left of the bed - so more than enough room for the clothes necessary for our travelling lifestyle. It's a good job I'm not a shoes-and-handbag shopaholic, but it's certainly spacious enough for our needs.

**STORE 'N' SERVICE**

Underneath the whole bedroom area is a large locker with external doors on both sides outside, and a sliding door internally, making

**WE LIKE**

- Overall appearance
- Powerful 3.0-litre engine
- Spacious, comfortable lounge area
- Full-sized fridge/freezer
- Rear fixed bed
- Very large 'garage' area with easy access
- Roomy washroom and shower

**WE WOULD HAVE LIKED**

- More mains sockets
- Larger kitchen work surfaces
- A ladder at the rear for easier cleaning of the roof

**WE DISLIKE**

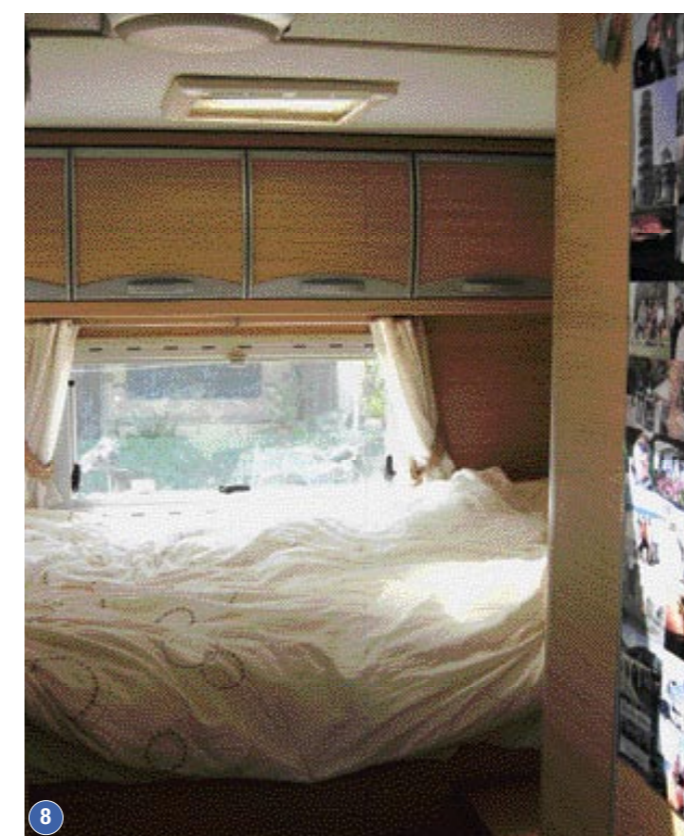
- Electric step
- Fragile catches on the fridge/freezer
- Fresh water filler

for easy accessibility. This provides a home for tools, picnic table, chairs, loungers, drinking water and, of course, the obligatory wine: this is always kept well stocked up!

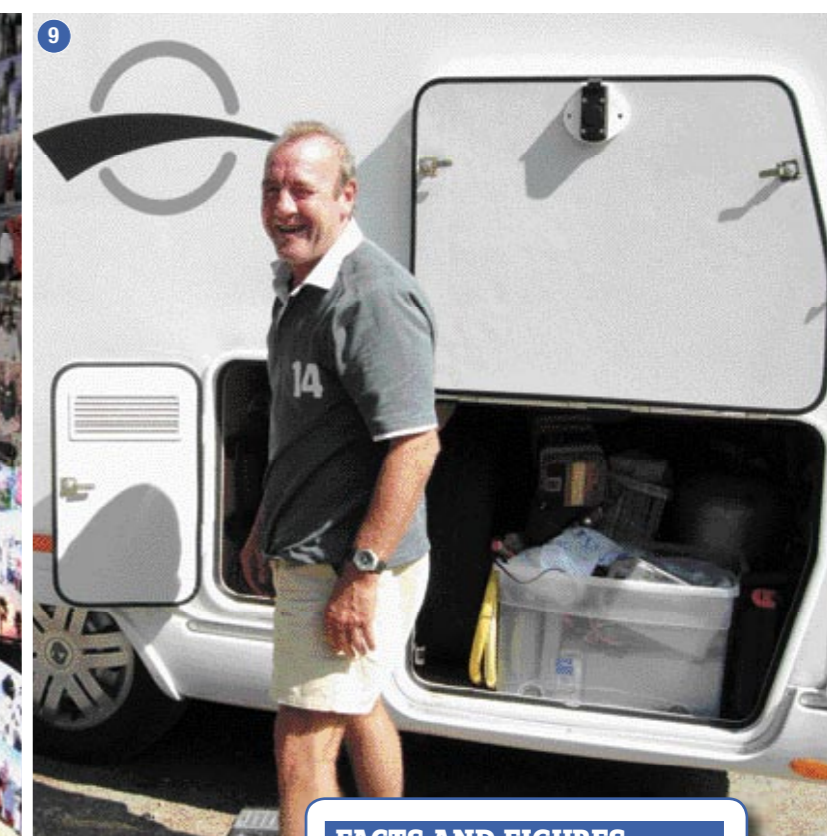
Continuing around the outside of the 'van, the fresh water is filled via a lockable inlet, but is not as easy as it sounds. The flap opens upwards making it slightly difficult to insert a hose so it's easier, if more cumbersome, to remove the sofa cushions and fill the tank directly using portable water containers.

The gas locker houses two 13kg cylinders - plenty for three to four weeks continuous living. In here there's enough extra space to store all the different regulators we have acquired each time we visit a new country. The external electric step has given us one or two headaches. It doesn't quite retract far enough under the body of the 'van - jutting out just enough to sometimes catch on high kerbs or objects lying in the road. The step has needed minor repairs twice during our time on the road.

Above the entrance door, a large wind-out awning is easily deployed, ensuring some



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much-needed shade from the European sun. We also had a flyscreen net door fitted - well-used whilst in Spain, to keep out annoying flies and insects, not to mention the pesky mosquitoes. A rack to hold our two bicycles was another useful addition. There's nothing better than whiling away the hours cycling along forest tracks on the edge of a beach.

**WELL TRAVELLED BEAUTY**

All in all, we are delighted with our beautiful 'home' and have thoroughly enjoyed our adventures so far. We've seen spectacular

mountains and volcanoes, driven through incredible gorges, wild camped alongside superb lakes and met some amazing people along the way. We've travelled through most of France, explored spectacular regions of Spain, sat on stunning beaches in Portugal and visited great friends in the Netherlands.

Back at home we've become known as 'the gypos.' With the prospect of many more happy touring times to come, we can't think of a better way to enjoy our retirement than the freedom of living on the open road in our perfect luxury motorhome. ■



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**FACTS AND FIGURES**

- Conversion:** Roller Team Granduca 265P
- Base vehicle:** Left-hand drive Renault Master chassis cab
- Power plant:** 3.0-litre turbo-diesel producing 140bhp
- Gross vehicle weight:** 4500kg
- Payload:** 1000kg
- Layout:** Swivelling cab seats ahead of half-dinette with side sofa, offside kitchen, nearside washroom, transverse double bed in rear
- Exterior measurements:** Length 6.98m (22ft 11in); width 2.31m (7ft 7in); height: 2.97m (9ft 9in)
- Berths:** 4
- Bed sizes:** Lounge double: 2.00m x 1.21m (6ft 6.5in x 3ft 11in); rear fixed double: 2.12m x 1.38m (6ft 11.5in x 4ft 6.5in)
- Length of ownership:** N/A
- Supplied by:** Ypo Camp, Pau, France
- Mileage covered:** 18,642 (30,000km)
- Average fuel economy:** 26mpg
- Accessories added:** Sigma S30 security system, battery-operated window alarms (Purchased in Spain, 2 Euro each), Clarion Map 560 navigation system, Remis cab blinds, Fiamma bike rack, Alden satellite system, flyscreen door, mattress topper
- Base vehicle service:** £120 - £170
- Habitation service:** £130 - £165
- MOT:** £54
- Recalls:** N/A
- Insurance:** £297
- Price new today:** No equivalent current model available from Roller Team
- Cost of similar priced 'van today:** £31,000
- What went wrong:** Broken fridge door catches, damaged external step (protrudes into the path of kerbs and other objects), Gas supply to heating and fridge faulty
- Further reading:** N/A
- Contact:** Roller Team Motorhomes, Trigano House, Genesis Way, Europarc, Grimsby, Lincs DN37 9TU (tel: 01472 571075; web site: www.rollerteammotorhomes.co.uk)

6 The big fridge/freezer is the best, but its door catches are not so good

7 Bijou kitchen area lacks worktop

8 The fixed rear bed is big, comfy and not too high

9 Big under-bed locker stores all Norm's bits and bobs

10 A hob with four burners allows marvellous meals

11 Near-perfect ablutions provide a super separate shower

12 Easy to clean, the washroom offers plenty of storage space