

MORELLO magic

Looking for the secret ingredient that makes a campervan special? Try going for the Murvi recipe

WORDS AND PHOTOS
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What are the magic ingredients required to produce your perfect campervan? Is it a multi-berth sleeping area to accommodate those children/pets/in-laws who are suddenly keen to hitch a ride? Maybe it's a supersized water tank that banishes the bleary-eyed morning stumble to the shower block to a distant memory. Or perhaps you're all about the drive and want enough va-va-voom to power along the autobahn with your European counterparts.

However long your list of requirements, the campervan you choose needs to work for your lifestyle. It needs to let you escape the daily grind at a moment's notice, roll the windows down and drive off into the sunset... Or at least join a queue of other like-minded campervanners stationary on the M5.

Luckily, the quality of many modern-day conversions and the possibilities they offer in terms of design, layout and inclusions mean you rarely need to compromise too much.

But don't be fooled into thinking that practicalities are all that count. Of course, a comfortable sofa and quick-draining sink should not be overlooked, but often a campervan's spark – its soul, if you like – lies in its aesthetics. And, if you can choose a campervan whose interior design mirrors your own style (our last campervan had stripy deckchair seat cushions and red gloss cabinets), it is guaranteed to put a smile on your face every time you slide open the door.

So, returning to our checklist. Mine is quite simple. A campervan should have:

- ▶ A light and airy feel. A van that's dark and claustrophobic creates the

MURVI MORELLO

PROS

- Light and bright interior
- Huge choice of furnishings
- Vast kitchen worktops
- Comfortable, high back sofa
- Great storage with large wardrobe

CONS

- ✗ Position of handbrake for hill starts

very antithesis of the ambience your campervan should convey.

▶ Plenty of storage. I am resigned to the fact that travelling light is not one of my strengths. I have to be prepared for every eventuality, however unlikely, and rather than seeking therapy for this flaw, I simply require more cupboards.

▶ Finally... this one is harder to quantify, but some campervans have a certain *je ne sais quoi* that grabs you the moment you set eyes on them. Much like a new house, if a campervan is right for you, you often just know within seconds (I may take a quick glance at the cupboard quota first).

So, checklist in hand, we recently had the opportunity to test a campervan manufactured by Devon-based conversion company, Murvi, to see how it stacks up against our – and many other



◀ A double that's easy to make and spacious

◀◀ Top notch storage throughout the van, not just in the kitchen

▶ Cab seats swivel to form part of lounge



SPECIFICATION

Base vehicle Ford Transit 35 long-wheel base

Drive Front-wheel drive

Engine 2.2-litre TDCi 100 engine

Power 100 bhp

Gearbox 6-speed manual

Number of travel seats 2

Berths 2

Leisure battery 2 x 115Ah

Payload 500kg

Length x width x height 5.98m x 2.47m (excluding mirrors – 2.06m, mirrors folded – 2.09m) x 2.58m

Standard equipment Reclining, swivelling front seats, rear seating that converts to a double bed (1.9m x 1.37m), Dometic ceramic toilet bowl, GRP washbasin with pull-out shower head, kitchen accessories including 4-piece melamine crockery set, glasses and cutlery, Dometic 3-way 90-litre fridge with removable freezer compartment, Smev 3-burner gas hob (or 4-burner hob with grill, or 3-burner hob with one mains hotplate), comprehensive safety pack, 30-litre underfloor gas tank, large electric step, Webasto DualTop heating system, 73-litre inboard fresh water tank, 45-litre waste tank, rear door into bathroom, double-glazed windows with integral blinds and flyscreens, Omnivent vent in kitchen, LED lighting

Optional equipment Ford sat-nav, £750, cab air-conditioning £600, rear-view camera £250, microwave £220, 21.5" LCD television £660, Fiamma retractable awning £620, 80W solar panel £550

Warranty 3 years

Price from OTR including VAT £49,339

Price of test vehicle £53,353



▲ Interior is bright and airy

◀ Shower room has convenient access through the rear door

▶ Living outside is the campervan way



▲ Cab seats are slightly higher than the lounge sofa, but perfect when the table is up for pre-dinner relaxation

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campervanners' – precise requirements.

Murvi have been building campervans for more than 30 years and the Morello is their flagship conversion, with several awards under the belt acclaiming the high-quality finish, superb layout and meticulous attention to detail.

Speaking to the team at Murvi, they are equally dedicated to offering their customers a bespoke finish, and the selection of soft furnishings, kitchen worktops, cupboards and floor coverings visible in their factory is testament to an unwavering commitment to creating a van with your ideal interior. So far, so good.

Previously built on the Mercedes Sprinter and Fiat Ducato vans, the latest Morello is also housed in the new Ford Transit LWB, with its slightly more generous proportions allowing for a spacious rear layout. Indeed, despite its two-berth specification, you could comfortably host an evening soirée for four in the large living area – there is even a four-piece crockery set provided – before the sleeping arrangements would make things a little too cosy.

Having said this, our campervan review team included our two-year old son and,

while he had to travel in the convoy vehicle (there is an option for a rear lap-belt in the Morello but it would be unsuitable for a colossal child seat), once we'd parked up, there was surprisingly enough room in the double bed for us all to squish in.

Initial impressions

Stepping into the Morello you are hit with a sense of light and space. It may be a cliché, but the huge sliding door and generous supply of windows do give the impression of bringing the outside in, and on a beautiful Devon morning, that's a pretty good cliché to fulfil. (On our second day, when the beautiful Devon rain swept horizontally through the wide-open door, I was pondering something less expansive.)

The lounge area is superb, and the cream leather upholstery fitted in this test vehicle was smart and sumptuous, yet also practical – said the parent of a toddler with a wet-wipe surgically attached at all times.

Drive time

The Ford Transit is one of the UK's most popular vans, offering a selection of body

lengths, good availability of affordable spare parts and a very reliable and comfortable drive.

Our journey took us to a campsite near one of south Devon's most beautiful beaches, Blackpool Sands. The test Morello didn't have a sat-nav, so I led the way in the car while our designated campervan driver, Paul, followed behind with a good, old-fashioned map.

It was an interesting journey. Our sat-nav stubbornly disregarded the local A-roads and navigated us through a maze of single-track lanes, none of which even had names let alone the status to appear on a map. Needless to say, the car and campervan soon got separated, our phone signal drifted away in the breeze and everyone in the lovely south Devon community was keenly aware of a toddler

🚪 The huge sliding door and generous supply of windows bring the outside in 🚪

ready for his lunch. At least it was a rigorous test of the Transit's performance through the English countryside.

Surprisingly, and despite a 2.2-litre engine, Paul felt the Transit was a bit sluggish. Perhaps being almost brand new it needed a few more miles under its belt (probably at a greater speed than we were doing) to loosen up. The driver also has a lot of space around him at the wheel, which may suit some, but we found the handbrake almost uncomfortably out of reach, which became particularly relevant when queuing uphill behind a combine harvester.

On the positive side, it was a smooth and comfortable ride, with no creaks or murmurs suggesting anything in the converted rear section was out of place.

Do you have one of these?

📝 Write in with your stories and the modifications you've made

The dials and buttons inside the cab were familiar, following a similar layout to the Fiesta and Focus, and the reversing camera was extremely useful.

Living space

Once we had finally reached our campsite at Leonards Cove, marvelled at the beautiful views and dusted off the bits of hay that had flown in through the open window, we returned our attention to the Morello's living space.

The lounge comprises a fabulously comfortable high-backed sofa and the two cab seats which swivel around to join the party. They provide a good separate seating area – particularly if the bed is already made up – but they felt a bit far removed from the action. Even with the cantilevered table between the seats, I still felt like I was sitting in the driver's seat of a Transit van.

So, we preferred to enjoy the view from the sofa and used the freestanding table for lunch. The test Morello had the optional television and DVD player fixed to the side wall although, even with the detachable



aerial, we couldn't pick up any channels in this remote corner of Devon.

Storage throughout the van is top notch. We were travelling with a lot of baggage (physically rather than emotionally) and the Morello swallowed it up. The large wardrobe is particularly impressive, and is accompanied by several upper and lower cupboards for bedding and clothing, a small compartment in the overcab area for the large table and other bits and pieces, and a variety of kitchen cupboards and drawers.

Sleeping area

The large double bed is formed from the seat cushion and backrest, while infill cushions fill the gaps and extend the length at the head end. The rock 'n' roll mechanism provided a smooth and



simple process and the width of the bed was good, even with a wriggling toddler in between us. There are some narrow gaps caused by the hinge in the sofa but in a traditional arrangement (ie with one or two people) you could probably avoid them. It does help if one member of your party is slightly shorter, as the length of the bed on the right side cuts in at the corner, so your feet either dangle off the end or you have to sleep a bit diagonally.

The best part of the night-time layout is the walkway it retains to the rear of the van, which adds to the feeling of space and ease of living. The side window provides a handy pocket to fit a book or an iPad and we were glad to find two USB points behind the driver's seat, although they were a bit tricky to access once the bed was fully up. We kept the bathroom door open overnight and the blue LED light on the mirror made a perfect night light.

The ceiling lights throughout the van are individually operated and there are reading lights above the bed, although the lights can't be dimmed – a bit of mood lighting to create that romantic camping atmosphere never goes amiss.

Haute cuisine

If I could sneak a fourth item onto my list of campervan must-haves, it would be

a generous kitchen worktop. Being able to chop your veggies without repeatedly elbowing your bag of penne into the sink makes for a much less flustered cook. The Morello's kitchen is impressively spacious, with a large L-shaped work surface and a very welcome built-in drainer. Our test van had a three-burner gas hob, a grill, oven and fridge, but Murvi offer other options if you'd like to swap your cheese on toast for a larger fridge. The dedicated kitchen waste bin cupboard is a great feature and saves the rarely glamorous bin-bag-swinging-on-door-handle scenario.

The attention to detail evident throughout the Morello is second to none. Included in every model are a kitchen roll holder, soap dispenser, first aid kit, fitted melamine crockery, a toothbrush glass... not to mention the two leisure batteries, 73-litre inboard fresh water tank and sophisticated heating system. Even if you can't be tempted by one of the optional extras, you would be taking home a very high-spec van.

Bathroom

With a Dometic ceramic bowl toilet and GRP washbasin, the Morello bathroom does exactly what it says on the tin. The offside hinged door at the rear of the bathroom allows you to enter

CLOCKWISE FROM THE TOP
Once on site, we slid open the sliding door and revelled in the views

Look at all that kitchen worktop space

The double bed is cut away slightly at the foot to create washroom access

Buy a new Murvi and you can choose your own interior

directly from the outside (or escape, I suppose, if you happened to be in the midst of an unsuccessful campervan date), but we found its most useful purpose was for cleaning and airing the bathroom – particularly after a shower. The bathroom converts to a wet room when you remove the carpet mat from the shower tray and the shower head extends from the basin.

In summary, the Morello is a brilliant campervan. It is stylish and spacious, light and bright, and with bags of storage and practical accessories, suitable for the most discerning traveller. Good things come to those who wait, and the waiting list for a new Morello is around 10 months, but with the team at Murvi determined to include the perfect interior for every customer, it really could deliver that elusive *je ne sais quoi*. Now, about those deckchair stripes...



campervan VERDICT

Step into the Morello through its vast sliding door and you are very likely to smile. The lounge is flooded with light and creates a spacious and airy living space that instantly connects you to your exterior surroundings. There is enough storage for an extended holiday and plenty of inclusions that would normally feature on a list of optional extras. Best of all, when it comes to designing the interior, you are firmly in the driver's seat and can create almost any look you want. It's not surprising that the team at Murvi have recently extended their award cabinet; we found very little to fault with the Morello.