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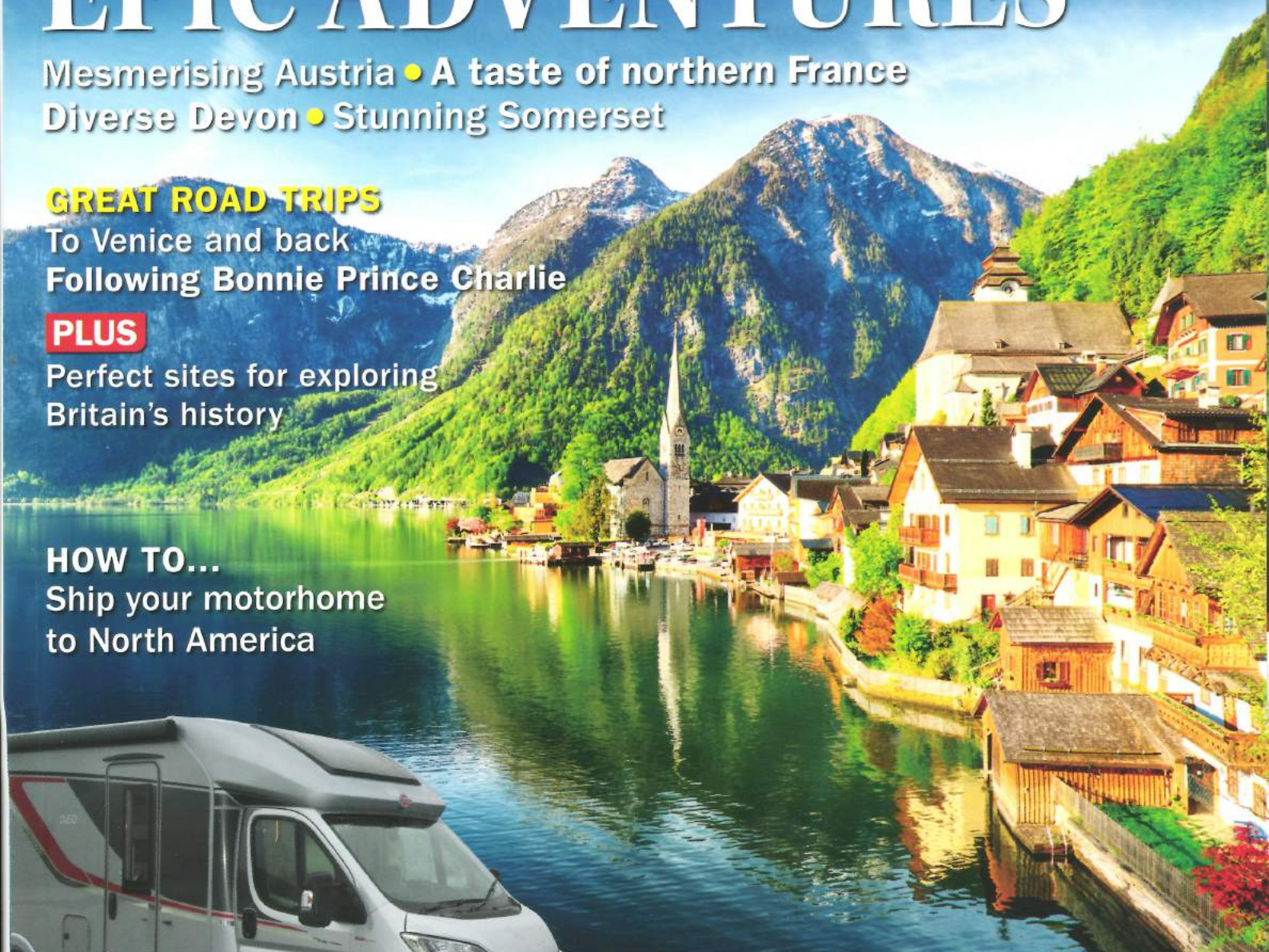
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# The lone Randger

Here's a pop-top campervan with a motorhome-style layout including a pullman dinette and a rear washroom



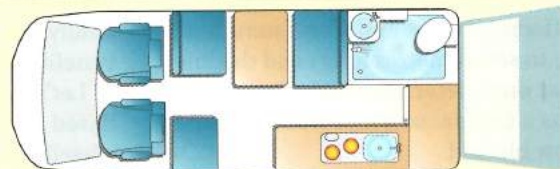
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Geneve Brand

## RANDGER R535

**Price from:** £43,995  
**Berths:** 4 **Travel seats:** 4  
**Base vehicle:** Fiat Talento  
**Length:** 5.40m  
**Gross weight:** 3,010kg







The cab seats are not part of the lounge, which has a pullman dinette and a jump seat

It's fair to say that the invention of the campervan paved the way for motorhomes, which gained favour, leaving campervans trailing behind as a slightly second-class alternative.

It's easy to see why. Motorhomes certainly used to be the glitzier and more glamorous option, boasting all the commodities necessary to offer genuine home-from-home living, more akin to an apartment on the Costa del Sol. So, why would you want to rough it in a little VW 'bay window' campervan that felt more like a basic metal tent on wheels?

But that was a long time ago and, boy, how things have changed. Nowadays, campervans come in all different shapes and sizes (some even up to seven metres long) and the line that once determined whether a van was a camper or a motorhome is often now blurred.

Campervans still tend to be smaller

than motorhomes – especially in terms of width and height – and so the recent surge in their popularity is, perhaps, a reflection of the times in which we live.

#### TRAFFIC-LIKE

There are many reasons why multiple-vehicle ownership is not possible for everyone. Apart from the financial implications of running both a car and a motorhome, parking two vehicles is an issue for many – especially if you live in a busy town or city where space is at a premium. So that brings us to the tricky issue of finding a vehicle that offers all the practicalities of a family car, yet comes with the added benefits of a motorhome.

Let's look at this Randger, then. Based on the Fiat Talento long-wheelbase panel van, it measures in at 5.40m long and 1.96m wide, making

it handy enough for doing the weekly supermarket shop (just – you'll have to overhang most bays, lengthwise). However, you'll need to check out your local height barriers and multi-storey car parks as the Randger is more than 2m tall, at 2.06m.

With a rear bench featuring two seatbelts and a full-width headrest, four can travel in the R535. The boot space that you'd expect with a side kitchen layout (as in the shorter Randger R499) is, however, occupied by the washroom on one side and kitchen on the other, so there's no space for the shopping bags here. That is one compromise of this sort of campervan over a family estate car, perhaps, but it's an issue that is easily resolved by investing in a few storage crates for the floor.

The Randger also has handy double sliding doors (with a slide-open window in each), so access to the





Kitchen area storage is quite comprehensive and all low down



Sliding doors on both sides, so you can alight safely wherever you go



The fitted kitchen and washroom mean there is limited rear storage

#### SECOND OPINION

*"Don't recognise the Ducato's little brother? It's a rebadged Renault Trafic - and that's definitely a plus"*

PETER VAUGHAN ROAD TEST EDITOR

habitation area is easy and convenient wherever you park.

The floor is also just at the right height that you won't put your back out lifting boxes in and out, but the absence of an exterior step does mean you would probably want to pack a portable one when you are camping.

On the road, the Fiat Talento, with its 125bhp Euro 6 engine (the only option offered by Randger), is smooth and car-like to drive. That's no surprise because it is derived from the Renault Trafic, which we have always rated as one of the class-leading base vehicles for campervans. It feels more MPV-like than some of its rivals, while the downsized engine (a 1.6 compared with two litres in most rivals) makes amends with twin turbos, although it's still down on torque compared with the equivalent Ford Transit Custom. There's no automatic gearbox option here, either.

In the centre of the dash, a 7-inch touchscreen accesses a sat-nav and DAB radio/CD with MP3 player. A USB port and Bluetooth are handy for your phone, too.

As a result of the rear kitchen and washroom, visibility through the rear view mirror is minimal. The Randger is not fitted with a reversing camera or parking sensors as standard, but both are available as options and they are amongst the very few items you'll pay extra for, as alloy wheels, cruise control and even air-conditioning are all included.

#### MOTORHOME STYLE

While the dimensions of the Randger (and its pop-top roof) clearly put it in the campervan camp, its pullman dinette seating is certainly more characteristic of a motorhome. The forward-facing upright bench seat

is clearly designed for travel and has three-point seatbelts and, when parked up, two adults can dine here using the removable table with its island leg. When not in use, the tabletop is stored in the washroom (clipped to the wall). There's also a tripod base provided, so that you can use the table outside.

Opposite the travel seat is another bench of roughly the same size, so, in theory, four could dine here. However, the backrest on the rear-facing seat is quite small (measuring just 35cm high), making this bench best suited to young children.

Because of the pullman dinette layout, the swivelling cab seats often found in campervans are absent. Instead, there is a small jump seat (measuring 37cm by 35cm) behind the passenger cab chair, with storage for a couple of pairs of shoes below. The cab area is not really used on site. ➤



LIKED



- Cab with sat-nav, air-con, etc
- Inclusion of a washroom with shower

DISLIKED



- Complicated 'downstairs' double bed
- Lack of storage for bedding, outdoor chairs, etc

WANTED

- Reversing camera or sensors (optional)
- Reading lights for the roof bed



There's a surprising amount of worktop in the galley

As there are twin sliding doors, the lounge area feels light and airy when it's warm enough to keep them open.

Tinted windows throughout keep the glare of the sun out in summer but may make it gloomy inside in winter. At night, the usual blinds and curtains are replaced by insulated screens for all the windows (even for the sliding doors' glazing and the tailgate), while a striplight in the dinette means candlelit dinners are optional.

**NO KITCHEN DRAMAS**

If you did fancy a candlelit dinner then the designated chef would need somewhere to conjure up a feast.

Fortunately, kitchen dramas are most likely to be off the menu, as the well-appointed kitchen in the Randger does not disappoint.

A combined two-burner gas hob with piezo ignition and stainless-steel

sink unit with a glass lid is nothing out of the ordinary, but the abundance of worktop space either side is.

To the rear of the 'van is a compact (41-litre) Webasto compressor fridge, with further worktop space above at a slightly raised level.

The Randger control panel is also located on the wall adjacent, from where you can switch on the blown-air heating. This is a Truma Combi, not the typical gas/230V unit, but one that runs off diesel.

Note that the kitchen does not have an oven/grill or a microwave, which is not unusual for a campervan of this size, although some rivals offer wider cooking options.

Storage is, of course, always at a premium but, in this galley, it exists in good measure.

There is a cutlery drawer, plus a couple of larger drawers below (each measuring 70cm by 20cm) that are

perfect for bulkier items like pots and pans. In the centre of the kitchen is a good-sized (80cm by 60cm) cupboard with a central shelf that is accessed via two tambour doors.

To the right is a corner unit that has a bottle holder at the bottom, with room for four wine bottles, and a couple of smaller shelves above.

**JIGSAW TIME**

On paper, this is a four-berth campervan with sleeping arrangements comprising a double bed made up in the lounge area and a second double in the elevating roof.

Now, I am not going to lie. It was at this stage that I struggled a little with the Randger R535.

Typically (and as in the alternative Randger R499), the downstairs double bed in a campervan consists of a rock 'n' roll-type bench system whereby this





Heavily tinted windows can make the interior seem dark. There are no curtains or blinds but screens instead

pulls forward and the backrest drops flat to create a bed.

The main benefit of this arrangement is that you are not left with extra sections that have to be stowed away during the day.

However, the bed made up in the R535's dinette requires three additional cushions that are stored in the washroom when in transit, or in the cab when pitched up.

Your bedding (and the bag of insulated screens) will have to be stashed in the washroom or cab, too, as the water tank is located in the space under one of the sofas, while the heating system is in the other.

Assembly of the bed uses the table (on a couple of support bars) to plug the gap between the sofas. A couple of hinged sections make it wider. Unfortunately, due to wear and tear, the hinges on this demo model were broken so I couldn't assemble it fully.

However, colleagues who have previously tested the R535 report that a bed of 1.85m by 1.31m is possible. It is made up of seven cushions (so plenty of joins) and it is not the quickest or simplest to assemble.

It also leaves little floor space for getting undressed.

The second bed (in the roof) is of standard fettle and the elevating roof is easily lifted by unlatching one clip on either side before a gentle push encourages the roof to go up as the gas struts take over.

The upper mattress (measuring 2.00m by 1.17m) is around 35mm thick and it sits on a solid base (no slats or springs underneath), so it's really designed for children.

And they'll need a torch as there is a lack of lighting up top. Access is via a ladder that sits at the back of the 'van but space for manoeuvring is tight due to the encroaching washroom

and kitchen. The gap measures 52cm square, while headroom under the bed is 1.39m.

### LIKE A MEERKAT

The reason access to the upstairs is compromised is that there is a washroom. It is quite unusual for a small campervan to have a washroom and its presence is more reminiscent of a motorhome.

The washroom can be accessed from both inside and out (via the tailgate). As you would expect in a motorhome, it has a Thetford swivel cassette toilet and a duckboard that conceals the shower tray (with a single drain hole). A tap over the basin doubles as a showerhead that can also be used outside – for hosing down sandy dogs and kids at the beach! In winter, a heater vent in the washroom means you won't get chilly. ►





The better bed is in the roof but it's really for children



The washroom is large and has a shower, loo and basin

### THE **RAVING** VERDICT

This Randger caters for those seeking a single vehicle that can cope with the daily commute or the school run during the week and then transform into a mini-motorhome come the weekend. It's surprising to find a washroom with shower in this size of camper and the kitchen is spacious. Lack of storage for large items (bedding, outdoor furniture, etc) and the complex-to-make downstairs bed do count against it.

Storage-wise, a good-sized shelf to the side of the basin provides ample space for toiletries, while a cupboard under the washbasin holds a few bottles of shampoo, shower gel, etc. Space is good in the washroom, too – it's wide enough to move freely and there is ample standing room for washing and showering when the pop-top is up. It is worth noting, however, that this is an open-topped cubicle, so you do feel a bit like a meerkat when sitting on the toilet and you need to be careful not to drench the sofa when showering (it's probably best to sit on the loo to shower). You might also want to politely ask your other half to look the other way (or leave the 'van) when you need to use the loo.

But being able to access the washroom from outside is a real plus, as it means the area doubles as a wetroom/drying room – of course, it makes cleaning it easy, too. The toilet servicing hatch and gas cylinder are also conveniently located at the back of the 'van. **MMM**

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### FACTS AND FIGURES



#### PRICE

From: £43,995

As tested: £43,995



#### BASICS

Berths: 4

Travel seats: 4

Warranty: Two years on base vehicle, two years on habitation, five years on water ingress

Type approval: European Whole Vehicle



#### DIMENSIONS

Length: 5.40m (17ft 8½in)

Width: 1.96m (6ft 5in)

Height: 2.06m (6ft 9in)

Gross vehicle weight: 3,010kg

Payload: 490kg



#### BASE VEHICLE

Type: Fiat Talento LWB

Engine: 1.6-litre, Euro 6, 125bhp, front-wheel drive, six-speed manual gearbox



#### KITCHEN

Cooker: Can two-burner hob with piezo ignition

Fridge: 41-litre Webasto compressor-type



#### BEDS

Main double: 1.85m x 1.31m (6ft 1in x 4ft 3½in)

Roof bed: 2.00m x 1.17m (6ft 7in x 3ft 10in)



#### ESSENTIALS

Fresh water: 68 litres (inboard)

Waste water: 59 litres (underfloor)

Space/water heating: Truma Combi D4 diesel-fired blown-air

Leisure battery: 75Ah

Gas: 1 x 2.75kg (Campingaz) or 3.9kg (Calor)

#### OPTIONS

Fitted to test vehicle: None

Other options available: Bike rack (£399), awning (£699), reversing sensors (£250), reversing camera (£399), towbar (£699), metallic paint – aluminium or beige (no cost option)

#### THE ALTERNATIVES

Devon Firefly	£39,407
Dreamer Cap Land	£43,400
WildAx Triton	£47,995

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