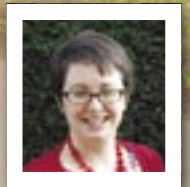


TWIN PEEKS

Trigano Tribute 665 Sport on 2.2-litre Fiat Ducato

Our Deputy Editor enjoys the combination of high top panel van conversion and fixed rear bed...



Words & pictures by Rachel Stothert



Panel van conversions incorporating a fixed rear bed became popular thanks, in part, to the now-iconic Adria Twin. This model has since spawned many look-alikes from both British and European

manufacturers - the enduring popularity, owing much to a design that provides both a fixed double bed and massive (and versatile) storage space.

All the Twin-alikes have the bed running across the rear, with some form of lift-up mechanism helping to create the room to carry bulky kit. All also feature a front lounge with kitchen and washroom sandwiched amidships.

Made in Europe, but aimed squarely at the UK market, the Trigano Tribute 665 (and the rest of the range) is imported via Grimsby-based, British converter Auto-Trail, a company owned by the mighty Trigano group. Trigano's range of CI and Roller Team coachbuilds also enters the UK here.

Do we talk about price now, before an overall impression has been formed, or at the

end when the real value for money rating will kick in? Well, at first sight the 665 doesn't seem overpriced, although the Euro exchange rate and impending VAT increase will almost certainly impact on the price of this 'van in 2010. It's also worth remembering that the specification has been tweaked (essentially reduced) to help it remain competitive.

There are two specification levels, the basic Classique and the more expensive Sport, here tested. The cost of upgrading between the two is just under £1100, which seems like incredible value, especially when you see the list of extras included.

DRIVING

Based on the LWB Fiat Ducato, the 665 is powered by the entry-level, but more than adequate, 100bhp 2.2-litre motor. The five-speed gearbox that partners it is easy to use, although legal-limit motorway cruising produces higher revs in top than the taller-g geared six-speed unit fitted to the optional (2.3-litre) 120 and (3.0-litre) 157 horsepower engines.

After reversing off a wet grass pitch I can report that this example didn't suffer the

1 Cab seats join the table and rear travel seats to make a lounge-diner for four

2 The kitchen features a hob/sink combo, with separate grill below

3 The rear-located fixed bed will be the reason to buy

4 The front lounge gives way to amidships kitchen and washroom





infamous transmission judder found in some Sevel-based motorhomes, although it had only done around 700 miles when I picked it up.

Size-wise, the 'van proved reasonably manoeuvrable and convenient for town centre parking - its excellent side mirrors providing great rear vision.

The cab offers plenty of storage, and considering the cab seats have fitted swivels, they weren't so high as to make driving uncomfortable - even for someone of my modest height. The Sport version provides - among other goodies - electric windows and mirrors. Many will say that these two things should be fitted as standard, but there is a cost implication, and it's here that money is saved to make the price of the Classique (entry-level) model look more attractive. And I do know the odd person who objects to electric windows. You pay your money....

Exterior differences between the Sport and the Classique versions include metallic grey

paint, colour-matched bumper and roof bars on the more expensive model.

The external electric step is a nice touch, although it doesn't really come out far enough. The unit sits quite a long way underneath the 'van, with add-on sill mouldings hiding part of it. The step's switch is within easy reach sitting just inside the sliding door and next to it, a mains socket that's convenient for electrical kit used outside.

LIVING

Once on site, you swivel both cab seats to help create a small lounge/diner. The seats face a wall-hung, single-leg table, with a forward-facing seat beyond, that provides two three-point-belted travel places. The floor is raised in this area to ensure the higher cab seats are level with the forward-facing dinette seats. The table is also at the right height for easy dining, although only three can really dine in comfort, as it's just too much of a

stretch from the cab passenger seat. Usefully, there is enough of the raised floor in front of said passenger seat to rest your feet on.

I would remove the table when not dining - it's a simple case of pivoting it on its tubular wall bracket and lifting it off. The table leg folds and the whole thing can be slid out of the way under the bed. This action creates a much less formal lounge area.

Also, considering how clumsy and forgetful I am, it's really remarkable that I never once tripped over, or fell down, the step between the lounge and kitchen.

COOKING

The kitchen juts out into the side door's aperture, but the curved nature of the forward end of the unit ensures that no snags happen when you're getting in and out of the 'van.

The top houses a combined sink/hob unit, with two burners (and push-button electric ignition). The sink is a decent enough depth,



On Test Trigano Tribute 665 Sport

I LIKED

- Manoeuvrability and ease of parking
- Big, comfortable bed
- Washroom space
- Webasto heating
- Lots of storage space
- The price

I WOULD HAVE LIKED

- Bigger external step
- LED lights on head side of bed
- Better shower curtain
- Rubbish bag holder

I DISLIKED

- Cheap-framed blinds
- Shower control/basin tap combo
- Small sink

5 The washroom includes a clever sliding washbasin that creates more room for showering

6 With the bed based raised bulky kit is easy to load

7 A decent quality mattress adorns the transverse double bed

8 The lounge single bed is only big enough for kids

and the folding tap can be raised high enough to easily get a traditional kettle underneath. Taller electric kettles may be more difficult, but there's little space to stand one anyway. The one fly in the ointment is the lack of a drainer. You either form a 'tag team,' with one washing and one drying, use a drip tray, or simply stack your wet crocks on the hob.

Both hob and sink have separate glass lids, although to use the right-hand burner you have to lift the sink lid up to get at its control knob. There's a grill/warming oven below. I found it okay for toast, but I'm really not sure that it's powerful or big enough for much else.

The cutlery drawer is set a little low, below the grill, but it's a decent size for eating irons and a few compact utensils. There is storage below this for pots and pans and a locker to the right, which is more than adequate for groceries and - importantly - tall enough for wine bottles. Above all this is a single locker at eye level. Kitchen kit is finished off with an adequate 60-litre 3-way fridge, located to the left and beneath the wardrobe.

One handy item I'd certainly fit straight after purchase is a rubbish bag hook on the end of the kitchen unit. Bereft, I found myself hanging a carrier bag on the sliding door's handle.



WASHING

Opposite the kitchen you find the washroom. This has a sliding door held closed by magnetic strip catch, which may or may not lose its efficacy with time. This door is suspended from the ceiling and had a nice, smooth, silent, sliding action.

The washroom is quite spacious for such a small 'van. Looking through the door, the small washbasin is directly ahead, underneath the window, with the (Thetford C250 Swivel-bowl) toilet to its right.

The toilet is set quite high, not so comfortable for me, but there's plenty of legroom here for taller people. The loo's bowl is round and its very flat lid really comes in handy as a dumping surface for cosmetics, as there is a minute amount of worktop space. There's a tiny space on the basin (more than likely meant to be a soap dish) and a small wooden shelf underneath the window (which also contains the electric flush control for the toilet), and that's it. Cupboard space, however, is ample, with two compact eye-level cupboards, which are easy to reach.

Cleverly, the washbasin slides sideways over the toilet to create the maximum amount of room when showering. The basin tap, which is fixed in position on the wall, doubles as the control for the showerhead. A pullout control diverts water from basin tap to showerhead - staying out thanks to the pressure of the water. You must make sure you pull this firmly or it does not stay put!

Sadly, the shower curtain it only covered half the room and allowed water to escape - even past the closed washroom door: a bigger curtain is needed here, for sure.

SLUMBERS

This motorcaravan is all about the fixed bed and its attendant, versatile storage space: the comfortable area, taking up the rear of the 'van, features a decent quality mattress (in three sections) sitting atop a metal bed frame equipped with wooden slats. The whole central section swings up to one side, creating full-height, all-the-way-through storage for





bulky kit such as bikes. This space should also be perfect for transporting that new fridge, cooker, or washing machine home from the shops.

Usefully, the bed's central section isn't permanently fixed, which means that you can lift it out and leave it in at home when you're on your daily load-lugging journeys.

Do bear in mind that, with the bed section lifted, you cannot access the high-level lockers on the nearside. This means you must make sure you don't store anything you might need en route when bulky items are loaded. The roof lockers opposite can still be accessed, of course, and they're much deeper too.

Underneath the bed at the front, there are two doors to close off the area, and stop stored items rolling forward. There are also some small storage compartments in the boxed-in sections, although most of the space on either side is taken up with wheel arches, water boiler and gas locker.

Windows are on the offside and in the back doors, while LED-powered reading lights are

on the same side as the window, strangely, suggesting this is the head end. A small rooflight above provides essential ventilation.

Up front, the dinette makes up into a single bed, using lowered table, the base of the rear seat and the swivelled driver's seat. The resultant bed is only really adequate for a child or very small adult.

STORING

With three high-level lockers on each side in the bedroom, two lockers above the dinette, one in the kitchen and one above the cab, there is a decent amount of smaller-item storage on offer. The wardrobe sits between the bed and kitchen (above the fridge), offering a hanging drop that's just long enough for a jacket.

Of course, the under-bed area offers lots more space if you are not going to be using it for bikes. Boxes stashed here, could keep things neatly organised.

There is also space under the forward-facing dinette seat, though you have to remove the table to get at it without contortions.

TECHNOLOGY

I couldn't fault the LED lights that are part of the Sport specification. They were bright, never got hot and, of course, are low energy. The Diesel-fired (using fuel from the vehicle tank) Webasto heating was mainly quiet and worked well, especially during a rather chilly weekend.

Once I'd got the hang of them, the concertina cab blinds worked very well, although I still think there must be an easier (less fiddly sliding latches) way of fixing them back into the open position. One disappointment was that the blind serving the lounge window fell apart when I closed it for only the second time. The screws in one corner came out of the wall and the riser separated from the top and bottom cassettes. Once I'd fitted the frame back together, Dave Hurrell came along with his tool kit and re-fixed the frame to the wall. Job done.

The control panel proved simple to use, with an on/off button, battery level indicators, fresh and waste water indicators, a control for the lights and one for the water pump. It was so simple that even I couldn't get it wrong.



On Test Trigano Tribute 665 Sport

The water heater (operated by gas only) was also simple, with a control to choose a temperature of 50 or 70 degrees Celsius.

In the locker above the dinette, you'll find TV aerial and mains sockets, although there was no aerial fitted.

THE END

Although I found a few things wrong with Trigano's 665, I still really liked it. The 'van suited me down to the ground, being a good size to drive and park, and offering the right compromise of extremely comfortable fixed bed and adequate living space. It also seems to be at the right price - the Sport version's package of extras offering very good value. The cosy bedroom is more than ample for two people, but I'd only use the washroom for showering occasionally.

Finally, do bear in mind that this capable version of the rear bed layout is aimed at us Brits and so UK-handed, with its side sliding door on our nearside. If you plan to carry rear seat passengers on a regular basis, this feature could be a deal maker over some of the other 'Twin-alikes' on offer. ■

TEST EXTRA SPECIFICATION

- **Price from:** £33,529 OTR (Classique)
- **Price as tested:** £34,627 OTR (Sport)
- **Base vehicle:** Fiat Ducato long wheelbase high roof panel van, 2.2-litre turbo-diesel producing 100bhp, five-speed gearbox, front-wheel drive
- **Warranty:** Three years base vehicle and conversion
- **Dimensions:** Length 5.99m (19ft 8in); width 2.05m (6ft 8.5in); height 2.68m (8ft 9.5in)
- **Maximum authorised weight:** 3300kg
- **Payload:** 570kg
- **Belted seats:** Four (including driver)
- **Berths:** Three
- **Beds:** Fixed double 1.88m x 1.43m (6ft 2in x 4ft 8.5in); lounge single 1.65m x 550mm (5ft 5in x 1ft 9.5in)
- **Other features:** Kitchen: stainless steel sink/hob with hinged glass lids, folding mixer tap, two burners with push-button electric ignition, grill/warming oven with electronic ignition and interior lamp, Dometic 60-litre three-way fridge with small freezer compartment. Washroom: Thetford

swivel-bowl electric-flush wheeled-cassette toilet, sliding washbasin, shower mixer tap, single outlet shower tray, curtain. Heating: Truma 10-litre hot water boiler, gas-only operation, Webasto space heater with blown-air, diesel-only operation. Water tanks: 85-litre onboard fresh, 90-litre underslung waste

- **Optional extras fitted to test vehicle:** Sport version: grey metallic paintwork, colour-coded bumper, electrically-operated and heated mirrors, concertina cab blinds, roof bars, removable carpets, two scatter cushions, LED lighting, Sports upholstery and matching curtains, two-tone wood/slate-effect high-level lockers with brushed/high-gloss handles (£1098)
- **Other options available:** 120bhp engine with six-speed gearbox (£1373), 157bhp engine with ComfortMatic automatic gearbox (£4390)

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UK handing sees the side sliding door on our nearside