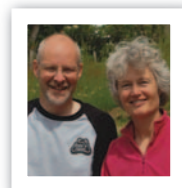


**AUTOCRUISE RHYTHM**



**TIMBERLAND DESTINY XI**



# HIGH-TOP HEAVEN

*British-favourite high-tops do battle, their rear lounge layouts providing the respectable relaxing spaces we love*

Words and pictures by Andrew and Rona Bromley



Both motorhomes in this head-to-head test come from established British converters: Autocruise is the Swift Group's producer of panel van conversions – its well-respected coachbuilt range having been retired. Using nearly identical Fiat Ducato and Peugeot Boxer base vehicles, Autocruise offers a range of different layouts at reasonable prices.

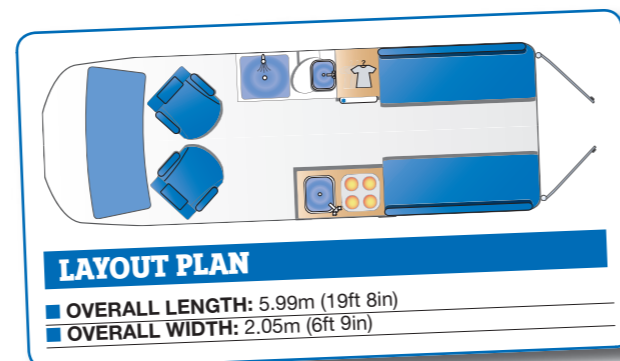
Independent manufacturer, Timberland, aims

for the higher end of the market, converting Fiat panel vans into Destiny models, with either front or rear lounge layouts.

Here, we test the Destiny XI, a rear lounge model, against its Autocruise rival, the Rhythm. This highly specified, all-bells-and-whistles Destiny costs nearly £53,000 on the road – at £10,000 more than its competitor, that's quite a difference. How will these two compare? Can the Destiny be worth the premium?

These two look the bees knees in their identical Lake Blue metallic paint. For us, there's no prettier colour scheme on the road. Leaving aside exterior beauty, these competitors share similar base vehicles, engines and interior layouts, so you need to look carefully before material differences become apparent.

Externally, each long wheelbase vehicle is just under the six-metre mark. Both have double-glazed acrylic windows – unlike some



competitors, which convert the window van, with its darkened single-glazed windows.

Autocruise strives for this same sophisticated effect, cleverly clothing the centre of Rhythm's flanks (around the windows) with a subtle blue/black sheet transfer. Timberland uses only its traditional green/blue/gold swirling decals, so the overall look is brighter, especially with colour-coded awning and bumpers.

You enter both vehicles through the nearside sliding door, via an electric step (on the Destiny it is auto-retracting). Each cab has Remis blinds and swivelling seats.

The washroom is immediately behind the driver's seat and the kitchen unit is partially across the doorway on the nearside. Behind the washroom is a wardrobe (above the fridge) and filling the rear, you'll find the lounge.

Two parallel settees provide the lounge layout so popular with British motorhomers. The Destiny also has a transverse in-fill seat in front of the opening rear doors.

The layouts' main drawback is the lack of rear travel seats for passengers: these are strictly two-person motorhomes.

The Rhythm's upholstery has a beige tweedy check, relieved by darker brown flower-patterned panels and others in beige faux-leather. Removable beige carpets cover a beige vinyl floor. Beige tweedy fabric on the walls surrounds robust creamy panels around the windows, enlivened by glossy dark plastic

'wood' windowsills.

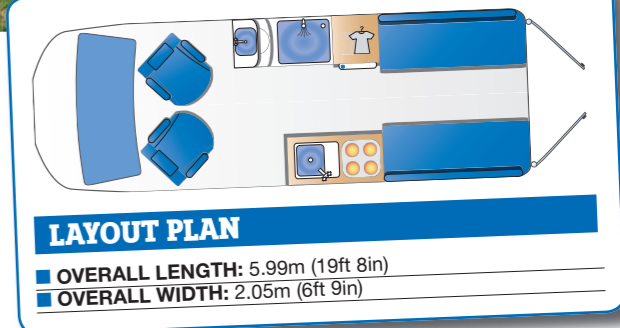
Work surfaces and the table-top are in a creamy-beige polished limestone-effect material. Light tan woodwork has darker panels and silver strips.

The overall effect is... beige! However, with its (beige) removable armrest cushions and (brown floral-pattern) scatter cushions, it's a comfortable relaxing environment. We prefer pleated blinds to the Rhythm's old-model roller-type, which can loosen and rattle with age.

In the Destiny, it's a similar story: largely beige/sand upholstery in a subdued abstract pattern, with occasional blue dots. There's beige fabric on the ceiling and walls and sandy-coloured lined curtains. Remis concertina blinds used in the lounge will, we understand, appear on rear door windows too, replacing the rather skimpy curtains.

Woodwork is in French Walnut, with silver handles, which were to be replaced by another design, as there's a knack to using them and they're easily broken.

The Destiny has tweedy blue/mix removable carpet throughout (which shouldn't show the dirt), over realistic-looking plank-effect vinyl. Work-surfaces and table-top are in a colourful blue/black stone-effect, contrasting with robust, but slightly proud, tan edging. This makes wiping surfaces difficult and seems rather old-fashioned; we prefer the Rhythm's more practical flush surface edges. We noted a peeling corner on the Rhythm's wooden fridge housing however, and preferred



the Destiny's superior quality woodwork.

Overall, both interiors are welcoming and pleasant. If they're studies in beige – well, that's because it's a popular and restful colour-scheme. You can't buck the market.

**MOTIVE POWER**

Are these two identical 'vans, with, presumably, identical power plants? Not quite.

Fiats currently in showrooms are in transition, from Euro 4 to Euro 5 models. There's quite a lag between base vehicle 'chrysalis' and motorhome 'butterfly', so there'll be a choice for some while.

The test Destiny had the 'old' Euro 4 engine (2.3 litres and 120bhp) and previous-model cab. Production models will come with the new version. The Rhythm boasted the new version: a Euro 5 motor (also 2.3 litres, but

1 Euro 5 cab. We'd prefer it without plastic wood effect. Note new radio  
2 Euro 4 cab, with shiny wood trim, and optional satnav