



ROLL MODEL

George Hinton believes this six-berth family motorhome sets a fine example

Vehicle supplied for test by:
Auto-Trail VR Ltd,
Trigano House,
Genesis Way,
Europarc, Grimsby
DN37 9TU. Call
01472 571000.

Auto-Roller was a CI (Caravans International) brand until it was acquired by the French Trigano Group over a decade ago. Trigano is now Europe's leading motorhome builder overseeing 15 brands, so customers benefit from a big research and development budget as well as economies of scale. Hence we have this six-berth family coachbuilt starting at around £36,000, though unfortunately the Chancellor demands another £7,000-odd in VAT from you before you drive it away.

CONSTRUCTION AND LAYOUT

Auto-Rollers are built at beautiful San Gimignano in Italy using the sandwich-construction principle. A big selling point is the Extreme Protection System

(EXPS), which gives maker Roller Team the confidence to offer a 10-year body integrity warranty.

High-density Styrofoam is utilised throughout, while extruded plastic framing is used in vulnerable areas. Pine continues to be the main body panel framing medium, but the entire perimeter is laminated with plastic, making it resistant to water.

On top of this, the entire under-surface of the 75mm-thick floor has a waterproof protective covering, while garage versions have a glass-fibre rear overhang. Walls, roof and rear panel are externally skinned in high-gloss GRP, while the lower skirts are moulded from ABS.

The base for this 746 test vehicle is the Fiat Ducato 130bhp Camping Car variant, although some models are built on the Ford Transit.

Layout is conventional but versatile – rear lounge seating can be used as a double or two single beds, while there is an extendable front dinette and a truly massive overcab bed. Importantly, there is a seatbelt for every berth. UK spec includes right-hand drive and a grill/oven, but the caravan body remains 'Continental-handed', with offside door.

ON THE ROAD

A proven base, the Ducato can reach 50mph in 15 seconds, and performance is only hampered when the engine has to push that huge overcab pod through the air at more than 60mph. If you don't need the room, low-profile alternatives are offered.

The ride is comfortable, solid and rattle-free. Maximum weight and MRO figures of 3,500kg and 3,075kg leave an adequate

payload of 425kg for family use, although six average 75kg adults could take it over the limit without luggage. The MTPLM is upgraded with the 150bhp engine option.

Payload is boosted by reducing the fuel tank by 30 litres to 60, but water tank capacity remains generous at 110 litres. Three-point seatbelts are fitted to the forward-facing dinette seating, with lap belts only on the opposing pair.

Electric mirrors and air conditioning are part of the Clima Plus Pack (£1,140), and our demonstrator also had the Lux Pack, comprising colour rear-view camera with 7in monitor, 95A auxiliary battery, 100W solar panel, flyscreen door and rear bike rack (adding 17in to the overall length).

Standard equipment includes remote-controlled cab central locking, electric windows, ABS brakes, twin airbags and cruise control.

LIVING ABOARD

Inside, practical plank-effect wood-grained vinyl covers the level floor, accessed by two inset steps. Meanwhile, dark walnut-effect furniture, with contrasting ivory locker doors and chrome highlights, looks decidedly classy. Dark brown 'Aida' upholstery, with contrasting cream faux suede-effect bolsters and trim, adds to the effect, putting some premium models in the shade.

Ample storage under the rear settees is accessed only by lifting the beech-slatted, hinged metal frames and cushions – there are no helping gas struts. The centre of the rear sofa houses pull-out slats for the double bed conversion and is also part of the large through-storage locker accessed externally on both sides of the vehicle.

Although one rear roof locker is devoted to a drop-down TV bracket, one remains for each occupant plus a couple of >>



Overcab bed offers generous headroom



U-shaped lounge combines space with comfort

Auto-Roller comes with a 10-year body warranty



Dinette seat usefully extends

TECHNICAL

RATINGS

CONSTRUCTION & LAYOUT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
ON THE ROAD										
LIVING ABOARD										
KITCHEN										
WASHROOM										
SLEEPING										
VERDICT										

RRP/as tested	£43,943/£46,833 OTR
Base vehicle	Fiat Ducato 35 Light LWB
Engine	2.3-litre turbodiesel
Power	130bhp (95.5kW) @ 3,600rpm
Torque	236lb ft (320Nm) @ 1,800rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, FWD
Fuel/tank/econ	Diesel/13.2gal (60 litres)/20.65mpg*
Overall length	24ft 7in (7.33m)
Overall width	7ft 7in (2.31m) exc mirrors
Overall height	10ft 6in (3.2m)
Max internal height	7ft 8in (2.34m)
MRO	3,075kg (60.5cwt)
MTPLM	3,500kg (68.9cwt)
User payload	425kg (8.4cwt)
Berths	6
NCC approved	Yes
Caravan Club insurance	The Club's Motorhome Insurance is tailored to the needs of members using our 25 years of know-how. We guarantee to beat your renewal premium by at least £25**.

*Includes fuel used for five nights' heating. Other figures supplied by manufacturer

**Premium Saving Guarantee. Subject to proof of existing renewal, including cover and price (eg a copy of your renewal notice), when cover is on a like-for-like basis. Please note, terms and conditions, eg excess(es), may vary from your current insurer. Courtesy car is subject to availability. Subject to terms and conditions and the Insurer's acceptance of the Risk. The Club's Car Insurance is arranged for The Club by Devitt Insurance Services Limited, Insurance Brokers. The Caravan Club and Devitt Insurance Services Limited are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The current average premium paid by members under The Caravan Club's Motorhome Insurance scheme is £253.

Club insurance: 0800 028 4809 • Info: rollerteammotorhomes.co.uk



Cabinetwork is stylish



Table for four – at a pinch

The giant Skyline front sunroof is an unexpected feature and one of three opening windows in the Luton. Excellent lighting is by LEDs throughout.

KITCHEN

Generous at 5ft long, there's adequate work surface for meal preparation in the kitchen, though at the expense of a draining board. Cooking is by compact three-ring gas hob and Thetford's Duplex oven/grill.

The round stainless sink is a decent size, although it has no cover, while the mixer tap is plastic. The cutlery drawer is large but the fridge is on the small side for a six-berth at 100 litres (although it is the high-spec Dometic 8000 series). A wind-up roof vent complements the window where air circulation is concerned.

Storage comprises a deep pan locker below the oven and another deep, shelved locker below the cutlery drawer.

For your mains electrical needs, a pair of 13A sockets are mounted at 45° to the right of the hob, but don't waste time looking for others elsewhere – there aren't any. Lighting is excellent, with a continuous strip of LEDs along the length of the top lockers.

WASHROOM

As compact as they come, releasing space elsewhere, this washroom compromises the 746 somewhat as a family van. Only 3ft 6½in long and 3ft wide, you are obliged to swivel our favourite Thetford 263 flat-top toilet to face the rear when in use and put your feet in the 21½in square shower tray. The shower area has a marine-ply duckboard to level it with the adjacent floor and incorporates the rectangular washbasin which has a pull-out shower spray in its mixer tap. It doesn't matter how much water you splash around

while washing as it will find its way down the single shower drain. Folding acrylic doors enclose the shower.

Surprisingly lacking in accessories, there's just a double gown hook high on the side wall and a chromed hanging rack for wet things that swings down from the shower ceiling. For storage, there are a pair of lockers.

There's an excellent mixture of gentle and bright artificial lighting, though we could not get the halogen downlighters above the basin working (the van had been to Greece prior to our test, so it may have been simple bulb failure). There's also a low-level blue LED on the circuit of night-lights throughout. A five-way rooflight in the shower gives extra daylight and ventilation.

SLEEPING

The 746 won't cramp the tallest individuals, as even the shortest bed, on the dinette, is 6ft 10in long! The enormous Luton bed is 7ft x 5ft 2in and has a three-inch thick mattress on a slatted base with 28in of headroom. A ladder and safety net are also provided. The rear lounge double is 7ft 1in x 6ft 1in, while there is also the option of a pair of 2ft 6in wide x 6ft 1in single beds.

Luton occupants have access to useful storage troughs above the regular roof lockers plus a wall stowage pocket.

Pull-down flyscreens and blinds can be used with open windows at night, while there are net curtains and pillow shams in two-tone beige to further enhance the quality feel. The cab windows have internal silvered insulating screens, while the blue LED floor-level night lighting mentioned earlier is a neat touch in this price bracket. ■

VERDICT

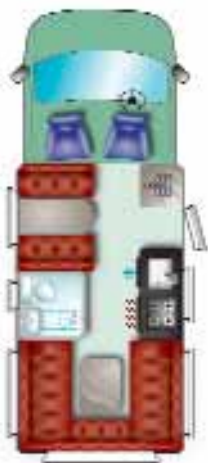
The versatile 746 is ideal as both a family and a 'grandparents' van – the latter can use it lazily as a fixed-bed model, but with the potential to take grandchildren and their parents away, too. Options include the usual Fiat engine upgrades, with the Comfort-Matic robotised gearbox available for £1,420. At something over £45,000, it looks very good value.

“Even the shortest bed, on the dinette, is 6ft 10in long!”

spares. The dinette front seat is full of water tank (which can be filled from inside or outside). Its opposite number is partly-occupied by the dual gas/electric Truma boiler which delivers hot water almost instantaneously to the adjacent shower/washroom.

At just 3ft 3in wide, the dinette is quite snug for four at mealtimes, but extensions are provided for both seats and table, with the idea of squeezing in the whole family. Older children will probably prefer to use the free-standing table in the rear lounge.

Space heating is diesel-fuelled from the propulsion tank, so the two 13kg gas cylinders should easily last for a month-long trip, depending on how often you hook up to mains electricity.



Washroom: nicely finished but compact