



Home is where the camper takes you.



A good Punto

ANOTHER marque to make a return to the Australian scene is Fiat.

Fiat commercial vans have been available for some time, but importer Ateco Automotive has been waiting for just the right time to bring back the passenger range of Fiat vehicles.

More specifically it has been holding off for the new generation to arrive, rather than start the ball rolling with cars nearing the end of their model life.

First cab off the rank is the Grande Punto hatch, the most popular car in Italy.

"The Punto brings Italian style to the small car category which is something that is long overdue," Fiat boss David Stone said.

Punto has been named European car-of-the-year no less than 11 times. The stylish hatch is due to go on sale in June when prices will be announced.

Happy campers

PETER BARNWELL

ENFORCED relaxation should be written into law to keep everyone healthy and sane. But how many people are able to fully relax given the frantic pace of life these days.

Get hold of a motorhome, go camping and find out how easy relaxing can be.

After a weekend in the new 7m Trakka Veneto four-berth "C-class motorcamper" relaxation swept over us as soon as we had packed the large vehicle, driven out the drive and ventured forth on a weekend surfing safari to coastal national parks.

There is no point in driving hard in a vehicle such as this because you can't. It is more of a waft rather than a drive as the big Veneto glides over rough roads and off into the sunset.

"How good is this," issues from everyone's lips as a holiday feeling sweeps across the touring party.

The Veneto is Trakka's latest medium-size motorcamper and is built on a Fiat Ducato cab/chassis unlike other Ducato-

based motorcampers which are van based.

It means the Veneto has a robust truck-like ladder chassis underneath, a high load capacity and a low centre of gravity. The cab is neatly joined to the accommodation unit and it drives well for a large weighty vehicle.

Power comes from a turbo diesel 2.8-litre four-cylinder driving the front wheels through a five-speed manual transmission. A four-speed auto is also available. The engine is relatively economical and gives good performance considering the weight it's hauling.

Cruising on the freeway at 110km/h is a breeze with the occasional downshift on steep hills. Fuel consumption allows about 500km touring range.

The test vehicle had air rear suspension which is superb, smoothing rough roads, allowing the vehicle to be levelled at camp sites and holding it comfortably on the road. The Veneto has single rear wheels with heavy duty Michelin tyres. Brakes are Brembo and make light work of slowing the Veneto which can



weigh up to about four tonnes with four people aboard.

The vehicle is quite luxurious offering a swag of goodies for the \$130,000 price tag. It has two double beds, one over the cab and the other down the back, an oven/grille, three-burner cook top, gas/electric and battery fridge, shower/bathroom/toilet, TV, microwave oven, twin gas bottles, large fresh water storage, hot water system, grey water storage, integral 240V power cord, dual auxiliary batteries, oodles of cupboard and wardrobe space and airconditioning in the

cabin and an electric system in the living area and numerous perspex side windows complete with screens and blinds and a number of skylights. The panoramic rear windscreen is a major attraction at camp sites, especially if there is a view. It is also handy when driving the Veneto giving wide vision to the rear. A large rear boot has two doors and housed surfboards and fishing gear.

"Camping" in this vehicle is hardly what you would call roughing it but still gives an outdoor experience.

Swag of awards

IT'S not often a dealer scoops more than one award.

But Worthington BMW, at Kariong, is celebrating a trio of wins at the recent BMW National Dealer Awards held in Melbourne.

Worthington has taken out the BMW Perpetual Trophy (2003, 2004, 2005), BMW Individual Award (for supplying individualised, special order vehicles to suit client needs) and the BMW Finance Award.

In addition to this, it is lucky to have the 2005 BMW second-year apprentice-of-the-year (Tom Sparkes), and two high achiever apprentices (Chris Isaac and Jake Pendleton).

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