



QUEST FOR PERFECTION

Elddis Autoquest 155 on 2.2-litre Peugeot Boxer

A new addition to the award-winning Autoquest range features a fixed bed layout. Is it as good as the others?



As a judge for the Caravan Club's Design and Drive competition for the last two years, I've been very impressed with the Elddis Autoquest contestants. Produced in Consett, Co Durham, they combine good quality construction and fittings, with a no-nonsense design ethos and extraordinary value for money. It's no surprise, then, that an Autoquest was overall Design and Drive winner in 2008, while others came

second and third in their class in 2009. Elddis has made huge investments in recent years in factory, design and testing facilities, claiming to be the first to have gained EC Whole Vehicle Type Approval for its motorhome range.

Here, we test the latest addition to the range, and the first with a fixed bed layout. The 155 is built, like the others, on the Peugeot Boxer base vehicle, with a low-profile coachbuilt body.

At just over seven metres (over 23 feet) in length, this is quite a sizable vehicle, with an impressive rear overhang and a neatly integrated

low profile forehead. It has, to me, a rather austere look - with its dark-tinted, Polyplastic windows and discreet grey and black decals, contrasting with dazzling white paintwork and bumpers. Insofar as a simple white box ever can, I also think it looks tasteful.

The sandwich construction body is faced with flat alloy panels (in previous years' models they were ridged) and is built using a Witter rear frame extension (designed to take a Witter towbar) on the standard chassis cab. The chassis has MAW of 3500kg, giving the 'van a respectable payload of 650kg.



Words & pictures
by Andrew Bromley

1 View forwards,
a comfortable lounge
and very effective
cab curtains

2 To the rear, the
kitchen gives way to the
reason-to-buy fixed
double bed

3 For a big motorhome the
155 is quite manoeuvrable



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AT A GLANCE

- **PRICE FROM:** £32,694 OTR
- **BERTHS:** 2
- **BASE VEHICLE:** Peugeot Boxer chassis cab with Witter rear extension
- **LAYOUT:** Swivelling cab seats ahead of twin-sofa lounge, offside kitchen, longitudinal fixed bed at offside rear. Nearside wardrobe, vanity area with washbasin, washroom at nearside rear
- **ECONOMY:** 30.5mpg

QUEST'S CAB

Normally, the 155 (like the rest of the range) is powered by the base level powerplant (100bhp, five-speed gearbox), but the test 'van had the optional 120bhp motor with six-speed gearbox. One might assume that having this higher output engine would be an advantage - but it ain't necessarily so.

The cab is standard Peugeot fare - the only mod cons being electrically adjustable mirrors and steering wheel-mounted radio controls. No air-conditioning, no cruise control, no passenger airbag - all are optional extras from Peugeot - but one must remember the reasonable price (starting at £32,694 on the road). The driving position is excellent and the seats very comfortable over long distances, the dash-mounted gearlever falls easily to hand and the big door mirrors give a good view aft. With no window in the rear panel, the rear-view mirror on the windscreen was redundant: a reversing camera would be an advantageous addition.

QUEST'S QUOTA

The cab seats swivel easily, but only partially - obstructed by the two inward-facing

settees behind them. Next, on the offside, lies the kitchen (opposite the caravan door) and behind that, the longitudinal fixed bed. Alongside, in the nearside rear corner, is the washroom, forward, a dressing area with a low-set washbasin and mirror, backing onto the large wardrobe. Despite having comfortable lounge seating for at least four, this large 'van only has seatbelts in the cab, and is a pure two-berth. I looked hopefully at the settees, in case they pulled out, to make a transverse a double bed... but no.

QUEST TO THE WEST

We decided a quick jaunt to south west Scotland would afford the chance to test 'our' Autoquest on all types of road (from motorway to tiny seaside lanes, and twisting A-roads to dual-carriageways), while revisiting old family holiday haunts. I found the 'van handled nearly impeccably throughout, let down only by a tendency to sway after passing juggernauts on the M6.

Faster cars sometimes barged through on fast A-roads, imagining this to be another white 'snail' to be passed at all costs, but would then

find themselves embarrassed by said snail tailing them through the bends and straights.

This particular 'van had the more powerful 120bhp engine, but in my experience the standard 100 horsepower unit is perfectly acceptable in everyday driving. Moreover, testing this example in reverse on a hill produced the juddering problem seemingly endemic to the six-speed transmission. I would choose the (less problematical) five-speed box and lower output engine every time. If buying this particular 'van, I would like the lower ratio reverse gear now offered by Peugeot (fitted as a warranty modification), as it might help a bit...

The trip computer indicated an overall diesel consumption of 30.5mpg, which I felt was very acceptable.

These Sevel-built vans (Fiats, Pugs and Citroens) all have fairly stiff suspension, which can translate into a noisy interior. The Autoquest was quite restrained however, once the chattering hob-cover had been muffled with a tea towel, the main features being rattles from high-level cupboards and a banging kitchen cupboard door, whose magnetic catch didn't!

On Test Eddis Autoquest 155

4 A homely breakfast at the versatile free-standing table

5 Table hides in its own neat cupboard

6 Kitchen is well equipped, but we would prefer a fixed stainless steel drainer

7 The bed was comfy, but too short for tall me

8 Dual-aspect TV cupboard allows viewing from the bed or, as here, the rest of the living area

9 Unsupported mattress' foot sagged when sitting to use the vanity washbasin

10 The washbasin lives outside the washroom

11 In the washroom, the toilet lives beyond the showering area



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QUEST FOR A REST

The interior ambience in the '09 Autoquest range is restrained: a quiet pattern of browns, greys and beige (on good quality sprung upholstery), warm wood-framed furniture (montreal maple) and a pleasing wallpaper called andaman silk.

Removable carpet sections cover a wood-strip-style vinyl floor and lined heavy-duty glossy-brown curtains line the windows (except in kitchen and washroom). Overall, I found the effect very pleasing and restful. Quality of furnishings, fittings and surfaces is high and the finish is good - this feels nothing like a budget 'van.

The twin settees are 1.37m (4ft 6ins) long and afford comfortable feet-up lounging (which could be even better if there were larger wooden end panels to lean against) - cushions are supplied. Sitting facing inwards, four people could congregate around the (free-standing) table without feet becoming entwined and one more could be entertained on one of the swivelled cab-seats (there isn't foot space for two). Four adjustable reading lights (which become very hot) and a central fluorescent dome light were backed up, on this 'van, by an optional Heki rooflight. Although the top-hung windows were tinted, they didn't darken the

interior unduly, so all was quite light and bright.

The table hides in a tailor-made cupboard between the kitchen and bedroom. It fits quite snugly and isn't that easy to remove, but once out it's reasonably lightweight, and stands solid on two foldout legs. It fits neatly in the space between the settees and, of course, can be used al fresco if weather permits (as it did for our trip).

QUEST FOR A RESTAURANT

For panel van conversion people like us, it was a novelty to use reasonably sized kitchen facilities. Rona particularly liked the fact that the unit seemed set up for tall people - some might even find it a bit high. There's a good-sized rectangular sink, with a sturdy Whale mixer tap, a supplied plastic bowl and removable plastic drainer. We would prefer a stainless steel drainer to be integrated with the sink - there'd be plenty of room. Alongside, is the three-burner hob, which has pushbutton ignition, as does the Spinflo oven/grill below. We've rarely used grills in 'vans - normally, they are too small and don't cook evenly - however, this one cooked small rashers of bacon satisfactorily. Both hob and sink have hinged, Chinchilla, textured glass covers

- suitable, 'tis said, for use as chopping boards.

Below the sink lies the 92-litre Dometic three-way fridge, which proved quite sufficient to swallow all our perishables. No light confirms when the fridge is working on mains electricity, which oversight became evident when a power cut occurred on site and we couldn't tell. However, there is a gauge to tell you when gas power is ignited.

Work-surface area is good, and increases enormously if you fold down the top part of the partition twixt kitchen and bedroom. Unfortunately, this then cantilevers over the bed and needs better support before one would dare stand heavy pans on it. On this prototype 'van, the 230V socket was on the bedroom side of the partition, so to boil an electric kettle the partition/work-surface must be lowered. In production another socket will be fitted over the kitchen unit.

Lighting is good - there's a 12V Lumo dome fluorescent ceiling-mounted light, plus a small striplight over the sink, and a widow serving the kitchen: a fan-assisted vent in the ceiling is optional - as standard, a five-way vent is fitted.

Two high-level cupboards are suitable for holding food/crockery, but like all the upper lockers, they're merely closed by sprung



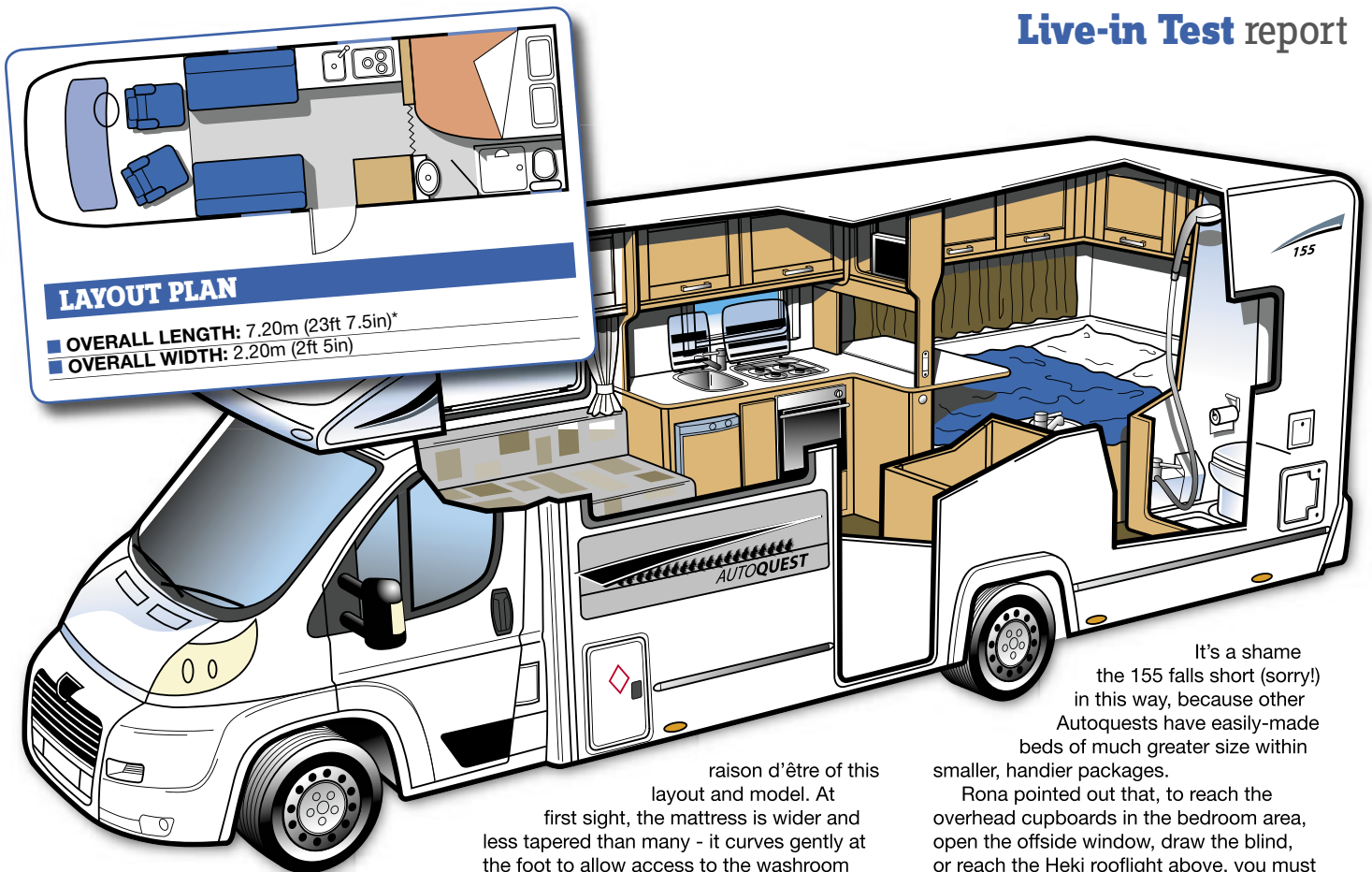
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hinges, without catches. This bothered us. Not only do they rattle, but springs weaken over time and in any accident we fear the air could be full of lethal, flying muesli boxes!

Underneath the oven, there's a good-sized cupboard for heavier items: a full-sized cooker is a cost-option, but would invade this. Between fridge and cooker is a tall, narrow, shelved cupboard (containing a small cutlery-drawer) - the one whose door banged when on the move.

QUEST FOR A KIP

Behind the work-surface/partition, lies the bedroom, with its fixed longitudinal bed - the

raison d'être of this layout and model. At first sight, the mattress is wider and less tapered than many - it curves gently at the foot to allow access to the washroom alongside. However, there was a big problem for me, as this bed, measures only 1.86 metres (6ft 1.5in) long. I spent a restful night in this bed at home (before we travelled) lying diagonally, but there was no question of sleeping à deux. That's why I had looked so wistfully at the twin settees - they would make such a good transverse bed, at over two metres long and wider than the fixed bed, too.

Never mind, we took my trusty Thermarest inflatable camping mattress and I slept quite well, down on the floor between the settees. This left 'her ladyship' sole possession of the bed: there's gallantry for you! She pronounced it very comfy!

It's a shame the 155 falls short (sorry!) in this way, because other Autoquests have easily-made beds of much greater size within smaller, handier packages.

Rona pointed out that, to reach the overhead cupboards in the bedroom area, open the offside window, draw the blind, or reach the Heki rooflight above, you must clamber over the bed in a most undignified fashion. On the plus side, there's plenty of headroom below the high-level cupboards to enable you to sit up in bed and read (using the two adjustable under-cupboard reading lights), or watch television. The TV sits in a cupboard above the partition, which is open to the rear, next to an aerial point and high-level socket. This cupboard also opens to the front, so you could watch telly from the lounge instead.

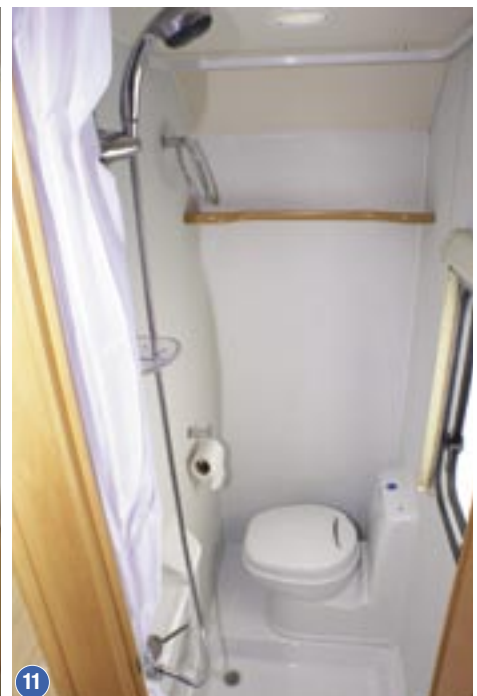
A disadvantage of the bed design is that the mattress sits on a slatted base, which doesn't extend the full width of the mattress - seven inches or so are completely unsupported at the cut-away foot of the bed. If you sit there, to



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On Test Eddis Autoquest 155

WE LIKED

- Excellent cab seat comfort
- Good-handling base vehicle
- Spare wheel as standard
- Good quality interior fittings and finish
- Comfortable settees
- Height of kitchen unit
- Usable shower
- Separate water supply for toilet
- Useful freestanding table

WE WOULD HAVE LIKED

- A stainless steel draining board
- Bench-type toilet, and (drop-down) washbasin *within* washroom
- Latches for cupboards
- Larger freshwater tank and means of filling it manually

WE DISLIKED

- Bed too short for me
- Unsupported overhang for mattress
- Reversing judder on 120bhp engine/six-speed gearbox
- Need to bring Aquaroll through interior



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access the washbasin, set low for that purpose, the mattress sags badly. The area at the foot of the bed containing the washbasin, mirror and another ceiling dome-light can be considered a dressing-room, as it can be separated from the rest of the interior by the partition and a folding concertina screen.

QUEST FOR A SHOWER

We reckon water doesn't mix too well with 'van interiors, so an onboard shower isn't a high priority for us. Anyway, I'm too tall to fit in most shower cubicles! However, the Autoquest washroom, though not huge and though equipped with a shower curtain (potentially cold and clammy to the naked torso), seemed promising, so I had a go. The curtain wrapped around to protect most of the walls and fittings, though not the side-wall, clad in textured wallboard (a smooth plastic surface would

be easier to clean). Water from the Truma Ultrastore boiler can be heated by electricity alone, but apparently, takes time. We, therefore, followed Eddis' advice to boost it with a blast of gas too and the water was quick to become hot. The Whale tap gave good control of flow and temperature, and an excellent shower was enjoyed. The single drain in the shower tray is to the rear, and we were parked slightly nose-down (so we could sleep comfortably with heads up), so the water didn't drain away. Repositioning the drain-hole towards the front of the tray would be an obvious remedy - either that, or fitting two drain outlets.

The shower hose is long enough to pass through the (translucent) opening window, so sandy feet, etc, could be washed outside.

The washroom also houses a Thetford C200CW swivel toilet, with its own water supply, so desirable flush additives can be used. Ideally,

we would prefer the bench-type version, with a drop-down washbasin above (as used in some other Autoquests), making better use of space. Within the washroom there's a toilet-roll holder, towel-ring and a shelf, plus moulded soap dish and shampoo bottle holder. A halogen downlighter and a small air vent in the roof are fitted and the window has a blind. There's no washbasin: that - as previously mentioned - is outside the washroom door, in the dressing area. As the dressing area isn't waterproofed in any way, you must try to avoid splashing.

QUEST STORE

You're given a useful payload of 650kg and there's plenty of storage space. In particular, the fixed bed has a large locker underneath, accessed either through an outside drop-down door, or by lifting the bed-base (which rises easily on a gas strut). It's not particularly deep (a price paid for the bed being at comfortable sitting height), but carries a useful amount of clutter, including the (optional) Aquaroll. Under the washbasin is a shelved cupboard - useful for toiletries - and there's a large wardrobe with a generous hanging drop of 1.15 metres (3ft 9in). The settee bases can be accessed via drop-down front doors, or from above - the seats rising on simple ratchet stays, which worked well. The offside base is home to the Truma Ultrastore boiler and assorted electrical units, and the outside battery store encroaches too, leaving limited irregular storage space. The nearside seat base will hold bulky shoes and the like.

Up front above the cab, there's a useful full-width cupboard and below that (at unvary head-height) an open shelf. At either side is a big pocket, handy for books maps and other oddments, but probably quite awkward for shorter folk to reach.

In the lounge are four high-level cupboards, two more in the kitchen and three large and one small in the bedroom. All have those sprung hinges...

QUEST'S KIT

Eddis has made some interesting equipment selections for its 2009 range, particularly in water loading and storage. The underslung (uninsulated) freshwater tank is small (45 litres) - one shower used three-quarters of its capacity. However, a submersible pump with an Aquasource connector is supplied, so you can leave an Aquaroll attached to the water inlet, automatically replenishing the small tank, as water is used.

Alternatively, a lay-flat hose allows connection direct to a mains tap. The waste tank, having the same limited capacity, requires a Wastemaster portable tank or bucket as backup. The same kit used with touring caravans, these systems do involve carrying extra equipment around. Irritatingly, an Aquaroll won't fit through the narrow exterior door of the underbed locker, so must be removed through the interior of the 'van. There's no alternative means of manually filling the 'van's water tank, which we would much prefer.

Water heating is by Truma Ultrastore boiler, and standard space heating is supplied by a Truma gas-powered unit. However 'our' 'van had the optional Ultraheat S3002 gas/electric heater with blown-air, delivered through vents in washroom, bedroom and living area.

With uninsulated underslung water tanks, this 'van isn't intended for winter use - yet, as the loo has its own water supply there are



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possibilities. Drain water system and boiler, put suitable anti-freeze in the toilet's flush tank, carry your drinking water in a water porter inside the 'van, and you're away. The 'van body is well insulated, so you should stay snug.

Controls are well considered. The fuse box is easily accessed through the door on the offside settee base, with the controls for the heaters, pump and auxiliary power system handily placed on the wall of the wardrobe. The gauge for the water tank appears to operate by float, and seemed more accurate than most, but when filling from the Aquaroll it's unnecessary, as the pump automatically switches off when the tank's full.

Gas supplies are contained in a locker accessed from outside (2 x 7kg cylinders are carried) and gas isolation taps are positioned within the bottom kitchen cupboard.

Access to the 'van is via an extending step. Manual is standard, but ours was electrically operated, via a switch situated low down in the entrance. This retracts automatically when the engine is switched on. There's an internal moulded step and a grab handle too, so access is easy. The test 'van had a flyscreen door (optional), which worked well against the Scottish midges, save for two small gaps by the door handle.

The 85 amp hr leisure battery lives in a locker under the offside settee, accessed from outside, which also houses the mains hook-up point.

Blinds (and flyscreens) at the windows

throughout the 'van pull downwards, leaving a strip at the bottom where light infiltrates in the morning - which might irritate some: on the other hand, the cab window curtains, though not very free-running, are like black-out drapes and the best I've come across. Also, these cause no blind spots when driving, as fitted cab blinds can.

Finally, a welcome bonus - Elddis supplies as standard, a spare wheel, easily accessible, under the tail.

END OF THE QUEST

Clearly, this particular Autoquest wouldn't suit us, because of the short bed length and the lack of any alternative. We also had doubts about the washbasin being outside the washroom and the unsupported section of mattress. However, if the bed dimensions are sufficient (as always, when in doubt try it out) and you desire a fixed bed layout, this 'van could be just the ticket. Although large (certainly too long for ordinary parking spaces), it's actually very easy to drive - even, we found, down small country lanes - and quite manoeuvrable.

Would I consider buying an Autoquest if I were in the market for a coachbuilt? Yes, definitely. The price is right, the quality of furnishings and fittings is excellent and the levels of comfort and space for living are great. Alternatively, There are eight models in the range, some of them under six metres in length, and most have long, easily-made beds!

12 A good shower was enjoyed - even by tall me!

13 Slatted bed base rises on gas struts to reveal useful storage underneath, with access from outside

14 Offside lounge seat base houses water heater and leisure battery box - the fuse box is easily accessible.

15 Electrically-operated step, with inner step and grab handle makes access easy

VEHICLE SUPPLIED BY

Elddis, Delves Lane, Consett, Co. Durham DH8 7PE (tel: 01207 699000; web site: www.elddis.co.uk)

WE STAYED AT

Beeswing Caravan Park, Kirkgunzeon, Dumfries, Scotland DG2 8JL (tel: 01387 760242)



LIVE-IN TEST DATA

TYPE

Low profile Coachbuilt

PRICE

- **From:** £32,694 OTR
- **As tested:** £35,124 OTR

BASICS

- **Vehicle:** Peugeot Boxer chassis cab with Witter rear extension
- **Berths:** 2
- **Three-point belted seats:** 2 (including driver)
- **Warranty:** Two years base vehicle, three years conversion, five years water ingress

CONSTRUCTION

Alloy-clad sandwich construction coachbuilt with GRP mouldings. Caravan entrance on UK nearside

DIMENSIONS

- **Length:** 7.20m (23ft 7.5in)
- **Width:** 2.20m (7ft 2.5ins)
- **Height:** 2.99m (9ft 10in)
- **Wheelbase:** 3.80m (12ft 5.5in)
- **Rear Overhang:** 2.37m (7ft 9.5in)
- **Maximum authorised weight:** 3500kg
- **Payload:** 650kg (after allowance for weight of driver, full fuel tank, 90 per cent fresh water, two gas cylinders)

INSIDE

Swivelling cab seats ahead of twin-sofa lounge, offside kitchen, longitudinal fixed bed at offside rear. Nearside wardrobe, vanity area with washbasin, washroom at nearside rear

THE VEHICLE

- **Engine:** 2.2-litre turbo-diesel producing 88kW (120bhp) @ 3500rpm
- **Transmission:** Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive
- **Fuel consumption:** 30.5mpg
- **Brakes:** Servo-assisted discs all round with ABS
- **Suspension:** Front: Independent with coil springs. Rear: rigid axle with leaf springs
- **Features:** Electric mirrors, trip computer,



adjustable steering column, door bins, central storage locker, radio/CD player with steering wheel-mounted controls, variable wiper delay

LOUNGING AND DINING

Swivelling cab seats and twin, inward-facing settees give comfortable seating for five. Free-standing table offers dining for four

KITCHEN

Main unit includes pan cupboard and shelved cupboard, two high-level cupboards above Sink: Argent rectangular stainless steel with hinged Chinchilla glass cover, swivelling mixer tap, plastic bowl, removable drainer

- **Cooker:** Three-burner Spinflo hob with hinged Chinchilla glass cover, Duplex grill/oven, all with electronic ignition
- **Fridge:** Dometic RM7360 three-way. Capacity 92 litres

WASHROOM

Vanity washbasin with mixer tap and mirror situated outside washroom. Thetford C200CW electrically-operated swivel-bowl toilet with own flush-water supply. Shower mixer, single-outlet shower tray with anti-bacterial non-slip shower mat, shower curtain, towel ring, toilet-roll holder soap dish, shampoo holder

BED

- **Fixed double**
- **Length:** 1.86m (6ft 1in)
- **Width:** 1.34m (4ft 5in) tapering to 1.09m (3ft 7in)

STORAGE

Above cab: Full-width cupboard, map shelf under, pocket shelves on each side. Lounge: Four high-level cupboards, two under-settee lockers - both with access from front and above. Vanity area: shelved cupboard under washbasin. Bed area: high-level TV cupboard accessible from both sides, four cupboards above bed, bed

base lifts for access to locker beneath and can also accessed externally. Large wardrobe

LIFE SUPPORT

- **Fresh Water:** Underslung (uninsulated) 45 litres (9.9 gallons)
- **Waste Water:** Underslung (uninsulated) 45 litres (9.9 gallons)
- **Water heating:** Truma Ultrastore boiler, gas-mains operation
- **Space heating:** Truma convector with blown-air and Ultraheat, gas-mains operation
- **Leisure Battery:** 85 amp hr
- **Gas:** 2x 7Kg cylinders
- **Lighting:** Lounge: 4 swivelling reading lights over settees, fluorescent ceiling-mounted light. Kitchen: fluorescent ceiling-mounted light, strip-light over unit. Bedroom: 2 swivelling reading lights over bed-head, fluorescent ceiling-mounted light above washbasin area. Washroom: 1 halogen downlighter
- **Sockets:** 230V: 2 (in bedroom, TV cupboard). 12V: 1 (in TV cupboard)
- **Control Panel:** Separate controls mounted on wooden panel to right of caravan doorway. Displays for voltage, fresh water level, waste water tank. Auxiliary equipment switch, pump switch, 12V master switch, on left side-located panel adjoining door
- **Blinds/Curtains:** Top-hung blinds/flyscreens to all lounge, kitchen and bedroom windows. Blind to (translucent) washroom window. Curtains to cab and all windows other than washroom and kitchen
- **Badged as NCC EN1646 Compliant:** Yes

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

- Fitted to test vehicle
- **Base:** 120bhp engine and six-speed gearbox (£1115)
 - **Conversion:** Electrically-operated step (£250), flyscreen door (£180), Ultraheat mains operation for space heating (£295), Heki II rooflight - two fitted (£295 each)
- Other options
- **Base:** Towbar and electrics (£395)
 - **Conversion:** Full-sized oven (£295), Status aerial (£160)

