

Freedom

Ian Lamming discovers the freedom of a life in an Adria camper

THE phone goes. Where am I? Can I talk? The answer is yes but strangely I'm sitting on a double bed, staring out of the window across Masham Market Place, while junior is watching more television channels than I can tune into at home. Such is the strange nomadic life of the Lamming household.

It is a very nice bed, next to a very nice shower-room and toilet and just feet from a kitchen where the appliances are a match for home too. So in many respects, important ways, this Adria Coral camper van is not simply a mobile home from home, it's actually better.

It is only when you are in a camper van that you notice how many of them there are on the road and now I can appreciate why. There is something cosy, homely and unhurried about a mobile home.

This Adria I've borrowed from Trek Motorhome Hire, a new business that has sprung up in North Yorkshire.

I wanted to get a feel for the beast, from a driver's perspective. Are they easy to drive, are they of manageable proportions are they unwieldy or cumbersome?

They are big. The Coral weighs in at three tonnes, is 3m high, 2.3m wide and 7.3m long.

So, for instance, in a supermarket car park expect to take up two bays nose to tail and give multi-storeys a wide berth.

Have you ever driven your car under 'low bridges' oblivious to what that actually means?

Well, in the Adria, you will need to pay more attention or run the risk of losing the top deck and front double bed.

That said, Adria is remarkably easy to pilot; it is of manageable

proportions and not unwieldy or cumbersome.

It soon feels like driving a large SUV and actually makes a better driver of you. Door mirrors the size of dressing tables offer a real-time view of behind and there is a hi-tech reverse camera for manoeuvring.

It is based on a Ducato chassis and the controls are familiarly Fiat. This model comes with an updated 150BHP 2.3 litre diesel, has a surprising amount of grunt and never feels short of power. MPG will be in the 20s somewhere and there's a 90 litre tank offering reasonable range.

The world seems to be slowed to a delightful pace. You can't really rush a motorhome and it is cathartic allowing the world to speed on by without you. Forward planning is key; you do need to read the road further ahead. This thing will not stop on a sixpence without shifting its goods and chattels to a deafening and potentially damaging degree.

It's the same rounding bends; it is 3m high and a consequently a tad top heavy. Spirited driving could see you on two wheels but the temptation is never really there in the Laid-Backsville it inhabits.

Slowing life down doesn't seem to affect forward progress because the armchair comfort and lack of stress makes it possible and pleasant to drive for longer spells.

It is most definitely a case of tortoise and the hare and when you do stop for comfort breaks or refreshments everything you could possibly need is in your shell.

Inside is much more luxury yacht than automotive vehicle and it is easy to be impressed with the quality of the fixtures and extreme cleverness of design. It really is a truly lovely thing.

Nine-year-olds are just the thing for exploring the nooks and crannies. Very quickly Benjamin finds an internal hatch to the gargantuan boot, which is large enough to house a family of bicycles or even small capacity motorcycle.

Next minute he is the captain of a submarine, standing on the front upper berth with his head out of the skylight like a submariner on the bridge – not while in motion, obviously.

An electronic control panel is his next port of call and mood and practical lighting goes on an off in the spacious cabin. The TV mast is hoisted internally, from inside a cupboard, to offer more Freeview channels than we get at home. Coronation Street will only ever be a click away and easily viewed from the well-equipped galley kitchen, complete with home-like hob, oven and fridge freezer.

I completely understand the Adria, both its ethos and its culture. It is freedom on four wheels; it is home from home; it is a mobile office; it is perfectly suited to my nomadic existence and any doubts that it would be too hard to drive are gone.

The next time the phone goes I will be able to talk – it has Bluetooth for when I'm driving. But where will I be? The answer to that is I haven't got a clue.



Fact File

Adria Coral XI Plus 670SP

Engine: 2.3 diesel

Power: 150hp

Combined MPG: 23

Transmission: six-speed manual

Height: 3,075mm

Width: 2,299mm

Length: 7,314mm