



Words & pictures by Dave Hurrell

FOUR PLAY

Bunk-equipped, four-berth panel van conversions are fast becoming the fashion in family-friendly motorhoming. Autocruise's Quartet is the latest model to join the fray

According to Autocruise, customer demand has led to the introduction of its latest new model. That may be, but it's the Auto-Sleeper Windrush that's spearheaded mainstream converters' rush (sorry) to squeeze four berths into a six-metre panel van conversion.

One thing's for certain, whether driven by customer demand or the competition breathing down its neck, Autocruise is reacting quickly to changes in the market. It's in van conversions where, in difficult trading times, the market is actually expanding, so Autocruise – its wetted finger in the wind – is now giving high-top buyers more choice.

COMPOSED

Like its Auto-Sleepers rival, the Autocruise Quartet aims to provide a comfortable lounge workable kitchen and usable washroom, plus a double and two single beds, all within the confines of the Sevel-built long wheelbase panel van. Aside from the constraints of volume, it's the width of the vehicle that affects the success of the design: coachbuilt 'vans are wider and squarer, making it far easier to install decent-sized bunks and beds.

Both models provide a transverse double made from the lounge and a kitchen, located along the nearside. However, the Windrush locates its washroom lengthways on the offside, bunks across the rear. The Quartet goes with lengthways bunks and washroom across the rear. I'm giving the Windrush a heads-up, as it should be on your must-see list if you're looking for this type of camper.

Bear in mind though, that both 'vans are not for tall people: if you're taller than six feet it's unlikely that either will suit.

DRIVING BEAT

Based on the Peugeot Boxer, the Quartet offers an easy, comfortable drive and 130 horses of Euro 5 power. The motor features various improvements to help it comply with the latest fag-banishing rules. Personal advantages include claimed significant improvements in fuel economy, noticeable reductions in cockpit din and the ability to legally access designated low emissions areas well into the future.

The Comfort Pack of extras (£1,395) offers cab air, cruise, alarm, reversing sensors, stereo with Bluetooth/USB/iPod connector, front fogs and printed-on 'wood' dash trim. Good value? You bet.

Peugeot's version of the Sevel van doesn't get the option of an automatic gearbox. It's just Fiat's Ducato version that can have the Comfort-Matic as an added extra. You can have your Quartet on Fiat and with the auto, but only with the 150bhp motor (£2,995). However, it can also only be had along with the Comfort Pack; pre-warn your wallet before you extract the needed £4,390.

CONCERT OF CONVENIENCES

External Autocruise features include a 12V socket next to the fresh water filler (allowing pump-driven top-ups) and an input socket for connection to site-piped or separate aerial/sat dish TV. Note that the conversion windows are all sliders. Unlike top-hinged ones, you won't

walk into them when open and they can be used for ventilation *en route*.

Internally, there's all-LED lighting, gas-mains powered heating and hot water, a decent-sized (80-litre) fridge, half-height stove with one high-speed burner (three burners and grill/oven) and a good slab of worktop for the cook.

JAMMING IT IN

The lounge uses the half-dinette arrangement, which provides two seatbelts on a rear travel bench and a reasonable wall-hung table. Swivelled cab seats complete this four-seater space, while a raised floor places all sitters at the same height. Downsides? Well the bench is a tad narrow, but that's about it.

The fridge is on the offside, above a reasonable wardrobe, while the bunks extend all the way to the rear. Each bunk get its own light and high quality mattress, but they're distinctly different. The bottom bunk is adult-friendly (1.85m/6ft 1in x 630mm/2ft 1in). Up top however, things get tighter: 1.74/5ft 8.5in and 560mm/1ft 10in mean that this bed is only really suitable for tiddlers – the kids that'll probably sleep here should love it.

Mum and dad get a transverse double bed in the lounge. Making it is relatively complex. Autocruise supplies pictorial instructions to ease bed building. Release a catch in the rear seat base and a support frame slides forwards. A fold-over flap and the seat cushions (plus a couple of little infills) make half the bed. A large locker, mounted in the side doorway, houses the rest of the bed: two metal bases slot in and a divided cushion goes on top to complete it. The



ESSENTIALS

- On-the-road price: From £42,135
- Length: 6.00m (19ft 8in)
- Gross vehicle weight: 3,500kg
- Payload: 485kg

- 1 The Quartet packs plenty into a small space
- 2 Half-dinette-based lounge includes the essential rear travel seats
- 3 The galley features a decent stove and a good slab of worktop
- 4 Otherwise good washroom could do with a more modern basin
- 5 The bottom bunk is big enough for grown-ups, but upstairs it's different

rear seat and bottom bunk, but one is compromised by the leisure battery, the other by a wheelarch and heater unit. There's a slim locker above the cab – a home for the table. Kitchen storage provides overhead lockers, two good cupboards and a cutlery drawer. Squashy bags will probably ride to the rescue for clothes storage – stored on the bunks during the day, stashed in the cab at night.

IN TUNE?

Every motorhome is a set of compromises flying in close formation. Here, it's lack of stowage space that's the biggest compromise. However, the Quartet is compact, a pleasure to drive, seemingly well screwed together and well equipped. It can also be fitted with an automatic gearbox, where its main rival, the Auto-Sleeper Windrush, cannot. You'll need to develop your own system for fuss-free front bed making, but the sleeping space is far better – and stronger – than many. Finally, and in a completely unscientific way, I stood aboard and asked myself: "Do I like it?" The answer was "Yes".

Read a full road test of the Autocruise Quartet in the July 2012 issue of Which Motorhome magazine. ■

resulting transverse bed is flat and strongly engineered. It's also only around six feet long. However, the swivelled cab seats are level with the bed and might allow lengthways sleeping.

The rear washroom is enclosed by a forward tambour door and concertina screen that gives access to the outside via a rear vehicle door. This not only provides an alternative entrance (handy when the lounge bed is made), but allows the loading of long items. Meanwhile, the washroom has lots of space, a sensible

storage cupboard and loo set at an easy-to-use height. Downsides include a shower mixer that digs into your back while 'enthroned' (this could probably be moved) and an old fashioned drop-down washbasin (there's room for a swisher fixed item).

IMPROVISING STORAGE

A family of four living aboard the Quartet will need to travel light. The wardrobe is reasonably sized and there's space under the

