

bolero recomposed

Al-Ko and Alde are the new buzzwords for the new-look Swift Group low-profiles

LAUNCHED in 2006 as the first Swift Group motorhomes on the then-new X2/50 Fiat Ducato, it seems appropriate that its re-design is timed to coincide with the arrival of the new Euro V version of Europe's favourite base vehicle. But more than just a refresh, the new 2012 Boleros – and their E500 equivalents from sister brand Bessacarr – move onto Al-Ko chassis (instead of Fiat's own low-line chassis) and all models get Alde central heating for the first time. Furthermore, there are three completely new, longer, 4-tonne layouts – although the baby of the range (the 600 EK) disappears from the line-up.

» silver cabs

Externally, the new Boleros get a silver metallic cab, while the body sides revert to white but with bold new graphics. Bessacarr E500s remain all-white but with more dramatic styling details.

Under the bonnet all 2012 model Swifts get Euro V engines and for Bolero that means the 130 engine, or the new variable geometry turbo 150 for the 4-tonne versions (and as an option on the smaller models). The new 3-litre 180 engine with Comfort-Matic gearbox will also be offered. All come with Al-Ko chassis for improved handling, extra payload and better rigidity.

Those who travel long distances will also appreciate the improved spec that comes with the de rigueur Vogue Pack (Elegance Pack on Bessacarr). This now comes with Fiat's own upgraded radio/CD

with stylish gloss black finish, steering wheel controls, Bluetooth phone connectivity and a socket for your iPod or MP3-player. There's also a mount for your TomTom sat-nav, Fiat's new 'burr walnut' fascia (much more attractive than aftermarket add-ons) and a twin-view reversing camera. A battery isolation switch is a useful addition for those who store their 'vans over winter.

» alde radiators

The real news, however, is the arrival of Alde heating (very unusual at this price level, but also standard on the Elddis Aspire) and this is combined with a Drivesafe regulator so the heating can be left on while you drive. Some layouts come with a heated towel rail, too. A Winter Pack remains optional (adding heaters for underfloor tanks).

The Mali Acacia woodwork in the Bolero has already been seen in Escape, while Bessacarrs make much more of a statement with their Italian Ash and canvas-style contrasting locker doors and chrome strips and handles. Combined with the new over-locker lighting, and glossy acrylic kitchen splashbacks (seen in both brands), the Bessacarr interiors are amongst the most stylish in their class.

Better still, despite increased equipment levels worth around £3500, prices will only rise by about £1800, putting the 3.5-tonne models at a competitive £51,500 including the Elegance/Vogue packs.

THE HIGHLIGHTS

We'll be subjective here and say that the new Bessacarr interiors look much more upmarket than their Swift equivalents. Of the layouts, we reckon the E582/E584 French bed with rear washroom is easily the winner and we'd expect this to take over as the best seller from the shorter fixed bed 'van.

If you're not a fixed bed fan, the Bessacarr E520 is as good an interpretation of the classic rear U-lounge as you're likely to find.

Further enhancements include microwaves fitted at a more accessible level (still in upper cupboards) and a granite-look sink.

» layouts for four

As part of a re-structure, the Swift Voyager and Bessacarr E600 ranges have been dropped for 2012, along with all Autocruise coachbuilts. That left some gaps to be filled by new versions of Bolero and E500.

First of these is a derivative of the existing fixed bed floorplan with rear travel seats (in a European-style half-dinette configuration). This model is called Bolero 684FB (E564) and is on a 3700kg chassis, while the existing side settee model becomes the 682FB (E562) and stays as a 3500kg 'van.

Those seeking a French bed format, though, will surely be tempted to stretch their finances – and their motorhome – to buy the all-new Bolero 722FB (E582) with side settees or the 724FB (E584) with half-dinette and a total of four seatbelts. These models both feature a vastly superior across-the-rear washroom with a proper separate shower in this en-vogue layout. A 175-litre SES fridge/freezer sits at the foot of the fixed bed, while the kitchen includes neat carousel storage.

If your preference is for single beds, the final new model – Bolero 712FB (Bessacarr E572) is the one for you. Offered only as a pure two-berth with side settees up front, this model effectively replaces the popular Autocruise Augusta. Its 'three-room' layout separates the twin beds from the kitchen/diner with a solid door, then there's a second door into a generous, separate shower washroom across the back of the motorhome. Gas struts provide easy access into the low-level bed bases (with external access too on the nearside only) but the beds themselves are only a smidgen over 6ft long and have walls at either end.

WHICH motorhome says

Bolero has always been a leader among British low-profiles. Al-Ko and Alde additions give a reason to trade up.



Bessacarr E572 (Bolero 712FB) has twin single beds



Silver metallic cabs are new to the Bolero



Under-worktop lighting



4-tonne 4-berth Bolero 724FB with French bed/end washroom



Heated towel rail in Bolero 724FB



6ft single beds in new E572 layout



Half-dinette lounges (and rear travel seats) feature for the first time in Bolero



Euro V cabs with burr walnut console



Bessacarrs get all-new graphics scheme



E520 shows off new Italian Ash cabinets



E572 has full-width rear washroom



All models move from Fiat low-line to the Al-Ko chassis