



# Easy living

George Hinton gets a taste of Moroccan life as he tries out a van conversion with highly-convenient sleeping options for two

Supplied for test by: Murvi Motorcaravans Ltd, 4 East Way, Lee Mill Industrial Estate, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 9GE. Call 01752 892200

**MURVI HAS** been around for three decades now, securing awards in each of the past 16 years – a fantastic record. The Morello model has been its greatest success and the biggest prize-winner. Encased in a standard long-wheelbase, high-roofed Fiat Ducato van (with Mercedes or VW rear-drive alternatives), it can be as discreet or as flashy as you desire, with the full range of

factory van colours to choose from, while the roomy interior offers all creature comforts, including a good kitchen, shower and toilet, plus the option of face-forward seating for two extra passengers.

New Morocco offers the same luxuries at the rear, but with a new sleeping option offering two easily-made single beds at the cost of any extra face-forward rear seating. It is therefore unashamedly a two-person motor caravan.

## CONSTRUCTION AND LAYOUT

The Morocco is a fully factory-built, all-steel high-roof van, so there are no potential leak points (except where fittings pierce the roof – more of that later) and you have the reassurance that any body damage can be fixed by a normal bodyshop rather than a caravan specialist.

Murvi cabinetwork is virtually all robust plywood, with upper lockers covered in a

grey carpet-like material, which has the bonus of damping out any tendency to rattle. The shower room, incorporating the flush toilet, occupies the offside rear corner, the toilet easily serviced by opening the offside rear door. Easy outside access to the shower spray will come in handy, should you want to wash sand or mud off yourselves or the family pet.

The kitchen, located at the nearside rear with the fridge facing forwards, also offers simple appliance servicing via the nearside rear door.

## ON THE ROAD

The excellent 2.3-litre 130bhp MultiJet is the standard motor for this long-wheelbase Fiat Ducato 35, but our test model had the 3.0-litre 157bhp power upgrade (annual road tax £205), with self-changing Comfort-Matic gearbox. This torquey engine cruises quietly and

easily at just 2,000rpm on the motorway limit in 6th gear, returning an excellent 26.2mpg. Our next tankful, after two nights running the diesel-fired heating, returned 23.4mpg.

Reversing uphill into a parking space, the transmission didn't quite seem to know what to do as there is no torque converter (hence the good consumption), but the automatic clutch (no pedal) seems to be set to limit slippage. The electronic throttle appeared to refuse to inform the engine what my foot was telling it to do and shut the power down, so we juddered to a halt. I had to abandon my manoeuvre and start again, more brutally.

In normal motoring, the transmission makes ponderous, jerky changes in fully-automatic mode, as it cuts power before shifting – so markedly, it feels like the brakes are going on. Step-off from standstill is a bit lazy, but on the plus side it senses when engine braking is needed and holds the lower gears.

Overall, we found progress was most comfortable when we shifted gears manually and could ease the throttle at the critical moment. This led us to the conclusion that this is a gearbox to buy only if you are forced to have an automatic.

Nearside visibility is slightly compromised by the optional internal cab window blinds, which are set into a deep, inner front frame that all-but-blocks the lower exterior mirror. The problem doesn't occur on the driver's side due to the different viewing angle. This apart, the usual excellent Sevel door mirrors give a good rear view and there is also limited through vision via the nearside rear door.

The passenger airbag is an option, along with the cab air conditioning. Standard kit includes Fiat's radio/single CD player (with additional rear speakers) which still retains the infamous 20 minutes-cutout 'battery saver' feature, unless the ignition is on. In the event of a puncture, you will find a full-size steel spare wheel cradled beneath.

## LIVING ABOARD

The sliding side entrance door has a big, slide-out electric Omnistep with a warning buzzer. Inside, settee upholstery is offered with a huge choice of covers including leather, the test van sporting an attractive green velour with a pattern of small blue and grey squares. The base slides across the van on recessed floor rails, which would not be possible on the Morello as the end kitchen cupboard would be in the way. For the Morocco this is shortened, but the worktop retained, by hinging the end to fold away at night. The sofa cushion hinges open to reveal a huge, fully carpet-lined storage area measuring 25in x 61in x 10in.

The main table is a natty free-stander with height-adjustable legs, allowing it to

be used outdoors on uneven ground as well as inside. The second square table can be attached to one of two brackets on the side of the nearside front cab seat. Both stow in the wardrobe.

There are four roof lockers here and a generous wardrobe between sofa and washroom, measuring 22in (56cm) wide x 25in (64cm) deep x 63in (160cm) high. The body contour provides a useful recess at the back of the wardrobe, where the standard first-aid and spare bulb kits are secured by Velcro to the carpet lining.

A Heki 3 wind-up sunroof incorporating mood lights makes for a bright, airy lounge, comfortably seating five. A 17in TV, neatly recessed flush into the wardrobe side, comes with a rectangle of upholstery material to conceal it when parked – a good security measure. Being fixed, it can only be viewed comfortably from the cab seats or while laying down on the sofa (which comes with two pillows plus two matching scatters), but other TV options are available.

Heating and hot water is courtesy of a Webasto Dual-Top diesel-fired combination unit with mains electric option, installed in the wardrobe base. Gas comes from a 10kg transverse underfloor tank, filled for under 70p a litre at autogas stations, but it is possible to have a gas-free model by opting for a diesel-ceramic hob and 12V fridge.

Two heavy-duty 110Ah batteries are standard. Other equipment includes three 13A sockets, smoke and CO alarms, fire blanket and extinguisher plus a safe.

## KITCHEN

The split-level worktop area totals 7ft 3in (2.2m) long, including hob, sink and extension flap. The attractive, solid timber worktop is fashioned in laminated beech and has working areas next to the hob, left of the sink and right of the sink (flap up). Standard kitchen equipment comprises a four-burner Smev gas hob with combined oven/grill unit and a 60-litre Dometic three-way fridge. However there are multiple options.

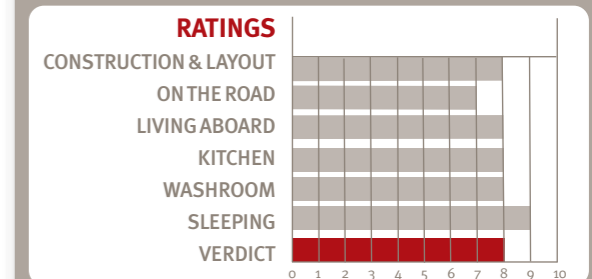
There are two roof lockers in the kitchen, the right-hand one containing a fitted set of melamine crockery and cut-outs for tumblers for four. However, these proved too shallow for our potholed roads, the contents regularly being displaced. One of two deep, lower cupboards, partly compromised by the wheel arch, also houses a Curver plastic cutlery tray, installed as a drawer, complete with a set of rather unpleasant plastic-and-metal cutlery that began to disintegrate with use. A narrow, shelved cupboard now finishes the forward end of the base unit, housing the gas valves.

In general, the kitchen works well, but the small grill burner makes toast production rather slow. More seriously,



Easy access to the fridge

“Murvi always keeps up-to-date with the latest equipment”



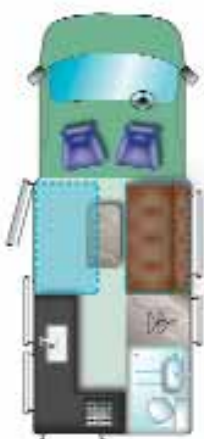
RRP/as tested	£43,636/£49,899
Base vehicle	Fiat Ducato 35
Engine (as tested)	2,999cc MultiJet (standard 2,298cc, 130bhp) 130bhp @ 3,600rpm
Power	295lb ft (400Nm) @ 1,750-2,500rpm
Torque	6-speed manual, FWD
Transmission	Diesel/19.8gal (90 litres)/24.2mpg
Fuel/tank/econ	19ft 7in (5.99m)
Overall length	6ft 9in (2.05m) exc mirrors
Overall width	8ft 4in (2.54m)
Overall height	6ft 3in (1.90m)
Internal height	3,315kg (65.3cwt) includes driver, 100% fuel, 50% water
MRO	3,500kg (68.9cwt)
MTPLM	185kg (3.6cwt) in test
User payload	320kg (6.3cwt) acc to manufacturer
Berths	2 (1 travel seat)
NCC approved	No

Figures supplied by manufacturer

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



You've a choice of two singles or a double at night



Clockwise, from top left: table comes with height-adjustable legs; Morocco's lounge just invites relaxation; kitchen works well; washroom may be compact but it does an efficient job

during rain we found water running off the top of the microwave – potentially highly dangerous, but fortunately we were not hooked-up at the time. This proved to be from failed sealing of a mushroom roof vent immediately above the oven. Cooking ventilation comes from an Omnivent with two-way fan or the sliding side windows.

The 13in-square stainless steel sink/drainer is fed via Whale pump and folding tap from an 18-gallon tank sited below the worktop. Its filler, sited unusually high (5ft/1.52m) on the bodyside, makes filling from a container rather than a hose very awkward. Waste water drains into a 10-gallon underfloor tank, emptied from a rigid outlet with a large-bore tap. Mains power sockets are supplied at each end of the kitchen, while bright low-energy lighting is provided by four LED lighting strips. Flooring is grey vinyl with a detachable carpet, and there's a stainless steel kitchen towel holder inside a base cupboard.



### WASHROOM

In general, it is a very efficient packaging job within the limits of a box measuring 35in (89cm) wide x 41in (104cm) long. Murvi always keeps up-to-date with the latest equipment, so it was reassuring to find the smallest (heated) room fitted with a Dometic ceramic-bowl type toilet, but this may be uncomfortably high for some at 22in (56cm).

The shower tray is just big enough at a nominal 18in (46cm) x 20in (51cm), but the trigger-spray shower head gives the odd cold surprise. Water pressure is only just adequate – commensurate with economical use of the limited tank capacity.

The fixed handbasin gives clearance to get your face over it for a good splash or to shampoo hair, and storage is good, with two roof lockers and a big, waterproofed cupboard under the basin. The shower curtain thus only covers the rear door. Equipment is good, with a liquid soap dispenser, tooth mug and holder plus toilet tissue holder. In the 'wet' area are two hooks and a towel ring.

There's a large bathroom mirror, but being the Morocco's only one, it would be more convenient if over the basin rather than at right angles. A tiltable LED striplight above the basin is more than bright enough and a five-way rooflight with nightblind admits light and air. The opaque, fixed van window has a roller blind.

### SLEEPING

Bed-making is simple: unlock the sofa base (lever concealed in locker at end)

and slide it across to the nearside. The backrest is then unstrapped and lowered to form the offside single bed. His-and-hers in format, the nearside bed is 5ft 10in (178cm) x 1ft 11in (58cm), while the offside bed gains 6in from the end locker and an extra cushion to measure 6ft 4in (193cm) x 2ft 2in (66cm).

For a double bed, you simply push the two singles together. We found it firm enough to benefit from an air mattress on top. Pleated blinds all-round (Venetian behind the hob) exclude light, while the cab can have back or window curtains as an option. Bedtime readers are spoiled for choice of lighting, with LED striplights on both sides plus an LED spotlight on the sofa side.

### VERDICT

Van conversions appeal for their compactness, despite their bodywork contours making them more expensive to fit out than a rectangular coachbuilt. Models from the Murvi stable have always scored highly with customers because they can be tailored very precisely to individual requirements, are of high quality and the after-sales service provided by the manufacturer is excellent. While we were disappointed by the couple of conversion problems we experienced, we are confident they would have been properly dealt with had we been actual customers. Provided you examine the payload issue carefully, the Morocco conversion is a useful addition to the range, and is bound to win many friends. ■