

Best of Brum

John Thynne and Gary Martin take you round the new motorhome launches at Birmingham's NEC show last October. There were models of all shapes, sizes and prices that caught the eye

From compact van conversions to giant American leisure vehicles, there was something for all

requirements and budgets at the NEC. Special editions such as the Adria Twin GT Le Mans and smart

paint jobs (Globecar Roadscout) caught the eye as did innovations from the likes of Concept Multi-

Car and newcomer DFSK which demonstrated how to make optimum use of space.

Rapido

Described as 'affordable A-classes', three new 8 Series models from French manufacturer Rapido made their first appearance in the UK. At £54,740 on the road, the Fiat-based 890F is a shade under 7m in length. It sports a rear longitudinal fixed double island bed with en suite bathroom, central kitchen and drop-down front double. The 883F (pictured) has a similar layout, except the rear double traverses the motorhome. Meanwhile, Mercedes-based 891M – another rear island-bed design – has a base price of £59,700 and measures 7.52m from nose to tail.



Adria

Adria presented a special Le Mans edition of its Twin GT panel van at the NEC. Featuring a white paint job with stylish red and blue exterior graphics (that mimic the Adria-sponsored IMSA Performance Matmut Porsche which finished second in its class in this year's Le Mans 24-hour race) and cab upholstery, this was a real head-turner. Based on a Fiat, the Twin GT sleeps three courtesy of a transverse rear double and convertible dinette up front. The basic on-the-road price for the 2.3-litre version is £48,590 but there is a host of options available. The Le Mans exterior finish, for example, will set you back £1,000.



Swift

Swift was keen to show off the travel seat system in its Sundance 584PR/Bessacarr E464 layout (right). The rear, parallel sofas cleverly fold and slide to form two belted forward-facing seats. Those same sofas can be used as twin beds at night, while a further two occupants settle down in the Luton. Based on the Fiat Ducato with 130bhp engine, it costs £44,345 on the road. Two other new models – Sundance 624FB/Bessacarr E454 (£43,710; top) and Sundance 644SD/Bessacarr E444 (£47,380) – were also on display (see September 2012 issue for details of the new line-up).



Signature

Wolverhampton-based Signature Motorhomes displayed three huge American imports in the form of Thor Ace Evo 29.2 (pictured), Evo 30.1 and Chateau Citation. The Evo 29.2 (£89,995) sports a 5ft x 6ft 3in fixed island longitudinal double



bed at the rear with nearside slide-out creating extra room in the kitchen and front dinette areas. Meanwhile, a slide-out at the offside rear makes room for the transverse rear double in the 30.1 (£91,995). The coachbuilt Chateau Citation features a rear transverse double bed with central washroom and separate shower cubicle opposite. It is available in two versions – 27SB has a front nearside U-shaped dinette, while 29GB offers an offside front dinette with sofa opposite. Both models are listed as £84,370 including VAT.

Auto-Trail

New from Auto-Trail is the Tracker RB, which is available in Hi-Line, Lo-Line and Super Lo-Line versions. Featuring a fixed transverse rear double bed measuring 6ft 3in by 4ft 3in, this smart new Fiat Ducato-based motorhome joins RS, EKS and FB in the Tracker line-up. The displayed model was priced at £51,819 on the road.



Auto-Sleepers

Two models from Worcestershire-based Auto-Sleepers made their debuts in Birmingham – Mercedes-based Winchcombe and Burford Duo. Priced at £65,995 on the road, the former features a rear washroom, central nearside kitchen and parallel settees up front that convert into two 6ft 8in x 2ft 4in singles or a comfortably-sized double. The Burford Duo has a rear washroom and with twin singles in front of it (unlike the Burford which sports a fixed double). The kitchen sits amidships while the front lounge can also be converted into a double bed – note, however, that there are only two seatbelts for travel. Priced at £68,995, the Burford's overall length is 7.88m compared with the Winchcombe's 7.29m.

Chausson

French manufacturer Chausson was exhibiting two new models in its Welcome low-profile range – 69 and 99 – based on the Fiat Ducato. The former, which has a base price of £45,340, sleeps five and has five belted seats for travel. The larger 99 model (pictured) adds about £1,500 to your bill. It too sleeps five courtesy of twin beds at the rear plus a double and single in the cab area. Unlike its smaller sister, however, there are only four belted seats. Chausson brought a further new vehicle to the NEC in the form of Flash 49EB. This smart-looking low-profile (£42,240 base price) has a 6ft 2in x 4ft 6in fixed longitudinal double bed at the rear.



Frankia and Bavaria

Making a return to the UK after several years' absence was the Frankia brand. Newly-formed company Frankia and Bavaria UK was displaying a low-profile T640 FF2 motorhome based on a Fiat Ducato chassis. On entry through the nearside door you turn left and step up into a smart rear U-shaped

lounge. The seating can be converted into a double bed or two singles and there is a handy garage below this area. An offside central kitchen and washroom/shower behind the cab complete the picture. The display model was priced £78,842 at the show. A similar Mercedes-based T6400 FF2 is also available.



Dethleffs

New from German company Dethleffs is the Globebus I8, an impressive-looking A-class model designed to sleep four. The display vehicle had a price tag of £65,140 and featured a central offside kitchen and bathroom with double bed options at front and rear. All Globebuses are available in the following colour schemes (some at an extra cost) – white, bright sand, cacao grey, titansilver metallic, laguna blue and milky green.

Globecar

Available in a range of colours including eye-catching red, the Globecar Roadscout (pictured) made an impression. This 5.14m-long Citroën-based (Peugeot option also available) panel van conversion has a double transverse bed at the rear, a central washroom and dinette on the nearside plus a kitchen opposite. Designed to sleep three (the third bed is converted from the dinette), there are four belted seats for travel. Advertised at £36,553 on the road, it joined the £43,303 Vario 499 on the Globecar stand. This high-line model – never seen in the UK before – is a great example of space-saving design, measuring just 4.99m from nose to tail. A longitudinal double bed drops down above the cab and living area at night (a third bed is available as an option), while the washroom sits along the rear.





Hobby

Fresh from the Düsseldorf Caravan Salon and making their first appearance in the UK were Hobby's 65FL Premium Drive (pictured) and 65GE Premium Van. The former, based on a Fiat Ducato and measuring a shade under 7m, sports a rear double on the offside alongside a small-but-stylish bathroom. Two more people can be accommodated up front at night and there are four seatbelts for travel. It had a price tag of £54,117 (excluding on-the-road costs). The four-berth 65GE Premium Van, meanwhile, was on sale for £40,995. Although slightly longer, this Renault Master-based motorhome has a width of just 2.14m which, Hobby says, makes it easy to park and ideally equipped for urban travel. These two vehicles were being displayed by Derbyshire-based Hobby Caravans and Motorhomes UK.



Concorde

On the Southdowns Motorhome Centre stand was the beautifully-appointed Concorde Credo Emotion. High-quality beige upholstery combines with a granite-effect dinette tabletop and modern kitchen furniture to create a super-stylish interior. This Fiat-based, 8.33m-long motorhome features rear twin beds and will set you back in the region of €113,500.



Laika

Also displayed by Southdowns was the Italian-made Laika Kreos 7019 (show price £85,670), a Fiat Ducato-based low-profile coachbuilt boasting a large overcab, drop-down double bed and a pair of singles at the rear.

Concept Multi-Car

There was plenty of interest in the new Bike and Surf conversion from Hythe-based Concept Multi-Car. Easily adapted for work or leisure, the Reimo components and

accessories can be quickly removed or reinstalled. Priced from £29,950, an elevating roof (£3,550), roof bed (£575) and kitchen module (£799) are available as options.



G&P Campervan

New from this Stafford-based van conversion specialist is the Maxi Tour high-top on Fiat's Scudo. Featuring a traditional 'VW-style' layout, kitchen and wardrobe run along the offside wall, both cab seats swivel and the forward-facing two-seater settee transforms into a good-sized double at night, quickly and easily. Powered by a



2.0-litre turbodiesel engine, Maxi Tour is priced at around £33k.



Bürstner

Joining Bürstner's 'compact class' Brevio T640 is the new T600 (pictured). The German manufacturer says the Brevio "redefines the boundaries between an everyday vehicle and a motorhome" and its large, rear tailgate which opens to reveal masses of storage space exemplifies this. At night, T600's double bed unfolds across the rear at waist-height; in front of this is a nearside washroom opposite a small kitchen. The model on display at the NEC had a price tag of £44,761 on the road. If you had had another £70,000 or so to spare, you might have been interested in the beautiful Grand Panorama i920 A-class with its overarching panoramic windscreen.

Leisure Hubs

With its smart paint job, alloy wheels, low-profile tyres and tinted windows, the two VW-based No Compromise van conversions from Leisure Hubs really caught the eye. The company claims to "combine the luxury of contemporary living with the freedom of open-road travel". These vehicles can be tailored to your own desires, but



expect items such as a coffee maker, top-end in-van entertainment music system and 3G plus wireless vehicle routers as part of the specification. Cool campervanning!

Bilbo's

This Surrey-based VW conversion specialist celebrated its 35th anniversary by introducing the two-berth Komba SE-35 priced at, wait for it, £35,000 (on-the-road). This VW T5-based elevating-roof model is available in a choice of three colours and comes with 36-litre fresh and 30-litre waste water tanks, two-burner hob and 65-litre compressor fridge.



Hymer

German giant Hymer unveiled its Fiat-based Compact 404 at the NEC. Described as "sporty", the 404 measures just 5.99m long, meaning it should be easily manoeuvred around town. Strictly a two-berth, it offers a generous rear transverse double bed and was on sale for £43,646 on the road. Also available was the massive B-SL-778 tag-axle model (from £91,490, pictured), which boasts a garage that is bigger than my one at home.

Carado

Hymer also took the wraps off a range of Carado-branded models, including the A-361. Costing in the region of £40,000, it sleeps up to six thanks to a large double in the Luton, convertible dinette and twin bunks at the rear.



DFSK

A new name in the motorhome arena, DFSK is a Chinese manufacturer of mini-vans which were launched as recently as 2011.

Its British importer – Swindon-based DFSK UK – unveiled a pair of compact elevating-roof campervans at the NEC. Provisionally named Hopper

RV1 and Hopper RV2, both models offer two-berth accommodation and are powered by a 1.3-litre 77bhp petrol engine, promising in the

region of 36mpg. 12ft 5in-long Hopper RV1 costs £17,995 and 13ft 4in-long RV2 £19,995 (both on-the-road prices).



Auto Campers

The vehicle of particular interest on this Berkshire-based company's stand was not one of its van conversions (although they were worth looking at, too) but rather the brand-new Ford Transit, the first time the motor caravanning public would have seen the latest reincarnation of this popular van. Equipment extends to Smart Regenerative Charging, which ensures the battery is only charged when it needs it, plus an option on the ECO Pack of an Auto-Start-Stop system, which saves fuel (and money) whenever you have to stop.



Wheelhome

That clever Stephen Wheeler took the wraps off another ingenious elevating-roof vehicle at the NEC. Fiat Doblo-based Skurry not only offers two-berth touring accommodation but comes with four forward-facing belted seats, so is equally at home when asked to perform the role of a car. With prices starting from £29,850, Skurry is powered by a 90bhp,

1.3-litre turbodiesel engine as standard (1.6 and 2.0-litre engines are extra-cost options) and comes with a sink and drainer, onboard 10-litre fresh-water cylinder, mains hook-up, useful storage and, perhaps most surprisingly of all considering its compact dimensions, a 6ft 5in x 4ft double bed (two singles can be set up if preferred).

Vanworx

Based in Portland, Dorset, Vanworx specialises in VW conversions which are built to order and can be customised to a degree by individual buyers. Standard equipment across

the model range includes RIB and Reimo rock-and-roll beds, Reimo elevating roofs, Smev hob and sinks, Vohringer lightweight furniture board and Waeco and Vittrifrigido fridges. Contact the company for prices.



Pilote

Displayed by French firm Pilote were two new additions to its Fiat-based Aventura range – the F630DJA panel van (£40,688 on the road as shown) and the A-class G600LGA (£51,294 on the road as displayed). The former sleeps two courtesy of longitudinal twin beds at the rear while the G600LGA (pictured) has a fixed double across the back and caters for two more in the dinette area.



CONTACT INFORMATION

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Bilbo's	01342 892499	bilbos.com
Büirstner	01388 537960	buerstner.com
Carado		carado.de
Chausson	0033 475 07 55 00	chausson.tm.fr
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	Southdowns Motorhome Centre	
Concept Multi-Car	01303 261062	conceptmulti-car.co.uk
Dethleffs		dethleffs.co.uk
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Globecar	01636 670760	globecar.de
	SMC Motorhomes	
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