

# The space race

Lunar's new entry-level range takes the layouts from the Roadstar but with value-for-money as the top priority. This is the island bed model



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FACT FILE	
PRICE FROM	£47,994
PRICE AS TESTED	£49,393
BERTHS	4
TRAVEL SEATS	4
LENGTH	7.69m
WIDTH	2.30m
HEIGHT	2.69m
GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT	3,800kg
PAYLOAD	506kg
BASE VEHICLE	Renault Master
ENGINE	2.3-litre, Euro VI, 130bhp
BEDS	Lounge double 2.10m x 1.22m, island double 1.75m x 1.34m
FRESH WATER	90 litres
WASTE WATER	65 litres
SPACE/WATER HEATING	Truma Combi 4kW, gas/electric
MOTORHOME SUPPLIED BY	Lunar Caravans

### VERDICT

There's some great news here as the excellent Renault Master has been rather under-used over the years, so it's good to see Lunar giving buyers an alternative to the ubiquitous Fiat Ducato. The Cassini looks good, drives very well and is seemingly well screwed together for a sub-£50k 'van. Inside, there's space aplenty in all areas, good design and all the right kit to make living independently on board a pleasure. Only the rather small island bed disappoints.



**L**ANCASHIRE-BASED Lunar Caravans re-entered the coachbuilt motorhome market early last year, with its Roadstar range. Again shunning the omni-present Fiat Ducato/Peugeot Boxer 'Sevel' chassis, Lunar favours the Mercedes Sprinter for its van conversions and Renault's Master for the now six-model range of coachbuilts.

That's half-a-dozen variants, but just two lengths (6.40m and 7.69m) and three floorplans, as the newly launched Cassini – named after the spacecraft sent to Saturn – shares its layouts with the Roadstar range. There's one rear lounge model and two fixed bed designs – island double or twin singles.

Where Cassini differs is in its reduced specification and lower price compared with its Roadstar siblings. In fact, the Roadstar version of the TI is £12,000 more expensive, while the Cassini actually undercuts the equivalent layout in Swift's Escape range.

The kit you miss out on runs towards 20 items. It includes decorative stuff, such as a metallic painted cab and alloy wheels, and functional features, such as Alde 'wet' central heating and a faired-in awning. Both ranges offer comfortable motorhoming, though, so the best approach is to fire up the calculator and see if it's worth parting with the extra dosh. I counted around seven Roadstar items that could

be retrofitted to a Cassini, so do consider your specific needs carefully.

The TI model, tested here, has its island bed arranged lengthways in conventional style and closely following a side kitchen and a separate-shower bathroom that stand either side of the aisle. Up front, there are few surprises as cab seats swivel to face a half-dinette (with two belted travel seats) and an inward-facing single seat opposite. There's comfortable seating and good dining for five, thanks, in part, to a large table with extension leaf.

The layout is typical of the type, but the chassis is a much less common sight in the motorhome world. Renault has been motivating

motorhomes for years now – ebbing and flowing as converters introduced the Master to their ranges, then dropped it. But this was my first time driving the latest Euro VI version and I was mightily impressed.

The Master has always seemed very well engineered, if a bit truck-like to drive – put that down to a more upright driving position and bus-like steering wheel. The latest incarnation provoked a very high grin-factor score, though, as excellent steering, good brakes and positive gearchange made their presence felt. The ride and handling, too, felt just right – softer than the rather firmly suspended Fiat but not as bouncy as Mercedes' Sprinter. The engine was the star,

however: smooth, quiet and, although lugging a seven-and-a-half-metre-plus 'van along, there was plenty of power to do the job in very effective fashion.

Meanwhile, the standard cab spec brings the usual kit, including a passenger airbag. But you'll need to spend £1,399 on the Driver's Pack to get cab air-con, cruise control and an upgrade to a DAB radio with sat-nav. That's a must.

It's no surprise that the living area is a symphony in neutral shades, so very much a similar style to most of the competition. Lined curtains in both lounge and bedroom add a touch of cosiness, as does the removable carpet set.

The kitchen does well on kit, with an oven/grill and microwave, but less well on storage with just one drawer.

In the bathroom, a roomy separate shower takes a starring role, while the basin area lacks only some surface for putting stuff down.

Providing beds is where the TI is most found wanting as the lounge double requires you to manhandle the very heavy table to build it, and three bulky infill cushions to complete the mattress. The island bed double should be the star feature, though, as it'll be the main reason to buy the TI. It proved comfy enough, but my tape measure kept repeating its disappointing tale of a bed that's just 5ft 9in long.