

Panel van conversions are expanding in size, so we tested a couple of highly specified petite high tops, all the better to please those with limited parking space



ow the heck are we going to squeeze one of the new generation van conversions on our little drive?' This is a question overheard at motorcaravan shows and while we all value the extra space in

these impressive new (longer and wider) 'vans, they simply can't be shoehorned onto some driveways. The only other alternative, paying for storage (as I know only too well) can hit the handbag hard.

Auto-Sleepers and Murvi offer more compact models which will appeal to folk who

must have a 'proper' washroom, but haven't room for a larger van conversion. Other obvious benefits to having less footage of 'van are improved access to narrow lanes, while supermarket parking is more of a breeze. Not everyone likes manoeuvring larger vehicles: if you can find a conversion with a comfortable lounge, sleeping for two, the ability to prepare and cook meals, safe transport for passengers and that 'proper' washroom, all within a gnat's whisker length of 18 feet, then why pay for those extra inches?

Award-winning, prestigious British manufacturers, Murvi and Auto-Sleepers





have long and successful records of pleasing us finicky Brits. They are well versed in the vagaries of our wonderful island climate, which is where Continental converters can 'miss the boat.' Because it rains a whole lot more on our sceptred isle, we cook, wash-up and sit inside our 'vans for more time than our lucky Euro cousins. Also, we don't all relish carrying a pile of cruddy plates across the campsite in the pouring rain, nor do we enjoy trying to light a match under the charcoal when the charming weather girl has advised us of an impending tempest.

Auto-Sleepers is now part of the SeA group

which has a large dealership network (Marquis) dotted around the country, so you won't have to drive far to look at a Symbol. Murvi is a small independent manufacturer, secreted away in the rural West Country, near Plymouth. It has no dealership network, preferring to deal directly with its clients. Murvi offers a huge optional equipment list, plus a greater willingness to customise your new motorcaravan.

Either of these 'vans would make the

neighbours envious if parked on your drive, as the panel van base vehicles seem to be getting better and better looking these days. These two beauties could just about be pressed into service as sole transport. The Peugeot Boxer-based Symbol (this year's winner of MMM's High Top of the Year award) has stylish-looking, factory-fitted single-glazed, tinted windows. This will only be a problem for campers who like to travel

The Piccolo has a Fiat Ducato as its base, to which Murvi fits double-glazed windows. There's a deliberately plain exterior finish, with no superfluous decals or graphics. Murvi aims for a discrete finish; it's even hard to find the firm's nameplates. The windows alone, give the game away that this is a motorcaravan.

during four seasons, as poorer insulation and increased condensation rear ugly heads.

MOTIVE POWER

LAYOUT PLAN

OVERALL LENGTH: 5.41m (17ft 9in)

OVERALL WIDTH: 2.05m (6ft 8.5in)

For those just bitten by the motorcaravanning bug, the differing name tags on the base vehicles mean little. They are almost the same











3 Five could sociably gather in the lounge with no step down between cab and living area

4 A settee for feet-up relaxing, but only one three-point belted seat

5 The freestanding table can also be used for outside dining

6 Place the smaller pedestal table between the nearside seats and you create a small dinette vehicle, produced in the same (Sevel) factory in Southern Italy.

However, the Fiat Ducato is the most popular base vehicle in Europe and you will see the same 2.3-litre engine powering much larger motorhomes than the Piccolo. The Symbol's Peugeot Boxer engine is smaller, at 2.2 litres, but is rated at 120bhp, the same as the Fiat. I'm sure engineers have a good reason for such anomalies.

Both vehicles have the handbrake positioned to the right of the driver, and the gearlever safely out of the way on the dashboard. This means access to the rear - without trooping around the outside - doesn't require gymnastics. Both provide a carefree driving experience with no fuss or worries, leaving you to enjoy the view. Ventilation, one of the previous base vehicle weak points, has been beefed up, and storage solutions around the cabs list a laptop compartment and numerous cubby-holes in which to stash your valuable clutter.

The Symbol's dashboard has what Pete, my intrepid photographer and husband, described as 'dusty trim'. He tried to clean it off with his hand, but this appears to be the latest alternative to the oft-repeated 'plastic' wood-decorated dashboard. What he thought was a layer of dust on the trim was actually a swirly pattern of grey and black - a change from 'burr walnut.' I told him to put his specs on!

He was also worried by Peugeot's 'head-banging' overhead shelf in the cab. We disagree on this one: I think it's useful for maps and it doesn't get in my way. He says he keeps hitting his head on it. And what happens if he brakes hard? Stop whinging Johnson.

ROAD MANNERS

The Piccolo's cab seats have armrests fitted on the inside only, but the Symbol has seats with two armrests and seatbelts attached. This keeps them nicely out of the way. Cab seats on both vehicles have multiple adjustment, and are supportive and comfortable. Worth mentioning is the strongbox beneath the Piccolo's passenger seat; a safe place for passports, currency and m'handbag. The Symbol also has a lockable hideaway: more of which later.

The engines fitted to these 'vans are more than man enough for the job, but both have the option of the big 3.0-litre (157bhp) beast, if you like that feeling of power at under your right tootsie. Yes, yes, I'm greedy for power! No, no, think of the planet... I really *must* stop watching Clarkson...

I LIKED

- Stylish look
- Great to drive
- Flat floor from cab to living area
- Domestic-style cooker
- Stylish external appearance

I WOULD HAVE LIKED

- Kitchen extractor fan
- A second leisure battery
- More washroom storage
- A window in the washroom

I DISLIKED

- Design of rear step
- Single-glazed dark tinted windows

I can almost guarantee that you'll enjoy driving either of the test vehicles as they are noticeably improved from the older models. Cornering is a pleasure as they hug the bends like go-karts, while the turning circle shows a considerable improvement over the old models; you're more likely to achieve a desirable three-point rather than a five-point turn. There's really nothing much to choose between our two testees for sheer driving delight.

Rear door entry, usually a big step up, is made easier in the Symbol as there's an external step provided, hanging off the rear. This seemed an eminently practical idea, but you'll have to be mindful of this extension when manoeuvring over uneven ground, reversing, or when boarding some ferries. A retractable step might solve the problem.

If you want to carry your offspring or Granny and Grandad in the rear, there's three-point belted seating for two in the Piccolo, plus integral, adjustable headrests. In the Symbol there's box-like rear seating for one, with a three-point seatbelt (The Symbol ES includes a second belted rear travel seat). I think both 'vans are a wee bit big for use as a sole vehicle, nevertheless, I bet there will be many that use them as such and if you do, rear seatbelts count.

LOUNGE AND DINE

As the swivelled front seats form part of the living space in both 'vans, the lounges are necessarily of the forward variety. The Symbol has an inward-facing settee on the offside and the single forward-facing seat just inside the sliding door. The driver's seat can only manage a quarter turn, so it's less successful as part of the lounge. The passenger seat turns fully. The Piccolo has a double forward-facing rear seat, which combines with the fully swivelling front seats to form the lounge and dining area.

An additional roof moulding fitted to the Symbol increases headroom, allowing a higher floor to be fitted. This obviates the need for a step between the cab and the rear. This feature adds inches to the overall height, but I think it's well worth this small inconvenience. With the settee and single rear seat you can invite three extra folks to share a bottle of wine in the Symbol. The count's two in the Piccolo, thereby saving precious vino!

Both converters have hedged bets by supplying their 'vans with both medium-sized, and small tables. In the Piccolo, the difference in levels between the cab and the rear mean that diners in the cab seats can't easily

I LIKED

- Great to drive
- Easy bed making
- Energy-efficient lighting
- Effective washroom
- Kitchen layout
- Kitchen extractor fan
- Webasto water and space heating
- Three-point seatbelts for four

I WOULD HAVE LIKED

A freestanding table

I DISLIKED

Driver's seat too high at the dinette table







- 7 Lounge features an RIB forward-facing seat
- 8 The rear houses washroom and kitchen
- 9 Dining arrangements utilising the large table are more suited to socials with nibbles

10 The kitchen is well equipped and has a handy slide out work surface

11 In the washroom, a dron-down basin makes the best use of available space

squeeze their leas under the wall-hung table. However, with the small cranked-leg pedestal table fitted between the front seats, everything is hunky dory. The Symbol has a freestanding table (stored in wardrobe) that can double as a picnic table. Three could sit at this when inside, with the additional table used for a fourth person.

COOK'S QUARTERS

British through-and-through could describe both kitchens, as both converters have borne in mind the preferences of the home market. While the Piccolo demonstrator had a high-

level microwave oven, there's an alternative. You could choose a smaller 60-litre fridge and a Smev oven/grill down below instead. The Piccolo tested had a cavernous 97-litre fridge fitted under the four-burner spark ignition hob and grill. The Symbol has a domestic-style cooker with an electric (gas-saving) hotplate among the three gas burners and a 70-litre fridge. Just when I was thinking there's not much workspace. I found a big pullout worktop which extends right across the rear

Both motorhomes have stainless steel sinks with drainers: fantastic, and streets ahead of the Continental opposition. Another British institution, the cutlery drawer, is fitted to both, as is a dedicated crockery storage cupboard. The Murvi comes with cutlery supplied, a veg basket, kitchen-roll holder, plate-drainer and a nice teak chopping-

board. Worktop area, in this relatively small 'van, is excellent, more than in many a larger motorhome. Lighting is super in both kitchens, with the Auto-Sleeper having two spots and two overhead lights. Murvi makes life easy for the cook with three battery-saving 8W fluorescent tubes, one of which is over the hob.

The Symbol's kitchen window cannot be opened: the kitchen adjoins the rear doors so I guess it was thought unnecessary. That's okay until it rains. There's a roof vent, but with a couple of pans on the boil it'll be like a Chinese laundry if you can't open the

A two-way 12V roof fan is fitted in the Piccolo, over the kitchen and the window over the sink slides open; very necessary for those contemplating travelling in the colder months. However, when the fan's turned to downdraft





HEAD-TO-HEAD DATA

■ From: £35.850 OTR ■ As tested: £37,576 OTR.

BASICS (*manufacturer's figures)

Berths: 2

■ Three-point belted seats: 3 (incl. driver)

Warranty: 3 years base vehicle, 2 years conversion

Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant: Yes

Construction: High roof steel panel van with factory-fitted single-glazed windows and GRP roof cap

Length: 5.64m (18ft 6in)* including step

■ Width: 2.05m (6ft 8.5in)

Height: 2.81m (9ft 2.5in)

Wheelbase: 3.45m (11ft 4in)* Rear overhang: 1.25m (4ft 1in)

■ Maximum authorised weight: 3300kg*

■ Payload: 521kg*

THE VEHICLE

- Engine: 2.2-litre turbo-diesel producing 120bhp
- Transmission: Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive
- Brakes: Servo-assisted discs all round
- Suspension: Front: Independent. Rear: Rigid axle
- Features: Central locking, ABS, ASR, tinted glass, electric windows, driver's airbag, swivelling cab seats - height-adjustable for driver, radio/CD player, trip computer, twin door bins, central storage locker

INSIDE

- Layout: Swivelling cab seats ahead of offside settee and kitchen, nearside forward-facing belted single seat ahead of wardrobe and washroom. Caravan entrance (side sliding door) on UK nearside
- Insulation: Thinsulate all round
- Interior height: 2.00m (6ft 6.5in)

- Sink: Stainless rectangular bowl and drainer under glass lid, mixer tap with swivel spout
- Cooker: Caprice Spinflo slot-in style with one mains electric hotplate and three spark ignition gas rings, grill and oven

 Fridge: Dometic 3-way. Capacity 70 litres

WASHROOM

- Toilet: Thetford electric-flush bench-type with wheeled cassette
- Basin: White drop-down bowl, with stainless mixer tap, mirror-fronted cabinet above
- Shower: White GRP tray and walls,

AUTO-SLEEPER SYMBOL

stainless mixer tap, flexible hose and showerhead

Offside single

Length: 2.00m (6ft 6.5in) ■ Width: 590mm (1ft 11in)

Nearside Single

Length: 1.91m (6ft 3in) ■ Width: 610mm (2ft 0in) Alternative transverse double

Length: 1.80m (5ft 11in) ■ Width: 1.47m (4ft 10in)

Longitudinal double (using cab seats)

Length: 2.00m (6ft 7in) max ■ Width: 1.80m (5ft 11in) max

EQUIPMENT

- Fresh water: Underslung 69 litres (15.2 gallons)
- Waste water: Underslung 40 litres (8.8 gallons)
- Water heater: Truma Ultrastore, gas/mains operation
- Space heater: Eberspacher Airtronic with blown air diesel-mains operation
- Leisure battery: 110 amp hr
- Gas: Capacity 2 x 6kg cylinders
- **Lighting:** 12V. Halogen spots: Two ceiling-mounted and three directional reading lights in lounge, two above kitchen worktop. Diffused ceiling lights, two flushmounted in kitchen, one in washroom. One multi-LED strip outside side sliding door
- Sockets: 230V: Two (below settee and in kitchen) Two (in kitchen and beside

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Fitted to test vehicle

- Base: 2.2-litre (120bhp) engine (£800), alloy wheels (£435)
- Conversion: Awning (£491)

- Base: 2.2-litre (100bhp) engine (FOC), 3.0-litre (157bhp) engine (£2150), cab air-con (£823), cruise control (£165), passenger airbag (£212) metallic paint (£764)
- Conversion: Two-way extractor fan (£136), pull-out roof bed and ladder (£259), optional upholstery (£206), offside overhead lockers (£200), overcab locker (£81)

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mode it will keep the chef cucumber-cool in summer temperatures.

BATHING SPACE

Windows in washrooms can't always be accommodated in motorcaravans, but they are a nice to have (for natural light) when you're putting on your face in the mornings. The Piccolo has one, the Symbol doesn't. The Symbol has, above the bench-type cassette toilet, a drop-down basin, which some folk tend to rail against: however, to me they seem like a clever space-saving solution. There's also separate showerhead and a small mirrored-door cabinet.

The Piccolo wins out in the washroom department as it has generous storage space beneath the fixed washbasin, and two lockers above. It appears much lighter in here thanks to the translucent rear window (complete with

blind) and clear five-way roof vent. Both 'vans' showers could be used to wash off sandy troublemakers before they're allowed inside.

Worth remembering, is that there are two ways into the Piccolo's washroom, either via the living space, or the offside rear door. It's iolly useful when you come back dripping wet and want to keep the carpet dry, but make sure your partner (when they're outside) knows when you're showering, or worse...

BED TIME

There are plenty of layout choices in the Symbol. It sleeps two, but you can have a transverse double at 1.80m (5ft 11in) long, a longitudinal double at 2.0m (6ft 7in), or two singles. The two singles and longitudinal double make use of front seats. I believe you can buy special pads from Auto-Sleepers to correct the difference in levels, though simple

Head-to-head test

12 A kitchen to delight the chef, with an amazing amount of workspace for a 'van of this size

> 13 The light and airy washroom can also be accessed through a rear door

cushions would do.

There's even an infill cushion (on legs) to put between the front seats, but I'd leave this unnecessary, and rather wobbly, bit of gear at home. The double bed is relatively easy to make. Firstly, release the base lock on the single seat, then slide and unfold the back cushions to make a single bed. Now release a lever on the settee base and pull it into the middle, the backrest drops down into the space to complete the double.

The Piccolo has a neat trick up its sleeve. In order to achieve the 6ft 3in double bed, the wardrobe is cantilevered over the foot of the

HEAD-TO-HEAD DATA

- From: £38,450 OTR ■ As tested: £40,373 OTR.
- BASICS (*manufacturer's figures)
- Berths: 2
- Three-point belted seats:
- 4 (including driver)

 Warranty: 3 years base vehicle, 2 years conversion
- Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant: No
- Construction: High roof steel panel van with double-glazed plastic windows
- Length: 5.41m (17ft 9in)
- Width: 2.05m (6ft 8.5in)*
- Height: 2.54m (8ft 4in)* ■ Wheelbase: 3.45m (11ft 4in)*
- Rear overhang: 1.02m (3ft 4in)
- Maximum authorised weight: 3300kg*
- Payload: 300kg (estimated)

THE VEHICLE

- Engine: 2.3-litre TD producing 120bhp ■ Transmission: Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive
- Brakes: Servo-assisted discs all round
- Suspension: Front: Independent. Rear: Rigid axle
- Features: Remote central locking, alarm, electric windows, driver's airbag, heightadjustable swivelling cab seats, radio/CD player, trip computer, twin door bins, central storage locker

INSIDE

- Layout: Swivelling cab seats ahead of offside forward-facing double seat and removable wall-mounted table with single folding leg, rear offside washroom with wardrobe in front, rear nearside kitchen. Caravan entrance (side sliding door) on UK nearside
- Insulation: 50mm mineral wool in walls and roof
- Interior height: 1.91m (6ft 3in)

- Sink: Stainless square bowl and drainer, plastic coated draining rack, vegetable basket, teak chopping board
- Cooker: Smev four-burner spark ignition hob and grill, 230V microwave with grill
- Fridge: Dometic three-way. Capacity 97 litres

WASHROOM

■ Toilet: Thetford swivel-bowl elec-flush cass

MURVI PICCOLO

- Basin: White GRP bowl, with satin finish mixer tap, cupboard below, lockers above
- Shower: White GRP tray under removable carpet, satin mixer tap, flexible hose, chromed showerhead with trigger

BED

Lounge double

Length: 1.91m (6ft 3in) ■ Width: 1.22m (4ft 0in)

EQUIPMENT

- Fresh water tank: Inboard 72ltr (15.9 gallons)
- Waste water: Underslung 45 litres (10 gallons)
- Water and space heater: Webasto DualTop boiler with blown-air, diesel-mains operation
- Leisure battery: 2 x 110 amp hr
- Gas: LPG underfloor tank 9.5kg capacity, dash-mounted contents gauge
- Lighting: 12V: LEDs: Two downlighters over cab, two over sliding door, two adjustable reading lights over bed head, one at rear of lounge. Fluorescent strips: Two in lounge/ diner, three in kitchen, one in washroom.
- Sockets: 230V: Four (two in kitchen, one in lounge/diner, one in wardrobe). 12V: Three (two in lounge/diner, one in kitchen)

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Fitted to test vehicle

- Base: Metallic paint (£382)
- Conversion: 15" built-in flat screen TV (£588), Teleco directional aerial (£229), alternative 97-litre fridge (£118), 230V microwave (£259), Seitz Duette cab blinds (£347)

Other options

- Base: 3.0-litre (157bhp) engine (£1175), ComfortMatic Automatic - only available with 3-litre engine and including ESP ASR and MBA (£1675), ESP (£382), ASR (£129), 3500kg MAW chassis (£940), cab air-con (£934), cruise control (£170), parking sensors (£253), alloy wheels (£482), passenger airbag (£212)
- Conversion: 60-litre fridge with four-burner hob/grill/oven (FOC), 77-litre fridge with fourburner hob/grill (FOC), 110-litre compressor fridge with hob/grill (£388), Nature Pure water purification system (£294), wind-out awning (£529), 85W solar panel (£588), rear ladder (£523), top-box (£323), bike rack (£294). NB: many other options can be specified at time of order, contact converter for details

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- 14 Versatile Symbol offers double or single beds
- 15 A large shallow drawer under the rear floor will conceal your valuables
- 16 The rear step is a great help for climbing aboard, but be careful when reversing



bed, allowing a permanent cushioned surface beneath for your feet. The forward-facing (RIB) seat has a base that pivots forward, through 180 degrees, so that it presents its flat underside. The backrest folds forward, again presenting a smooth surface and that's it; bed made. It's possible to make this bed in seconds, which will please the legions of folk that are somewhat allergic to the bedmaking process. Since the bed doesn't require the use of the cab seats, they can be used as your night-time clothes rest - handy for the morning.

STORE ROOM

Storage in the Symbol consists of wardrobe, with drawer beneath, the space under the seats (one of which has a pull-out wire drawer), the overcab and two overhead lockers. There's also a small Tambour-door cabinet with four glasses and fixings for two bottles. A high shelf around the lounge, with a restraining lip, proved very useful for easily-to-hand gear.

I'd ask a handyman to fit a similar restraint lip to the high narrow shelf that's across the cab entrance, creating some more valuable niche storage space.

When you open the rear doors of the Symbol you find a large shallow lockable drawer, which makes use of empty space beneath the floor. Sadly, it won't take tins (my first thought), but valuables like laptops, passports and cash would be safe there, as (once the rear doors are closed) it's not easy to find. Oops, I've given the game away!

The Piccolo has a large wardrobe, two overhead lockers and storage under the double bench seat. The bedding will store in the big space behind the forward-facing seat and under the cantilevered wardrobe. There's loads of room there for more than just bedding though. As two pillow-shaped upholstered cushions are provided in the Murvi, you'll only have to stow pillowcases.

There's enough space in the kitchen for your provisions and there's crockery and cutlery in their own dedicated storage cupboards. A deep locker lies beneath one of the oblong-shaped cushions at the end of the twin rear seating on the offside. It's big enough for two laptops, while hiding beneath the other cushion, is the pair of leisure batteries.

A bit of kit that I really appreciate and would like to find in all motorcaravans is the strongbox beneath the passenger seat.

LIFE SUPPORT

Plenty of lights in the right places distinguish these two British 'vans. The Symbol's light-count is eleven, pretty good for a camper of these dimensions. There are two 230V mains and two 12V sockets, plus a TV aerial socket. Best of all a no cost option is fitted, on the side of the wardrobe: an admittedly rather small (10in), Avtex flat screen TV/DVD player combo.

A diesel fuelled/mains electric Eberspacher unit takes care of space heating in the Symbol, with a gas/mains electric Truma boiler heating the water. Two 6kg cylinders of gas can be carried and one 110amp hr battery is provided; I'd be happier with two. Pleated blinds are fitted to the side windows with curtains across the cab and rear windows.

An amazing thirteen, energy efficient lights, illuminate the Piccolo, with a mixture of battery-preserving LED spots and fluorescents; the kitchen is particularly well lit. Power provision is generous, with four 230V mains,

and three 12V sockets. An optional 15in TV/DVD player combo was inset into the side of the test Piccolo's wardrobe. Two 110 amp hr batteries are standard - useful for long weekends on show grounds - where there's no access to mains electric - and for travelling in winter when many campsites are shut.

A gas-saving (powered by diesel from the vehicle's tank) Webasto DualTop 6.0kW combined water and space heater is fitted to the Murvi. It also has the advantages of 230V 1.20kW space heating and a hot water immersion heater. You can use the system when travelling so, no need for cold drafts from the rear when the temperatures dip and you can shower as soon as you arrive. A refillable (underslung) gas tank frees up space in the interior. A device on the dashboard informs you (via a float system) of the necessity for a re-fill.

CONCLUSION

You won't go far wrong with either of these two niche market-capturing motorcaravans, but let's nit-pick at the differences. They seem to point to the Auto-Sleeper as a great motorhome for the traditionalist, who would admire its conventional interior design. It would suit a couple who like to stick to electric hook-up-equipped campsites and take most of their holidays in the summer months. With only a single leisure battery, a long stay on an out-of-the-way campsite with no hook-up, might have them worrying about the state of their power supply.

Flush-fitted single glazing (in privacy glass) looks stunning, but if cooking when it's cold outside, the condensation could be annoying. Overnighting in a cold spring or autumn, let alone winter, you will wake to wet windows. At three in the morning you'll wish the windows were double-glazed. There's a roof vent provided for ventilation, but no fan.

Pete also complained he found it a bit dark inside - even on a sunny day.

The Piccolo, with its comprehensive list of safety equipment supplied as standard (you've got to read it to appreciate just how well equipped it is) will attract those who require a highly specified 'van in which they can confidently spend time away from an electricity supply. Two passengers can be carried in the rear, which is important for some, while speedy bed making will win approval too. The Piccolo's ability to heat the water as you're travelling, mean's you can wash or shower instantly on arrival. It's horses-for-courses - the Piccolo should suit the more dedicated traveller, the Symbol is more suitable for a traditional British motorcaravanning lifestyle.

VEHICLES LOANED FOR

EVALUATION BY:

Auto-Sleeper Symbol
Marquis Devon, Lee Mill, Ivybridge,
Devon PL21 9EG (tel: 01752 892977;
web site:

www.marquismotorhomes.co.uk)

Murvi Piccolo

Murvi Motorcaravans, 4 East Way, Lee Mill Industrial Estate, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 9GE (tel: 01752 892200; web site: www.murvi.co.uk)









- 17 A quick and easy-to-assemble bed allows the small table to support your morning cuppa
- 18 Still plenty of room for your posh frocks in the wardrobe, despite the table's presence
- 19 Under the cantilevered wardrobe is a great place to store bedding and more
- 20 An underslung, refillable gas tank frees up space in the interior

