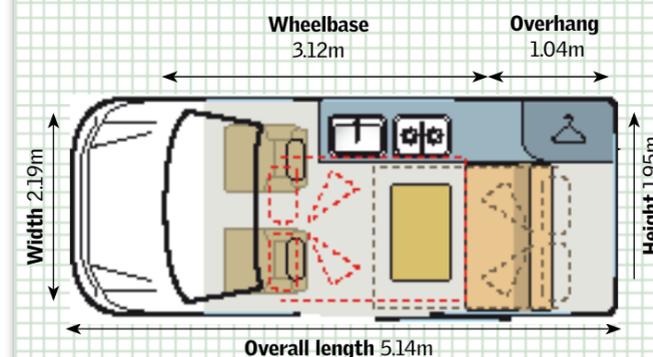




AUTOCRUISE £31,235 (OTR)
Pulse £33,235 (AS TESTED)

Base Fiat Scudo Berths Four (optional roof bed fitted) Engine 2.0-litre 120 MultiJet Torque 221 lb/ft @ 2000rpm Power 120bhp @ 4000rpm Fuel 80-litres MTPLM 2932kg Max payload 551kg Gas Two x 4.5kg Fresh water 30 litres Waste water 26 litres Battery 110Ah



1 Plenty of lounge and dining room, but we're not keen on the table arrangement 2 The main bed folds down flat quickly 3 Kitchen storage space is excellent 4 The roof raises easily and there's plenty of headroom 5 Heating and control panels are well located 6 There's ample storage space for lots of kit at the rear of the 'van

Contact Autocruise Motorhomes Ltd, Swinton Meadows Industrial Estate, Meadow Way, Swinton, Mexborough, South Yorkshire, S64 8AB Tel 01709 571 411 Web www.autocruise.co.uk

Autocruise raises Pulse

 Sarah Wakely tests the new Fiat Scudo-based Pulse – a great everyday campervan



Given the current popularity of smaller motorhomes, with their similarly smaller price tags, it's unsurprising that the 5.14m Fiat Scudo has found favour as a base vehicle this year. Its combination of small dimensions and car-like handling mean it easily doubles up as a vehicle suitable for everyday use, too.

The Pulse is Autocruise's first Scudo-based 'van: it offers a typical camper layout of a forward-facing sofa that converts into a double bed, with all the facilities (which exclude any washing facilities) along the offside. It's a tough market, though: experienced converter Danbury Motorhomes has recently launched the Versito, also based on the Scudo and with a similar layout. The Pulse will need to be good to hold its own in what is a truly competitive market.

ON THE ROAD

★★★★★ It's easy to forget that you're driving a motorhome when you're in the cab seats of the Pulse: they're set low, and there's barely any climb needed to get in. They are fully adjustable so it's easy to find a comfortable driving position, and there's ample storage throughout the smart cab to store maps and the like. The engine offers plenty of poke with which to power the sub-three-tonne 'van along. However, you'll need to work the gears to get the most out of it if you need to let off the power uphill. The six-speed gearbox, with its short travel, feels satisfyingly solid to use, but we rued the exclusion of a foot rest alongside the throttle, which would have made motorway trips more relaxing. Our vehicle was fitted with the optional Prestige Pack

(£1560); this added body-coloured bumpers, electrically folding mirrors, cab air-con, cruise control, alarm, fog lights and rear parking sensors to the spec sheet. We found the last particularly handy, as the view through the rear, tinted windows is pretty much non-existent.

EXTERIOR

★★★★☆ With the roof down there's little to betray the fact that you're driving a motorhome, other than the smart, but minimal, Autocruise and Pulse decals. Giveaways are the electric-hook-up flap, the freshwater filler cap and the wastewater drain tap, all of which are located on the offside of the vehicle. Entry to the accommodation area is via the nearside sliding door; there's also one on the offside, but it's sealed due to

the kitchen units in front of it. A pair of doors allow access to the storage area at the back, too, as well as the gas locker, which is situated within this area. The Reimo elevating roof is manually operated; it's easy to push up, but tricky to pull back down if you're on the shorter side.

LOUNGING AND DINING

★★★★☆ Both of the Pulse's cab seats swivel, to allow four to lounge and dine. The former is easier than the latter due to a fairly complex table arrangement: a small unit slots into a leg behind the passenger seat, while a larger table fits beneath the bench seat. Neither unit feels particularly sturdy, and the large table is difficult to access, too: it's stored behind the bench seat, meaning that you have to go through the rear doors to collect it.

It's possible to slide the rear bench seat backwards and forwards, before locking it into place, which allows you to create more lounge space. A Webasto Airtop diesel blown-air heater keeps things cosy in the evening, but its outlet is below the passenger cab seat – any occupant will quickly get uncomfortably hot feet.

KITCHEN

★★★★☆ You wouldn't expect kitchen facilities to suit the cooking of a three-course meal in a 'van of this size, but those in the Pulse should suffice for most basic food preparation. The 72-litre Waeco fridge with freezer compartment is sizeable enough to hold sufficient food for shorter trips, and there are plenty of cupboards for storing dry goods. There's also a two-burner SMEV hob with small grill, the latter of which is

smartly hidden behind a locker door. The sink is small, and there is no draining board, nor extractor fan. Storage for cutlery and crockery is good; a folding door on the cupboard in front of the rear bench allows for easy access even when the latter is in its forward position.

SLEEPING

★★★★☆ The Pulse comes as a two-berth as standard, its bed formed by folding out the bench seat, before lowering the back rest. Once in position it's a comfortable place to be, as the cushions are flat and the mattress decently spongy. Our test 'van was also fitted with the optional drop-down roof bed (£440). It's of a large enough size for taller occupants, but only really suitable for children – it has a weight limit of just 150kg.

The concertina blinds throughout the accommodation area are excellent and block out most natural light, but the cab screens aren't quite so effective. They're internal silver screens that you affix with press studs, and feel thin and flimsy.

STORAGE

★★★★☆ The storage facilities within the Pulse are impressive for a 'van of these dimensions: the alternatives offered by the layout have clearly been well thought through. The space behind the bench seat is split in half by the end of the bed to offer room for bedding and the like above, as well as cables, ramps and muddy boots below. Kitchen storage is plentiful, too, there's room in cubbies above the cab for books and the like, and a decently sized drawer below the bench will hold folded clothing. Finally, there's

a small half-length wardrobe with hanging rail at the back of the 'van; although hung clothes can only be easily accessed via the rear doors.

VERDICT

★★★★☆ The Pulse is certainly an attractive, and keenly priced, camper. The Fiat Scudo base has plenty to do with this: it's a pleasure to drive, and its MPV-like dimensions mean that the Pulse is also truly viable as an everyday runaround vehicle. Unless you're travelling with children we'd recommend foregoing the roof bed option in favour of the Prestige Pack: the extras included are worth the expense. They make the Pulse an even more well-rounded and attractive package: one that we believe Autocruise should be proud of.