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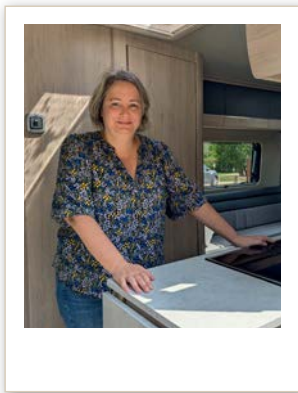


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# Welcome

**O**ur inner geeks have been well and truly sated this month, when a chance encounter with a Japanese campervan converter website led to the discovery of an official *Star Wars* themed campervan. It's just packed full of details from the films, but it's only one of five so not likely to darken our shores.

Never say never, as we do get a lot of vehicles from Japan as they, too, are right-hand drive. The reason for this is that there is a tax system that penalises older vehicles. I've set a note in my calendar to go looking for one in 10 years' time!

Closer to home, while most of the manufacturers held launches back in the summer for the coming season, we are also seeing a lot of new model information coming through this month.

Special editions, the return of old names

and new layouts, there's some interesting ideas coming our way.

But as one reader confirmed recently, reporting on a drop-down bed featuring in an ancient caravan they had owned, new ideas sometimes never really are that new. Let us know if you think an old feature from a motorhome long gone should be resurrected or share your ideas of what should be in the motorhome of the future.

If a new motorhome is in your imminent future, take a look at the newly updated *Buying Your Perfect Motorhome*, which goes on sale in a few days. After 9 February, you'll be able to buy the 2026 version at **W [motorhome.ma/perfect](http://motorhome.ma/perfect)**



**COVER** Llanddwyn Island, Anglesey  
Credit: Pajor Pawel / Shutterstock.com

*Rachel* **Rachel Scholes**  
Deputy Editor

## We would love to hear from you

Share your motorhome adventures, your campsite reviews, your motorhoming DIY tips and advice and even your gripes with MMM readers.

Email us at: [mmm@warnersgroup.co.uk](mailto:mmm@warnersgroup.co.uk) Join the community [facebook.com/motorhomemags](https://www.facebook.com/motorhomemags) [instagram.com/mmm\\_motorhomemag](https://www.instagram.com/mmm_motorhomemag)

**NEXT EVENT...** The Yorkshire Motorhome, Campervan & Camping Exhibition, 20-22 March, 2026 [outandaboutlive.co.uk/shows](https://outandaboutlive.co.uk/shows)



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# Contents

## TRAVEL

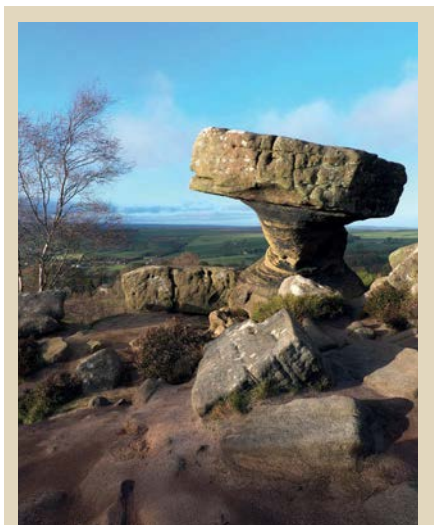
**42 COVER ANGLESEY** A small island with big scenery (and the longest name!)

**50 NORTHERN IRELAND** An unplanned adventure finds warm welcomes and wild places



**59 COVER SCOTLAND** Wildlife through a lens – capturing some amazing wildlife on camera from Inverness to Dumfries

**68 FRANCE** Brushing up on art history with a trip across the Channel



**76 WEEKEND TRAVEL** Grand Nidderdale is full of gritstone

**85 SITES FOR AWARDS** Gold-standard getaways at award-winning campsites

**93 WE STAYED AT** Real reader reviews sharing trusted campsite experiences across the UK and beyond



**34 COVER SOUTHWEST ENGLAND** From mystical to maritime, a popular region that offers something for everyone on this epic adventure

## TESTED

**102 LAUNCH** We get a sneak peek at Auto-Trail's new F-Line, with the popular big front lounge and end washroom layout

**105 MANUFACTURER** Le Voyageur turns 45

**107 LAIKA KREOS H5109** A snapshot of the stylish A-class from Italy – and why you should buy now



**111 RAPIDO 850F** Find out why this model won our Fixed Double Bed of the year motorhome award

**119 RP REBELLION 2** A £200k camper kitted out for proper off-grid camping... you'll never need to plug into the mains!

**127 PILOTE EVIDENCE G781** The French manufacturer's biggest motorhome has room to relax

**135 MY MOTORHOME** Getting the sales pitch from family and making the leap into motorhomes with an Auto-Trail Imala

**141 MEET THE DEALER** Why you would choose, err, Choose Leisure to buy a motorhome from

## TECHNICAL

**144 TECH HELP** From bumpers to blinds: when to repair or should you replace?

**152 MY PROJECT** Boost your off-grid power the smart way with a lithium battery upgrade

## REGULARS

- 10 LETTERS** From quirky paint jobs to first adventures in a new van, readers report on motorhoming
- 20 FAVOURITE PHOTOS** The UK through your lens
- 23 BACK TO BASICS** When colour coordination goes too far...
- 24 NEWS** A campervan from the dark side and many more updates from the world of motorhoming
- 28 WEB NEWS** Five great reasons to visit Out & About Live this month
- 30 SHOW NEWS** Stop by an outdoor show for advice and great entertainment
- 82 MY TRAVELS** A weekend in Wales on a whim is just perfect
- 143 PUZZLES** Solve our monthly brainteasers to be in with a chance of a cash prize



- 151 ACCESSORIES** Gadgets and gifts for you and the motorhome
- 164 VINTAGE 'VANS** Looking back 60 years to the start of MMM
- 166 MY VIEW** Getting all poetic about motorhoming



127

**163 NEXT MONTH** What's coming up in the April issue

## Included with this issue



- 4 Bürstner B66 644 C**  
Rear lounge and a garage
- 6 CMC HemBil Drift**  
Cooking al fresco!
- 9 Dethleffs Globetrail Iconic**  
Special edition, special colours
- 12 Etrusco CV 640 SB Plus**  
Single beds, Italian style
- 15 Florium Black Pearl 63 LJ**  
Not only available in black!
- 18 Hillside Birchover Classic**  
Improved T7 campervan
- 20 Maverick Outdoors Expedition**  
VW T6.1 for bikes and dogs
- 22 Pilote Vega V630S**  
Modular bedroom, huge storage
- 25 Sunlight Vanlife 540 V**  
Go upstairs, yes stairs, to bed



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# Your letters

Have your say by emailing or writing to us at:  [mmm@warnersgroup.co.uk](mailto:mmm@warnersgroup.co.uk)

Top  
Pitch!

## Upgrades for the maiden voyage

Here we are first night in our new Rapido. I saw our little piece in the latest MMM magazine (January, page 11) and I have done so many upgrades in the handling and rattle dept since. We still got the best habitation motorhome on the market thanks to your advice.

Being a total novice I went all in, but in order of things to change and improve the ride and rattles I did the following, starting with the cheapest options.

I used SvTech to plate it up to four tonnes, which required only one upgrade of semi rear airbags from Glide-Rite.

Then I uprated the single leaf springs to four-tonne double leaf springs from Jones Springs. After this, Koni Special-Active front struts with the Koni rear shocks were added.

And, finally, I replaced the overinflated hard Continental VanContact Camper tyres and switched them for General Grabber AT3 tyres which are strong and will take a lot of weight without affecting the handling or fuel consumption. This allowed me to run on a much more comfortable riding tyre pressure of 55-60 psi.

I have to say the tyre pressure advice you gave made the most difference; it's absolutely crucial. The other upgrades improved the rattling, handling and importantly the sway that you get when being overtaken. Your back end wants to do the salsa sometimes, especially when pulling off the motorway onto the slip road and an 18-wheeler passes you.

I still have not solved the air-con issue, because the window/skylight above the kitchen where it would be replaced with a Truma is massive and not your typical 400x400 straight swap out.

Oh, and I've found a couple more things that are a total game changer.



I carry an EcoFlow Delta 2 Max portable power station and an EcoFlow alternator charger which charges at 800W per hour on tick over. This means, despite having solar and a lithium battery, I don't actually need them. And we also have a 32in Avtex TV.

I still miss the California but don't miss the crawling around on my hands and knees in the morning and banging my head everywhere because I am 6ft 4in.

Thanks again for your invaluable help in selecting the perfect motorhome for holidays and even living in full time in the event of a zombie armageddon.

Paul and Linda

**ED** Paul's original letter pointed out the on-road rattles of his new Rapido in comparison to a previous VW California, which are very different vehicles. Our original advice to Paul was varied but did mention the idea of lower tyre pressures to make the ride less harsh and therefore reduce the impact of uneven roads. There is an ideal pressure depending on weight – armed with actual axle weights, tyre manufacturers may suggest pressure much lower than the stated maximums found on the label inside the 'van, but always check first.

## On the box

In the January issue (page 9), Chris Tack came across as both rude and condescending. Who is he to tell anyone whether or not to watch television on holiday?

We all consider our motorhomes a home from home so why not watch

the soaps as you do at home if that is your thing? It isn't ours and we don't watch TV while we are away – mainly because we rarely achieve a signal, even in this country!

However, what we do enjoy immensely, and it is very much part of our holiday, is watching box set DVDs

on our TV. We look forward to them after our busy days and meals outside.

*Madam Secretary* was probably our all-time favourite, while currently we are enjoying *Call the Midwife*, neither of which we had seen on TV at home. Each to their own.

Margaret Ratcliffe

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 Your Letters, MMM, Warners Group Publications, West Street, Bourne, Lincs PE10 9PH

I felt compelled to comment on Chris Tack's views on TV usage. I love relaxing and watching TV.

When there is a bad signal, which is rare, I take plenty of movies/series on a USB stick or I can usually stream using my phone's hotspot. And guess what, if I want to talk or play games, etc... I can, too.

Everyone has their own preferences. Horses for courses.

**Pete Green**

**ED** What's on your box if you carry one, or do you pack the board games instead?

### From the east?

Firstly, as an ex caravanner, I would like to thank you for the best magazine for all campers, whether two or four-wheelers. I have been looking for an article in a recent issue of a high-top campervan with an end bathroom, based on a VW van.

I think it was produced in Czechia or somewhere like that. Can you please let me know which month it



was in so I can reread it?

Keep up the good work.

**Eric**

**ED** We think Eric means the Globe-Traveller from Poland – we tested a VW Crafter not so long ago. We did a snapshot on the Falcon 2YS model on the Crafter in the March 2025 issue of *What Motorhome*, but I think the issue referred to here is August 2024. This had a full review

of the Falcon 2XS, which did indeed have an end washroom.

If you can't track down the review, you can watch the video on our YouTube channel

**W** [motorhome.ma/review313](https://www.motorhome.ma/review313)

### The drain of the problem

I am referring to Bernard Holt's letter (December 2025, page 105) regarding waste water flushing back into the shower tray. I had the same problem, especially when the waste was fairly full and we braked.

I solved the problem by locating the waste pipe under the 'van, cutting it and inserting a simple on/off valve with a large on/off knob, suitable for a 12mm (half-inch) bore (bought online). To insert the valve into the pipes, I used a hair dryer to make the pipe more flexible.

I secured the pipe ends with Jubilee clips. I can now stop the water returning or I can open the valve if I decide to have a shower. Total cost £4.45 as I had the Jubilee clips already.

**Ralph Curtis**

## Be prepared

The problems encountered by Victoria and Neil Ilott during their visit to Finland (December 2025 issue) do serve as a timely reminder that a motorhome must be appropriately constructed and equipped for the use to which it is to be put.

For LPG, the critical value is the boiling point, ie when it freezes and stops working. For propane that is around -42°C, but butane is only around -2°C. So if you are visiting cold climes it is vital that



propane, not butane, is used.

A few years ago, on our way to the Algarve we stopped off at an aire high in the Pyrenees for a few days skiing. Our motorhome is a Hymer B-Class, fully winterised with a heated double floor containing water tanks, etc, so we



had no concerns.

This was just as well because just after we arrived a blizzard blew in and we were grounded for two days. The temperature dropped to -12°C but we were as snug as bugs in a rug!

**Malcolm Foster**

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### Pet passports post-Brexit

Following Brexit, those of us with furry friends find ourselves at a distinct financial disadvantage, notwithstanding the time constraints now imposed, when seeking to take our pets to Europe. Having discovered that there is the potential for pet passports, issued prior to Brexit, to be reintroduced, I have been waiting patiently so that I can make the necessary arrangements to introduce Daisy and Lilly to Europe.

I also wrote to my local MP, who responded accordingly and made me hopeful of a timely resolution, given the 'promise' of discussion during autumn.

However, so far, I've heard nothing. I wondered if you or any of your readers have any updates?

On the plus side, we are now able to take our furry friends to Northern Ireland by applying for a lifelong pet travel document, which is a relatively straightforward process provided your pet is chipped.

I have also attached some pics of our girls whilst on our travels (very mini Shih Tzus).

Geraldine Clow

**ED** It is correct that the new trade deal signed in May 2025 means that pet passports will be reintroduced, replacing the complicated and expensive animal health certificate system. It has been suggested that this could happen in 2026 or 2027, so not imminently.

However, in the meantime, if you want to take your dog to Europe, you'll have to have the animal health certificate.

As Geraldine also states, if you

want to go to Northern Ireland with your pet you need the free Northern Ireland pet travel document. You'll be asked for:

- Your pet's microchip number
  - The date your pet was microchipped or when the microchip was last scanned
  - Your pet's breed, colour and sex
  - Any unusual features your pet might have, like a missing eye or leg
- W** [gov.uk/apply-for-northern-ireland-pet-travel-document](https://gov.uk/apply-for-northern-ireland-pet-travel-document)

If you live in Northern Ireland you do not need this document to travel to the UK, but your pet does need to be microchipped.

Geraldine's MP supplied a response from Defra which states:

As announced at the UK-EU Leaders' Summit on 19 May 2025, the UK and EU have agreed to work towards a common Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Area, which will mean taking pets on holiday into the EU will be easier and cheaper. Instead of getting an animal health certificate each time they travel, pet owners will be able to get a multiuse pet passport valid for travel to the EU.

The European Commission has published a draft SPS mandate for negotiations pending approval through the Council of the European Union. We are expecting to start

negotiations in the autumn, once the EU has confirmed their mandate.

In the meantime, and until an agreement is reached, owners will still need an animal health certificate for their dog, cat or ferret(s) if they're travelling from Great Britain (England, Wales and Scotland) to an EU country.

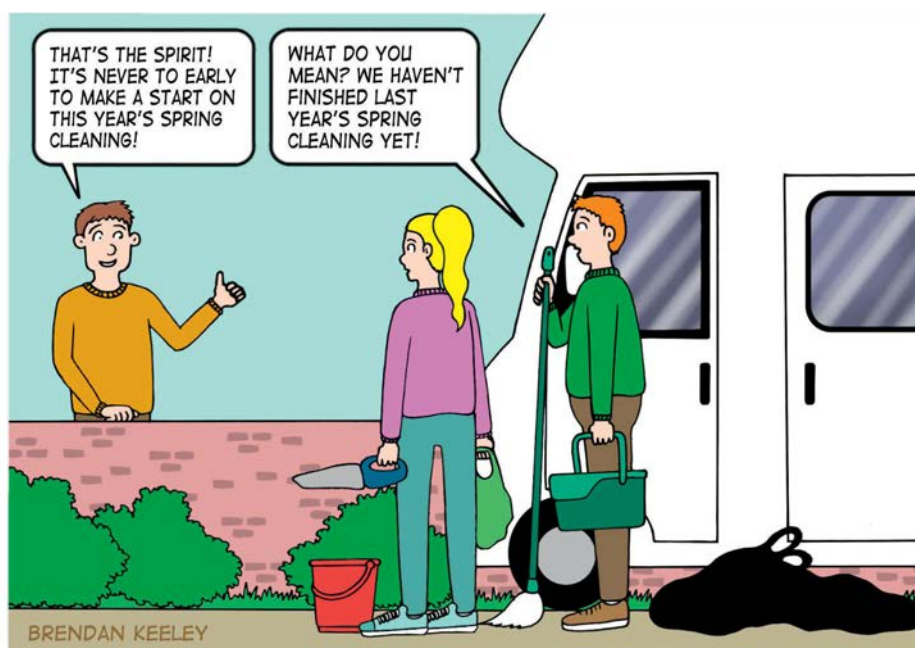
### Larger loads...

May I ask for clarification on the recent announcement of lifting the driver's licence category for driving motorhomes or campervans from 3,500kg to 4,250kg? Is this only if the said vehicles are powered by alternative fuels, ie, batteries?

Alan

**ED** Yes, the increase to 4,250kg is only for electric vehicles. The EU is currently looking to increase the limits for car drivers on the Continent, and I am aware that the NCC is lobbying the UK Government to follow suit, but there's no timescale or even a decision on whether this will be added into law.

Why not sign the petition currently on **W** [petition.parliament.uk/petitions/741293](https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/741293) It's open until 9 April and had over 7,000 signatures as we went to print.



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## Insuring the home when away from home

We have travelled abroad for several months each winter since 2017, as a lot of your readers also do. Our home insurance was always through M&S, covering any 90 days away in 180 period.

Sadly, this year, it stopped doing home insurance. We were notified that Aviva would quote for our insurance on a similar basis to M&S.

However, Aviva only covers for up to 60 continuous days away from home. We tried several insurance brokers (60 days max again).

We searched online specifying 90 days, but got loads of options, all only covering up to 60 days. We went to the NFU office and were told, yes, it could do 90 days full cover. I did explain that we had a campervan and were planning a long trip. However, when the paperwork came through it was 60 days full cover and 30 days very restricted cover which definitely did not meet our needs. We got a refund.

We are now with Howden, arranged over the phone, but exactly what we wanted. So please check your insurance or it could be costly. How about a list of companies who cover 90 days continuous, MMM? **Sue Canham**



### MMM helped me save money

I receive a lot of magazines over the year: motorcycling mags, cycling mags and, of course, motorhome mags. Every so often the pile gets too big and I have to get rid of some.

Last weekend, I went to the Camping and Caravanning Club site at Hertford and happened to take the

August edition of MMM with me, and I'm very glad I did. I had not seen the article on insurance when I first read it, but noticed that Comfort Insurance was highly rated, so I went online and got a quote.

For the same cover for our 2019 Westfalia Club Joker I saved £769! Thank goodness I took it with me for a final perusal.

**Dave Grover**





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- 2021 (21) Fiat Ducato Swift Champagne Edge 494 2.3TD .....£51,995  
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- 2022 (72) Citroen Relay Pilote Joa Camp 75Q 2.2TD .....£48,995  
5 berth,PAS,alloys,solar panels,sw/seats,drop-down bed,island bed, garage
- 2018 (55) Fiat Ducato Autotrail Frontier Dakota Lo-Line 2.3TD .....£47,995  
4 berth,PAS,awning,tow bar,aerial,sw/seats,rear fixed bed,end washroom
- 2018 (68) Peugeot Boxer Elddis Majestic 275 2.0TD .....£46,995  
2 berth,PAS,awning,solar panel,aerial,sw/seats,radio/CD,end washroom
- 2015 (15) Fiat Ducato Rapido Le-Randonneur 990DF 2.3TD .....£46,995  
4 berth,PAS,A-class,awning,garage,aerial,sw/seats,bedroom with island bed
- 2019 (69) Peugeot Boxer Elddis Evolution 155 2.0TD .....£46,995  
4 berth,PAS,awning,solar panel,c/rack,alloys,sw/seats,rear bed & washroom
- 2014 (14) Fiat Ducato Rapido Le-Randonneur 840F 2.3TD .....£45,995  
4 berth,PAS,awning,air-con,sw/seats,kitchen,2 double beds,rear washroom
- 2012 (12) Fiat Ducato Auto-trail Arapaho 2.3TD .....£43,995  
6 berth,PAS,awning,c/rack,tag axle,sw/seats,side kitchen,rear U lounge
- 2018 (18) Peugeot Boxer Elddis Encore 255 2.0TD .....£43,995  
4 berth,PAS,awning,c/rack,alloys,solar panel,air-con,sw/seats,fixed bed
- 2019 (19) Peugeot Boxer Itineo PJ 740 by Rapido 2.0TD .....£43,995  
6 berth,PAS,awning,c/rack,sw/seats,drop-down bed,double bed over garage
- 2018 (68) Peugeot Boxer Elddis Sussex 175 Chiltonington 2.0TD .....£42,995  
2 berth,PAS,awning,tow bar,alloys,solar panel,aerial,sw/seats,end washroom
- 2018 (68) Peugeot Boxer Elddis Majestic 115 2.0TD .....£42,995  
2 berth,PAS,solar panel,awning,c/rack,sw/seats,rear kitchen & washroom
- 2016 (16) Fiat Ducato Autotrail Imala 715 2.3TD .....£42,995  
4 berth,PAS,awning,c/rack,solar panel,sw/seats,lounge/diner,fixed bed
- 2016 (16) Fiat Ducato Swift Esprit 462 2.3TD .....£42,995  
2 berth,PAS,awning,c/rack,aerial,air-con,heating,side kitchen,rear lounge
- 2017 (17) Peugeot Boxer Bailey Approach Advance 635 2.0TD .....£42,995  
2 berth,PAS,air-con,heating,sw/seats,240/12V,side kitchen,end washroom
- 2015 (15) Fiat Ducato Autotrail Tracker EKS 2.3TD .....£41,995  
2 berth,PAS,awning,c/rack,air-con,sw/seats,rear washroom,rear kitchen
- 2014 (14) Fiat Ducato Swift Bolero 712SB 2.3TD .....£41,995  
2+2 berth,PAS,awning,ladder,air-con,sw/seats,2 single beds,end washroom
- 2015 (15) Peugeot Boxer Elddis Signature 175 2.2TD .....£39,995  
2 berth,PAS,awning,c/rack,solar panel,sw/seats,240/12V,end washroom
- 2017 (17) Fiat Ducato Autotrail Tribute T-625 2.3TD .....£39,995  
4 berth,PAS,c/rack,sw/seats,heating,side kitchen,washroom,rear U lounge
- 2015 (65) Peugeot Boxer Elddis Accordo 135 2.2TD .....£38,995  
3 berth,PAS,cruise control,heating,sw/seats,side kitchen,rear lounge
- 2014 (64) Fiat Ducato Bessacarr 442 2.3TD .....£38,995  
2 berth,PAS,awning,solar panel,sw/seats,side kitchen,end washroom

- 2016 (16) Peugeot Boxer Elddis Autoquest Evolution 115 2.2TD .....£38,995  
2 berth,PAS,awning,sw/seats,heating,lounge/diner,rear kitchen & washroom
  - 2013 (13) Fiat Ducato Autotrail Tracker FB 2.3TD .....£37,995  
4 berth,PAS,awning,solar panel,tow bar,sw/seats,rear fixed bed & washroom
  - 2014 (14) Fiat Ducato Rapido Le-Randonneur 600FF 2.3TD .....£36,995  
4 berth,PAS,awning,c/rack,aerial,sw/seats,drop down bed,end washroom
  - 2011 (61) Fiat Ducato Burstner Ixeo IT 666 2.3TD .....£36,995  
2+2 berth,PAS,c/rack,alloys,air-con,sw/seats,half dinette,rear bunk beds
  - 2014 (14) Ford Transit Autotrail Tribute T-625 SportX 2.2TD .....£35,995  
4 berth,PAS,awning,alloys,aerial,sw/seats,washroom,kitchen,rear U lounge
  - 2014 (14) Peugeot Boxer Elddis Prestige 105 2.2TD .....£35,995  
2 berth,PAS,awning,solar panel,tow bar,sw/seats,side kitchen,end washroom
  - 2012 (12) Peugeot Boxer Autosleeper Nuevo Classic 2.2TD .....£35,995  
2 berth,PAS,c/rack,alloys,aerial,air-con,sw/seats,rear kitchen & washroom
  - 2011 (61) Fiat Ducato Autotrail Apache 634 2.3TD .....£34,995  
4 berth,PAS,awning,tow bar,solar panel,sw/seats,kitchen,rear U lounge
  - 2011 (61) Fiat Ducato Bessacarr E660 2.3TD .....£34,995  
4 berth,PAS,awning,c/rack,solar panel,sw/seats,fixed bed,rear washroom
  - 2012 (62) Fiat Ducato Swift Lifestyle 624 2.3TD .....£33,995  
4 berth,PAS,awning,c/rack,aerial,air-con,240/12V,rear kitchen & washroom
  - 2010 (10) Fiat Ducato Autotrail Apache 634L 2.3TD .....£32,995  
4 berth,PAS,awning,c/rack,aerial,sw/seats,washroom,kitchen,rear L lounge
  - 2012 (62) Fiat Ducato Swift Hi-Style 530LP 2.3TD .....£31,995  
2 berth,PAS,awning,tow bar,aerial,air-con,sw/seats,rear kitchen & washroom
  - 2008 (09) Fiat Ducato Autotrail Mohican SE 3.0TD .....£31,995  
2 berth,PAS,awning,ladder,tow bar,aerial,air-con,sw/seats,end washroom
  - 2010 (10) Fiat Ducato Bessacarr E425 2.2TD .....£30,995  
4 berth,PAS,awning,solar panel,radio/CD,side kitchen,rear L lounge
  - 2004 (04) Peugeot Boxer Autocruise Vista 2.2TD .....£22,995  
2 berth,PAS,aerial,sw/seats,side kitchen,rear washroom,rear door,e/step
  - 2002 (52) Mercedes Benz Frankia 6000 DL Compact Class 2.9TD .....£22,995  
3 berth,PAS,awning,c/rack,aerial,sw/seats,rear washroom,rear kitchen
- HI-TOPS
- 2021 (21) Fiat Ducato Swift Select Champagne 122 2.3TD .....£51,995  
2 berth,PAS,awning,solar panel,aerial,alloys,sw/seats,240/12V,rear lounge
  - 2018 (18) Peugeot Boxer Autosleeper Symbol 2.0TD .....£47,995  
2 berth,PAS,awning,tow bar,solar panel,sw/seats,rear kitchen & washroom
  - 2017 (17) Fiat Ducato Autotrail V-Line SE 540 2.0TD .....£44,995  
2 berth,PAS,awning,solar panel,aerial,tow bar,alloys,sw/seats,rear lounge
  - 2017 (17) Fiat Ducato Swift Autocruise Select 184 2.3TD .....£43,995  
2+1 berth,PAS,awning,solar panel,aerial,sw/seats,half dinette,rear lounge
  - 2015 (15) Volkswagen Transporter Campervan Conversion 2.0TD .....£35,995  
2+2 berth,PAS,lift-up roof,twin sw/seat,porta-potti,Rock n Roll bed
  - 2011 (11) Fiat Ducato IH Tio R 3.0TD .....£35,995  
2 berth,PAS,awning,solar panel,tow bar,air-con,sw/seats,rear U lounge
  - 2016 (16) Ford Transit Custom 270 by Bodans Conversions 2.0TD .....£31,995  
4 berth,PAS,lift-up roof,alloys,upper platform,air-con,c/lockg,wc

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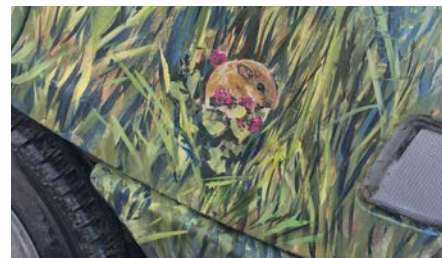
## Wandering in Wales

We've just recently come back from a wonderful Welsh road trip. Red Kite Touring Park in mid Wales was a delightful place to stay. Then we headed to Porthmadog. From there it was a scenic drive to Beddgelert Campsite passing over the narrow Snowdon roads with its amazing views.

Glyn and Carol Bull

**ED This was originally destined for the Favourite Photos section, but we felt that the three photos needed to be run together so here you are... What's been your favourite trip recently? Get in touch and let us know**

**E [mmm@warnersgroup.co.uk](mailto:mmm@warnersgroup.co.uk)**



### One of a kind!

My dear old motorhome has done me so well over the past years, but was looking a bit shabby on the outside, so I decided I would like to treat her.

At a Crops Not Shops festival I saw an incredible van painted by a famous artist of Glastonbury, Jon Minshull. I approached him to transform my girl.

It's been a long time coming as he does a lot of work on walls and houses, some of which you will find stories of on BBC and Somerset Live. Jonathan asks for a description, a story that you would like portrayed.

I wrote a short description. It went something like this...

*My image is what I consider the garden of Eden, which was created by nature not man. It's ancient with trees that have grown for so many years you can see their spirit in their twisted and knolled trunks and branches; the old oak stands proud.*

*There is a natural clearing in the woods, where the deer and the rabbits come to eat, and a windy natural path that crosses it and goes deep into the woods. The trees and grasses are abundant with the animals whose spirit energies will help guide us, and somewhere there is a white stallion with flowing mane and tail to remind us of balance.*

*It is not a dark wood, not in this glade, but it does go deep. The roots of the trees crawl across the land, and are carpeted with mushrooms, flowers and ferns of all colours.*

*I wander barefoot as nature made me, wolf dog by my side, in search of my true love. The path ahead of me is soft and warm and connects*

*me to the earth. I will wander it deep into the unknown within the forest, where hope lies.*

*As the woodland falls away a stream can be found, springing from the rocks; she meanders around stones, rocks and reeds. She reminds us that life is but a flow; we do not fight our obstacles, they are but there to help shape us.*

*To transform us, like the butterflies, birds and dragonflies that enjoy the sunlight dancing on her ripples, and the abundant life she births from her waters. The magic of life is all around, and in this world where nature holds balance, peace and harmony reigns.*

*I have had more than a few animal spirit guides through my life; most are the animals, birds and insects that you would find in nature here in the UK, but other than them the healing bear has always been there with me. They are always all there for me, waiting subtly for when they are needed.*

Once Jonathan is given your description and the 'van, he hides it away in a barn, lent to him by a wonderful garage in Glastonbury. Here he channels what you have given him and his own creativity.

The man who owns the garage and is also working on some upgrades on the inside for me, told me that it is "his best work yet!" Once all the work was completed, I was invited up for the 'Big Reveal' which was actually on my birthday. It was a real gift.

**Toni Twist**

**ED It's certainly one of a kind... share your exterior decal changes with us.**

## LETTERS

### A moderate word of caution

A word of warning about modifications and informing the insurance company. Back in 2019, we had our motorhome fitted with a towbar and a Toyota Aygo adapted with a Towmaster 2, so that it could be towed behind.

I advised both insurance companies of the modifications and required it to be put on the insurance certificate. This took a little persuading, but they agreed.

Moving on to October 2025, the Aygo was reversed into and damage sustained to the front of the car. At first it only looked superficial, but once the authorised repairer had

stripped the vehicle, the damage became obvious. It required not only the front bodywork, but two headlights and a radiator.

After a couple of weeks, I had heard nothing from the repairer, so contacted it. This is when the problems started. It advised that the insurance company would not repair the crossmember, which had also been damaged, as the vehicle had been modified. It would only be replaced with a standard beam.

On contacting the call centre several times and getting nowhere, I eventually received a call from the engineer. He advised me that the insurance would only put the vehicle

back as standard.

A few days later I received a call from the engineer advising that, as I had notified the insurer, it would agree to replace the modified crossmember. The original repairer couldn't carry this out, so I had to find a suitable repairer.

The moral of this story is, if you modify anything, inform your insurance company and make sure it is recorded. This means towbars, roof racks, cycle racks – just about anything so that you are covered.

It was very lucky I'm in the trade and was aware; many are not. Do not get caught out. It could be costly.

**Stephen**

## Sleeping studio-style

From MMM's pages I have gained a kit that converts my trusty Berlingo into a mini camper and many other tips. I have appreciated the addition of *What Motorhome* to your pages, but after over 10 years of looking and visiting the Birmingham exhibition I still haven't found a 'van that matches up to the elderly caravan I lived in from Boxing Day 1979 until mid August 1980 in the north of Scotland.

With no insulation, a habitation door that didn't close properly and a toilet outside in a small shed, it should have been grim but we had electricity, gas, a solid fuel stove and a double bed that folded up into the wall fully made up (straps held the bedding). It was a simple system – get out of bed, do up straps, begin to lift bed. Then, as it rose, we turned on the two-bar electric fire, dressed fast and then made the fire to be nice and warm for the rest of the day. It was a relatively easy abode.

It was a very simple pivot and counterweight and the legs operated the same, swinging into position under their own weight,



either coming down into a bed or going up into the wall. I really didn't appreciate how brilliant it was at the time and how foolproof, too – up and over garage doors are similar but need a lot more lifting. I was fitter then, but it really didn't take much effort either way.

Why don't modern vehicles have such a bed now? They were popular in studio apartments in the 1950s and 60s and were a relatively effortless space-saving device.

Today, I'd like a 'van that could get into car parks. So many of the places I'd like to travel to in a leisurely fashion in the UK and Ireland have begun to resent campervanners because of the actions of a selfish few.

France and Italy are still welcoming, but Brexit has made visiting for half a year much more complex and, for less time, hotels



and B&Bs work out cheaper than a 'van by far. I'm also becoming more uncomfortable with the environmental cost as yet another 'storm of the century' hits.

So, as I turn 70, I'm giving up my impossible dream, but thank you for the interesting articles and ideas over the years and good luck to those still dreaming or living the dream.

**Penelope Reid**

**ED** The closest to this currently is the Carado V347 and Sunlight's V 67 S Adventure, both of which are motorhomes with a fold-down single bed that stores against the wall during the day and covers the lounge at night. What are your favourite features from previous motorhomes that don't exist or are hard to find these days? Email us **E mmm@warnersgroup.co.uk**

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# Your favourite photos

*Readers share the photographs that trigger their happiest memories and always make them smile. Here are some of the best from this month...*



A beautiful sunset. [Jayne Hillard](#)

'Zog' by the lake at Hardwick Parks. This lovely site is between Witney and Oxford. We were fortunate in having some sunny days recently in October but the water was cold for exhilarating swims! [Jen Dening](#)



Our Bailey Alora at the lovely Caerfai Bay site near St Davids in July 2025. A great location for beach and lovely coastal walks. We will definitely be going back for the amazing views. [Steve Flower](#)



Taking a late September break at Findochty Caravan Park, Moray. [Garry Field](#)



The splendid views from Beech Croft Farm campsite in the Derbyshire Peak District, not far from the Monsal Trail. It's approximately a nine-mile cycle/walk/horse ride on the disused railway line that runs between Buxton and Bakewell. The trail is a part of what will become White Peak Loop, designated as National Cycle Route 680. **Tim Jenkins**

We've been at our favourite campsite, Red Kite Touring Park, in mid Wales for the New Year's Eve celebrations. Beautiful scenery, very cold, frosty weather and a cosy Bailey 69-2 motorhome for the cold winter nights. **Mick & Dawn Powell**



Past Arrochar in Argyll, this is Maxwell, our 26-year-old 'van. **Marjorie Smith**

## SHARE YOUR PHOTOS

If you have a picture of a motorhome adventure that makes you smile, please share it. Email it and a caption to [mmm@warnersgroup.co.uk](mailto:mmm@warnersgroup.co.uk)

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CHAUSSON





# Back to basics

Dave Richards explains how a gently obsessive approach to colour coordination can add extra fun to life on the road...

Way back when, colour coordination remained the sort of exclusive fun which was often only available to brightly coloured Volkswagens. Times changed and even the VW California comes out of the factory in a wide selection of hues, although to the untrained eye, it frequently looks like 50 shades of grey.

What the recent generation of T6 vans has brought with them, though, is a vast selection of colour-coded accents, from wing mirrors and spoilers, all the way through to vibrant brake callipers.

Owners were quick to catch on and since the model's introduction, now an astonishing 20 years ago, it has swept up all manner of similar vehicles in its influential wake. Even the owners of motorhomes, many of which are all essentially white, are now able to join in as well.

All that is required is to take a little time in selecting one of the many colours from the graphics along the sides of the vehicle and then coordinating a handful of well-chosen items in the same shade.

I appreciate that it may feel a little tenuous at first, but as time progresses and more items are accumulated, the more apparent the match will become.

I'd heartily recommend beginning with toilet paper. It's such an inspiring place to start and you'll chuckle sharing the idea with friends.

You may be surprised at the variety of colours, if not brands, that



*"Painting an unwanted side table from home in matching colours for our campervan trips!"*

a simple web search for 'coloured toilet paper' will produce.

From such humble beginnings, you'll find it an incredibly easy and fun progression of the camping game. Many things come in silver, grey or whatever their natural colour would be, but with matching coloured highlights.

It can potentially be brash if you'd like, but it can also be very subtle. The fact that your camping kettle and your long-necked lighter both compliment the colour scheme of your 'van in an understated manner is actually very cool. Then there's the dustpan and brush, the egg timer, the cheese grater, the tea towels, the antimacassars on the seats, the brush for doing the dishes and even the washing-up liquid bottle...

Outdoors, our tent pegs, together with the electric drill and mallet that are used to secure the two different types, are all matched to the vehicle. Along with a parasol, the bellows on the pop-up roof, the highlights on the gas canister graphics, the pup tent...

Even the valve caps on the tyres are the correct shade. Chairs and awnings are dead easy if you're working with blue or green. Sadly, our experiment in recovering deckchairs in curtain fabric proved as short lived as you might expect.

As you can imagine, we've been doing it for many, many years and over that time it's almost become second nature. Spotting something in the correct colour fills us with a disproportionate sense of joy.

And of course we cheat. We have two identical stainless-steel coffee mugs, but one of them sports a coloured carabiner so we can tell which has the sugar in it. Similarly, our stainless pint glasses are differentiated by a band of tape.


Finally, we've learned to paint the occasional item and are particularly proud of our 1984 vintage wine table, bought in the first-ever Boxing Day sale. It served its term in the house and was about to be chucked away, when we were struck by a moment of genius. A quick splash of gloss, a new fake-leather top, and we were cooking with gas.

Marmite? Maybe, but at the very least it's always a talking point.

And I can consume a pint of ice-cold beer at my leisure. **mmm**

**SEND US YOUR TOP TIPS**

From pets to pitches and camping hacks to easy upgrades...

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## MANUFACTURING

# Erwin Hymer Group tops NCC manufacturing accreditation scheme

Erwin Hymer Group UK has announced that it has attained the top rating in an NCC approval scheme. The company's Elddis, Buccaneer and Xplore motorhomes and campervans have been awarded the maximum five-star rating in the NCC's Manufacturer Approval Scheme for 2025-6.

This mark was awarded after an annual audit which recognised the advances and improvements made at the company's County Durham factory.

Erwin Hymer Group UK's Managing Director, Chris Short, is delighted with the company's class-leading NCC results, "This recognition of our improvements and the level of excellence we have attained is a direct result of hard work, dedication and expertise across our entire business.

"I would like to thank our EHG workforce for striving to achieve and maintain this benchmark and, of course, to our customers for their trust and support as we continue to design and deliver class-leading vehicles and customer service."



The Erwin Hymer Group is owned by US RV manufacturer, Thor Industries, and as well as the UK brands, the group also has a multitude of European makes available in this country, including Bürstner, Dethleffs, Hymer and Niesmann+Bischoff among others.

## INDUSTRY

### BILBO'S MOTORHOMES CO-FOUNDER PASSES AWAY AT 76

Bilbo's Motorhomes has announced the passing of its co-founder and owner, David Latham, who died aged 76.

Bilbo's was started as just a husband and wife team and, over nearly five decades, David played a central role in shaping both the business and the wider campervan industry, with Bilbo's becoming synonymous with thoughtful

design, craftsmanship and reliability.

His daughter, Elesha, who now also works in the business, commented, "He will be missed enormously, but leaves a legacy of respect, honesty, and ambition that will guide us moving forward."

Peter Vaughan says, "Having known David for over 35 years, I always found him to be one of the most friendly and

genuine people in the industry, always keen to discuss VW campervans over a freshly brewed coffee. His desire to build the best campers showed through in his insistence on really staying in a new model himself before letting journalists out in it. He will long be remembered as a founder of the VW campervan market in the UK."



## INDUSTRY

# Japanese company makes Star Wars campervan

Toy-Factory, a Japanese campervan converter, has announced a new special *Star Wars* edition campervan, officially licensed by Lucasfilm. The company has a long history with Disney, having made four other licensed themed campers previously.

An extremely limited edition, there will only be five of the Da Vinci 6.0 Star Wars Edition. The company ran a lottery in December to allow people the chance to buy one for ¥21.87 million, that's just over £100k at today's exchange rate.

The black exterior has a round red and white graphic to depict the Death Star and the themes surrounding the Empire within the films. However, it is within where the theming comes to life.

There's a Death Star graphic on the side kitchen unit that appears when you open the sliding door and then also a light panel on the wall that reflects those found in the giant fictional space station/ship. A red light on this panel symbolises



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Darth Vader's lightsaber.

The cab seats are adorned with the Star Wars logo, the washroom has a background from the duel scene in Cloud City in *The Empire Strikes Back* and the table has a hyperdrive speed pattern. Even the light switch panel looks like it belongs in a galaxy far, far away.

If that wasn't enough, the main carpets feature a red TIE fighter pattern, while another mat in the garage area has the opening credits of *Episode IV: A New Hope*, in their distinctive style.

There's numerous other details, including audio effects in the lounge (with lightsaber, TIE fighter and hyperdrive sounds) activated by a switch and one in the bedroom that has R2-D2 sound effects.



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## INDUSTRY

## INSURER CELEBRATES 15 YEARS OF SPONSORING PARALYMPIAN HANNAH COCKROFT

Caravan Guard, caravan and motorhome insurer, has marked 15 years of sponsorship with Paralympian Hannah Cockroft CBE, welcoming her back to its Halifax offices to recognise the long-standing partnership.

Hannah Cockroft, a nine-time Paralympic gold medallist and born in Halifax, brought two medals from the Paris 2024 and Tokyo 2020 Games, where she competed in the T34 100m, 400m and 800m events.

The company's sponsorship helps support the ongoing costs of elite racing.

## CHARITY

## Sleep out for a cause

The Great Tommy Sleep Out is back in March 2026, inviting camping enthusiasts to swap their cosy beds for a night outside, in support of veterans facing homelessness.

Organised by Royal British Veterans Enterprise (RBVE), it's a simple way to help former service personnel.



## PRODUCTS

## Robens relaunches lighter accessory range

Robens' Ultralight range sees new products, including quilts and lightweight sleeping mats, perfect for motorhomes and caravans with limits on storage space and payload.

The sleeping bag ranges see updates in colours and sizing, with regular-sized bags (fitting up to 180cm) and long-sized bags (fitting up to 195cm).

## ANSWERS

## Puzzle solutions

Stuck on our brainteasers? Here's the answers to the puzzles in the December 2025 issue (page 103).

The crossword solution is:

**Across** 7 Owlsh 8 Unveil 9 Emit 10 Maharaja 11 Applied 13 Loath 15 Forty 17 Helpful 20 Virginal 21 Digs, 23 Tattoo 24 Oriole  
**Down** 1 Swim 2 Pistol 3 Whimper 4 Cushy 5 Overdo 6 Jiu-jitsu 12 Prodigal 14 Bellboy 16 Tights 18 Pidgin 19 Endow 22 Gulp

Answer in shaded squares:

Microwave

Wordsearch terms: Wander, Festive, Santa, Adventure, Merry, Mistletoe, Snowfall, Touring

Sudoku answer in shaded squares: 118

## SECURITY

# Facebook group reveals surge in motorhome and campervan thefts in 2025

According to the Stolen Motorhome Database on Facebook, there have been over 130 thefts of motorhomes and campervans logged in 2025. Insurance specialist, Safeguard, goes further to state that motorhomes are a prime target for theft during the winter months.

“Motorhomes are a popular target for criminals when they’re typically used less,” said Mark Sheppard, Senior Trading Manager at Safeguard.

The insurance company says that physical deterrents are among the most effective ways to prevent motorhome theft. These include steering locks, wheel clamps, alarms, tracking devices and locks for pedals and gear sticks, etc.

Another key aspect of motorhome security is ensuring it can be easily identified in the event of theft. Consider displaying the first four characters of your registration number prominently



on the roof of your motorhome.

Review your security options with our online advice article [W motorhome.ma/security](https://www.motorhome.ma/security)

## DIY

## Campervan wins eBay conversion awards

eBay has announced the winners of its annual awards for van conversions. Cheshire couple, Charlie Ding and Rosie Wells, won £10,000 for their creation.

*Amazing Spaces* TV presenter, George Clarke, headed the judging panel that chose the overall winner from a selection of category winners. Charlie and Rosie’s camper won the Clever Camper category before picking up the overall award.

Charlie and Rosie spent 18 months turning their Mercedes Sprinter into a luxury campervan, with some ingenious design features including an electric bed that lowers from the ceiling and a wardrobe that slides into the shower section when not being used.

Charlie said, “We are ecstatic to have won the overall prize – especially after investing so much time and effort into planning and building our ideal conversion.

“We plan on living in it full-time while we travel around Europe with our dog, so we made design decisions to maximise the living area while storing all our gear and equipment.”

## DEALER

## MARQUIS MOTORHOMES AND CARAVANS ANNOUNCES 2026 UK EVENT LINE-UP



Marquis Motorhomes and Caravans, one of the UK’s largest dealers with 12 locations, has announced its line-up of events for 2026, with four dates. The special events will run throughout spring and summer.

Visitors can expect a wide selection of new and used motorhomes on display, alongside exclusive offers, demonstrations and test drives. There will also be first-time buyer deals and industry experts will be on hand to answer questions.

Marquis Big Events 2026 kicks off with the northeast region, at Marquis Durham from 10-12 April, followed by the southeast at Marquis Surrey / Sussex from 24-26 April.

While the northwest event at Marquis Lancashire runs from 8-10 May, the final date (12-14 June) sees an event in the southwest at Marquis Exeter.

## UPGRADES

## New exterior sockets for motorhomes

Scanstrut, a marine and outdoors kit manufacturer, has announced a new range of weatherproof external sockets for motorhomes and campervans.

The Ventura range has a standardised hole size and shallow installation depth and there is a range of options, including mains, 12V, USB-C, solar and water inputs.

Each socket features a spring-loaded, click-to-close lid, corrosion-resistant materials and marine-



grade 316 stainless-steel hardware.

While suited to those building their own campervan, the eight-strong range could also be used to update or add to the existing sockets on your motorhome.

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Stay in the loop with the latest motorhome news, expert reviews, travel & more

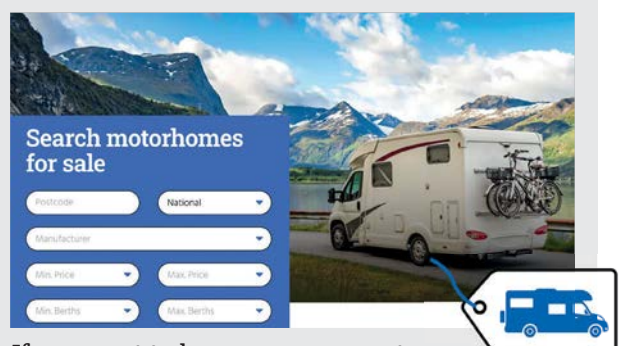
### CAMPSITES

There's something about the turn of the year. It gets us thinking about the coming season and, for motorhomers, planning an adventure. Across New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, the most popular campsite was Wareham Forest, one of our Premier Parks, down in Dorset.

Explore more campsites in Dorset on Campsite Finder [W motorhome.ma/campfinder](http://www.motorhome.ma/campfinder)



### FOR SALE



If you want to buy a new or new-to-you motorhome in the coming months, then we'd certainly recommend signing up to our newsletters. One of the most looked at listings recently was a 2013 Dethleffs Advantage for £29,999 and it's already been sold after appearing on one of our newsletters. Sign up now for emails with great deals, discounts and handpicked vehicles. [W motorhome.ma/emails](http://www.motorhome.ma/emails)

### ADVICE



A Facebook group that logs stolen motorhomes has reported an increase in thefts last year, so it's the perfect time to review your security measures. Read our online security advice article [W motorhome.ma/security](http://www.motorhome.ma/security)



### REVIEWS

Are you prioritising kitchen space? This might be the reason for the Rimor Sailer 56 Plus being the top motorhome review recently. It's got a great lounge, too. [W motorhome.ma/rimor56plus](http://www.motorhome.ma/rimor56plus)



### SHOP

As our Tech Help Editor commonly says, the best solutions are sometimes the most simple, so it's no surprise that one of the most popular products on our shop currently is a neat drinks holder for £5. The Olpro table clip drink holder creates a secure space for a can or small glass. What a good idea! [W motorhome.ma/olproclip](http://www.motorhome.ma/olproclip)



**WANT TO KNOW MORE?** Find the latest news, reviews, technical info and more at [outandaboutlive.co.uk/motorhomes](http://outandaboutlive.co.uk/motorhomes)

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<sup>^</sup>Caravan and Motorhome Club membership is £69 when paying by annual direct debit, price valid until 14 December 2026. Copyright © 2026 Caravan and Motorhome Club. All rights reserved. Information correct at time of print.

## Top guest speakers confirmed for Yorkshire exhibition

Whether you're yet to set foot inside a 'van or you've already clocked up miles of adventures, next month's Harrogate event is a must visit. Taking place at the Yorkshire Event Centre from 20-22 March, visitors can expect to find 45-plus dealers with over 300 new and used vehicles for sale, accessories galore, free manoeuvring courses, and the highly regarded advice centre ready to inform, entertain and inspire.

The Advice Centre is your go-to place for practical, expert-led talks. These free sessions will help you make informed decisions and get the most out of your hobby.

### DAILY TIMETABLE

- **10.30** Motorhome/Campervan Buying Advice: Peter Vaughan
- **11.30** Your first year of motorhoming, what you need to know: Wandering Bird
- **12.30** Campervan & Motorhome Accessories: What's worth it?: Motorhome Matt
- **13.30** Eating Italy Live: Cooking Demo & Talk: Vanlife Eats
- **14.30** Touring Europe in a Motorhome: Essential updates for 2026: Wandering Bird

### MEET THE SPEAKERS



#### Peter Vaughan

One of the UK's most respected motorhome journalists, Peter Vaughan has been reviewing and advising on motorhomes and campervans for over four decades. As Editor of *What Motorhome* and Road Test Editor for MMM, Peter has an unrivalled knowledge of the latest models, essential accessories, and buying advice. His sessions will help both new and experienced owners find the right vehicle to suit their needs.



#### Wandering Bird

Once an air traffic controller, Kat quit her job in 2018 to travel Europe in a motorhome, and she's never looked back. Several years on, the novelty still hasn't worn off and Kat believes everyone can (and should) experience the incredible freedom of life on the road.



#### Motorhome Matt

You may be familiar with Matt Sims, from his popular weekly podcast, but did you know that he also runs multiple award-winning businesses for outdoor lovers, including motorhome hire, sales and vehicle storage as well as accessories?



#### Vanlife Eats

Mark comes from a family of Italian chefs from Minori on the Amalfi Coast, where food is a way of life. With his extensive background in authentic Italian cuisine, he has combined his passion for cooking with vanlife, showing that you don't need a full-sized kitchen to make delicious, gourmet meals on the road. Alongside his partner, Sophie, Mark founded Vanlife Eats – the UK's largest online community dedicated to campervan cooking.

### PRACTICAL DETAILS

Entry to the show is £10 when booked in advance (booking remains open until 8.30am each day), or £15 on the gate. Children under 17 go free. The exhibition area is both indoors and outdoors and is all dog friendly. The show opens at 9.30am daily and closes at 4.30pm (4pm Sunday). For more details, please visit

[outandaboutlive.co.uk/shows](http://outandaboutlive.co.uk/shows)

## 2026 HEADLINERS CONFIRMED

This year's headline entertainers have now been unveiled, with lots of incredible acts to look forward to. Here's a rundown of who you can expect to see on stage in 2026.

### The Southern Motorhome & Campervan Show 15-17 May 2026, Newbury Showground

The Dr Hook Experience, The Foundations, Union Gap

### The East Midlands Motorhome & Campervan Show

12-14 June 2026, Newark Showground  
The Kommitments and Earth, Wind for Hire

### The Norfolk Motorhome & Campervan Show

17-19 July 2026, Norfolk Showground, Norwich  
Disco Classical (70s/80s), Queen of the 90s – Angie Brown, DMF (90s/00s)

### The Western Motorhome & Campervan Show

21-23 August 2026, Three Counties Showground, Malvern  
One Night in Nashville, Cash Revisited

### The South West Motorhome & Campervan Show

11-13 September 2026, Bath & West Showground, Shepton Mallet  
Mercury, Maet LIVE & The Never Neverland Express, Quattro Band

### The Motorhome & Campervan Show, Season Finale

18-20 September 2026, Lincolnshire Showground  
Bay City Rollers, Lee Lard as Peter Kay, The Rubettes ft Bill Hurd

### The Malvern Caravan & Motorhome Show

2-4 October 2026, Three Counties Showground, Malvern  
We Three Kings of Rock'n'Roll

## PRICES AND OPTIONS

Camping pitches are available at all events for up to four nights for £94.50 (apart from the final Malvern Show in October – see below) including booking fees. Pitches allow for two adults and up to three children, with inclusive entertainment. The additional headline show on Saturday evening (acts outlined above) can be added to your booking. Seats are £21.30 in advance or £25 at the show.

Camping pitches at the October Malvern event are £74.55 and headline entertainment tickets are £15 in advance or £20 at the show.



**BOOK** For full details and booking info  
 [outandaboutlive.co.uk/shows](https://outandaboutlive.co.uk/shows)

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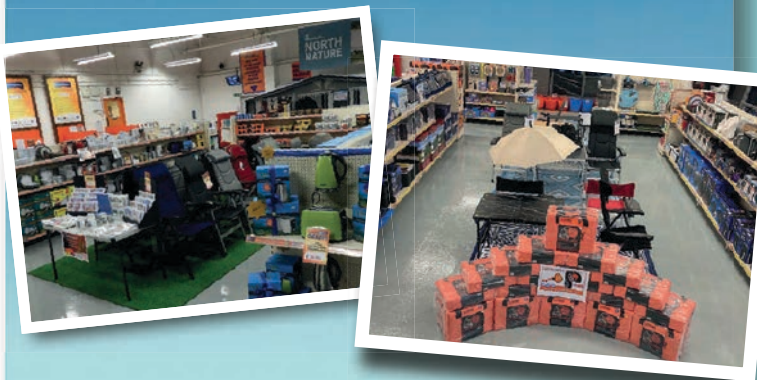


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TERMS & CONDITIONS: THIS FREE PRIZE DRAW IS RUN IN CONJUNCTION WITH TELTA AND RAYMOND JAMES CARAVANS LIMITED. ENTRANTS' DATA WILL BE SHARED BETWEEN THESE TWO COMPANIES BUT NOT WITH ANY OTHER THIRD PARTIES. ENTRY IS OPEN TO UK RESIDENTS AGED 18 AND OVER. ONE ENTRY PER PERSON. WINNERS WILL BE NOTIFIED VIA THEIR PREFERRED CONTACT METHOD. FULL TERMS & CONDITIONS CAN BE FOUND AT OUR WEBSITE.

# Floating like a dragonfly

Wildlife and colour on an epic multi-centre trip through the South West

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: **Carol Kubicki**



## ABOUT US...



**US** Carol Kubicki and husband, Anthony. We explore beautiful places in our Blue Bus whatever the season, being keen walkers, fair weather cyclists and improving birdwatchers

**OUR 'VAN** A 2021 Devon Firefly on a Ford Custom Transit SWB 2.0-litre. This is our third Devon Conversions campervan and we love the layout that packs so much into a sub-five-metre van

**G**lastonbury, in the Somerset Levels, might bring to mind crystal healing and ley lines, but away from the town wildlife flourishes. Our campsite was perfectly placed, close to both the RSPB's Ham Wall reserve on the Avalon Marshes and the town centre.

On the easy walk to the reserve, swallows danced alongside us through the fields, insects buzzed among the flower-rich wetlands, and birds warbled and chirped in the June sunshine. In the reserve, we were astonished by the profusion of flitting dragonflies as we meandered among a horde of electric blues and fresh greens. Later, a warden helped us identify the four-spotted chaser dragonflies as we were mesmerised by a marsh harrier hunting over the reeds and charmed by the swans with an astonishing seven fluffy cygnets.

We spent an afternoon browsing Glastonbury's shops packed with psychedelic tie-dye clothing and throws. Outside, vivid eye-catching murals brightened up gable ends. I was enjoying the explosion of colour and hoped our whole trip around the South West would be as kaleidoscopic.

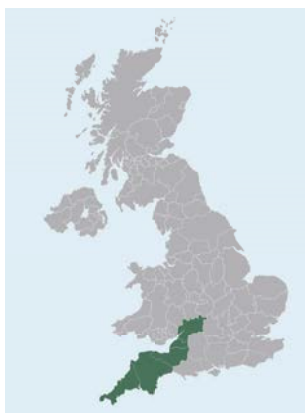
The low-lying Somerset Levels are broken up by hillocks that were once islands among the flooded marshes. The Glastonbury Way (seven and a half miles) took us over the best known of these, Glastonbury Tor, and to most of the

important sights in the area. Its figure of eight shape led us through the town twice, meaning we could have coffee in the morning and a beer later in the day.

The teasing route took us towards and then away from Glastonbury Tor, to include Gog and Magog, two ancient oak trees. When we eventually climbed Glastonbury Tor it was as busy as you would expect, everyone crowded along the sheltered and sunny side of the fourteenth century tower, enjoying the views over the fertile Somerset countryside.

We skipped visiting the Chalice Well and instead circumnavigated the abbey, stopping for a beer in the George and

**ABOVE RIGHT** Rock stacks and cliffs near Tintagel



## THE ROUTE

Follow our journey, go to...  
**W** [motorhome.ma/southwest2026](http://motorhome.ma/southwest2026)

Pilgrims Inn, a pub dripping with antiquarian atmosphere. Originally, this was the hospice for the abbey and it oozes medieval charm, with snugs, worn stone floors and ornate windows.

The grassy ridge of Wearyall Hill gave us more panoramas before the route dropped down to an overgrown path by the River Bure, skirting Bride's Mound, an early Christian site. A good trail on a disused railway line lined with willow trees took us back to the campsite.

In south Devon, we pitched up at Widdicombe Farm and, from our terrace, had views to fields of deep-red soil and yellow mown grass. A service bus from the

nearby village of Marldon carried us to the sea at Paignton.

Heading for the prom, I was faced with a rainbow of colours. The coral-hued sand led to a brilliant-blue sea. Beyond were brick-red sandstone cliffs, rocks strewn with lime-green seaweed and Torquay's white houses.

Walking around Torbay, a sign for the historic village of Cockington sparked a memory with Anthony of childhood family holidays and, on a whim, we turned away from the coast. It was a good call!

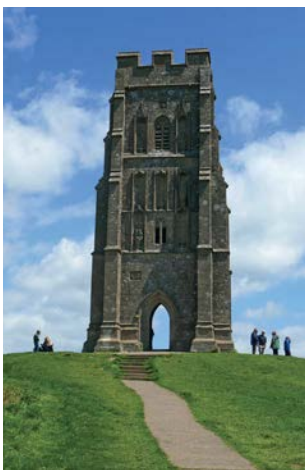
A winding path through a water meadow with a babbling stream led us to a pretty village with thatched cottages ►



**ABOVE** Looking over Glastonbury

**BELOW** The fourteenth century tower on Glastonbury Tor

**BELOW INSET** Vivid Glastonbury mural



and parkland. Anthony remembered the church's unique pulpit, so we peered in. The ornate wooden pulpit, thought to be salvage from a Spanish Armada warship, was still there.

A cricket match was under way in front of Cockington Court and we watched the game with drinks from the café. The art gallery had some interesting pieces but the activity of the workshops appealed more. Here we admired glassblowers, blacksmiths, and other artists at work.

On a blue-sky morning we picked up the John Musgrave Heritage Trail in Marlton. Set up by local Ramblers, this turned out to be a delightful route to Berry Pomeroy Castle. The toughest section was the thigh-busting, almost-vertical lane by Marlton Church.

From the top, our path wound between high hedges, through shady woodland and

along gravel tracks across pastoral Devon. Eventually, the stones of Berry Pomeroy Castle peered over the trees beyond a dazzling meadow.

We walked through the impressive twin-towered gatehouse listening to the audio guide explaining the complicated history of the ruins. The building evolved from a fortification to an Elizabethan mansion that sat within the walls. Lord Seymour inherited Berry Pomeroy at the end of the sixteenth century and had overambitious plans to build something palatial on the restricted site but this was never completed.

In Brixham, the colourful terraces rise attractively in tiers, huddling around the harbour. The vistas are complimented by multicoloured boats, gleaming in the sunshine. We strolled around the steep narrow streets and along the half-mile- ➤



**THE JOURNEY**

We travelled from home in Morecambe to Somerset via the M6 and M5, then returned from Gloucester on the same motorways, a return distance of **620 miles**. We spent 19 days touring with 17 nights on sites in June



**THE COSTS**

**Fuel:** 620 miles at an average 40mpg.....**£88**  
**Ferry:** Dartmouth Higher Ferry.....**£8.90**  
**Campsites**.....**£541.10**  
**Attractions:** Two adults: Berry Pomeroy Castle, Arlington Court, Slimbridge Wetland Centre.....**£75.18**  
**Bus and train:** Bus to Paignton.....**£2**  
**Total**.....**£715.18**





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## INFORMATION

Glastonbury Information Centre

**W** [glastonburyinformationcentre.co.uk](http://glastonburyinformationcentre.co.uk)

Avalon Marshes

**W** [avalonmarshes.org](http://avalonmarshes.org)

Berry Pomeroy Castle is run by English Heritage

**W** [english-heritage.org.uk](http://english-heritage.org.uk)

The South Devon Ramblers has details of the John Musgrave Heritage Trail

**W** [southdevonramblers.com](http://southdevonramblers.com)

Slapton Ley National Nature Reserve

**W** [field-studies-council.org/locations/slaptonleynr](http://field-studies-council.org/locations/slaptonleynr)

Arlington Hall is owned by the National Trust

**W** [nationaltrust.org.uk](http://nationaltrust.org.uk)

Slimbridge Wetland Centre

**W** [wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/slimbridge](http://wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/slimbridge)

long breakwater. Facing the breeze at the lighthouse, we could see Torquay across the sea.

The ferry at Dartmouth broke up our journey through the Devon countryside to Stokenham near Slapton Sands. After settling our silver machine on the campsite, we walked to the beach.

We joined others paying respects at the memorial to the hundreds of soldiers who were killed here in April 1944 while training for the D-Day landings. Thousands of residents were temporarily evacuated from the villages around Slapton Sands to ensure secrecy during the D-Day preparation and these villagers, who must have felt so disorientated, were in my thoughts, too.

Today the three-mile-long shingle and sandy Slapton Sands is perfect for strolling. The next morning, we carried our sandals and felt the many-hued pebbles shift under our steps. Bright wildflowers and a road fill the shingle bar that separates Slapton Ley, a freshwater lake, from the beach.

Surrounded by reed beds and trees, Slapton Ley is a nationally important

nature reserve and we followed the meandering paths around the waterside, the sunlight peeping through the leaves. At a viewpoint we rested and were lucky to see a pair of hobbies gracefully manoeuvring over the still water.

Reaching Slapton village, we relaxed with a beer in the pretty garden behind The Queens Arms, watching jackdaws hopping between the thatched roofs. We walked through the narrow streets of handsome properties and spotted the ruined tower that is all that remains of a previous chantry college. We strode back along quiet narrow lanes, pressing ourselves against the high hedges when an occasional vehicle came by.

We often stop at farm shops when we are on the road. These usually have parking, good food and a café. Crossing the border to Cornwall, we pulled into the unusually named Tre, Pol and Pen, which is Cornish for homestead, well and hill. After a delicious brunch and coffee, we left with a bag full of gifts and groceries to take to Trewethett campsite that sits on the cliffs of the north Cornwall coast.

With a storm forecast the next day, we

**BELOW** The harbour at Brixham





## TOP TIPS

Be prepared to reverse on some of the narrow lanes with high hedges in the South West

Slimbridge Wetland Centre has good access for pushchairs and wheelchairs. The latter is provided free of charge and mobility scooters can be hired for £10 a day. The paths are mostly hard surface and the hides are accessible. Full details can be found from this link

**W** [www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/slimbridge/plan-your-visit/accessibility](http://www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/slimbridge/plan-your-visit/accessibility)

**ABOVE CLOCKWISE** Ladies Window rock formation near Tintagel; Slapton Sands is a short walk away from Start Bay C&MC site; Berry Pomeroy Castle has a complicated history

decided to explore the coastal path that runs alongside the site as soon as we arrived. This spectacular stretch of coast was packed with colour.

Clumps of oxeye daisies bobbed in the breeze, yellow lichen clung to dry stone walls and seabirds swirled around the sea stacks. The high cliffs plunging into the sea were breathtaking.

We clambered down to Ladies Window, a natural archway. Stepping cautiously through the arch, we stood windswept above the crashing waves on a narrow rocky platform, shiny with use.

The rain and strong winds arrived, but we chose to walk to Tintagel, as friends had highly recommended the vegan pasties at The Cornish Bakery. The path along the secluded Rocky Valley was slippery in the downpour and we guessed we were the only people out hiking. However, looking for the rock carvings at the ruined mill buildings, we found them surrounded by a huddle of rain-drenched women learning about the connection between meditation and labyrinths!

Tintagel was busy but at the recommended bakery we queued patiently for a table, glad to be out of the rain. The pasties were worth the effort!

Better weather returned as we drove to north Devon and the idyllic Hallsdown

Farm, our base for a few days. We were soon pitched up with a view across a field with a white-nosed donkey whose thick coat changed with the light from chestnut to ecru.

The campsite was a wildlife haven, the most notable sighting being a pair of striking black and white great spotted woodpeckers. They fed their youngster a few yards from our campervan, the male distinguished by his bright red head patch.

Arlington Court, a National Trust estate once owned by generations of Chichesters, was manageable on foot from Hallsdown Farm. From the lanes, our first glimpse of the property was the family emblem. This statue of a heron catching an eel sits on a cupola on the old stables, now the Carriage Museum.

Visiting the house, we learnt about the last owner, Rosalie Chichester, an animal lover, who managed the estate as a no-hunting haven. She travelled widely and collected curios, from shells to model ships. The two-storey house isn't a palace but the light and homely property does have a magnificent central hall that is larger than our bungalow!

There is something satisfying to the eye about the combination of a golden scone, pale yellow clotted cream and ruby red jam. Maybe it is that you know it will be ►



**ABOVE** Arlington Court is surrounded by meadows

**BELOW** Avocets at Slimbridge

**BELOW INSET** Tudor Caravan Park – the site is alongside the canal



delicious! After generously sharing scone crumbs with a friendly robin, we picked up the five-mile waymarked trail to explore the wider estate. The land reflects Rosalie Chichester’s passions and is managed for wildlife with meadows down to the river, water features and plenty of woodland.

Heading north, we stopped for a final slice of Devon before hitting the motorway. Sitting on the River Exe, the historic town of Tiverton was a good choice for shopping, coffee and general ambling. Interesting buildings remain from its days as a centre for manufacturing woollen cloth and the tidy main street was radiantly bedecked with Devon flags (green with a black and white cross). We bought cake for later and stumbled upon some of Tiverton’s jazzy Flock that Rock, a sculpture trail of painted swans.

Tudor Caravan Park is on the doorstep of Slimbridge Wetland Centre in Gloucestershire, so visiting the reserve was easy. Leaving the visitor’s centre behind, we strode purposefully to the promisingly named Kingfisher Hide that overlooks a nest.

A member of staff was briskly sweeping the hide and we had clearly arrived at the end of the show. He told us the young kingfishers had fledged and the whole family moved on.

Disappointed, we watched an egret before trying another hide. Here, cute fluffy avocet chicks bumbled over rocks, almost perfectly camouflaged to keep them safe. At the edge of the reserve, we were lucky to see a rare visitor to the UK, a lonely male white-spotted bluethroat.

Wandering back towards the exit, we decided to have a last try to see kingfishers. Often seen as a blue flash along a river, these speedy technicoloured birds can be difficult to spot. We settled down in a hide and almost immediately a blue and orange blur arrived, perching on one of the many branches over the water.

The kingfisher repeatedly dived in the water, until success! It caught a fish which it swallowed, then flew away. We hardly had time to feel elated when a different kingfisher landed on a closer branch and gave us a similar flamboyant performance.

The vivid plumage of the kingfishers was a fitting grand finale to our multicoloured holiday. From showy coastal flowers to Brixham’s picturesque harbour; from the shimmering Somerset dragonflies to Torbay’s radiant seascape, England’s South West had flaunted its riotous palette of colour. [www.outandaboutlive.co.uk](http://www.outandaboutlive.co.uk)



**WE STAYED AT**

**Isle of Avalon Touring Park**, Godney Road, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 9AF

**T 01458 833618**

**W [avalontouringpark.co.uk](http://avalontouringpark.co.uk)**

**PREMIER PARK 2026** **Widdicombe Farm Touring Park**, The Ring Road (A380),

Compton, Torquay, Devon TQ3 1ST

**T 01803 558325**

**W [widdicombefarm.co.uk](http://widdicombefarm.co.uk)**

**Start Bay Caravan and Motorhome Club**

**Site**, Stokenham, Kingsbridge, Devon TQ7 2SE

**T 01548 580430**

**W [caravanclub.co.uk](http://caravanclub.co.uk)**

**Trewethett Farm Caravan and Motorhome Club site**, Trethevy, Tintagel, Cornwall PL34 0BQ

**T 01840 770222**

**W [caravanclub.co.uk](http://caravanclub.co.uk)**

**Hallsdown Farm Touring Park**, Arlington, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 4SW

**T 01271 850847**

**W [hallsdownfarm.co.uk](http://hallsdownfarm.co.uk)**



**Tudor Caravan Park**, Shepherds Patch, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire GL2 7BP

**T 01453 890483**

**W [tudorcaravanpark.com](http://tudorcaravanpark.com)**

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## THE ROUTE

Follow the journey, go to...

**W** [motorhome.ma/anglesey26](http://motorhome.ma/anglesey26)

**W**e leafed through the well-thumbed pages of our atlas until North Wales stopped us in our tracks. Anglesey felt like a place apart.

A few weeks later, we found ourselves waist-high in prickly gorse, scrambling up a narrow path so steep in places that we had to pass our little dogs up to one another like furry parcels. We were on our

way to the top of Holyhead Mountain. Despite its modest summit of just 220 metres, the steep gradient made it feel as though we'd conquered a proper peak, and the spectacular 360-degree views certainly backed that up.

Standing beside the trig point, buffeted by the wind, we could see Holy Island and almost the whole of Anglesey spread out before us. The low, gently undulating



# *Wandering Anglesey's wild coast*

Exploring Anglesey's beaches, headlands and hidden history, with wildlife, walking routes and perfectly placed campsites

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: Sarah Warburton

green pastures lay in sharp contrast to the distant peaks of Eryri (Snowdonia), their outlines softened by haze.

Since dogs aren't permitted on Ynys Lawd (South Stack), we tag-teamed the lighthouse visit, which worked perfectly as there were plenty of benches positioned along the clifftops overlooking the sea. Armed with binoculars, I had a prime vantage point from which to scan the

chiselled grey cliff faces, where almost every square centimetre was occupied by nesting razorbills and guillemots, the air abuzz with their chatter.

The descent to the lighthouse felt endless – 400 steep stone steps followed by a crossing over a suspension bridge. Even on such a calm day, the sea churned and waves crashed dramatically against the cliffs beneath. ►

**ABOVE** Thomas Telford's Menai Suspension Bridge



**ABOUT US...**



**US Sarah Warburton** and husband along with their two small dogs. We enjoy getting away as often as possible in the 'van. We are keen walkers and swimmers and love the freedom of motorhoming

**OUR 'VAN** A 2022 Eddis CV40 called Mavis. She's our first 'van and we love relaxing in the roomy lounge at the rear with the back doors wide open

Before the first suspension bridge was constructed in 1828, all crossings – whether passengers or supplies – were made via a basket suspended from a cable. I can't say I'd have relished that.

Our first campsite, Pen Y Bont, proved to be perfectly positioned beside one of Anglesey's lesser-known features: the Inland Sea (Y Lasinwen). The Inland Sea owes its existence to Thomas Telford's ambitious London to Holyhead Road project, which was built to improve links between London and Dublin following the 1800 Act of Union.

The construction of the Stanley Embankment in 1823, as part of the route, effectively dammed the Cymyran Strait, trapping tidal waters between the embankment and Four Mile Bridge. This created a large, peaceful lagoon with mudflats, salt marshes and creeks.

We meandered along the embankment to the sound of curlews' haunting cries and the sharp piping of oystercatchers, while wading birds dabbed contentedly in the shallow waters. As the day ended, the Inland Sea was an idyllic place to watch the light fade and the sun set behind Holyhead Mountain.

A pleasant 20-mile drive along quiet, remarkably pothole-free roads took us to Newborough National Nature Reserve and Forest. There's a range of walking, cycling and even running trails here, showcasing the best of the reserve, from which we chose the five-mile Saint, Sand and Sea

walk. The route led us first along sun-dappled forest paths, past a series of interpretation panels that tell the story of this special place.

The forest was planted with Corsican pine trees between 1947 and 1965 to provide both timber and jobs for the local area. The trees also play a crucial role in stabilising the sand against the wind, preventing the village of Newborough from being inundated.

As we paused to read, Andrew grabbed my arm. "Squirrel," he whispered. He'd been lucky enough to glimpse one of the forest's residents, a red squirrel, as it scampered across the path. I looked around in vain, but its bushy tail had already vanished into the undergrowth.

The path led us seaward and, as the tree canopy thinned, we were treated to tantalising glimpses of what was to come in this wind and sea-sculpted environment. Emerging fully from the forest, we stood open-mouthed at the vista before us: mile after mile of white sandy beach, an azure sea glistening in the sunlight against a backdrop of Eryri's peaks and, to our right, the end destination of our walk – Ynys Llanddwyn, a hummocky promontory extending into the sea that can be cut off at high tide.

As we climbed the headland, our feet crunching along a path of crushed white shells, we made frequent pauses to savour the ever-changing views as stunning rocky coves and inlets revealed themselves. ►

**ABOVE** Welsh ponies graze by the ruins of St Dwynwen's Church, Ynys Llanddwyn, Newborough

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## TOP TIPS

### South Stack

Wear sensible shoes if visiting South Stack Lighthouse as the steps to and from the island are very steep

Tickets for admission to South Stack island and lighthouse can be purchased from the kiosk at the RSPB visitor centre where cards are accepted, or by cash only on the island itself

There is a large car park as well as toilets and a cafe in the RSPB visitor centre

Downloadable trail maps  
[W www.rspb.org.uk/days-out/reserves/south-stack](http://www.rspb.org.uk/days-out/reserves/south-stack)

**BELOW** Cemaes from the harbour

**BELOW INSET** Tidal bell on the beach at Cemaes

A stonechat perched high on a branch of coconut-scented gorse kept a watchful eye as we ambled past, admiring the pastel-coloured wildflowers that festooned the grassy clifftops. It was a hive of avian activity: oystercatchers searched the beaches, while out at sea cormorants flapped furiously just above the water and boisterous gulls seemed to hang in the air, scanning for picnic leftovers.

We continued to the beacon and lighthouse at the end of the peninsula, pausing at a row of whitewashed cottages that were once home to local pilots. These skilled navigators guided ships around treacherous sandbars when the nearby mainland ports of Bangor and Caernarfon bustled with slate shipping.

En route back, the path led us past an atmospheric ruined church dedicated to St Dwynwen – the Welsh patron saint of lovers – which once welcomed pilgrims from all over Wales. Adjacent to the

church, we spotted a herd of Welsh ponies grazing the area, completely unfazed by the many day-trippers admiring them.

Back at the 'van, we reflected that this had been one of the best walks we'd ever done, anywhere. From statuesque trees and fabulous beaches to captivating wildlife, fascinating geology and rich history, Newborough truly had it all.

As this was our first visit to Anglesey, we decided to split our stay across two sites on different sides of the island. En route to our second stop, we called in at the seaside village of Cemaes. A thriving port in the nineteenth century, when limestone, marble and brick were exported, today it's mainly pleasure craft that fill the harbour, watched over by a jumble of whitewashed cottages.

Cemaes is also home to one of around 14 tidal bells located around the British coastline, designed by sculptor, Marcus Vergette. Intended as a warning about



### THE JOURNEY

We travelled from Wiltshire via the A419, A417, M5, M6, M56 and A55 and returned the same way. We travelled a total of **526 miles**, including our mileage whilst travelling on Anglesey. We spent eight nights on sites



### THE COSTS

<b>Fuel:</b> Average 36mpg .....	<b>£92.19</b>
<b>Site fees:</b> .....	<b>£292</b>
<b>Attractions:</b> Beaumaris Castle (free as English Heritage members), Beaumaris Gaol (two adults) £14, South Stack Lighthouse (two adults) £20 ...	<b>£34</b>
<b>Parking:</b> South Stack £7.50 all day, Beaumaris £6 all day, Newborough Forest £7 all day, Llangefni £1.50 (2 hours) .....	<b>£22</b>
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>£440.19</b>



## TOP TIPS

### Newborough NNR

There are several car parks around the large Newborough site. Some are free, others are chargeable

For Beach (the main car park), Airman's and Cwningar car parks, there is a charge. Between 4pm and 9am there is height barrier on entry to these car parks (you can still exit between these times)

Waymarked walking, running and cycling trails, plus a downloadable audio trail at:

**W** [naturalresources.wales/days-out/places-to-visit/north-west-wales/newborough](#)

If you are walking to Ynys Llanddwyn, check the tide times before setting off as the headland can be cut off in high tides

**ABOVE CLOCKWISE** South Stack Lighthouse; Glimpses of the sea through pine trees, Newborough; Pilots' Cottages, Ynys Llanddwyn, Newborough

climate change and the impact of rising sea levels on coastal communities, the bells are sounded by waves at high tide.

As we wandered along the expansive and almost deserted beach, I couldn't resist rolling up my trouser legs and dipping my toes in the water. Despite days of glorious sunshine, the sea was still absolutely freezing.

My chilly legs suitably dried off, we followed the coastal path to Eglwys Llanbadrig (St Patrick's Church), dramatically positioned on a headland with commanding views across the sea. Legend has it that St Patrick founded the original church here around AD 440 after being shipwrecked nearby and taking refuge in a cave. Originally a timber structure, it was replaced by stone in the twelfth century and rebuilt again in the fourteenth century. It's said to be the oldest church in Wales.

Back in Cemaes, we enjoyed a delicious late lunch at the welcoming Bell Café, and stocked up with supplies at the local shop.

Stepping into the industrial landscape of Parys Mountain was an otherworldly experience. Mining has shaped and scarred this mountain since the Bronze Age, but it was the discovery of a massive copper vein in 1768 that sparked an industrial boom, leading to a brief period of world copper market domination.

From the viewing platform, we stared out at a vast chasm cut from the mountainside using nothing more than picks, shovels and gunpowder, streaked with rust reds, burnt oranges, earthy browns, charcoal blacks and silvery greys. For those keen to explore further, there's a choice of waymarked industrial heritage trails taking in the remnants of old kilns, furnaces and other buildings that once processed the precious ore.

Our second base was Frongoch, a certificated site beautifully located on a hillside overlooking the magnificent Red Wharf Bay. The true scale of the bay only became apparent as we wandered along the coastal path down to the village of the same name.

This enormous, flat expanse of sand and water stretched so far that we could just about make out tiny figures walking on the far side of the bay. The dogs enjoyed a rambunctious game of fetch while we strolled along beachcombing, before a spontaneous coffee and cake pit stop at one of the village's waterside eateries set us up perfectly for the amble back to the site.

No trip to Anglesey is complete without a visit to the pretty town of Beaumaris, which sits in an enviable position along the Menai Strait. Having seized Welsh territory in the thirteenth century, ►



**TOP TIPS**

**Cemaes**

We used the free village car park, but this may not be suitable for motorhomes longer than 6m

**W** [cemaes.wales](http://cemaes.wales)

**Parys Mountain**

A 2.3-metre height barrier is in place at the car park entrance, but there is a layby on the opposite side of the B5111 opposite (this was where we parked)

There are two marked walks around the site. Details can be found on the information panels in the car park

**ABOVE** Colours on show in the vast chasm at Parys Mountain

**BELOW** Beaumaris Castle from Castle Street; The station sign at Llanfair PG



Edward I ordered the building of a series of castles to strengthen his grip. Four of the finest (Conwy, Caernarfon, Harlech and Beaumaris) collectively form a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Beaumaris was the last to be started but was never completed, earning it the nickname ‘the greatest castle never built’.

Castle Street proved a treasure trove of independent retailers, but the real star for me was Anglesey’s oldest shop building. Painted a gorgeous pastel green and dating back to the fifteenth century, it now houses the Red Boat ice cream parlour.

I narrowed my choice down to millionaire’s shortbread and Lotus Biscoff, crowned with Mini Eggs – utterly divine. The dogs weren’t left out, either: Red Boat’s pup-friendly peanut butter and banana flavour went down well.

A short walk away, Beaumaris Gaol offered a sobering contrast. Built in 1829, the forbidding stone structure lurks behind tall iron gates, incongruously

surrounded by pretty cottages.

As I wandered between the cells, a sharp tapping echoed along the corridor. With two executions having taken place here, a ghostly presence didn’t seem entirely out of the question – until I looked up and spotted the culprit: a herring gull industriously building its nest, its beak striking the barred window as it worked.

All too soon, our final day arrived and it was time to begin the journey home. I couldn’t resist indulging in some parkrun tourism at Nant y Pandy Nature Reserve in Llangefni. Warned not to expect any personal bests, the undulating course through woodland and along a babbling river proved the prediction accurate.

Back on the road, we came upon Wales’ most famously named village: Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrob wlllantysiliogogoch. Obligatory station photo taken, we browsed the souvenir shop before settling on a couple of postcards for friends abroad.

Our final stop was a layby on the A5 overlooking the Menai Strait and its two remarkable bridges: the elegant Menai Suspension Bridge, opened in 1826, and the more robust Britannia Bridge. We stood for a while watching the swirling waters of The Swellies below before reluctantly heading back to the ‘van.

Anglesey, it seems, has a habit of getting under your skin – and I have no doubt we’ll be back. [www](http://www)

**WE STAYED AT**  
**Pen Y Bont Caravan & Camping,**  
 Valley, Anglesey LL65 3EY  
**T 01407 740481**  
**W** [penybontfarm.co.uk](http://penybontfarm.co.uk)

**Frongoch Certificated Site (CS), Lon**  
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**T 07471 400945**

**W** [frongochanglesey.co.uk](http://frongochanglesey.co.uk)

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# Beyond the causeway

Nine off-peak days in Northern Ireland, where the best moments came from missed turnings and local tips

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: **Maeve McCormack**

## ABOUT ME...



**ME** Maeve McCormack. I live in Sligo on the Wild Atlantic Way. For years I saved change in a money box to buy a campervan when I retired. Then Covid hit and I decided not to wait

**MY 'VAN** 2018 Volkswagen T6. 2-litre diesel, three seatbelts, four-berth. I bought it from the local dog warden and converted it. The pop-top roof, gas and hot water systems were done professionally, but I did the floor, insulation and soft furnishings as well as fitting the pre-made furniture

**I**t is May, the sun is shining, the work schedules align; off we go on an impromptu trip close to home in Northern Ireland. With our youngest now away in college, we can take a May holiday and take advantage of the long evenings, for the first time in 26 years.

On Friday night, we drove 33 miles to Belcoo, Co Fermanagh, and tucked into dinner at the Customs House Inn.

We set up for the night half a mile away, at Lough MacNean Lakeside in Co Cavan, parking in a cosy corner at about 9pm and settling in for the sunset. The slow unwind had begun.

The old-style pump fulfilled any need for water, and public toilets were available for the other end of the scale. There was a big playground, lake swimming area with changing rooms, a public slipway and mobile Hot Box Sauna. As it was not an official campsite, we arrived late and left early as to not burden the locals.

We were on the road for Carrickfergus (106 miles away) by 8.30am with a quick pit stop for diesel in Blacklion. There is a two-space aire in Carrickfergus, beside the castle. It's a great location for the commuter train into Belfast City if you want to visit. We stayed local.

Situated on Belfast Lough, the town is completely walkable and overlooked by a well-preserved Norman castle that is open



to the public. The unusual layout has the main village running parallel to a strip of green parkland, a dual carriageway (the Marine Highway) and a mile-long promenade. While at the public slipway and small beach, we came across some paddleboard enthusiasts making the most of a calm, sunny day.

What a fascinating mix it was. 500-year-old pubs, Union Jack bunting, a restored full-size tank and gun carriage, giant metal knights kitted out in local sports team colours and a less-than-life-size statue of



**ABOVE** Pretty Portaferry

King William of Orange, sometimes mistaken for Captain Hook.

We could have taken the tour of the castle and the various museums, but undertook our own research by chatting to the locals as we wandered the town centre. It turns out the knights were once part of the Knight Ride monorail amusement centre, and the local council bought the statues for £10 and relocated them to the green. This we found out over a few pints in the quaintly ancient Dobbins Inn.

Apparently, a secret tunnel runs from here to the castle. I was too polite to ask about the tank, but a quick online search told me it is a restored Churchill Mk VII Tank from World War II, originally designed and produced by Belfast's Harland and Wolff operating at that time from Carrickfergus. Who knew? Incidentally, the 'no climbing' signs are invisible to the local children.

My favourite shop in the town was The Secret Bookshelf, run by a local author, situated in a cosy courtyard with a ►



© Bernia Brown / Tourism Ireland



© Arthur Ward / Tourism Ireland



## THE ROUTE

Follow our journey, go to...

**W** [motorhome.ma/nitour2026](http://motorhome.ma/nitour2026)

**ABOVE CLOCKWISE** Helen's Bay coastal walk; Bookshop heaven, Carrickfergus; Carrickfergus Castle

**BELOW INSET** St Helen's Bay Beach

coffee shop. It had a huge selection of new and secondhand books. Blissful holiday browsing.

The next day, we drove to Hazelbank Park, after a tip-off the previous day regarding the presence of the Coronation Garden. Designed by Diarmuid Gavin, it marks the coronation of King Charles III. We had lunch in the adjacent picnic area and park overlooking the Belfast Lough. The day was sunny, so it was time for beach and ice cream. Off with us to Browns Bay Beach, which on the map is only six miles away, though inadvertently we did take a bit of a scenic route, passing by Kilroot Power Station. The tight, hilly roads were manageable in our T6. We embraced the misdirection as part of the joy of having nine days to explore. The beach was buzzing. A cross section of intergenerational Northern Irish families out for the day, gangs of young people, ghetto blasters and boy racers. While swimming, I reached my hand out to touch Scotland, but it was not as near as it

looked. The beach was sandier than the pictures I had seen. No Sunday trip to the sea can be had without ice cream. Rinkha was the place to be, an old dance hall turned ice cream parlour. It had been making ice cream there since the 1920s along with selling groceries, hardware and toys. Despite the potential grandeur, our picnic lingered on, leaving us faced with a closed sign. We will return. We did, however, find a liquid alternative back in Carrickfergus.

Maintaining our fondness for alternative routes, we left Carrickfergus for Newcastle, ignoring the 44-mile motorway option. The northeastern coastal route was more leisurely, with pit stops at St Helen's Bay Beach, and the harbour town of Donaghadee.

We managed to miss our turn for the beautiful Mount Stewart House and Gardens but were not too worried and continued. We met some diversions, putting us further astray and running us by Kirkistown Motor Racing Circuit.



## THE JOURNEY

From our home in Sligo, we headed to the border at Lough MacNea and then across to the east, focusing on the coast north of Belfast and then U-turning to head south. Avoiding motorways, we mainly hugged the coastal roads down to the border with Ireland, ending with a quick visit to Dublin. The whole journey was 603 miles



## THE COSTS

<b>Fuel:</b> Average 40mpg .....	<b>£93</b>
<b>Campsites</b> .....	<b>£135.30</b>
<b>Ferries:</b> Portaferry one way .....	<b>£7.70</b>
<b>Attractions:</b> Two adults, Seaforde Gardens .....	<b>£14.80</b>
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>£250.80</b>

**TOP TIPS**

Don't book ahead if it's a quiet time. We had planned one night in Newcastle, but ended up staying three nights it was so nice

Check out the local bakery in each town – particularly the soda farls, sweet breads and brown breads that you just don't get where I live!

Always carry a bit of cash, not all places take cards and sometimes the internet is weak

If you are near the border, pop across for cheaper fuel

**BELOW** Cloughmore Stone, Rostrevor

We got to Portaferry, a coastal village, at around 6pm for a ferry that runs every half-hour across the Ards Peninsula to Strangford. Waiting for the ferry, we chatted to Malachy, a retired philosopher, and we put the world to rights. He kindly offered us his kitchen to cook in while he showed us his book collection.

Unfortunately, we had a sunset ferry to catch. On said ferry, we started conversing with a regular. Leaning in the window, he was excited to hear we were from Sligo, a place he had traded cattle in the 1950s.

Leaning in further, one hand on the dash, the other on the windowsill, he told us how his father instructed him to buy cattle, exported first through Scotland and then to England as Scottish Aberdeen Angus. This was all done on a rail network, much of which no longer exists.

Strangford is another idyllic seaside village, but we did not stop, anxious to get

to Newcastle and Bloody Bridge campsite. Finally pitched up, behind us stood an apple tree, while miniature rhododendrons and pine cones peppered the ground around us, and in front stood a tree trunk turned dinner table. It was a perfect sunset view.

The next morning exploration beckoned. This trip was always supposed to be about aimlessly wandering, and Newcastle was perfect for this.

There's also plenty to do if you want to be more active. We spotted a cinema in the community centre, a tourist office that runs yoga classes, a seasonal outdoor swimming pool, a children's indoor play area, playgrounds and numerous walks for all ages and abilities from the local park area.

It has a wide, old-fashioned Main Street with loads of independent shops, from traditional hardware stores, modern ▶



© Chris Hill / Tourism Ireland



**ABOVE CLOCKWISE** Newcastle Promenade; Tank at Carrick Fergus; Dinner in Newcastle

**BELOW** Coronation Garden, Newtownabbey

bistros, and a range of excellent secondhand shops.

From the campsite it is about a mile's walk to the mile-long promenade, bookended by the majestic Slieve Donard red brick hotel and the ice cream strip. A four-mile-long beach is sandy and stony, lovely for walking but not very tempting for a swim.

The most expensive coffees all holiday were at the Percy French part of the Slieve Donard end, but it was a one-off and we were happy to pay for seat and the view. At the other 'ice cream' end, we had a fabulous early dinner at the super friendly Harbour House overlooking the sea.

This is the swimming end, too, with pier jumpers, paddleboarders and distance

swimmers all doing their thing. The water was clean, clear and sheltered.

Next day, it was time to find the source of the name Bloody Bridge. We parked a mile up the road and strode along the cliff paths, popping down to secret beaches as we went, crossing 'Maggie's Leap' ravine. As the stories goes, Maggie was a local long ago being chased by a group of men whilst collecting seagull eggs. She jumped the ravine to outrun them and didn't crack a single egg. As a reward they now have a local IPA named after her.

The next leg of our journey was the coastal route to Rostrevor with a scenic stop-off at Seaforde Gardens and Tropical Butterfly House. We had the privilege of bumping into the lady of the house, who gave us a potted history of how she and her husband restored these gardens during The Troubles.

With wide streets, a winding river, and many ancient hostleries, a pub crawl through Rostrevor beckoned.

The following day, it was an uphill hike to Cloughmore, 'the big stone', 1,000 feet above Rostrevor, said to have been thrown here by Finn McCool during a fight with a Scottish giant.

The area is full of walking and mountain biking trails, a favourite of ours being Narnia Trail. CS Lewis used to holiday here, and we walked through a magical wardrobe door into a forest full ▶



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**STOPOVERS**

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There was a plentiful supply of clean public toilets wherever we went

If you are wild camping, leave no trace and respect the local community

Don't park up if there are loads of vans there before you. If there are more than two, I go somewhere else

**ABOVE RIGHT** CS Lewis used to holiday in Rostrevor

**BELOW** Newcastle coast, with the Mourne Mountains in the background

**BELOW INSET** Carrickfergus Harbour

of famous settings, including 'The Lamp Post', 'The Beaver's House' and 'Aslan's Table'.

An early start the next day, we decided to pop down to Dublin to the theatre. We drove direct and parked at Booterstown suburban rail station on the southside.

We were back at the 'van by 10pm after seeing both the evening and lunchtime shows at Lir Theatre, getting back with time for a tippie in The Old Punch Bowl pub. We didn't pop the roof and slept to the sounds of the bird sanctuary adjacent to the car park.

Sunday morning is a great time to drive easily in Dublin, so we made a trip to a suburb to purchase a traditional archery bow, meet an old college friend in Dublin City for coffee and pop by our daughter's student accommodation on the other side of the city to pick up some of her bags.



© Chris Hill / Tourism Ireland

As we headed for home to Sligo (125 miles), she reminded us that this time last year a May or September break would not have been possible with her at home in school. It makes you realise how quickly life shifts, and how travel plans change along with it. [MMM](#)



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**W [bloodybridgecampsite.com](http://bloodybridgecampsite.com)**

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**W [visitmournemountains.campmanager.com](http://visitmournemountains.campmanager.com)**

**Booterstown Dart Station, Dublin.** Car park for local train. No barriers at exit. Beside the sea and park. €3.50 for 24 hours parking

**ALTERNATIVE CAMPSITES**



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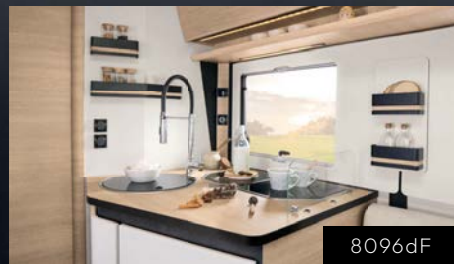
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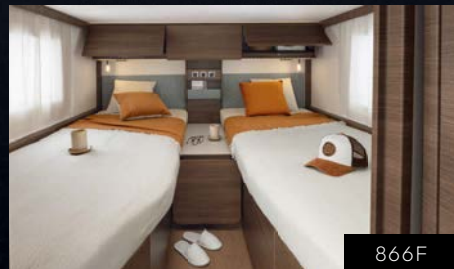
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# *Camerambling through* **Scotland**

Bumbling north of the border in search  
of the best wildlife photos

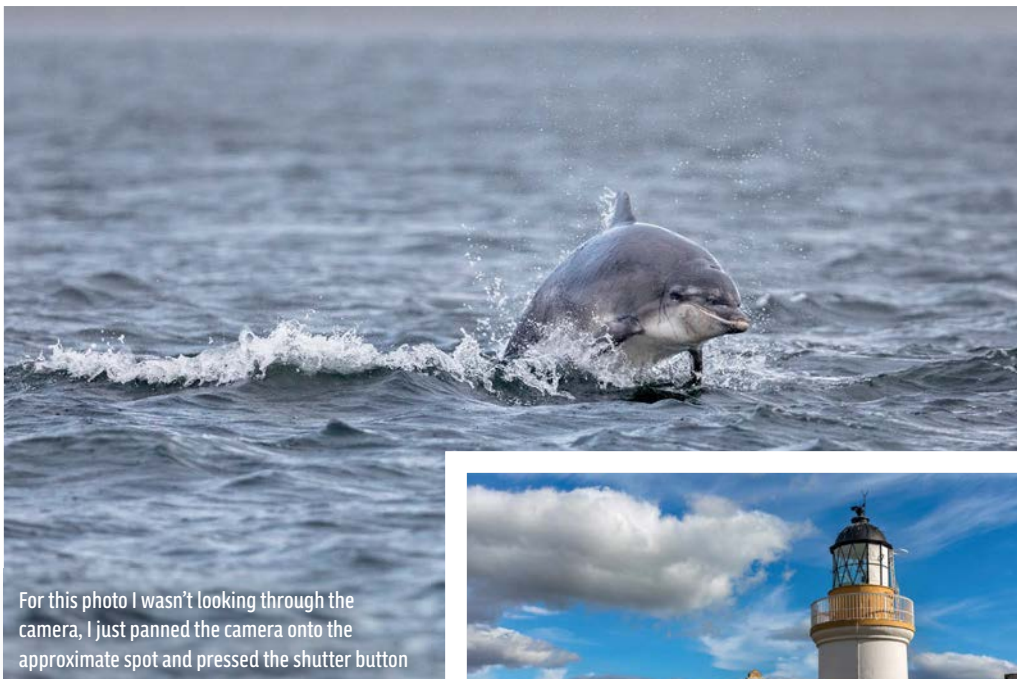
WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: David Chapman



**I**'d just dropped Sarah off at a small railway station in Scotland and, after several weeks travelling together, I was on my own again. She was heading home to Cornwall, leaving me free to devote time to wildlife photography as I made my way south through Scotland.

Wildlife photography is a patient pursuit, demanding long hours of waiting with no guarantee of success. Yet it has grown hugely in popularity in recent years, and I know many MMM readers share that same passion for capturing wildlife on camera. ►

Amongst the leaf litter, a red squirrel shows me its tail



For this photo I wasn't looking through the camera, I just panned the camera onto the approximate spot and pressed the shutter button

## Dolphins, Chanonry Point

My starting point was the Black Isle. I stayed at the Camping and Caravanning Club site at Rosemarkie and, for once, secured a front-row pitch – proof that a little good fortune still goes a long way.

Chanonry Point is widely regarded as the most reliable place in the UK to see bottlenose dolphins, which often come close to shore.

Because of this they attract big crowds. This can be a bit uncomfortable for the usually solitary beast known as the 'wildlife photographer'. Socialising is not what we do, but I did get talking to quite a few people and was a little surprised that everyone was from Yorkshire (and very friendly).

I always thought that photographing birds in flight was the hardest aspect of wildlife photography. At least you can see where the birds are coming from. Dolphins, on the other hand, just



Chanonry Point's lighthouse

appear from nowhere.

Many's the time I was looking through my camera expecting the dolphin that was racing towards me to surface a little closer, only to hear the crowd cheering at another dolphin that had just launched itself into the air in a completely different spot doing a triple backflip before smiling at the crowd and disappearing back into that steely grey cloak of spume that is the sea.

Well, I don't have all the answers, but I do have a few tips for photographing the dolphins at Chanonry Point.

Arrive about an hour after low tide and be prepared to stay for four hours. Don't use a very powerful lens; if you try to fill the frame with a dolphin you will miss it. I used a 300mm lens, but if they come close, a

200mm would be better and remember that less-powerful lenses have more depth of field so you have a better chance of getting the dolphin sharp.

Ideally use a shutter speed of 1/2000th of a second or faster, you might need to increase your ISO (light sensitivity) to achieve this.

Hopefully it will be sunny, but did I mention that it can be wet, cold and windy? So, if these tips fail, just get ready with plenty of excuses about the weather, it works for me! ➤

### ABOUT US...



**US** David Chapman. I am always armed with a camera. My wife, Sarah, and I often choose interesting places to visit and new things to see

**OUR 'VAN** 2017 Pilote P600P on Fiat Ducato 2.3-litre. We like its fixed bed layout with plenty of storage space. It's really well designed

### TOP TIPS

I find the direction of sunlight is best in the afternoon or early evening, so try to plan your trip to coincide with appropriate tides; dolphins are most likely to be active in summer and probably best on spring tides



### THE JOURNEY

From the Black Isle to Blackpool it was a total distance of **470 miles** in July



### THE COSTS

**Fuel:** Average 32mpg..... **£175**  
**Campsites** Eight nights on campsites and one night wild camping near Argaty..... **£224.30**  
**Wildlife hides and sessions:** Red squirrel hide two sessions £120, Osprey hide one

session £180, Argaty red squirrel hide £63, Argaty red kite hide £63, kingfisher hide £95 (replacement Daytime Woodland Pool hide £85 and Daytime Badger hide £90)..... **£521**  
**Total** ..... **£920.30**

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I got up at 3am and waited for over six hours for this moment, but it was worth it



The osprey photography hides at Rothiemurchus fishery are at eye level with the water

## On a hiding to nothing, nearly

Well, it wasn't long before that I travelled up through the Cairngorms with Sarah, but on my way back south I rented a couple of wildlife photography hides.

I booked two sessions, dutifully turned up at the arranged times, sat in the designated hide for five hours on each day. I got a bad back, cramp in my calf and not a single photograph was taken.

There are morals in this story. Renting a hide can make wildlife photography very easy, providing instant gratification, no need to do all the hard work in preparation, no stalking, no crawling around on your hands and knees dressed in camouflage gear, but failure is a possibility and much harder to take when you've paid for it!

Despite this costly defeat, I booked a separate hide to photograph osprey fishing.

I had two options within

walking distance of the High Range campsite; I chose the one at Rothiemurchus Fishery.

The meeting time for this hide is 4am; is it even worth going to bed, I wondered? With three alarms set I did go to bed, but didn't sleep a wink. I walked down to the meeting place and was taken to the hide with a complimentary breakfast. It was all very pleasant.

Well, I sat there for five hours, and nothing happened. It was like the red squirrel hide all over again.

At 9.30am I was contacted to say the session time was over and I left my shed. While passing pleasantries with the guide prior to departure, we looked up and saw an osprey, the first of the morning.

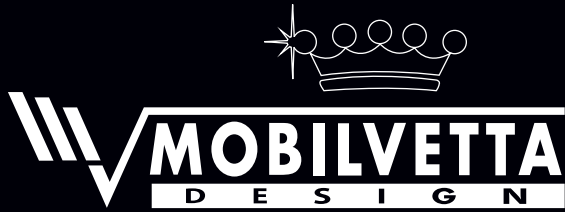
My guide was only paid until 9.30am so he was off, but he said I could go back to the hide if I was clinically insane. Being clinically insane I went back into that dark,

damp chasm of despair and within half an hour the darkness was lifted; the osprey decided it was breakfast time.

Fortunately, ospreys are nowhere near as difficult to photograph as dolphins. When they dive for fish they plunge into the water, and it takes them a second or so to get airborne again and that's sufficient time to get the camera onto the bird and get it focused. It was a magical moment and a real privilege to photograph, arguably one of the best five seconds of my life. ►

### TOP TIPS

You need to underexpose shots of ospreys because their underwing is white; I always use manual exposure for birds in flight



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## Seeing red at Argaty

Heading south, I stopped overnight near Argaty Red Kites in Perthshire. I'd booked two hides, one for red squirrels in the morning and one for red kites that afternoon.

The red squirrel hide had a meeting time of 9.30am. There was no need to be up particularly early, so it was a shame that I had forgotten to turn off the 3am alarm on one of my three clocks.

At least I was good and early. Argaty is a relatively low-key red kite feeding station when compared to the big ones in Wales and that makes it rather pleasant. I found the staff extremely helpful, courteous and considerate, a lovely place to be.

Before my guide could get me into the red squirrel hide, the squirrels were running around almost at my feet. I don't think the hide was entirely necessary, but it helped get many birds, including nuthatch, tree creeper and even sparrowhawk, much closer than would otherwise have been possible.

The weather didn't help; it was very dull and, I know, you are starting to think that wildlife photographers are like farmers, never happy with the weather, and you might have a point. But this was a dark day in a dark wood. So, even



A red kite at Argaty photographed with a 500mm lens

though there is a wonderful squirrel jumping set-up in front of the hide, it is only possible to take photos at very high ISOs.

It was probably the best red squirrel experience I've ever had but because the low light levels, meant they were not my best photos. However, there was no time to fret. After a quick lunch it was back to the main car park, and I was guided up to the kite hide. There were about 15 red kites, and they came down in waves for about two hours. The view is good, but distant, so a telephoto lens (500mm) is needed.

Kites can be a bit overwhelming to photograph because there is such a lot of activity. They are at their most dynamic as they turn to dive down towards the ground. The shapes are incredible, but this is also the fastest part of their flight so quite difficult to keep a camera on them. I found the best strategy was to focus on a bird that was circling and stay on it until it began to dive.

Overall, the Argaty day was an exciting, full-on encounter with wildlife and worth it for the experience as much as the photography. ➤



Looking out from Argaty red kite hide



Argaty red squirrel, at 10,000 ISO I'm surprised you can see the squirrel for the noise

### TOP TIPS

For squirrels jumping, aim for a shutter speed of 1/4000th of a second or faster

For red kites, use manual exposure because the background varies from bright sky to dark woodland

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This badger was one of ten that came out before 4pm

## Final fling in Dumfries

Over the last few years, a selection of wildlife photography hides has been established near Kirkcudbright in Dumfries and Galloway. For my final fling of this trip, I decided to book a day with the kingfishers.

Alan McFadyen, a down-to-earth, welcoming guy who established Scottish Photography Hides, is seriously dedicated and ingenious. The Forest Floor hide is extremely comfortable with computer chairs and even a carpet! Outside, level with the hide windows, he has constructed a forest floor!

Leaf litter, logs, some grass, everything but trees. The idea is that when you look through your lens it looks like you are down in the leaf



A view of Kirkcudbright from Silvercraigs campsite

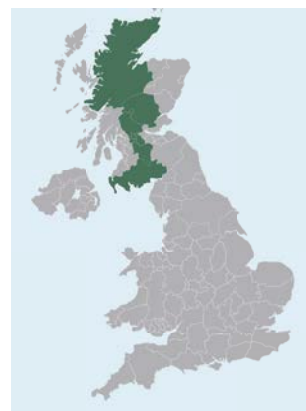
litter with the birds which include many finches, great spotted woodpeckers and nuthatches.

For me the stars of the show were the red squirrels. Yes, at last I got squirrels where I wanted them, in a bright spot at the edge of the wood on some lovely photogenic props. Alan has collected a huge range of attractive tree stumps, mosses and ferns to make a photographic set of

which Hollywood could be proud.

After seven busy hours in that hide Alan took me on a short walk to another hide, in front of which is a badger sett. He scattered some peanuts around the sett and within 10 minutes there were 10 badgers feeding in broad daylight.

There's no doubt Alan provides seriously good wildlife photography opportunities and I will be back. **MMMM**



### THE ROUTE

Follow my journey, go to...

**W** [motorhome.ma/wildlifescot26](http://motorhome.ma/wildlifescot26)

### INFORMATION

**Osprey hide**

**W** [rothiemurchus.net](http://rothiemurchus.net)

**Argaty Red Kites**

**W** [argatyredkites.co.uk](http://argatyredkites.co.uk)

Scottish Wildlife Photography Hides

**W** [photographyhides.co.uk](http://photographyhides.co.uk)

**Natural History Museum** has some tips for using a phone to capture wildlife on screen

**W** [motorhome.ma/cameratips](http://motorhome.ma/cameratips)



### WE STAYED AT

**Rosemarkie Camping and Caravanning Club Site**, Ness Rd E, Rosemarkie, Fortrose IV10 8SE

**T** 01381 621117

**W** [campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk](http://campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk)

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WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: **Seán Conway and Maria O'Brien**

## ABOUT US...



**US** Maria O'Brien and Seán Conway. We have been travelling around Europe since our initial trip to Portugal (in 1987) in a VW T2 that spent more time in garages than on the road. We are always looking for excuses to visit new places

**OUR 'VAN** 2021 Auto-Trail Expedition 67. Fran the Van is small enough to park on the road, but contains everything that we need, including a bed that does not need to be dismantled every day

**FAR RIGHT CLOCKWISE** Château at Amboise; Trekking in the Camargue; Al fresco art, Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer; Tram, Montpellier; Sculpture *L'Espoir* in Palavas-les-Flots

**A**s we are ramshackle ramblers, Dieppe distracts us from our art tour of southwest France's Languedoc-Roussillon. As if that's not enough, we then border-hop between Catalonia and France, before detouring to walk some of the Camino de Santiago in the Basque Country. Finally, we chase down the final resting place of Leonardo Da Vinci in the Loire Valley's awesome Amboise. Luckily, vanlife is particularly suited to such easily distractible tourers.

Our trip south is a work of art in itself: from Dieppe's seafront camper stop, with the jade sea before us and reproductions of Impressionists' paintings, to the visually stunning free A75 motorway south of Clermont-Ferrand, with the Millau Viaduct and Garabit's elegant red one. At Lodève we descend to Languedoc's plains south of Montpellier and see a shepherd tending his sheep in herb-scented dunes.

We camp in Base Fluvial Paul Riquet at Palavas-les-Flots and watch the flamingos balancing on one leg in the lagoon's waters. A five-minute walk to town takes us past colourful fishing barques. Coloured lights twinkle from trees, and from the flying-saucer observation tower.

The evening ends in Bar du Pêcheur, feasting on duck salad and a bottle of red named after the unfortunate queen, Marie Antoinette.

Saturday morning in Palavas and it's as if we've stumbled onto a French movie set. Nella Buscot's huge bronze sculpture of

desperate shipwrecked travellers marks the entrance to the river. Her fisherman pulls in his nets and a dreaming woman sits on the opposite bank. Below us a harpoon-wielding diver fishes for octopus.

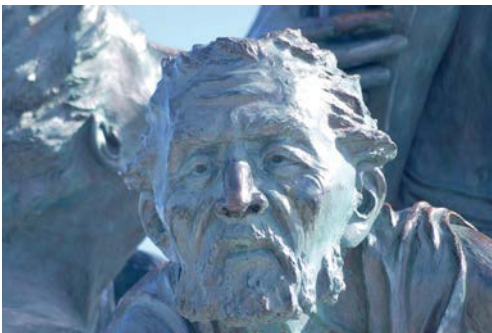
We lunch in a fishmongers and café, Au Poisson Bleu, with paper cups for wine and griddled octopus.

In St Pierre's Church a spine-tingling classical voice rises towards its abstract stained-glass window.

The cycle track from Palavas takes us on the six-kilometre journey to Lattes' Number 3 tram stop and Montpellier's centre. On the way we ramble out along a spit riddled with salty green vegetation to inspect the time-honoured fishing system of poles and nets, before detouring to the Méjean Lagoon nature reserve. Its sweep of pruned trees, their bare branches silver in the sunlight, artistic itself. Storks sit in messy ash tree nests, two of them making a heart shape with their necks and beaks.

Montpellier's trams are art on wheels, each line themed differently, be it literary, marine, natural or technological. Our number 3's interior is designed by Christian Lacroix.

We stroll around Montpellier's imposing churches, up alleyways ornamented with sculpted female figures. Elegant squares lead by the columnated law courts to a seventeenth century Arc de Triomphe, Louis XIV on his stallion, the eighteenth century aqueduct and an ornate water tower. ►





**THE ROUTE**

For the route go to...

**W** [motorhome.ma/franceart26](http://motorhome.ma/franceart26)

There's a story behind The Three Graces Fountain, whose sculptor was sent to Carrara to return with a marble block, but came back with the sculpture completed. The town council refused to pay him, claiming he'd got the Carrara stonemasons to do it.

Leaving Palavas, we drive along the D62's spit to Aigues-Mortes. Mirage-like, the limestone ramparts rise from the Salins d'Aigue-Mortes' pink waters, which can be explored by train, cycle or walking track. We set off on foot to climb a salt mountain, complete with an observation point. I'm lost in a dream of castles and pink lagoons.

Driving through Provence's Camargue to Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer takes us past white horses, bulls, ranches, and marshes. We park up in Camping La Brise de Camargue by the sea. The floodlit sanctuary of Notre-Dame-de-la-Mer guides us to the centre and Lou Gabian's wood-panelled bar, with vintage, brown-toned photographs of Camargue cowboys and a real Stetson-wielding cowboy chatting nonchalantly.

We trundle around the Big Sky country

of the marshland, with its red saltmarsh-edged paths, horse riders and flamingo-filled lagoons. We're sobered by the Gilbert Leroy memorial who was deported to Buchenwald by the Nazis in 1944.

On the town's promenade we stand at the reproduction of Van Gogh's *Seascape near Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer* (June 1888) with its tumultuous waters. Art detectives have traced the grains in the paint layers to this spot. Other Van Gogh reproductions of thatched round-gabled fishing cottages, dunes and colourful sea barques are beautifully romantic.

The fortified sanctuary, Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, is a moving site of pilgrimage for the Roma and travelling people who come here to honour Sara, the servant of the two Saintes Maries. Sitting on the sturdy stone roof's ridge, we gaze at the glittering sea, tiled roofs and purple-hued marshland below.

In Arles, even the central ring road is graceful with its limestone buildings and wrought iron balconies. We park outside the cemetery. The park within the Roman and medieval walls contains a striking WWI statue of a woman defending her ▶

**BELOW LEFT** Stork in its nest, Méjean Lagoon nature reserve

**BELOW RIGHT** Al fresco art, Collioure

**BELOW INSET** Statue of Elkano, Getaria



**THE JOURNEY**

This was our spring trip sandwiched in between grandparent duties. We arrived in Dieppe on 14 February and meandered down to Catalonia, taking in various French towns on the way. We travelled across northern Spain to the Basque Country and then travelled back to Dieppe, crossing on 15 March



**THE COSTS**

**Fuel:** Distance travelled in France and Spain: 1,897 miles at 32mpg €484 ..... **£433.69**  
**Ferries:** (DFDS over-60s deal) including cabins ..... **£229.60**  
**Site fees** €459.27 ..... **£411.53**  
**Attractions:** Two adults: Saltworks €18, Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer €8 ..... **£23.30**  
**Total** ..... **£1,098.12**

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## TOP TIPS

We have a Nationwide current account that gives free travel insurance for trips of up to 31 days, as well as breakdown cover. This trip was 31 days

Searchforsites is a very useful website that allows you to find campsites in most countries in Europe

Camping-Car Parks – a network of small campsites that are generally open all year and booking is automated. They include several former municipal campsites

children and a mosaic column celebrating Van Gogh's visionary use of colour.

The park's railings sport an outdoor photographic exhibition, the most striking is a 1940s boy with blood dribbling down his chin, a bat above. Passing the Roman amphitheatre I can almost hear the operas on the summer evenings.

The old hospital courtyard at Espace Van Gogh is planted as it was in the artist's day when he was confined here after cutting off his ear. We soak up the vivid beauty and tragedy of the terracotta walkways, multicoloured pansies, and the fountain he painted while recovering.

I'm compelled to sit on the lemon walled, red shuttered terrace, Van Gogh's famous night scene.

Passing the Museum Fondation Vincent Van Gogh, we know we should go in to explore his artistic legacy. But... we're starving, and a French cuisine beckons.

We discover the Café de la Paix in Place Voltaire to feast on beetroot carpaccio, and cod brandade in a tomato coulis.

On the Rue de la Madeleine, we bowl into the ancient church's gallery, the interior filled with arresting modern art. Most striking is the pure innocence of the black and white photograph of a baby hanging above the altar. Arles truly has fed our souls today.

Our art tour of Languedoc-Roussillon

takes us from Provence to better weather in Spain's Catalonia, allowing us to border-hop back to the French Pyrenees.

Catalonia's village, Capmany, and Camping Albera are situated in a gently shelving cork forest and olive groves. Capmany has stone houses, with doors big enough to fit your horse and carriage through, a bell tower, ancient church, olive oil museum, and vintage olive presses.

The prehistoric walking trail from the campsite takes us past the sacrificial altar, a grand stone lookout, and most dramatic, the yawning, dank mouth of a dolmen.

Thirty minutes' drive back over the border, and we park up in mountainous Céret's picnic spot on the D115. The town is famous for artists such as Picasso hanging out here but is also the cherry capital of southern France. We gaze down from the off-road cycle route at the Pont du Diable, said to have been built by the Devil in 1321 in exchange for the soul of the first villager to cross it.

Tree-shaded squares, fountains, and rampart ruins mark the centre. The iconic thirteenth century Fontaine des Neuf Jets has a top that changes from French cockerel to Catalonia's lion, reminding us that this is contested border territory.

Standing in Place Pablo Picasso, we admire the circular snake fountain, built in 2013, which pays homage to Picasso's

**BELOW LEFT** Arc de Triomphe, Montpellier

**BELOW RIGHT** Pyrenees from Torroella's Castell del Montgrí





## INFORMATION

Salins d'Aigues-Mortes  
**W** [visitesalinsde  
camargue.com](http://visitesalinsdecamargue.com)

Church in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer

**W** [saintesmaries.com/en/  
the-church](http://saintesmaries.com/en/the-church)

drawing of the Sardana dance produced in the town's Grand Café.

The Musée d'Art Moderne de Céret and bronze monument outside the town hall celebrate the artists who made Céret their home, from Picasso to Chagall, Dufy to Matisse. The modern art galleries offer up a broad spectrum: from bold bulls to delicate pen-and-ink flowers.

The D81 coastal road to Collioure winds between the vine-clad Pyrenees and the picture-postcard blue sea. We park on the edge of Collioure, the ancient fort above us. A ten-minute stroll by hill-clinging pastel houses takes us to the quayside, the Château Royal, the fortified headland, and two white-sand beaches.

The Hôtel des Templiers sports a vivid mosaic on its facade. Inside, the walls are covered with original paintings. The current owner's grandfather entertained Matisse, Picasso and Dufy here, the artists settling their bill with paintings. Along with the mahogany bar counter, the paintings make for a seductive venue.

We finally tear ourselves away to follow the Le Chemin de Fauvisme, where you can stare through the metal frames at the views painted by Matisse and Derain who were considered 'wild' by Parisian salons for their 'unrealistic' use of colour. Visiting Collioure is like strolling inside a painting itself, especially the Carrer de les Estables,

lined with pastel houses, galleries, succulent plants spilling over urns.

Deviating from our art tour, we head to Camping Les Medes in Catalonia's L'Estartit as we've always loved it, with its three natural parks, embracing lagoons, islands, coast and mountains. We clamber up the cobbled path in Torroella de Montgrí, five miles from L'Estartit, to the massive fortress squatting on its summit with its 360-degree view of islands, white sand beaches, and snow-capped Pyrenees. As we slip-slide down by purple iris on the limestone track to the Hermitage of Santa Caterina we're suddenly surrounded by a peaceful herd of Pyrenean chamois.

As if we haven't detoured enough from our original plans, we scoot over to the Basque fishing port of Orio, and the fresco-walled Orio Kanpina campsite.

We delight in two wonderful treks along the Camino while here: 7km Orio to Zarautz; and after one stop on the train, 5km Zarautz to Getaria. We're treated to craggy bays, rivers, Atlantic rollers, mountains, woods, hens, donkeys, long-haired sheep, goats, stone farmhouses, monasteries and churches. Seán is in technical heaven at the historic mining dock, Malla Harria at Zarautz, though he nearly passes out when I try to drag him into Getaria's Balenciaga sleek black fashion museum. ►

**ABOVE CLOCKWISE** Stained glass in Château du Clos Lucé, Amboise; Interior of Hôtel des Templiers Collioure; Fresco on the wall of the campsite in Orio



Zarautz's promenade of playful bronze sculptures, from conches to abstract sun-hatted women, and surfers, is a highlight, as is Getaria's rugged islet, with primary coloured fishing boats and female fish-gutter frescoes.

Our return journey through France takes us up the free N10 to the Loire Valley's Amboise, the last resting place of Leonardo Da Vinci.

Camping L'Île D'Or is opposite the white limestone castle, with its whiff of princesses abseiling from towers. Art tours don't come much better than Amboise's cobbled streets, wine tasting in the castle walls, troglodytic houses, and outdoor photographic exhibitions.

Château du Clos Lucé, where Leonardo

**ABOVE CLOCKWISE** Olive oil museum, Capmany; Part of the garden, Amboise; Sculpture on the promenade in Getaria

died, is not to be missed, with its museums, galleries, graceful house, gardens, and immersive experience. Seán is in engineering heaven studying Leonardo's designs for tanks, movable bridges, helicopters, bicycles, sluices and canal locks.

I'm in heaven in the artistic immersive experience and watching the huge gossamer banners of Leonardo's enigmatic women subjects swaying from weeping willow trees.

It must be said that some of our best adventures come from changing our plans at the last minute. We have been treated to a sensual feast from Languedoc's lagoons to Amboise's gracious town centre. **MMMM**



## WE STAYED AT

**Aire Camping-car Dieppe Mal Foch**, 67 Bd de Verdun, 76200 Dieppe, France

**Camping de mon Village Lunery**, 6 Rue de l'Abreuvoir, 18400 Lunery  
**W** [campingcarpark.com](http://campingcarpark.com)

**Camperstop Paul Riquet**, Rue Frédéric Mistral, 34250 Palavas-les-Flots  
**T** 0033 467 077300  
**W** [palavaslesflots.com/attractive/ports/port-fluvial](http://palavaslesflots.com/attractive/ports/port-fluvial)

**Camping-Car Park Amboise**, Allée de la Chapelle Saint-Jean, 37400 Amboise  
**W** [campingcarpark.com](http://campingcarpark.com)

**Camping Albera**, Ventador s/n, 17750 Capmany, Girona, Spain  
**T** 0034 972 549192  
**W** [campingalbera.com](http://campingalbera.com)

**Camping Paradis la Brise de Camargue**, Rue Marcel Carrière, 13460 Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer  
**T** 0033 490 978467  
**W** [camping-labrise.fr](http://camping-labrise.fr)

**Camping Les Medes**, Paratge Camp de l'Arbre, s/n, 17258 L'Estartit, Girona, Spain  
**T** +34972751805  
**W** [campinglesmedes.com](http://campinglesmedes.com)

**Camping Ciudad de Zaragoza**, C. de San Juan Bautista de la Salle, s/n, Casablanca, 50012 Zaragoza, Spain  
**T** 0034 876 241495  
**W** [zaragozacamping.com](http://zaragozacamping.com)

**Camping Orio Kanpina**, Hondartza Bidea, s/n, 20810 Orio, Gipuzkoa, Spain  
**T** 0034 943 834801  
**W** [oriokanpina.com](http://oriokanpina.com)

**Camping-Car Park Lussac**, Route de la Grange, 33570 Lussac  
**W** [campingcarpark.com](http://campingcarpark.com)



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## *Get away for...*

# THE WEEKEND!

It's little wonder Brimham Rocks draws crowds... it's a natural playground where geology and folklore meet

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: **Vivienne Crow**

**A**s we wandered the labyrinthine trails, winding through fantastic rock formations and swaying birch trees of Brimham Rocks, I realised this unusual landscape must be like a natural theme park for many families. While small children weaselled their way through twisty rock tunnels and passageways, playing hide and seek, others scrambled to the tops of boulders, proclaiming their hard-won kingdoms.

Boulderers had set up their mats at the base of trickier routes, or 'problems' and National Trust volunteers led less adventurous visitors on guided walks.

This collection of preposterously precarious formations on the low moorland at Brimham is made up largely of a grippy sedimentary rock called millstone grit. Weathering and erosion,

mostly during the last glacial period, created the shapes we see today, although some eighteenth century antiquarians believed that prehistoric people had played a part in creating this wonderland by stacking the rocks.

Brimham Rocks is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Nidderdale. This National Landscape – formerly known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – lies to the east of the Yorkshire Dales, before the high ground drops away into the Vale of York.

Wander its moors, dip into the lightly wooded valleys, drive along the dale bottom and see ancient enclosures that are home to cutesy barns just crying out to be photographed.

You'd be forgiven for thinking you were in the National Park, despite ►

*Why?... To visit historic sites  
and explore the often-unusual  
natural landscape*



MAIN Looking down on Stean from Middlesmoor

FAR LEFT Scar House Reservoir with Great Whernside in the distance

BELOW LEFT Ripley Castle is up for sale

BELOW RIGHT St Chad's Cross in the church at Middlesmoor



## ABOUT ME...



**ME Vivienne Crow.** I am a freelance outdoor writer who loves exploring the British Isles both for work and for pleasure

**MY VAN 2009 Auto-Sleeper Symbol** on a Peugeot Boxer base. Our second Symbol, we particularly like its efficient use of space

Nidderdale's exclusion. Whatever the reason, subsequent campaigns to redraw the boundaries eventually achieved a compromise when, in 1994, the then Countryside Commission named Nidderdale as the thirty-sixth Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

My partner, Heleyne, and I were spending a few days in the area, staying at Studfold Caravan and Camping Park near Lofthouse. Arriving early afternoon on the previous day, we'd first headed out to the Scar House and Angram reservoirs near the head of Nidderdale.

Sitting at the foot of high, brooding hills, it's a moody landscape made all the more atmospheric by the lingering presence of past lives. Work on the closely guarded water source began in 1893, Angram Reservoir being completed in 1919 and Scar House in 1936.

The reservoir's access road ends at a car park near the concrete foundations of the homes of construction workers brought in to build Scar House. Upon its completion, the 233ft-high dam was the tallest in Britain, about one-third of a mile long and more than one million tonnes of stone were used in its construction.

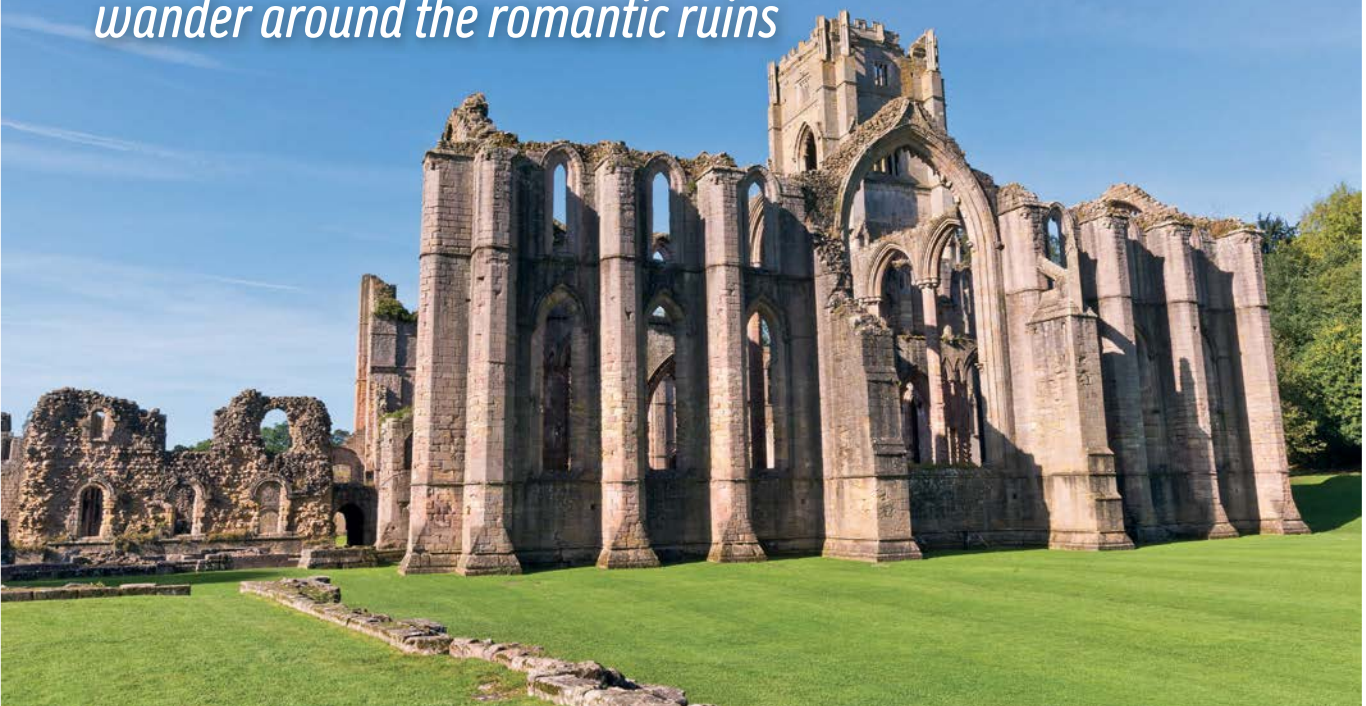
Needless to say, there were a lot of people involved in building it. Scar village housed up to 1,250 people, most of whom enjoyed better living standards than the folk of nearby Pateley Bridge.

Their homes had hot and cold running water and flushing toilets – unusual for working-class people of the time – and they had access to a hospital, school, cinema, concert hall, tennis courts and shops, including a grocery store operated by William Morrison, the founder of the Bradford-based supermarket chain.

Having walked the track above Scar House Reservoir, we crossed the Angram Reservoir dam to reach the remains of the tiny hamlet at Lodge, once part of a medieval grange farm belonging to Byland Abbey. When Scar House Reservoir was built, it was feared the community would contaminate the new water supply, so the farming families living here were paid to move away. All that remains today is some ruins, guarded by imposing sycamores and marked by a few modern plaques.

A couple of miles southeast of Scar House are the honey-coloured cottages of Middlesmoor, one of Yorkshire's highest villages. The historic St Chad's Church sits

*Must do... Call in at Fountains Abbey to wander around the romantic ruins*



© Michael Warwick / Shutterstock.com

on top of the hill and enjoys gorgeous views down the dale and across to the surrounding moorland.

A highly decorated ‘hammer-head’ cross inside the church is thought to be Anglo-Saxon, commemorating St Ceadda (Chad), the seventh century bishop of Lichfield. The nearby How Stean Gorge, featuring caves and dramatic limestone walls, can be explored using a network of paths, bridges and viewing platforms first installed in Victorian times.

Our first full day of touring in the area was nearly scuppered by roadworks. There are only two roads in and out of Upper Nidderdale: the winding valley road and the very winding moorland road that includes Trapping Hill, the maximum gradient on which is nearly 16%.

I didn’t fancy the latter in the ‘van, so when we saw the ‘road closed’ sign on the valley route, we thought we were stuck. Driving to the start of the roadworks, “I don’t really fancy the diversion up the hill in this,” I explained to one of the workmen, indicating the ‘van. After consultation with his colleague, he let us through – slowly and carefully – with the warning that we wouldn’t be able to get

back before 4pm. Fine with us.

The valley road follows the River Nidd downstream to Pateley Bridge. It’s worth allowing a couple of hours for exploring this small market town. As well as being home to England’s oldest sweet shop – dating back to 1827 – it has a museum that is chock-full of artefacts from rural life in the valley over the last 200 years.

The Nidderdale Museum, run entirely by volunteers, was set up in 1975 by, according to its website, “a group of enthusiasts who shared a deep concern for the traditional way of life which they felt was rapidly disappearing after the Second World War”. It can be found in a ▶



**THE JOURNEY**

We drove from Carlisle to Lofthouse, explored the area and then retraced our steps home – 260 miles. We spent two nights away in May



**THE COSTS**

<b>Fuel:</b> Average 34mpg .....	<b>£43</b>
<b>Site fees</b> .....	<b>£52</b>
<b>Entrance fees:</b> Two adults – Nidderdale Museum, £10; How Stean Gorge, £16; Fountains Abbey & Studley Royal Gardens, free (National Trust members).....	<b>£26</b>
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>£121</b>

**INFORMATION**

Brimham Rocks and Fountains Abbey  
**W** [nationaltrust.org.uk](http://nationaltrust.org.uk)

Nidderdale National Landscape  
**W** [nidderdale-nl.org.uk](http://nidderdale-nl.org.uk)

Pateley Bridge  
**W** [pateley-bridge.com](http://pateley-bridge.com)

North Yorkshire attractions  
**W** [visitnorthyorkshire.com](http://visitnorthyorkshire.com)



**ABOVE** The main road through Pateley Bridge

**BELOW FAR LEFT** Fountains Abbey

**BELOW** Scar House Reservoir



*Must see... The weird and wonderful 'carved' formations of Brimham Rocks*

**TOP TIPS**

Call in at the relatively new HAY Café at Killinghall between Ripley and Harrogate. The pastrami on the New Yorker Benny provides a peppery lift to a brunchtime classic and the coffee is superb [W hayharrogate.co.uk](http://www.hayharrogate.co.uk)



**ABOVE TOP** The Druid's Writing Desk, one of the many unusual rock formations at Brimham

**ABOVE** Ripon Cathedral can be seen in the distance from the main avenue through Studley Royal deer park

Victorian workhouse, just above the town centre, where the destitute of the nineteenth century were given basic accommodation and put to work.

Another Victorian creation – this one aimed at slightly wealthier folk – is Pateley Bridge's Panorama Walk. Following a medieval packhorse route that ended at Fountain's Abbey, it was improved at the time of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee as part of attempts to attract tourists.

Heleyne and I joined it at its eastern end, having first followed a delightfully wooded riverside trail as far as Glasshouses. Leaving the shade, the short climb up to the Panorama Walk was surprisingly hot, but the outlook over the valley made it worthwhile.

The Victorians had even set up a viewing area, on top of a natural rock outcrop. Enterprising, yes; imaginative, no – they'd called this rock, 'The Rock'.

A short detour to the ruins of St Mary's Church provided more shade. This tiny church, largely dating from the seventeenth century, was abandoned by parishioners after St Cuthbert's was built closer to the town in 1827.

I do love a good ruin – and the ecclesiastical ones are always among the best. Fountains Abbey, on the eastern edge of the Nidderdale National Landscape, is possibly the best of the lot.

It's definitely the largest monastic ruin in the country; that much is fact. The monks who lived here, from 1132 until Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries 400 years later, ran the richest and most influential religious house in England, controlling a vast estate and economic activities that encompassed lead mining, the woollen trade and horse breeding.

We spent several hours strolling the many miles of footpaths that criss-cross this 800-acre World Heritage Site, which also includes the landscaped gardens of Studley Royal Par, making use of the river that flows through the estate and featuring ponds, graceful cascades, follies, bridges and statues. [www.studleyroyal.org](http://www.studleyroyal.org)



**WE STAYED AT**

**Studfold Caravan & Camping Park,** Lofthouse, near Pateley Bridge HG3 5SG  
**T 01423 755084 W studfold.com**

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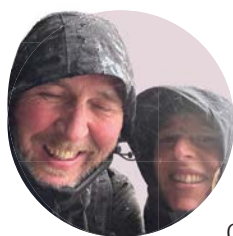
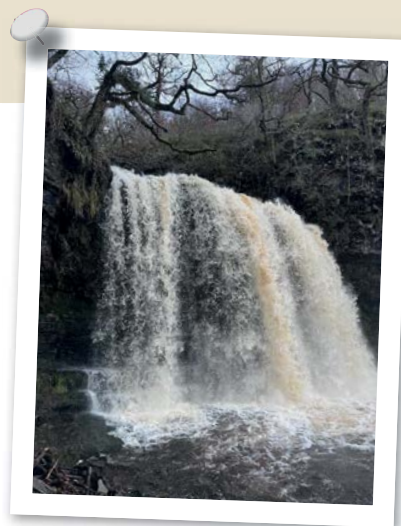
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# My travels

*Lisa Board sets off for a weekend without a plan and finds the perfect day*



“ We, my husband, our fairly ancient Labrador and I, were on a last-minute, very unplanned, three-day road trip to Wales from our home on the Isle of Wight in our converted VW Crafter LWB. Using copies of *Wild Guide Wales* by Wild Things Publishing,

*Road Trip Wales* by Robbie Roams, a pub stopovers Facebook group and the searchforsites app we found ourselves on evening number two at Skysea Caravan and Camping Site in Port Eynon, chosen for two reasons: close walking proximity to a good local pub (The Ship Inn), and an interesting walk nearby.

And so, the perfect day began on a sunny blustery morning. We were relieved to have a break from the relentless rain experienced the day before.

Clouds whipped by, revealing sunshine and blue skies. We walked the well-trodden path through the old quarry and over the clifftops to Culver Hole where 600 years ago an incredible stone pigeon house was built into the precipice.

Perched on the rocks between the Irish Sea and the Bristol Channel on a bright windy day with the waves crashing and the sea spray on your skin, we felt very



inspired by the sense of history and the thought of the smugglers who later repurposed the structure and built a secret tunnel. We returned to the 'van for a coffee before hitting the road.

Our next destination was the Four Waterfalls Walk in the Brecon Beacons, an hour-and-

20-minute drive away. We parked at Gwaun Hepste car park near Ystradfellte. There simply isn't room for 'vans at the other car park and you'll have to drive the one-way route through narrow lanes to come back around if you try (don't ask me how I know that!).

We arrived at about 1pm, so after lunch in the 'van, we headed out onto this five-mile, well-signposted, forested walk... and it didn't disappoint. To get to each waterfall you have to leave the main path, descending steep steps and crossing boardwalks. It smelt fantastic: damp soil, wood, minerals and moss, amplified by the sound of water thundering over rocks. The threat of more rain was in the air. It was fantastically moody.

The brilliant thing about this walk is that the waterfalls get better and better as you go and the descents harder and more rewarding until you reach the grand finale, Sgwd yr Eira. Eira is the biggest and only waterfall of this particular walk that you can appreciate from behind the cascade. What a singularly energising, rewarding, fun and wet experience! Every face I saw was a happy one. And our senses were flooded by the absolute wonder of nature.

Back at the 'van, we celebrated with a cup of tea and some biscuits, whilst I started to look for somewhere to stay that evening. This is where the Facebook groups and apps come into their own.

The New Inn at Ystradfellte, a five-minute drive away, welcomes campers for overnight stays in its car park. There's EHU and overnight bathroom facilities. You pay to stay (£20) so there's no obligation to eat in.

We arrived at about 4pm, parked up and went straight to the pub. There was not one but two log burners and we managed to bag one of them! The landlord and locals were super friendly and, after two pints and a packet of crisps, with warm feet and warm hearts, we headed back to the 'van, tired and happy for dinner. ”

**HOLIDAY DISASTER OR HOLIDAY DREAM? Tell other readers about your motorhome adventures, good or bad, in 700 words [motorhome.ma/myviews](https://www.motorhome.ma/myviews)**



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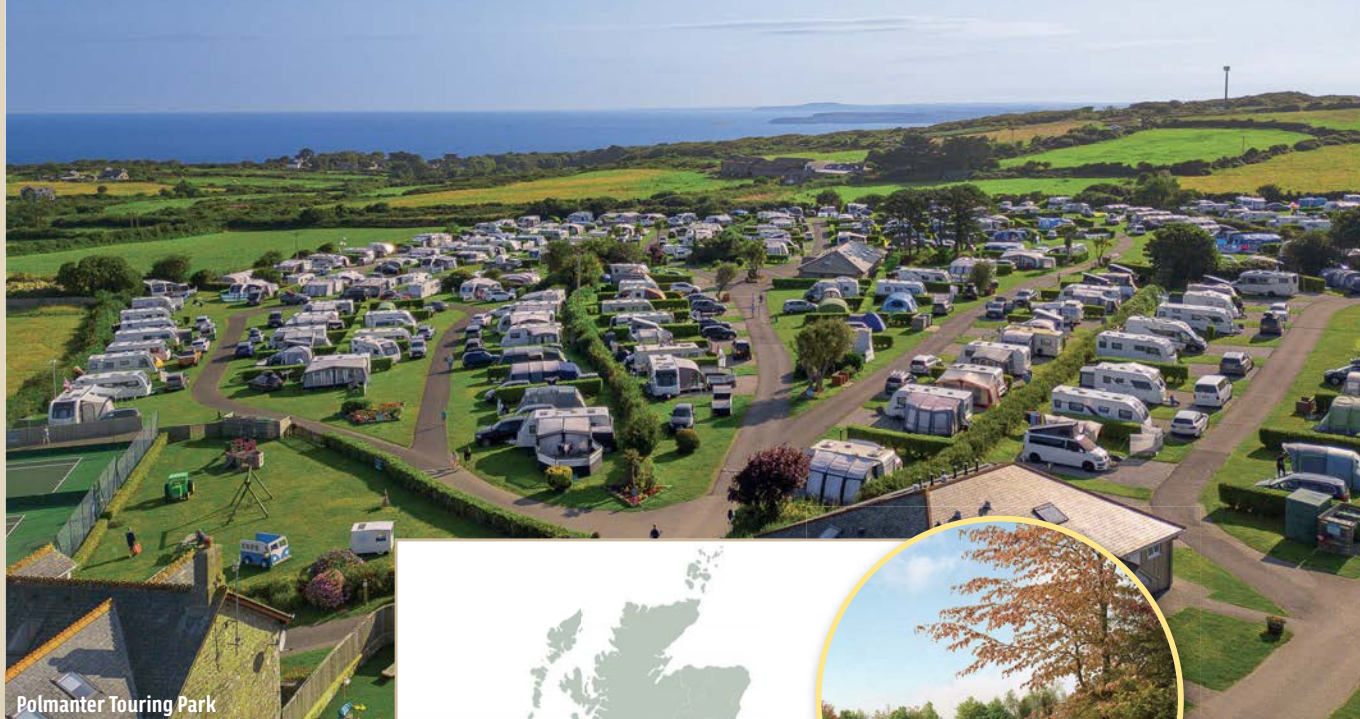


[westfalia-mobil.com](https://www.westfalia-mobil.com)

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- |                                    |   |   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| 1 Ashleigh Farm Caravan & Glamping | 6 Yeatheridge Farm Caravan Park         | 11 Whitefield Forest Touring Park       |
| 2 West Highland Way Campsite       | 7 Longnor Wood Holiday Park             | 12 Blair Castle Caravan Park            |
| 3 Drummohr Camping & Glamping Site | 8 St Helens in the Park                 | 13 Woodhill Park                        |
| 4 Stubcroft Farm Campsite          | 9 Meadow Springs Country & Leisure Park | 14 Park Cliffe Camping & Caravan Estate |
| 5 Holme Valley                     | 10 Bagwell Farm Touring Park            | 15 Polmanter Touring Park               |

1

## Ashleigh Farm Caravan & Glamping, Lincolnshire

25 High Street, Willingham-by-Stow, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire DN21 5JZ T 07578 336037  
W [ashleighfarm.co.uk](http://ashleighfarm.co.uk)

Ashleigh Farm is open all year and has eight grass pitches for motorhomes and caravans, and three 10m by 10m hardstanding pitches with electric hook-up. There is also access to fresh water, waste water disposal, a play area, and a bathroom with toilet, washbasin, hand dryer and waterfall shower.

The campsite, just 12 miles from Lincoln and Doddington Hall, won the title of Camping, Glamping and Holiday Park of the Year at the Destination Lincolnshire Tourism

Excellence Awards 2024/25.

A few treats are available at this site. Fresh bread and cakes are made to order, including gluten-free options, and whole cakes if you're wanting to share! You can also order afternoon tea between April and the end of October which will be delivered to your pitch. If you'd rather try your hand at baking, there are breadmaking lessons available to book and during the season you can attend meditation, art and photography retreats.



2

## West Highland Way Campsite, Glasgow



Mugdock Castle

8821, Milngavie, Glasgow G63 9AN  
T 07488 261730 W [westhighlandway.info](http://westhighlandway.info)

Open all year, this campsite (which also offers glamping and hotel rooms) was recognised by the ACSI Awards 2025 as one of the Greatest Little Campsites.

A short drive from Glasgow and Stirling, it is surrounded by woodland. Also close by is the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park. Guided walks, cycle routes, and activities are offered on site and there is also a snack bar and restaurant.

There are hardstanding or grass pitches with toilets, showers, a TV room and WiFi. A nice touch is the continental breakfast that is included in the price of your stay!

Local attractions include the Glengoyne Distillery, Mugdock Castle and Strathblane Falconry.

3

## Drummohr Camping and Glamping Site, East Lothian

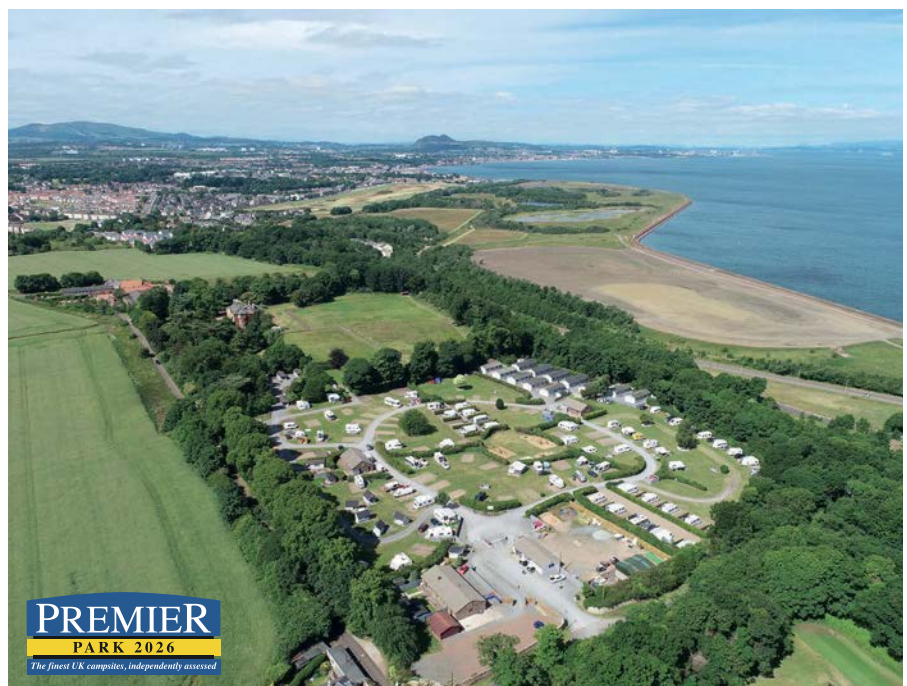
Levenhall, Musselburgh, Edinburgh, East Lothian EH21 8JS T 01316 656867 W [drummohr.co.uk](http://drummohr.co.uk)

While its parent company, WCF Leisure, was recognised by the Dog-Friendly Awards as having the Best Camping and Caravanning Site, Drummohr was also crowned Camping Site of the Year at the Scottish Hospitality Awards 2025.

Open all year, Drummohr has easy access to transport links to the city of Edinburgh, so is ideal for exploring in all seasons. The site is also within

walking distance of the shores of the Firth of Forth – perfect for you to get a coastal fix, too.

Drummohr is located in the landscaped grounds of a former monastery with hardstanding and grass pitches with electric hook-up. There is a dog walk on site, along with toilet and shower blocks, accessible bathrooms, a small shop and play area.



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4

### Stubcroft Farm Campsite, West Sussex

Stubcroft Lane, East Wittering, Chichester, West Sussex PO20 8PJ T 01243 671469 W [stubcroft.com](http://stubcroft.com)

Set close to sandy beaches, Chichester and the South Downs National Park, Stubcroft Farm is getting quite a collection of awards! The site has held a Tripadvisor Travellers Choice Award for the past eight years and also won Gold at The Beautiful South Awards for Excellence 2025/26 for Camping & Caravanning Park of the Year. Other awards won include Gold for the Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Award, and a Gold Regenerative Tourism Award – which recognises businesses who encourage visitors to behave in a responsible way towards the environment during their stay.

Stubcroft Farm has hardstanding and grass pitches with electric hook-up across different fields. There is a small shop, toilets, showers, a laundry room, accessible facilities and a motorhome service point.



East Wittering Beach



5

### Holme Valley Camping & Caravan Park, West Yorkshire

Thongsbridge, Holmfirth, West Yorkshire HD9 7TD T 01484 665819 W [holmevalleycamping.com](http://holmevalleycamping.com)

For the Out & About Live Campsite of the Year Award 2026 we asked our readers to vote for their favourite campsites. The overall winner of the public vote was Holme Valley Camping & Caravan Park, set on the outskirts of Holmfirth, close to the long-distance Pennine Way walking trail.

The site, open most of the year, is set in a wooded valley, with a central fishing lake, in the grounds of a former woollen mill. There are hardstanding and grass pitches

with electric hook-up, with toilets and showers, a laundry room and a licensed shop.

For those travelling with children there is adventure golf and off-road buggies along a woodland track. The site welcomes dogs and is a short walk from the village where there is a pub.

For exploring the outdoors, the Peak District National Park is a short drive away, with many walking routes, plus waterfalls and reservoirs to discover.

6

### Yeatheridge Farm Caravan & Camping Park, Devon

East Worlington, Crediton, Devon EX17 4TN T 01884 860330 W [yeatheridge.co.uk](http://yeatheridge.co.uk)

Open from 15 March to 15 October, Yeatheridge Farm was recently crowned the Camping & Caravanning Park of the Year 2025/26 by taking home the Gold award at the Devon Tourism Awards at a ceremony held in November 2025.

The campsite, a short drive from Tiverton and Exeter, forms part of a working farm with an animal paddock where you can meet some of the farm animals. You can also

enjoy walks in the surrounding woodland. The site is dog friendly with a dog walk, dog shower and pet-friendly bar area. As well as the on-site bar, there is also a restaurant, takeaway, fully stocked shop, soft play area, games room and two indoor swimming pools – so plenty for all to enjoy. For a more relaxed stay there are also several fishing lakes.

Pitch-wise, there are a range to choose, from hardstanding with



River Exe at Tiverton

electric hook-up, water tap and grey waste drain, to grass with just electric, and these are served by shower blocks, washing up areas and a launderette.



## 7 Longnor Wood Holiday Park, Staffordshire

Longnor, Staffordshire SK17 ONG T 01298 83648 W [longnorwood.co.uk](http://longnorwood.co.uk)

For anyone travelling with canine companions it's nice to know your dog is welcome on holiday with you, too. That's where the Dog-Friendly Awards come in, voted for by the public and users of the website [dogfriendly.co.uk](http://dogfriendly.co.uk). 2025's award for Best Camping and Caravanning Site went to WCF Leisure, which owns and manages three quality campsites, with adult-only Longnor Wood being one of them.

The site, open 2 February – 3 January, is set in a countryside location surrounded by meadows

and rolling fields – in fact, the view from the four-acre dog exercise area is something else! There are hardstanding touring pitches – a choice of fully serviced, or standard with just electric. The facilities on site include a heated amenities block, a licensed shop, a dog wash, and a gym, sauna and games room.

Longnor Wood is surrounded by the Peak District National Park, and if you fancy a wander around some pretty towns, the market town of Bakewell, and the spa town of Buxton, are both within 30 minutes' drive.

## 8 St Helens in the Park, North Yorkshire

Wykeham, Scarborough, North Yorkshire  
YO13 9QD T 01723 862771  
W [sthelenscaravanpark.co.uk](http://sthelenscaravanpark.co.uk)

As well as being an AA platinum rated campsite, St Helens can now lay claim to the AA's Campsite of the Year for England, and overall winner, in the 2025/26 awards.

On the edge of the North York Moors National Park, a short drive from Scarborough, the site is praised for its family-friendly area with play park, its adult-only touring area, and the all-in-one washroom cubicles.

Other facilities include a licensed shop, a seasonal coffee shop, launderette, and dog wash, within landscaped grounds, with the site open from 2 February to 3 January.

A cycle route leads through the surrounding estate, and a tea room is a short stroll. Just two miles away is sister business, the North Yorkshire Water Park, a superb aqua park.



Scarborough

## 9 Meadow Springs Country & Leisure Park, Powys

Ffynnant, Trefeglwys, Powys SY17 5QZ T 01686 430654 W [meadowsprings.co.uk](http://meadowsprings.co.uk)

This five-star rated motorhome and caravan touring park in mid Wales won the Best Caravan, Camping & Glamping award at the National



The Clywedog Reservoir

Tourism Awards for Wales 2025, having previously won another accolade in 2024.

Hafren Forest and Clywedog Reservoir are a short drive away from this countryside site. Here, the touring pitches are all hardstanding. In addition to a general touring area, there is an adults-only section with fully serviced pitches. An accessible touring section has level access throughout and dedicated facilities,

to ensure all guests can enjoy their time here.

The campsite is open all year and part of a 42-acre resort offering rivers, lakes, walks, badminton, pitch 'n' putt, a playground, a dog exercise and a swimming area, water sports, and Arthur's Restaurant and Bar.

In late 2026, a swimming pool and health spa complex is planned to be developed, adding to the extensive list of facilities.

10

## Bagwell Farm Touring Park, Dorset

Chickerell, Weymouth, Dorset DT3 4EA **T** 01305 782575 **W** bagwellfarm.co.uk

Located near the stunning Jurassic Coast, Bagwell Farm won two Dorset Tourism awards in 2025 – Gold for Camping, Caravanning Park & Glamping Business of the Year, and then Silver for Dog-Friendly Business of the Year.

Nestled in the countryside, this open-all-year site is only five miles from Weymouth's sandy beaches, with views of Chesil Beach, the Fleet Lagoon (renowned for wildlife), and Lyme Bay. Local attractions nearby

include the Isle of Portland and the famous limestone arch of Durdle Door, along with many coastal walks and stunning beaches to discover. The South West Coast Path is a short walk away, and a bus stop within half a mile helps aid you to explore the area without having to move the motorhome.

At Bagwell Farm you will find hardstanding pitches with electric hook-up, along with fully serviced pitches and those on grass.



Facilities include shower blocks, a laundry room, a play area and a handy shop. There is also a bar and grill, open seasonally.

11

## Whitefield Forest Touring Park, Isle of Wight



Brading Road, Ryde, Isle of Wight  
**P033 1QJ T** 01983 617069  
**W** whitefieldforest.co.uk

As the winner of the AA Campsite of the Year 2025/26 South East England, Whitefield Forest makes a top choice for an Isle of Wight escape. The site's website has details of special offers it has with both the main ferry companies – Red Funnel and Wightlink.

Surrounded by woodland, and open 27 March to 5 October, the site has hardstanding and grass pitches with electric, and some pitches are fully serviced. There are toilets, showers, privacy cubicles and a laundry room, along with a woodland play area, and a squirrel hide.

At only 23 miles by 13 miles, on the Isle of Wight you're never far from attractions. The beach at Ryde is only three miles away, and a golf course and supermarket are less than a mile.

12

## Blair Castle Caravan Park, Perthshire

Blair Atholl, Pitlochry, Perthshire PH18 5SR **T** 01796 481263 **W** blair-castle.co.uk

Voted for by you, our readers, the Out & About Live Campsite of the Year Award recognises places you have stayed that you feel are exceptional. The winner of that award is also in this feature, but the Highly Commended award in the same category went to Blair Castle Caravan Park, near Pitlochry in Highland Perthshire.

Blair Castle Caravan Park sits at the entrance to the Cairngorms National Park, in a beautiful area for walking, cycling and exploring. Half a mile from site you can be connected to a network of over 50 miles of paths

and tracks that lead along rivers, through forests and into the glens of the national park.

Pitches on the site, which is open 2 March to 16 November, are hardstanding with electric or you can choose fully serviced. There are even 18-metre super-sized pitches. Toilet and shower blocks, dishwashing areas and a laundry are also available, along with a shop, food cabin, games room and bike hire. Guests also receive free entry into the gardens and grounds of Blair Castle, and discounted entry into the castle itself.



13

### Woodhill Park, Norfolk

**Cromer Road, East Runton, Cromer, Norfolk NR27 9PX T 01263 512242 W woodhill-park.com**

The Green Tourism Awards recognise good environmentally friendly tourism businesses. Gold is the highest accolade awarded, and Woodhill Park has achieved this award thanks to some notable 'green' initiatives. These include the planting of 3,000 tree saplings, wildflower meadows to support biodiversity, EV charging points on site and the use of electric-powered site vehicles. The reduction of the amount of waste going to landfill has also been implemented.

Woodhill Park, open 1 March to 30 November, is set on a clifftop between Sheringham and Cromer, with hardstanding or grass fully serviced pitches, and grass pitches just with electric. There are toilets, showers, family washrooms, a launderette, a shop and a brand-new play park.

A short walk along the clifftop gives access to the beach, and then it's a two-mile walk along the Norfolk Coast Path into Sheringham.

There is also a bus stop at the



campsite entrance for easy travel into Cromer to explore the pier, shops and various amusements on offer.

14

### Park Cliffe Camping & Caravan Estate, Cumbria



**Birks Road, Windermere, Cumbria LA23 3PG T 01539 531344 W parkcliffe.co.uk**

Proudly taking the title of Camping, Glamping and Holiday Park of the Year in the Cumbria Tourism Awards 2025, Park Cliffe offers a tranquil retreat at the heart of the Lake District.

On site you're greeted by peaceful lake-and-hill views, plus plenty of woodland wildlife. There's loads to keep you busy around Park Cliffe, with Bowness and Windermere close by.

The touring pitches here are hardstanding with electric, and some look out towards Moor How, a small hill with big views over Lake Windermere.

As for on-site comforts, you'll find showers and toilets, private bathrooms for hire, a licensed shop, and a bar and restaurant. Park Cliffe's opening dates are 1 March to 8 November.

15

### Polmanter Touring Park, Cornwall

**Halsetown, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3LX T 01736 795640 W polmanter.com**

No stranger to awards, Polmanter Touring Park holds a Gold award from the Cornwall Tourism Awards for the last five years, five platinum stars from the AA, and took the title of Camping, Glamping and Holiday Park of the Year at the 2025 VisitEngland Awards for Excellence.

It's not just awards that Polmanter has in abundance, there is also an array of facilities on site, including an outdoor swimming pool, a bar and restaurant, a shop, play area, indoor soft play, a games room, tennis

courts, mini golf, a dog exercise field and a dog shower. There's even a spa and treatment rooms! Pitch-wise, there is a selection, from basic grass with electric hook-up, to multiserviced hardstandings with electric, water and drainage.

This quality site is just two miles from the pretty coastal town of St Ives with a regular shuttle bus service running into the town. You can also enjoy country walks locally. Pitches are available from 1 April to 31 October.





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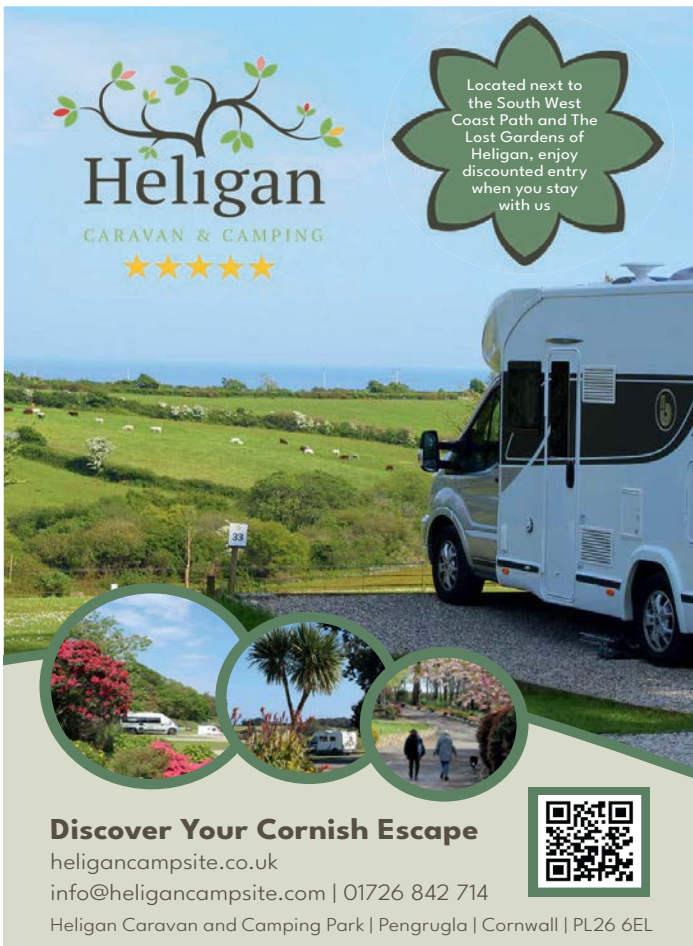
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## Bridgend Campsite, Isle of Arran, Scotland



Lamlash

### INFORMATION

Shiskine, The String, Isle of Arran  
KA27 8EN

what3words: dynamics.verb.wacky

T 01770 860597

W [bridgendcampsitearran.com](http://bridgendcampsitearran.com)

Cost: Two adults, pitch, electric from £34

Open: 27 February – 2 November

Nearest bus/train: Bus at campsite gate

Nearest pub/food: Two miles



Looking out from our pitch



Sunset over the site

We travelled to the Isle of Arran via CalMac's Claonaig to Lochranza ferry and this campsite has a great location for exploring the island. Bridgend is a well-kept 15-pitch campsite, lovingly cared for by the current owners.

At the entrance to the site there is a noticeboard with your allocated pitch number and the WiFi password. When we were there the signal was weak as there was a problem in the area. However, we were able to use our own mini-router with an EE SIM card.

The hardstandings are level, but the grass pitches are slightly sloping. The facilities are clean and tidy. Access to the facilities is down a

sloping path, or by steps. The black waste disposal point and the bins are by the steps. Grey waste is allowed to drain on your pitch.

Just by the facility block there is a small shop. If it is closed there is a number to call if you need anything.

Parts of the campsite have views of the sea. Dogs are allowed on site and there is a lane just outside the gate where you can walk them.

Bridgend is ideally placed for visiting the island, including the small village of Lochranza with its castle and the Arran Whisky distillery. On the west side are the King's Caves, Auchagallon Stone Circle at Machrie and Blackwaterfoot with a butchers, artisan bakers and

convenience store.

Head to the south coast for the beaches around Kildonan. Over to the east you'll find Whitling Bay, Lamlash with its beautiful seafront, and coastal Brodick, that also has a castle and gardens.

Further round is Sannox Bay. For the energetic there is the 2,867-foot Goatfell, an SSSI accessible from a marked path near Brodick Castle.

We left Arran on the CalMac ferry from Brodick to Troon.

Would we stay at Bridgend Campsite again? Yes, we would!



Anne Gillies

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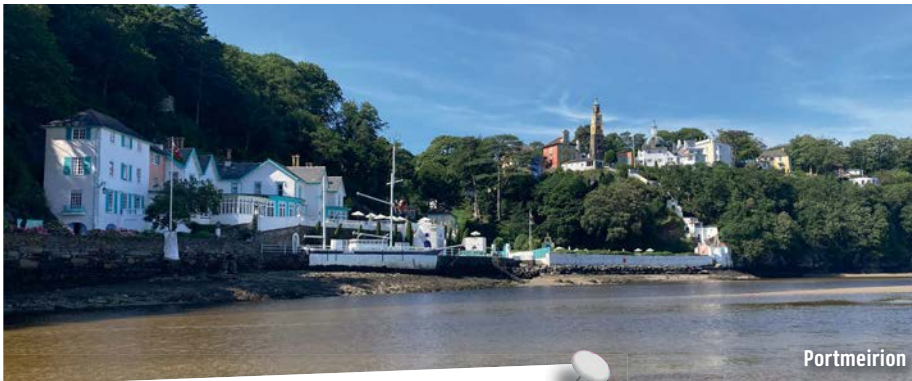
**hallsdownfarm.co.uk**  
**hallsdownfarm@gmail.com**  
**01271 850847**

**Escape to Hallsdown Farm Touring Park in Devon**

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## Llech Camping and Touring Site, Gwynedd, Wales



Portmeirion

### INFORMATION

Llechollwyn, Ynys Talsarnau LL47 6TH

what3words: insurance.treaties.snap

T 01766 781082

W llechcamping.co.uk

Cost: Two adults, pitch, electric from £32

Open: 17 April – 20 September

Nearest bus/ train: One mile – bus in Ynys and train station at Tygwyn

Nearest pub/food: Two miles in Talsarnau



Harlech Castle



Llech Camping and Touring Site

Dave and Heidi, the owners of Llech Camping and Touring Site, say that their vision was “to offer a friendly experience, with clean and well-maintained facilities, but with a back-to-basics, rustic vibe”. And that’s exactly what they’ve achieved.

The site is at the bottom of a dead-end road near the small village of Ynys, and within the Snowdonia National Park in North Wales. Consequently, it’s extremely peaceful, with fine views of the Rhinog Mountains and Yr Wyddfa (Mount Snowdon). As you drive to the campsite the Dwyryd Estuary is on your right, with Portmeirion nestled in the woods on the far side.

We liked the fact that free WiFi is available at the seats and tables overlooking the estuary. In fact, we spent a relaxing evening watching

the waters rise, as the tide crept in.

The entrance road can get covered with water at high tide on certain dates. But don’t worry; the campsite is only cut off around once a month and only for an hour or so. When the tide goes out, the estuary is basically a giant sandy beach criss-crossed with shallow channels of water.

During our stay, we strolled barefoot around half a mile across the estuary towards Portmeirion, and back, before driving to this fantasy Italianate village the following day. We enjoyed visiting nearby Harlech, a lovely little town with a large medieval turreted castle.

There are only 15 pitches at Llech, which no doubt contributes to the peaceful atmosphere (13 grass pitches, and two hardstanding; eight

with electric, including the hardstanding pitches).

Notwithstanding its small size, there are two family wet rooms – each with a shower, sink and toilet – along with extra showers and toilets. There’s also a dog shower. Our pitch had a wooden table and benches, and you can hire a fire pit.

The facilities are well maintained and we noticed some thoughtful little touches. For example, there’s a mini-fridge and freezer by the washing-up sink, along with a bottle and can opener. A small shop in the reception sells a few essentials, including milk, tea, coffee, chocolate and Welsh ice cream.



Sue Phillips

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## Stretton Lakes, Rutland, England



### INFORMATION

Great North Road, Stretton, Oakham, Rutland LE15 7QS

what3words: retail.stunner.ironclad

T 01780 410507

W [strettonlakes.co.uk](http://strettonlakes.co.uk)

Cost: Two adults, pitch, electric from £35

Open: All year

Nearest bus/ train: One mile, Clipsham

Nearest pub/food: One mile, Clipsham

Normanton Church at Rutland Water



The high-quality facilities block



Pitches overlooking one of the lakes

Situated in the pretty county of Rutland, Stretton Lakes is the perfect countryside retreat. The touring site is exclusively for adults only, but there is also a self-catering luxury lodge side to the business where children are accepted. However, this area is separated from the campsite by fishing lakes and woodland, so you wouldn't even know it was there.

Stretton Lakes offers 32 all-weather pitches alongside four of the site's seven fishing lakes. All pitches have electric hook-up, water supply and grey water drain; some face south with views across the lakes, others are on a different lakeside, sheltered by hedging and trees.

Free fishing is available to all guests – you can even fish straight in front of your pitch. The site is dog friendly with a dog wash and an

enclosed exercise area, with walks in the surrounding woodland possible.

The facilities block is right beside reception (where there is a small shop), and inside you'll find individual private showers rooms with rainfall showers, oak wash stands and stone washbasins – and I wouldn't expect any less from such a luxury-looking building from the outside. There is also a laundry room within the same building.

There's plenty in the local area to explore, and as someone who loves the outdoors and historical architecture, I was in my element! Two miles away on the outskirts of the village of Clipsham is Yew Tree Avenue – a wonderful place for a walk, with 150 ornamental yew trees, most over 200 years old. On the way back to the campsite you can call in

at The Olive Branch in Clipsham, an award-winning pub/restaurant.

A short drive away you can explore the town of Oakham, with a selection of shops, a Wednesday and Saturday market, a castle, and lovely church. There's also the larger town of Stamford, famous for its Georgian buildings, and the historic Burghley House with parkland walks and pleasure gardens.

For activity, Rutland Water is a 10-minute drive. Here you can enjoy watersports, or walking and cycling around the reservoir – the circuit is 15 miles, with an option to add another six miles out onto the Hambleton Peninsula.



Claire Tupholme

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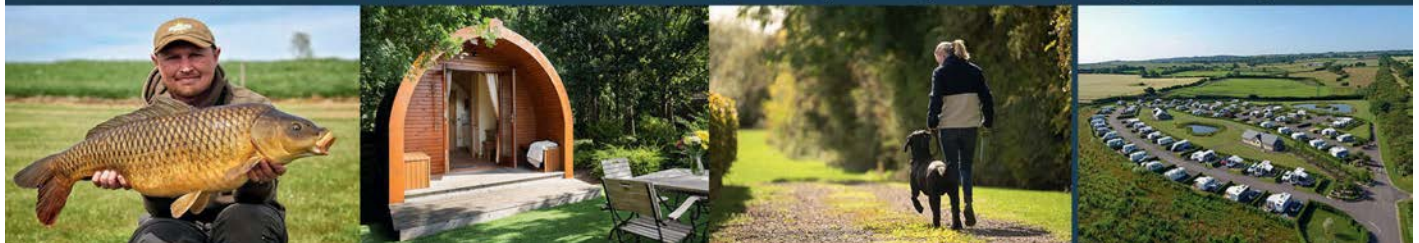
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**Camp Resnik, Kamnik Municipality, Slovenia**



View over Kamnik

**INFORMATION**

**Nevlje 1a, 1240 Kamnik, Slovenia**  
**what3words: foods.dodges.cherish**  
**T 00386 51 346543**  
**W kampresnik.com**  
**Cost:** Two adults, pitch, electric from €27 (£24.19)  
**Open:** 1 May – 30 September  
**Nearest bus/ train:** 500 metres bus, 1km train  
**Nearest pub/food:** Directly across the road



The site



Ljubljana

This delightful little campsite in Slovenia is located just a few minutes' walk away from the small town of Kamnik.

The site is fairly level grass, with some open areas and some with plenty of shade. Reception is closed from 12 noon until 6pm, but a friendly staff member invited us to choose a pitch and then to return later to register.

There are three small facilities blocks on site. Two of them are fairly new and solar heated, with spacious shower compartments with the usual push-button showers but with controllable temperature, WCs, dishwashing sinks and laundry sinks. All were absolutely spotless at the time of our visit.

There is a drive-over motorhome grey water point with fresh water

tap. The chemical toilet emptying point is a bit primitive, a hole in the ground with a wooden lid to remove, but was effective and simple to use.

There is a washing machine available as well as undercover dining areas. Fresh drinking water can be found in the facilities blocks.

Free WiFi is a real benefit, while dogs are welcome on the campsite at an extra charge.

Across the road from the campsite is a bar with a wide range of beer, a small snack menu and very friendly staff. Located next door is a public open-air swimming pool, with tennis courts and volleyball being available close by also.

It is a 500-metre walk into the medieval town of Kamnik where there are several bars/restaurants (lunch at the Italian restaurant was

excellent), one or two shops and a Spar supermarket. The town is a nice old town, and it is a pleasure to wander around.

A short distance down the road from the campsite, you can take a steep footpath up through the trees to Stari Grad, a tough climb in the heat, but fortunately there is a bar/restaurant at the top for refreshments. The climb is worth it for the stunning views!

There is lots of walking and cycling to be enjoyed in the area and it is possible to take the train or bus from the town to Slovenia's capital, Ljubljana, which is only 25 kilometres away.



Jane Knagg

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Geiranger Camping, Møre og Romsdal, Norway



Seven Sisters Waterfall



Village at head of fjord



Looking down on campsite

**INFORMATION**

6216 Geiranger, Norway

what3words: dive.longingly.estimate

T 0047 70 263120

W [geirangercamping.no](http://geirangercamping.no)

Cost: Two adults, pitch, electric from 380NK (£29.98)

Open: 1 May – 30 September

Nearest bus/train: Outside campsite

Nearest pub/food: 250m

Geiranger was on our must-visit list for our tour of Norway, and Geiranger Camping scores 11 out of 10 for its location at the head of the fjord with stunning views all around.

It is right on the shore within easy, level walking distance to a small supermarket, restaurants, cafés, shops selling *sjokolade* (chocolates), *fiskekaker* (fish cakes) and other Norwegian goods. Plus, the tourist office is useful for booking excursions. The village is bustling when a large cruise ship comes in, but quietens down later in the day.

The campsite has 140 pitches, 70 with electric hook-up, split across two fields linked by a bridge across the river. It is very open, but the gravel spaces are well separated by grass where you can sit out, appreciate the views and listen to

tumbling waterfalls behind the site.

It has all the necessary motorhome services plus a laundry room, useful when you have spent several days parked up in remote places. The sanitary facilities seemed ample in the shoulder season. Showers cost extra.

Reception staff are friendly, helpful, and speak English. The site shop stocks handy essentials, from milk to reindeer pelts for draping over your camping chairs (this is Norway after all). It is not possible to make pitch reservations in advance, but in May we found plenty of space on arrival.

We stayed three nights because we found lots to enjoy in the area. An easy half-mile walk directly from the campsite leads up past a series of waterfalls to the Norsk Fjordcenter,

with a height gain of 80 metres.

From there, we took a more strenuous hike via Westerås (with welcome refreshments) to Storsaeterfossen, a photogenic waterfall with the added bonus of being able to walk behind it. This four-kilometre-each-way walk involved a height gain of 550 metres.

A stay in Geiranger is not complete without a boat cruise along the fjord to properly appreciate the stunning Seven Sisters and the Sutor waterfalls. Alternatively, for water-based activity, rowing boats can be rented from the campsite, or kayaks from the kayaking centre, which was a short drive away.



Sandra Thorpe

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# Six seven

These two numbers currently seem to send kids wild, but will they have the same effect on motorhomers when this new Auto-Trail debuts?



**S**ix seven. It doesn't seem to mean much, although these are now primary school teachers' least favourite numerals. In Auto-Trail speak, they simply signify a new layout in between the compact F60 and F62 and the longer F70, F72 and F74, with an overall length nudging 6.7 metres. F, of course, is for Ford as the F-Line was the company's first Transit-based range.

This is also a replacement for the Excel 675 B. That offered a similar floorplan in a slimmer body but, crucially, its narrow width precluded a drop-down bed. The 2.35m-wide F67 solves that, although the electrically lowered double is still an option (at £1,500).

The concept is as before, with a front

lounge, end washroom and a garage. However, the ablutions and rear storage are both enhanced over the Excel and, with the addition of a drop-down bed, the new model goes head-to-head with some best sellers, including models from Bailey, Swift and a number of continental brands such as Bürstner, Chausson, Pilote and Rapido. To say we've taken to this layout would be an understatement.

Maybe Auto-Trail is a little late to this particular party but its new arrival debuts at the Caravan, Camping and Motorhome Show at the NEC. And it does so with plenty of options to tailor an F67 to your exact requirements. Starting with the base price of £67,955, which includes the 130hp motor and manual gearbox, you can upgrade to 165hp (£1,200)

and/or automatic transmission (£1,860). The black alloy wheels on this show model are a further option (£995), but the Magnetic Grey metallic cab is one of five colours available at no extra cost.

The low-profile body incorporates a large overcab sunroof and a 200W solar panel. The entrance door is linked to the central locking and comes with a flyscreen and umbrella as part of the Lux Pack (£1,578) that also includes Ford's 12in touchscreen, a TV aerial, carpets, reversing camera and external barbecue point.

The base vehicle spec is comprehensive if you also tick the Drivers Pack (£1,975), which includes automatic lights and wipers, front fog lamps, cab air-con, front parking sensors and a range of driver

**WATCH**  
the video!  
motorhome.ma/  
review365





assistance and safety systems.

But it's the layout that's central to the appeal here, especially as the F67 feels bigger inside than its dimension imply. The settees look inviting and are comfy to sprawl on and there's plenty of artificial lighting, while the free-standing table stores away in its own locker when not required. Where the Auto-Trail differs from its main rivals is offering generous storage below the settees rather than foldaway travel seats. If you need to

carry rear passengers, there's an HD Dinette option (£995) which swaps the offside sofa for an L-settee with two forward-facing seatbelts. Above, the (completely rectangular) drop-down bed measures 1.92m by 1.40m and a ladder is provided for access, although your dealer can apparently remove the stopper that prevents the bed coming down lower. The alternative bed formed from the seats is larger, at 2.17 by 1.47m.

The kitchen beats the imported

opposition by including a microwave, as well as a combined oven/grill and three gas rings. A neat worktop extension ensures that there's plenty of preparation space, while storage includes a large cutlery drawer, a variety of cupboards and, opposite, a tall 150-litre compressor fridge.

For many, though, the washroom will be the key selling point. A solid, inward-opening door provides access to a space that includes plenty of room to use the loo and washbasin, a separate shower with baskets for your shampoo, etc, and a supersized wardrobe incorporating two drawers. Below that, there's internal access to the 70cm-wide garage with 1m headroom (or over 2m in a small zone on the offside).

So, Auto-Trail has put its own twist on this proven formula, with the result that those numbers – six seven – might now get a different generation all fizzed up. [MMA](#)



#### FACT FILE

**Base vehicle:** Ford Transit  
**Price from:** £67,955  
**Berths:** 2/4 **Travel seats:** 2/4  
**Length:** 6.69m **Width:** 2.35m  
**Height:** 2.88m **Gross weight:** 3,500kg  
**Payload:** 580kg

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## RANGE OVERVIEW

# Le Voyageur turns 45

This premium French manufacturer is celebrating a big anniversary with a new special edition...

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Le Voyageur 7.8 GJF anniversary model



Elegant 45 years stitching

It started with the idea of an adventure. Nearly 50 years ago, Georges Sacier was looking for a reliable, elegant new motorhome for a dream tour. That dream came true with the Mercedes-based Le Voyageur 600 in 1981 when leisure vehicles with a three-pointed star were a rare sight.

Today the company offers two premium A-class ranges, the Fiat-based Eterna and the Héritage on the Mercedes Sprinter. It is the Héritage range we're focusing on here as that has seen the most changes for the 2026 season. However, there's also an anniversary edition to mark the company's forty-fifth birthday.

For some it's not a luxury motorhome without a three-pointed star adorning the bonnet and that's why Le Voyageur has increased the choice of Héritage vehicles for the coming season. These have an Al-Ko chassis, adding flexibility for layout options as well as enhanced driving comfort with a wider rear track and

a low rear frame.

Factor in the MBUX Virtual Assistant, which can help with questions on the road, as well as adding easier automated driving tools, and it's a vehicle that has been designed to travel with confidence.

The Full Box control panel allows you to keep an eye on your vehicle, with real-time tracking of water and battery charge levels. The system also allows you to set the air-con or the Alde heating to a specific temperature, and to control the lighting and any extra devices.

Then, to make parking your new pride and joy easier, the Héritage comes with a 360-degree drone-view camera system. This shows a top-down image of your vehicle with no blind spots, even when on the move. Overhangs or tight spaces will no longer be a problem with the system recording views from all four cameras at the same time.

Most of the Héritage models have twin inwards-facing sofas, which are

supremely comfortable for relaxing, plus a table that folds in half for easy access when you're not dining. And while the majority are tailored towards the couple, you can still safely tour with four thanks to hidden belted travel seats.

Storage will be ample, while the 175-litre fridge should allow you to shop at farmers' markets to your heart's content. In the bedroom, mattresses are properly comfy, while 1.90m-tall showers are a star feature of the spacious washroom.

Celebrating 45 years, all 7.8 models are available to order as a special anniversary edition. As well as the exclusive branding outside, the interiors feature white high-gloss cabinets and a special leather upholstery with 45-year stitching.

Each model also comes with a gift pack with a leather folder to store all the important paperwork, a keyring, bottle cooler, blanket, two bath towels, four wine glasses, two coffee cups and four leather coasters. **MMM**



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## NEW MODEL NEWS

# La Dolce Vita on wheels

This is the ultimate Laika motorhome, full of Italian design flair

**K**reos is the flagship range from Italian premium brand, Laika (part of the Erwin Hymer Group). It was launched to considerable acclaim in low-profile form in 2023, with the A-class version following a year later. The fully integrated model, the H 5109, comes with just one layout, itself a replica of that in the original L 5109.

If the 'L' was a looker, then the 'H' takes things to a new level, but then few motorhomes come with such a rich infusion of automotive design. For the A-class, Laika once again turned to GFG Style, the company of Giorgetto and Fabrizio Giugiaro with a back catalogue of creating cars wearing Alfa Romeo, Lamborghini and Maserati logos, amongst others.

With simple black and white decals, minimalist LED headlamps, grille peppered with tiny slots and flush glazing, you won't mistake the new Kreos for anything else. Nor will you forget that it's Italian, thanks to the tricolour on the mirrors!



The décor inside is, perhaps, an even greater change from the designs sometimes seen elsewhere. The dark blue Deep Ocean walls contrast with a mixture of white, grey and wood accents and there are also curves and rounded corners everywhere – if this is not your thing, you can choose

the alternative Icy Grey scheme. There are five upholsteries and even more choice with contrasting backrests for the settees and colourful scatter cushions.

The lounge has a sofa next to the door and an L-shaped seating group opposite. We love the round dining table here, while the A-class version, of course, gains the extra width in the cab and the views out through the vast windscreen.

There's also a 32in LED TV (part of the TV Pack), which can be viewed from the electric drop-down bed in the A-class cab (1.90m by 1.40m) when it is deployed, as well as from the lounge seating in the day.

In the 1.2m-long kitchen you can choose to upgrade to the Grand Chef version with integrated oven and grill, while a microwave and coffee machine are also offered as options. Worktops are in Getacore (like Corian), while the 153-litre fridge is opposite, next to the habitation door.

The washroom sits behind the ►





kitchen with a door to close off the rear and another door to give privacy from the bedroom.

Unlike in even some luxury models, the toilet can be comfortably used even with its cubicle door closed, while the shower on the opposite side of the motorhome has a traditional showerhead as well as a rainfall shower above and sauna-style wood panelling.

At the back, the bedroom has reading lights with USBs and single beds each measuring 1.95m by 0.80m. They feature lifting headboards and sliding wardrobes beneath for easy access to clothes. There are also high-level lockers on three sides of the bedroom. The garage (limited to

250kg) under the bedroom has doors on either side, plus a chequerplate for your motorbike's stand and even a wine store.

You'll be drawn to this 'van for its stunning looks (inside and out), but these aren't the sole reason to buy. The wood-free body has 44mm-thick walls with polyurethane framework, glass-fibre roof and underfloor and a heated double floor.

Water tanks (200 litres fresh, 146 litres waste) are set within the basement but have been designed to slide out of the garage area for maintenance.

Other features include an electric windscreen blind, twin panoramic rooflights (lounge and bedroom),

Alde gas/electric heating with convectors in every room (including the cab and garage), plus a heat exchanger and an electric waste water drain valve.

Even more luxury can be added with Alarm, Multimedia and Chassis Pro packs, while further options include an inverter, lithium batteries, habitation air-con, 4G router, solar panels, outside shower and barbecue points, rear air suspension, an awning and towbar.

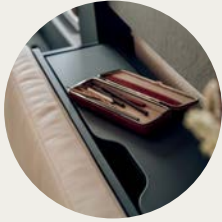
Even better is the fact that, for a very limited time, these rather stylish motorhomes are offered with a discount of £16,800 (but only on stock vehicles that are already in the UK, not new factory orders). [www.outandaboutlive.co.uk](http://www.outandaboutlive.co.uk)



## FACT FILE

**Base vehicle:** Fiat Ducato Al-Ko  
**Price from:** £163,500  
**Berths:** 4 **Travel seats:** 4  
**Length:** 7.89m **Width:** 2.32m  
**Height:** 3.03m **Gross weight:** 4,500kg  
**Payload:** 606kg





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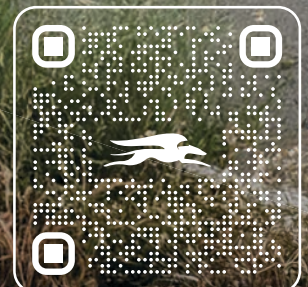
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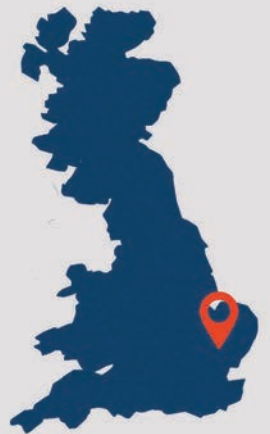
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Peter Vaughan

# French made

Surprisingly compact and yet spacious inside, this new island bed A-class is the latest design from Rapido

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Price from: £85,900 • Berths: 4 • Travel seats: 4  
Length: 6.99m • Gross weight: 3,500kg

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Wokingham Motorhomes W [wokinghammotorhomes.co.uk](http://wokinghammotorhomes.co.uk)



Plenty of floor space and large windows make for a spacious lounge area despite the Rapido being under 7m in length

Most island bed motorhomes are around 7.5m long and, often, when manufacturers have tried to reduce that size, the results have been, at best, compromised. Perhaps that's why, when Rapido showed its dealers the layout plan for the new 850F, they were initially a bit nonplussed. However, seeing it for real last summer soon changed their minds and I, too, was impressed at its spaciousness for a 7m model. Colleagues on the Out and About Live Awards judging panel were equally taken with it, so much so that it grabbed the Best Fixed Double Bed category ahead of strong competition from Fleurette and Rimor amongst others.

The 850F isn't just a new layout but part of a refreshed 8F Series for 2026. This range, along with its Al-Ko chassis sister, the 80dF, has been completely redesigned internally and

externally, with new furniture and a bolder, more aggressive front face. There are new cab windows, a new front passenger door, new-look wheelarches, revised bus-style mirrors and enhanced cab insulation. Most importantly, the latest sloping dashboard design improves driver visibility.

Based on the Fiat Ducato with OEM wide-track rear axle, the 8F is still Rapido's most affordable A-class range. It includes 7.49m-long single bed and island bed layouts, as well as the rear lounge 854F and now the 850F. Prices for this newcomer start at £85,900, but to that you need to add the 'non option' of the Select Pack at £2,190. Still, at under £90k, this is considerably more attainable than many other A-classes, especially those German models that favour extensive options lists.

Here, the right-hand drive version already comes with a higher spec than on the Continent. So, you get

the Truma Combi 6 EH gas/230V boiler which you operate from the main Rapido touchscreen – or your phone – rather than a separate heating display. Also standard are the oven, a second leisure battery (both 92Ah AGM), removable carpets, external shower, electric parking brake, front fog lamps, twin lens mirrors and rear steadies.

The Smart Pack is also included in the UK, with 16in alloy wheels, leather steering wheel with radio/phone controls and the aluminium-effect fascia trim.

The aforementioned Select Pack ensures that you have minimal need to add extra kit. It comprises a Pioneer multimedia unit with 6.8in screen, Apple CarPlay, Android Auto and a reversing camera, plus Traction Plus, Hill Descent Control, composite leaf springs for the rear suspension, all-season tyres, a thermal dual-pleat windscreen blind, doors with two-point central locking,



Driver visibility is improved by sloping dashboard



Jump seat makes a useful footrest



Room to relax with the island bed slid back into its chaise longue position

a habitation door with window, flyscreen and bin, a gas inverter (so you can use the heating while driving) and a heated waste tank.

There's very little else you can add but you might want to consider the Lounge Pack (automatic cab air-conditioning instead of the standard on/off air-con, an induction phone charger and digital dashboard) at £850 – I wouldn't bother. Or more likely, the Energy Pack (£1,100), which upgrades the batteries to lithium and adds a 150W solar panel.

There are also two brand-new furniture finishes to choose from, at no extra cost, and five upholsterys. The demo vehicle here features the light wood Aurora cabinets with Alba fabric (£270 extra).

### **GARAGE MUSIC**

There's no doubt that the redesign has brought the 8F series up to date visually. With its framed habitation windows, hexagonal black mesh

grille wearing the Rapido three generations logo, LED daytime running lights and classic red/grey graphics, the 850F looks premium. It also continues with the company's Novatech construction, featuring an impact-resistant polyester finish for the sides, roof and underside, plus superior Styrofoam insulation.

As with the vast majority of A-classes, you get a habitation door on the offside and cab door on the nearside, the former fitted with an electric step that auto-retracts. The gas locker can accommodate two 13kg cylinders side by side and low down to ease the strain on your back, while the inboard fresh and underslung waste tanks are generously sized at 120 litres each.

The key feature, externally, is the garage. This has loading doors on either side (only to floor level on the offside) that clip to the body in the open position.

The maximum load in here is

150kg and there are fixed lashing points, a ceiling light, mains socket, outside shower and convenient access to the habitation electrics.

There's no spare wheel but the garage does have a significant party trick – press a button and you can raise the headroom from 84cm to 1.14m (with the bed above rising accordingly). Importantly, tambour roller sections on either side keep the bedroom and garage storage entirely separate.

Overall payload is 425kg on a licence-friendly 3,500kg chassis. That's better than some rivals but 3,650kg and 4,400kg upgrades are available for those that need more. The auto gearbox robs you of 25kg, don't forget.

### **HORSES FOR COURSES**

Under the usual letterbox-like bonnet of this Rapido, the 140-horsepower motor is standard, with that eight-speed automatic ▶



### ADVANTAGES

- Enhanced standard spec for the UK
- Large fresh and waste tanks
- Spacious and comfortable lounge
- Well-planned swing-wall washroom
- Choice of furniture and fabrics
- Bedroom with chaise longue position bed and sliding privacy door

### DISADVANTAGES

- Island bed less appealing in its raised position
- Limited kitchen worktop



Large kitchen drawers are centrally locked at the flick of a switch, oven is included in the UK spec

gearbox fitted as a £2,580 option that most will surely want. It makes driving effortless and smooth, with the Ducato's very firm suspension ensuring a surefooted and stable feel – although there were also a good few rattles on the long and bumpy drive away from Wokingham Motorhomes' rural retreat. Hopefully, those can be addressed at PDI (this vehicle was fresh from its NEC debut) – after all, Rapido's oldest established dealer has nigh on 50 years' experience with the brand...

The captain's chairs with integral seatbelts and tilting squabs give a comfortable seating position as you enjoy the commanding view through the panoramic windscreen. It's the new, angled dashboard that makes a huge difference, though, as you can see the road closer to you, making it far easier to position the vehicle on the road. A BIG improvement.

Another significant change is the electric parking brake, which gets

around the old problem of a tight space between the seat and gas locker, into which big hands struggled with the lever.

The new coach-style mirrors give an excellent view aft in combination with the Pioneer radio's reversing screen (albeit rather smaller than Fiat's own infotainment unit). And, if you still manage to bump the back end, at least the bumper is a separate section.

Going forwards, the triple windscreen wipers (correctly handed for right-hand drive) sweep the glass more effectively than in most A-classes. There are pull-down roller-type sun visors and speakers set into the base of the bed above.

### INSIDE STORY

But it's the feeling as soon as you step inside the 850F that's the winning factor. This feels bigger than you'd expect of a 7m motorhome, especially one with an island bed.

For a start, there's plenty of floor space immediately inside the door. Plenty of daylight, too, with the A-class cab and large rooflight taking centre stage. After dark, it's equally bright, with downlights in the ceiling and the base of the cab bed, plus a swivel reading light over the sofa.

That settee is long enough for feet-up sprawling and has backrests that magnetically attach to the vehicle's sides (so they don't flop over when you drive). With a raked backrest and scatter cushions, it's a great place to unwind.

Or you can enjoy the cab's captain's chairs, which are perfectly placed to watch the telly (a bracket for which is mounted on the washroom wall, with 12V and aerial sockets adjacent). Bag the rotated driver's chair and there's a tiny jump seat (just 32cm wide) alongside that can be used as a footstool. Its base slides out but would be even better if it extended further.



Choose from Aurora (shown) or Palatina furniture; Alba upholstery costs £270 extra (there are four other fabrics available)

The table, meanwhile, is a permanent fixture but not an obtrusive one when folded in half. As a couple using this motorhome you might never unfold it, but, if you do, it's banquet sized – 84cm by 83cm!

Coat hooks above the jump seat and elasticated straps above the cab seats (which look ideal for collecting mementos and postcards from your European tours) complete this very inviting lounge.

## GASTRONOMY

Fans of British motorhomes may point to the lack of a microwave, or the limited worktop, but there's plenty to please in the Rapido's galley. Of course, there are trendy black accessories (tap, 12V and 230V sockets) but it's the large drawers that I liked best, complete with a switch to centrally lock them.

The Can hob may only have two gas rings but they are well spaced, so you can use pans larger than those

destined for a doll's house! Down below, the oven (also from Can) includes a grill and is sensibly positioned below the hob.

The fridge – a three-way absorption type with automatic energy selection – is supersized, too, with a bottle drawer in its base and a cupboard above. I'm so pleased that Rapido wasn't tempted to put the oven up there!

## BED & BATH

Opposite the cooler, Rapido saves space in this shorter 'van by putting all the ablutions together in one room. There's no shortage of space in here to use the cassette toilet or the smart oval basin with its pop-up plug. Large mirrors on the wall and the door help to ensure there's no claustrophobia. It's just a shame that the washroom storage locker doesn't have the elastic straps that we've seen in some Rapidos.

You don't have to endure a battle

with a shower curtain, though, as this is a DuoSpace washroom. Undo a bolt and the wall behind the basin swings to the right and a bifold screen completes a proper shower cubicle. There's even a basket on the wall for your shampoo and gel.

It's the end bedroom with 1.90m by 1.48m island bed, though, that's the 850F's raison d'être. Slid back in its chaise longue position, it makes for a spacious (that word again) bedroom with comfy space to sit up with a brew. Your tea can rest on one of the extra-long beside tables, complete with USBs to recharge your devices overnight.

Even when the hypoallergenic Bultex mattress is pulled out flat, there's room to get around the end of the bed (just) and a sliding door makes the bedroom completely private if one of you wants a lie-in, or if you're using it as a four-berth.

Wardrobes on either side of the bed follow a new design that ►



Well-planned washroom is called Duo'Space...



...because it quickly becomes a proper shower



Drop-down bed can be replaced with cupboards



Height-adjustable head restraints for rear seats

sweeps round into the top lockers. It's a style statement that also gives you plenty of clothing storage. Under the foot of the bed there's a compartment for those items (socks, pants) that you want kept toasty warm – it sits above the boiler.

You can now delete the drop-down cab bed in your 8F series Rapido but it's still the norm here to have four berths. It's a new bed, with wider mattress, simpler locking mechanism (just a catch to slide across before lowering) and better stability (with rests that stop it

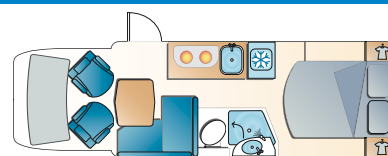
wobbling when lowered).

The bed still lowers manually, after tipping the front seat backrests forward. It comes down to 1.24m off the floor (so a ladder is required), but headroom is good (up to 76cm) and there's a roof vent (essential in summer). There's a single LED downlight at each end, so you can sleep with heads at either end (or kids could top 'n' tail) and a curtain surrounds the 1.87m by 1.42m mattress for privacy. When you raise the bed back up, there's just enough room to leave a duvet in situ. [www](http://www)

### THE **MMM** VERDICT

More compact motorhomes with an island bed rarely work well but Rapido has succeeded in packing a lot into a 7m overall length and still creating a motorhome that feels remarkably roomy. It's well-equipped, too, with the Select and Right-Hand Drive Special packs and seems well priced for what it offers.

## FACTS AND FIGURES



### PRICE

From: £85,900 As tested: £91,070

### BASICS

**Berths:** 4 **Travel seats:** 4  
**Warranty:** Two years base vehicle and habitation, eight years water ingress  
**Type Approval:** Full GB Approval

### DIMENSIONS

**Length:** 6.99m (22ft 11in)  
**Width:** 2.35m (7ft 8½in)  
**Height:** 2.91m (9ft 6½in)  
**Gross vehicle weight:** 3,500kg (3,650kg and 4,400kg options)  
**Payload:** 425kg

### BASE VEHICLE

**Type:** Fiat Ducato Light chassis-cowl  
**Engine:** 2.2-litre, 140hp, Euro 6E, front-wheel drive, eight-speed automatic gearbox (as tested)

### KITCHEN

**Cooker:** Can two-burner gas hob, Can combined oven and grill  
**Fridge:** Thetford 142-litre three-way fridge with automatic energy selection

### BEDS

**Island bed:** 1.90m x 1.48m (6ft 3in x 4ft 10in)  
**Drop-down double:** 1.87m x 1.42m (6ft 1½in x 4ft 8in)

### ESSENTIALS

**Fresh water:** 120 litres (inboard)  
**Waste water:** 120 litres (underslung, heated)  
**Space/water heating:** Truma Combi 6 EH gas/electric blown-air  
**Gas:** 2 x 13kg  
**Leisure battery:** 2 x 92Ah AGM

### OPTIONS

**Fitted to test vehicle:** Eight-speed automatic gearbox (£2,580), Select Pack (£2,190), Alba upholstery (£270), mattress protection (£130)

### THE ALTERNATIVES

Fleurette Discover 71 LMF Wellness £101,590  
 Malibu I 480 RB-QB "K" £92,690

### INSURANCE

T 0800 975 1307  
 W [shieldtotalinsurance.co.uk](http://shieldtotalinsurance.co.uk)

For quote details: [motorhome.ma/QuoteInfo](http://motorhome.ma/QuoteInfo)



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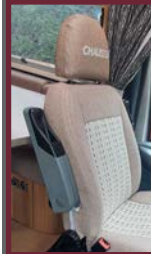
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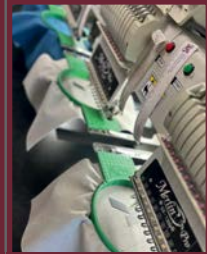
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- Peter, 2026 (Trouville Classique MWB owner)

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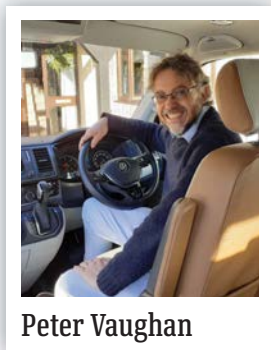
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SCAN ME





Peter Vaughan

# Act of Rebellion

RP's 4x4 flagship is back, with more features and more off-grid capability than ever before

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**BEST 4X4 CAMPERVAN**  
RP Rebellion 2 AWD Pro

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**RP REBELLION 2 AWD PRO**  
Price from: £148,000 • Berths: 2 • Travel seats: 2  
Length: 7.00m • Gross weight: 4,400kg

Motorhome supplied by:  
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View from the raised rear bedroom. Note the TV on the right and long Corian shelf above the galley on the left

Over 1.2 million people have watched our YouTube video of the original RP Rebellion, a 4x4 super-campervan that clearly caught the imagination of a lot of folk and, arguably, started the boom in off-road leisure vehicles.

Since then, RP has continued to develop its luxury adventure 'vans, adding a clever second alternator to give you unlimited off-grid stays (as long as you have diesel in the tank). Meanwhile, its Smart Assist system allows key functions to be controlled and monitored from an iPad.

Always seeking to stay ahead of the competition, RP launched the new Rebellion at last October's NEC show – and instantly grabbed the Best 4x4 Campervan trophy in the Out & About Live Awards 2026.

Development of the latest model started when Mercedes-Benz withdrew the Super High Roof version of the Sprinter, a

prerequisite for RP's unique elevated rear lounge. Now, the company starts with the L2 van and adds its own roof on top – not an easy task when mated with the perfectionism of RP owner, Steve Young.

The prototype tested had roof design number seven, with final tweaks still being made to the mould at time of writing. Crucially, the new top adds 70mm in height, creating more headroom and extra storage, while the awning is now much better integrated into the roof (without any ugly brackets) and spoilers duct airflow over the rooflights.

There is much more, however, to the revised Rebellion than a new roof. The garage has been reconfigured, the front lounge and washroom have both been redesigned, there are new-generation solar panels which can directly charge the latest lithium batteries (and even top up the vehicle battery), and a weight-saving

programme has increased payload by 150kg with no loss of quality.

Even the pricing has had a thorough overhaul, with a new lower starting figure of £148,000 for the 4x4 and £136,000 for a rear-wheel drive version. There are many options you can add, but an online configurator on the RP website now allows you to spec your vehicle exactly as you need it.

The show vehicle – fully loaded with all the bells and whistles (no washing machine this time, though!) had £13,489-worth of base vehicle extras and a further £47,650 of additional habitation features, but you no longer need to spend over £200k to get into a Rebellion.

### STILL UNIQUE

Apart from the Pebble paint finish, this 2026-model Rebellion could, at first glance, be mistaken for its predecessor, which is a real compliment regarding the OEM look



Three sizes of table are provided; this is the largest for dining



When the nearest Costa is a thousand miles away...



Increased garage space and a flyscreen is now available for the top hatch

of the new roof. It still has RP's own bodykit (£1,495) and Black Rhino Warlord alloys, now fitted with the latest BFGoodrich All-Terrain T/A KO3 tyres for improved traction in challenging environments (£3,780). Lazer Lights (for off-road use, linked to the main beam) are now integrated into the grille (£1,545).

Of course, the foundations of the Rebellion are still a seven-metre Sprinter panel van, now with the 2-litre 190hp diesel engine and 9G-Tronic automatic gearbox as standard. The maximum gross weight of 4,100kg is uprated here to 4,400kg to give a 650kg payload.

And, while we're on the subject of load lugging, let's take a look at the Rebellion's distinctive *derrière*. As before, the barn doors are replaced by RP's own huge top-hinged tailgate, which opens to reveal a deeper garage, boasting extra capacity. Now 1.69m wide and 91cm tall, with a minimum depth of 85cm,

the space has longer (1.87m) sections on either side for skis, windbreaks, etc. The batteries (two 200Ah 24V Victron lithium units) are now raised off the floor to increase their efficiency, while the inboard water tank is now placed centrally for improved weight distribution. Three sizes of tank are offered, the largest being 180 litres.

Not only does the tailgate look much more attractive than panel van doors but you can load the garage without cold and rain blowing into your bedroom. But, if it's sunny and warm and you want fresh air, there's still another top-hinged hatch above the tailgate that gives panoramic views from the rear lounge. This second door can now be fitted with a full flyscreen.

### MUD, GLORIOUS MUD

There's a limit to what you can do with someone else's brand-new £200k campervan but Storm Bram

ensured that there was plenty of thick, gloopy mud and exceedingly soft, wet ground at Bramham Park where we photographed the Rebellion. Suffice to say that we didn't get stuck (or close to it), while having fun showering our cameraman (and cameras!) with grime. Only the sheer size of the Sprinter (compared with something like a Land Rover Defender) – and perhaps your bravery – will limit where you go. And, with the optional 213-litre diesel tank, you should have enough range to go from Land's End to John O'Groats without refuelling.

On the road, it's a familiar Mercedes cab, albeit one that has you sitting eye to eye with the truckers. The steering is now lighter than before and the all-wheel drive system allocates drive according to grip, without the driver having to get involved. VB semi-air suspension (£2,070) allows a softer setting for off-roading, all controlled digitally ▶



### ADVANTAGES

- New high roof creates more headroom, more storage
- Larger garage with top-hinged tailgate
- Second alternator gives unlimited off-grid stays (as long as you have diesel)
- Vast kitchen worktop
- Elevated rear lounge with opening panoramic hatch
- Versatile front seating area
- New one-piece washroom

### DISADVANTAGES

- Narrow aisle between the washroom and kitchen
- Tables stored in the wardrobe
- Some options are pricey



Very impressive galley has huge amount of worktop, while there's no fear of running out of power for cooking

from the dashboard. Fresh and waste water tanks are also emptied via fascia switches, so there's no grovelling underneath for muck-splattered drain taps.

For a commercial vehicle, the driving environment already feels premium, but the 4x4 Sprinter is now offered with additional luxuries, including a heated steering wheel and LED headlights. Our test vehicle came with heated seats (£420) trimmed in RP's exclusive Italian leather (£3,930). Reshaped for extra support, these are chairs that should stay comfy for a very long drive.

### OFF-GRID INDEFINITELY

Already we've discovered plenty of USPs of the Rebellion but the key one is its off-grid capability compared with other gas-free vehicles (which often have very limited potential for electric cooking without a hook-up). This is achieved via the 24V Advanced Power

Management System (£16,750), which adds a second alternator that replicates hooking up to a mains electricity supply. You simply flick a switch, which triggers the RP charging system with the engine running. Ideally, you'd do this en route to your destination but, if you flatten your batteries while parked up, you can replenish your electric supply for as long as you have diesel – you'll never run out of power!

We put this to the test, boiling water on both induction rings on the hob and using the twin drawers of a Ninja air fryer at the same time. Even though we were drawing almost 5kW of power, we were still topping up the batteries at the same time! The Victron inverter can supply up to 7kW.

A rather harsher test has been carried out by an RP customer touring the USA for almost a year. With no ability to plug into American 110V electrics, the Rebellion has been

running off-grid for the whole tour.

It's not just the electrical systems that impress here, but also the incredibly generous kitchen. With the flap raised at the forward end, by the sliding door, there is 2.13m of worktop (over 7ft), all in DuPont Corian. Then, above, is a shelf (1.37m long) giving even more worktop at a second level.

Storage is excellent, too, with three deep drawers (the top one for cutlery and utensils) and a large cupboard under the sink (which has a domestic outlet). Different sizes of compressor fridge are available, the largest (seen here) having a 150-litre capacity split between two drawers – use one as a fridge, the other as a freezer, if you wish.

There's more storage at high level but, with headroom here measuring up to 2.14m, you'll need to be tall to access the highest shelf without a step. Opposite, there's even more cupboard space, including a



Sumptuous elevated lounge is a real USP and makes the Rebellion feel sooo much more spacious than rivals with just a rear bedroom

compartment for a De'Longhi Cappuccino coffee machine.

The only downside is enforced by the width of the Sprinter van, so the centre aisle is just 45cm wide at its slimmest point. But everything seems extremely sturdy, with remarkably few rattles when bumping around off road.

## TWO LOUNGES

Twin steps lead up to the rear lounge, which feels very different to the fixed beds in the Rebellion's rivals; you can turn this space into a bedroom almost instantly and leave it as such if you prefer.

As single beds, both mattresses measure 1.89m long and, for the first 89cm, the beds are joined, filling the width of the 'van.

Two armrest cushions and a portion of slide-out slats turn twin beds into a huge double, 1.89m by 1.68m (1.50m long in the middle, so the steps are still accessible and no

ladder is required).

Pack your duvets away and this space is a comfortable raised seating area with a great view out via the open upper rear hatch, while small side windows give daylight with privacy. New top lockers create extra clothes storage here and there's more locker space under the sofas. The 21.5in Avtex smart TV is a £1,195 option with comfortable viewing, whether as a bedroom or a lounge, while another new feature is the movable reading lights that clip to rails under the cupboards.

There's much greater change up front, where the seating has been redesigned to create a versatile lounging/dining space for two – with space for guests, but no rear travel seats. Both cab chairs swivel and a jump seat/footrest that appears from the end of the galley is a nice touch. Opposite, the settee can be side-facing or arranged to face the rotated driver's seat with small or

large tables in between. In all, the Rebellion has three sizes of table, two of which can also be used in the rear lounge or al fresco with the addition of a tripod base.

In the cab, RP has now manufactured its own headlining, replacing the dark Mercedes original. Its beige colouring matches the side panel mouldings – there's no old-fashioned carpet trim in this very twenty-first century motorhome. Then above the cab is a huge locker where you'll find a rechargeable Maglite clipped into place. In the entrance, there's even a built-in broly that slides out from behind an RP logo!

## ALL IN ONE

Opposite the kitchen, you step down into a new washroom that's now moulded in one piece and lifted into the Rebellion as a single unit. There's 1.92m headroom here and an opening window, protected by a ►



Comfortable single beds can be combined to form a double



Larger safe is hidden in a cupboard



Two-drawer fridge/freezer has 150-litre capacity

waterproof blind when showering.

Not only is there the usual showerhead on a riser bar but an overhead rain shower, too, for that boutique hotel vibe, while the large fold-down washbasin is RP's own design, made in-house from Corian.

Previously, RP has fitted the OGO composting toilet but, as here, a new alternative is the Clesana bag system loo. Either option will allow much longer off-grid stays, as you'll not have to go searching for chemical emptying points.

Heating currently is a diesel/

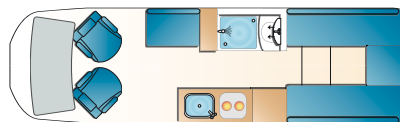
mains 6kW Truma Combi but this will shortly be changed to a diesel Alde 'wet' central heating system, which will include a heat exchanger to take heat from the Mercedes engine. Insulation includes 75mm in the floor, while additional insulation is provided by the Styrofoam core in the lightweight furniture.

For hotter climes, the Rebellion is available with an automotive air-conditioning system (£2,940) for the habitation area with ducting built into the new roof and outlets in four separate areas. [MMM](#)

### THE **MMM** VERDICT

With all-wheel drive to go almost anywhere and the 24V Advanced Power Management System to stay off-grid virtually indefinitely (as long as you have diesel), the new Rebellion is designed and built as a mini expedition vehicle, without the cost of something like a Unimog. It has so many USPs that it stands head and shoulders above 4x4s from mainstream manufacturers.

## FACTS AND FIGURES



### PRICE

From: £148,000 As tested: £209,139

### BASICS

Berths: 2 Travel seats: 2

Warranty: Two years base vehicle and habitation

Type Approval: GB Small Series Approval

### DIMENSIONS

Length: 7.00m (22ft 11½in)

Width: 2.02m (6ft 7½in)

Height: 3.20m (10ft 6in)

Gross vehicle weight: 4,400kg (as tested)

Payload: 650kg

### BASE VEHICLE

Type: Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 419 L3 AWD panel van

Engine: 2-litre, 190hp, Euro VI, four-wheel drive, nine-speed automatic gearbox

### KITCHEN

Cooker: Culina two-ring induction hob

Fridge: Vitrifrigo 150-litre two-drawer compressor (£2,595 option)

### BEDS

Double bed: 1.89m x 1.68m (6ft 2½in x 5ft 6in)

Rear singles: 1.89m x 0.59m min (6ft 2½in x 1ft 11½in)

### ESSENTIALS

Fresh water: 180 litres (inboard)

Waste water: 110 litres (underslung, heated)

Space/water heating: Truma Combi D 6 E diesel/electric blown-air Gas: None

Leisure battery: 2 x 200Ah 24V new-generation smart lithium

### OPTIONS

Fitted to test vehicle: Many, including off-road wheels and tyres (£3,780), VB air suspension (£2,070), exclusive leather (£3,930), RP Smart Assist (£4,500), 24V Advanced Power Management System (£16,750), automotive habitation air-con (£2,940), electric awning (£2,675)

### THE ALTERNATIVE

Project Yonder Freedom 4X

£194,775

### INSURANCE

T 0800 975 1307

W [shieldtotalinsurance.co.uk](http://shieldtotalinsurance.co.uk)

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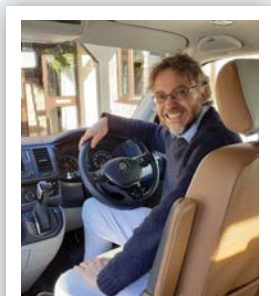
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## PILOTE ÉVIDENCE G781FGJ

Price from: £104,900 • Berths: 4 • Travel seats: 4  
Length: 7.89m • Gross weight: 4,500kg



Galet upholstery and Annecy furniture are the only designs available for the interior

**P**ilote's Évidence range has clearly been a hit since it first arrived on the scene for the 2021 season with the simple concept of proving one spec, one price for the company's best-selling layouts. It now accounts for the majority of UK sales, although customisable Expression models continue for customers who want a wider choice of floorplans or more flexibility on equipment and décor.

So, it was no surprise when the French company added campervans to the Évidence line-up, while, for 2026, the range expands again – upwards this time to include the company's largest A-classes. Now, with this pair of G781 models, Pilote also breaks through the £100k price barrier to go head-to-head with some prestigious names.

The layouts here are not new but having these range-topping Al-Ko chassis models available in Évidence spec is. You can choose from FC

(island bed) or FGJ (single beds, as tested), but otherwise these 2026-season models have a fixed specification – and a very comprehensive one at that. The mostly German competition would have you ticking a lot of options to get anywhere close...

### DOUBLE WHAMMY

Except for some new graphics, this Évidence G781FGJ looks familiar, with little to mark it out from any other Pilote A-class of recent years. It has a curvy cab that's less aggressively styled than more recent newcomers and is, perhaps, looking a little dated. The design of the rear is not as fancy as some rivals, either, but having the bumper in several sections should reduce repair costs.

What's important, though, is under the skin and that's a 4,500kg Al-Ko chassis. And, with Pilote, when you upgrade from standard Fiat to Al-Ko underpinnings you also get a

deeper double floor with external access to the 20cm-high void.

The Isotek structure of the body is otherwise similar and boasts flush habitation windows, a hail-resistant roof, aluminium side skirts, a polyester layer under the floor, and walls with fibroplast rot-proof strips and aluminium inserts to ensure the stability of the bodywork and furniture. A five-year water ingress warranty is provided, while water tanks (130 litres fresh, 95 litres waste) are mounted in the double floor for true winterisation.

Where these newcomers really score, however, is their much-reduced reliance on gas – although there's still room to carry two 13kg cylinders. Fridges are now the compressor type and heating uses diesel rather than LPG. Then, to ensure you have sufficient 12V power, there are two of the latest monocrystalline 100W solar panels on the roof and a 300Ah lithium



Cab spec includes 180hp motor and auto gearbox



Sofa converts into travel seats with seatbelts



Large garage can carry up to 250kg and has 1.22m of headroom

battery in an external compartment of the double floor. The standard spec even runs to a 2kW inverter.

Turning to the heating, another advantage over lesser Pilotes is that all G781s have Alde's 'wet' central heating system, running off 230V (up to 3kW) as well as diesel. Not only that, but a heat exchanger and engine pre-heating are included. In combination with the double floor, the evidence (sorry!) is that this 'van is ideal for winter touring...

### SIZE MATTERS

This isn't just the best-equipped motorhome we've ever seen from Pilote, it's also the largest to carry the Évidence name. At 7.89m long, it's around 40cm longer than typical motorhomes of this ilk, while the Heavy base vehicle ensures that the payload is impressive, at 1,136kg.

The garage can carry up to 250kg of that total thanks to the extended chassis beneath, while the

dimensions are of an XL nature. Both loading doors measure 95cm by 110cm and, like all the hatches, they have compression locks and double seals to keep the elements at bay.

Inside, there's headroom of 1.22m and width of up to 1.38m. It's a heated zone with adjustable lashing eyes mounted on floor rails, a 230V socket and an external shower. The only downside is that the only lighting is on the offside.

### INSIDE STORY

Of course, the extra length of the G781 also translates into extra living space, with a light and airy feeling as soon as you're on board.

The front lounge adopts the popular face-to-face sofas – longer on the nearside where an extra backrest against the end of the galley is especially appealing for feet-up chilling. The white faux leather of the captain's chairs and seat squabs is mated to a pale grey cloth for the

backrests – it's called Galet and is the only trim available. The furniture is named Anney (the alternative Pyla is only offered with Expression spec) and mixes light wood tones with white walls and grey kitchen doors. The slatted panels (kitchen, bedroom and entrance) are very on-trend but this isn't an interior that's overblown with bling.

There's plenty of illumination here, with downlights (four in the base of the cab's drop-down bed, two more around the rooflight) and ambient lighting above and below the top lockers. With the huge windscreen and (push-up) Heki, there's no shortage of daylight, while the side windows have net curtains for when you want privacy. The offside lounge window is a slider, so it can be open when you're motoring.

That could be important when you convert the sofas into forward-facing travel seats, a job that requires no extra cushions, just the ►



### ADVANTAGES

- 300Ah lithium and 200W solar
- Alde diesel heating with heat exchanger
- 20cm-deep double floor
- Impressive payload on 4,500kg Al-Ko chassis
- Spacious lounge
- Well-planned washroom
- Long single beds
- Good value

### DISADVANTAGES

- No Mercedes chassis option
- Single lens driving mirrors
- Windscreen wipers handed for LHD
- Awkward access to handbrake



An inverter allows mains appliances to be used in the kitchen even when you're not hooked up

addition of a slot-in head restraint for the nearside. The seat bases lack any metal reinforcement but they offer adequate legroom and visibility.

The boiler lives under the nearside settee but there's some useful under-seat storage, too, with a hatch into the offside locker just inside the entrance, creating an area that's ideal for footwear.

The table slides fore and aft, twists and folds – unfolded it measures 78cm by 90cm (plenty for four diners), but I couldn't decide whether or not it seemed a tad too high. The telly won't be, because its bracket slides up and down (the screen itself is one thing that you'll have to pay extra for).

### IN TWO MINDS

Are two gas rings enough? An increasing number of motorhomes seem to be fitting fewer burners on the hob, while some British models still have four (though you might

struggle to fit four saucepans in the space). Here, the smart Thetford cooker has unequal-sized rings and below the counter there's a Duplex combined oven and grill, also from Thetford. Opposite, the same brand provides the large (158-litre) compressor fridge, with that capacity including a 30.5-litre freezer drawer.

The kitchen looks contemporary, with its black tap and matching loose sink cover, plus hooks and spice racks on the wall. There's not a lot of low-level storage, although a big cutlery drawer is fitted and a larger drawer below includes a bin. Fortunately, the top cupboard here is huge, while another locker is found above the fridge.

Worktop is also pretty good, thanks to the aforementioned sink cover and the hob being set well back in the counter. The single three-pin socket can be used even when you're not hooked up as it's linked to the inverter.

### STEP UP

The G781's double floor ensures a flat walk through from the cab to the lounge and kitchen, where headroom is a generous 2m. You'll also find trapdoors here (hidden when the carpet is in situ) giving access to the inverter and a little more storage.

As you step up into the ablutions and bedroom areas to the rear of the layout, headroom decreases to 1.88m.

The format here follows the usual pattern for larger motorhomes – toilet area on the offside, separate shower opposite and the bedroom beyond. The loo door swings round to close off the whole of the back of the motorhome, while a sliding door then separates the bedroom from the washroom.

Even used in isolation, the toilet area offers adequate legroom and shoulder space to use the swivel cassette (another Thetford fitting) comfortably. There's a 'salad bowl' basin in white plastic with a high-



A spacious and airy interior that benefits from the extra length of this model, but is that table just a tad too high?

quality metal tap, while a grey base cupboard and wall shelf for soap, etc, match the design of the kitchen. There's a towel rail on the door, plus a couple of robe hooks and a 'hidden' toilet roll holder in the cupboard. You'll also find a mains socket here, but the best feature is the wall locker with straps to keep everything in place.

On the nearside, the shower cubicle is a decent size with a roof vent giving extra headroom for taller occupants. There's a slight step in the shower tray but the half-size duckboard virtually levels things up. Behind the shower's riser, the gloss black tower includes recesses for your shower gel, etc, but the lips here aren't deep enough to let you leave potions in place when the 'van is in motion.

Perhaps the biggest beneficiary of the G781's extra length, though, is the bedroom where the beds' Bultex mattresses are also extra-long –

2.02m on the offside and 2.12m on the nearside. At the head end there are swivel reading lights and rear speakers, while 230V, USB-A and C sockets and a recess for your book/tablet/phone all point to good design. Ambient lighting and downlights again feature, as well as a roof vent, but the one thing that's missing is the ability to tip the beds into a chaise longue-style arrangement – of course, I banged my head on the overhead lockers, which seemed to loom quite low over my pillow...

Under the foot of each bed is a wardrobe that can be accessed from the front or above. Raise the 'roof' of each wardrobe and you find that this part of the bed base is solid, rather than the sprung staves further along. With unusually long hanging rails of 63cm and 73cm, you can pack in a lot of clothes for a long tour but the drop from each rail (80cm) is only suitable for shirts, trousers, etc.

Included in the spec is a slide-out

extension to the section between the twin beds, complete with an additional slot-in cushion and a ladder (as the steps are now covered). It's another feature that's often an optional extra and allows you to use the bedroom as a 2.18m by 1.62m transverse double. Despite the windows and lockers on either side, it's just possible to sit up in bed with this arrangement.

Of course, in usual A-class style, there's also the drop-down bed over the cab. Simply tip the captain's chairs' backrests forward and manually lower the bed. Add the ladder and you have a 1.85m by 1.35m double. Ambient lighting is provided but no roof vent, so it might get stuffy on summer nights in the Med.

### **AUTO PILOTE**

Driving, I wasn't particularly aware of the G781's size. With the 180hp motor and eight-speed automatic transmission (again, standard), ►



Single beds with reading lights and speakers



External shower fitted in the garage



Wardrobes are large but shallow



Excellent storage in the spacious loo room

there are no worries on the performance front and the long wheelbase and Al-Ko chassis ensure that stability (both cornering and when passing HGVs) is excellent. The Aguti chairs are also worthy of praise and should remain comfy on long trans-European tours, while a 9in Pioneer multimedia unit (including Apple CarPlay and Android Auto) is another standard item.

However, it's not all good news. The manual parking brake – squeezed between the seat and the gas locker – is, literally, a pain to

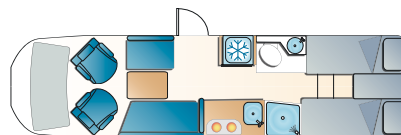
release (an electronic brake is not available with the Al-Ko chassis) and the bus-style mirrors lack wide-angled sections, so you're always slightly nervous of blind spots. The windscreen wipers, too, could be better as they're handed for driving from the left seat, not the right.

This test G781 also had a very loud squeak, which sounded like plastic rubbing on plastic. I couldn't identify the source but it was very annoying, especially as, otherwise, conversion noise here was slightly better than the norm. **MMM**

### THE **MMM** VERDICT

The fact that Pilote's biggest, most expensive motorhome looks so much like lesser models may hamper its sales a little but that shouldn't be a serious consideration when there's so much kit included in the price. It may not have the bling of more expensive alternatives but the comfort, space and off-grid capability would be hard to beat at £105k.

## FACTS AND FIGURES



### PRICE

From: £104,900

As tested: £104,900

### BASICS

Berths: 4 Travel seats: 4

Warranty: Two years on base vehicle and conversion, five years water ingress

Type Approval: Full GB Approval

### DIMENSIONS

Length: 7.89m (25ft 10½in)

Width: 2.30m (7ft 6½in)

Height: 2.85m (9ft 4in)

Gross vehicle weight: 4,500kg

Payload: 1,136kg

### BASE VEHICLE

Type: Fiat Ducato Heavy Al-Ko chassis-cowl

Engine: 2.2-litre, 180hp, front-wheel drive, eight-speed automatic gearbox

### KITCHEN

Cooker: Thetford two-burner hob, Thetford Duplex oven/grill

Fridge: Thetford 158-litre compressor including 30.5-litre freezer drawer

### BEDS

Drop-down bed: 1.85m x 1.35m (6ft 1in x 4ft 5in)

Rear singles: Offside 2.02m x 0.81m (6ft 7½in x 2ft 8in), nearside 2.12m x 0.81m (6ft 11½in x 2ft 8in)

### ESSENTIALS

Fresh water: 130 litres (in double floor)

Waste water: 95 litres (in double floor)

Space/water heating: Alde Compact 4000 D 'wet' diesel/electric central heating with heat exchanger and engine pre-heating

Gas: 2 x 13kg

Leisure battery: 300Ah lithium

### OPTIONS

Fitted to test vehicle: None

### THE ALTERNATIVES

Adria Sonic 700 DL

£118,390

Dethleffs Esprit I 7150-2 EBL

£137,390

### INSURANCE

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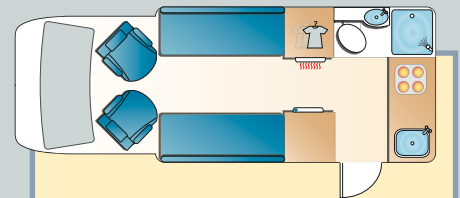




# Our motorhome

*Paul Adams gets the sales pitch from family and decides to buy a motorhome*

## 2019 AUTO-TRAIL IMALA 615 GT



**Price from:** £44,995  
**Berths:** 2  
**Travel seats:** 2  
**Base vehicle:** Fiat Ducato  
**Length:** 6.34m  
**Gross weight:** 3,500kg

**W**e were camping in a tent in south Devon and were joined by my brother and his wife, who were in an Auto-Sleeper Northants two-berth motorhome. I had just retired from a job that had involved almost weekly international travel, and we got talking about the future.

My wife and I had enjoyed many foreign holidays, but had grown tired of the travel and airports, and together with my work travel, we had decided we wanted to see more of the UK instead. My brother did a good 'pitch' on both the ups and downs of motorhoming,

### THE SMALL DECISION

We wanted to keep the motorhome at home and not in storage, so it could not be longer than 6.5m. As we

liked the layout of my brother's Auto-Sleeper with an end kitchen, we decided to look for one similar.

After many visits to different dealers looking for something in our price range, we came across a brand-new Auto-Trail Imala 615 GT two-berth on sale locally. So, in October 2019, we became the proud owner of 'Vera', named after my mother who had only weeks before passed away.

### INSIDE SEEMS HUGE

The Imala 615 is like a Tardis. At nearly 6.5m it doesn't look that big from the outside, but inside it seems huge, especially when the cab seats are turned around. In the lounge area, we have 10 large lockers to put our clothes, sleeping bags, books and bits and pieces in.

As the lockers were so big, there was a lot of wasted space; in four of these I manufactured some shelving and put small baskets in them.

The lounge has two 1.85m-long facing bench seats and, together with the cab seats, can easily seat eight adults comfortably for a drink in the evenings. The wardrobe is more than ample for the two of us even on three-week trips. Also, having a drop-down television between the cab seats means we can put our feet up in the evenings.

The carpets and the seating were a light beige, so my wife sourced some throws for the lounge seats and we lifted the carpets and went to a carpet shop where we picked a darker-colour carpet and had new ones made using the originals as patterns, which are still fitted. ►



Super-long lounge seats and a cafe table for drinks

#### WHY WE BOUGHT IT

We wanted to explore the many places in the UK we hadn't seen in an informal way, not staying in hotels or B&Bs, and not in a tent. We love that it's so roomy and light inside, has loads of storage space, easy bed making, and is warm and toasty in winter

#### WHAT WE WOULD CHANGE

There's not much. We would lower the height of entry into the motorhome, for both habitation door and cab. When we buy another 'van it will be very similar to this but we'd fit a bonnet cover to protect the paintwork, and have reversing sensors and WiFi fitted as standard



Aftermarket reversing sensors fitted after a bump

#### LESS FUSS

One of the key plus points for us and the Imala 615 was that we didn't want to spend lots of time or move lots of things to reorganise the living space when converting the lounge into beds at night. We found that by pulling the base out slightly to drop the seat back cushion down to align with the seat base, the bed was more than ample.

Coupled with this fact, we could pull the sleeping bags down onto the bed from the front lockers, completing the task for both beds in around five minutes.

Cooking and eating in the motorhome is very easy, with an oven, grill, multifuel hob and a microwave fitted at your disposal.

#### KITCHEN KIT

The table has its own locker, so easily accessible, next to the good-sized fridge, and the cutlery drawer and food are stored under the sink

and worktop space adjacent to the end wall. We keep our cups, glasses and plates in two lockers above the cooker and sink.

One item we did buy as an option at time of purchase for the lounge area was a circular café-type table fitted at the end of one of the lounge seats, just so that we could have a drink or have a snack without having to get the big table out.

#### SHOWER LIKE NEW

The washroom has a toilet, sink, mirror and a shower with a concertina splash door. The room is a little small, but you're still able to turn around in the room without hitting anything.

We have never used the shower, preferring on-site facilities, and instead we use it as a storeroom.

#### ADDING ON KIT

Shortly after purchasing the motorhome, we debated what we

needed to buy and what we could utilise from our camping days for our trips, whilst also taking advice from my brother and his wife. The top five items were:

1. Outside insulated cab screen
2. 12V water pump and Aquaroll
3. Awning tie-down straps
4. Levelling ramps
5. Motorhome-specific sat-nav

We've bought more items as the years have passed to make our travelling more comfortable, and each year we also have a clear out of anything we haven't used the previous year to avoid the dreaded weight limit.

Driving our motorhome is fairly easy, even with the extra width and length. To help me I have a piece of paper on the back of the sun visor that gives the dimensions of the motorhome in metric and imperial to remind me when going over, under or through height, width or weight limited areas.



DIY shelves to maximise the overhead lockers



The washroom fits our needs



The wardrobe can cater for longer trips

The Garmin sat-nav is particularly good in guiding along our route, and only once has it (or it may have been me) got confused and taken us down a narrow lane with high walls.

### FIRST TRIP WOES

For our very first trip away, we thought we would go somewhere relatively close, a 55-mile drive to a site near Bridgnorth. About two miles from site, the EML illuminated and the motorhome went into 'limp mode', something I had never experienced on any car.

We got to a layby and called the dealer, which referred us to Fiat Camper Connect. The nearest mechanic was in Wolverhampton and would be an hour before he could reach us, so we carried on to the site and waited for him there.

After the infamous diagnostic tool had been connected to the motorhome, there were 'no faults found' and an error code that was

linked to the throttle. Now, I will point out I have size 10 feet and the pedals on the Ducato are a little closer together than I was used to.

I know that at the point we went into 'limp mode' I had pressed the brake and accelerator pedals at the same time. The Fiat mechanic gave me a knowing look.

His remedy to me was, if it ever happened again, wait 30 mins for the ECU to rid itself of the two joint inputs (speed up, slow down) and you would be good to go again. Fortunately, it has never happened as I take extra care with my feet!

We tend to use public transport or walk to our destination when we arrive on site. The only time we did use the motorhome, I reversed into a high grass bank at a garden centre and cracked the offside corner of the motorhome. It still amazes me how much a piece of shaped and formed white plastic costs. After that, I fitted reversing sensors!

### MORE PURCHASES

It was clear we needed some other way to extend our range to visit places that were too far to walk or had no bus, so we chose to buy pedal assist electric bikes. This also required buying and fitting a towbar and a towball-mounted cycle rack.

Fortunately for us, we were members of the Caravan and Motorhome Club (C&MC), which had discounts with both Witter and Raleigh and so we did save quite a bit on what was a large purchase, second only to the motorhome itself.

Puling off the drive to go to Witter, I saw half of the bottom leaf of the leaf spring suspension lying on the drive! I pulled it out of the way and went to investigate.

The motorhome was two and a half years old and the bottom leaf had a crack in it that had propagated further corrosion, to the extent that the leaf spring failed. I felt physically ill, as if it had failed on the ►



One of the single beds made up

## FACTS AND FIGURES

### PRICE

Price new today: £76,496 including Media Pack

Price of similar-aged 'van today: £44,995

### BASICS

Berths: 2 Travel seats: 2

Length of ownership: 6 years

Annual mileage: 4,500

### DIMENSIONS

Length: 6.34m Width: 2.35m

Height: 3.03m

Gross vehicle weight: 3,500kg

Payload: 520kg

### BASE VEHICLE

Type: Fiat Ducato

Engine: 2.3-litre, 130bhp, turbo diesel, manual gearbox

Fuel economy: 28mpg

### BEDS

Double: 2.15m x 1.85m. Or two singles: 1.05m x 1.85m and 1.15m x 1.85m

### RUNNING COSTS

Base vehicle service: £250

Insurance: £425

Habitation service: £180

Road tax: £360

motorway, that piece of spring could have caused a serious incident and even a fatality travelling at 55mph.

After getting over the shock of what could have been, I set about getting the motorhome repaired, firstly through a warranty claim with Auto-Trail, which was refused as the cab and chassis is only warranted for two years, and then directly with Fiat, who also flatly refused to support the payment of the repair.

To make matters worse, I enquired about buying the springs myself from Fiat, and was told that, post Covid, it could take up to six months for some to become available. So, I found a supplier in the Midlands that my local garage had used several times with no issues, and bought the springs from there and had them fitted.

I knew a retired metallurgist who had a look at the spring. In his opinion it was a manufacturing fault that was in the chassis before Auto-Trail did the conversion, with salt corrosion and stress accelerating the failure.

### STRIKE IT LUCKY

We didn't realise when we bought our motorhome how lucky we were, as the GT badge had incorporated options that are not normally included in the base version.

These include the awning, a 100W solar panel, alloy wheels, outside barbecue point, the Avtex TV and cruise control.


Motorhoming can be an expensive hobby, but it's a hobby my wife and I can do together. Putting aside campsite fees, just the running,

maintenance and repair costs can be eye watering, especially if you have one or two cars that you use as well.

Over the last six years we have visited 126 campsites and spent 410 nights in our motorhome... there are so many places still for us to visit.

Our 'Vera' has had a couple of issues during this time, especially the spring incident, but since then we have enjoyed incident-free touring. Yes, in the six years of ownership we've replaced both the leisure and vehicle batteries, had the cambelt and water pump changed and this year had four new tyres fitted, but these were expected expenses, not cheap but expected.

There are some lovely 'vans out there, but we love what we have, and don't see ourselves changing 'Vera' any time soon. **MMMM**

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SCAN ME



[motorhome.ma/rds2026](http://motorhome.ma/rds2026)

**MEET...**

# Choose Leisure

This company suggest customers take all the time in the world when buying...

**S**teady progress is the key behind the success of Choose Leisure. It's a story that starts in 2008, when husband and wife, Paul and Jenny Santos, decided to build on their long experience in the motorhome industry by setting up a business in their own town. They started Choose Leisure with a grand total of just three staff and six motorhomes to sell.

By 2009, they were pioneering a system of motorhome brokerage – that is marketing and selling on behalf of private owners – that was to become the foundation of the business. Within two years, it had developed enough to make the very short move next door into its current premises near Canterbury, Kent. Upgrades followed and currently there's showroom and outdoor space to display up to 80 vehicles – new and pre-owned – at any given time.

There has been a similar system of steady progress when it comes to the acquisition of franchises for new motorhomes. That started in 2013 when it took on Auto-Sleepers, followed by Germany's Carthago in 2021, with Italy's Laika soon after that. Etrusco, Malibu and Swift



joined the portfolio in 2023, and has since retained all of these retailers heading into 2026.

The company's premises have also seen upgrades. Somewhat ironically, by 2017 the realisation that more space was needed saw Choose purchasing the land next door – the exact spot where it had all started – followed five years later by the expansion of its service centre facilities to an adjacent site (across the road), allowing it to set up a

10-bay workshop.

It's just as much about the people at Choose. The latest development came last year with Paul and Jenny handing over the running of the company to the senior management team they had carefully put in place – Dave Williams had joined as Managing Director in 2023; Charlie Joiner has run the service side since 2016; and Finance Director Lisa Canning. Between them they can point to some 60 years' experience in the motorhome sector.

As a final note on that steady progress theme, Choose explains its choice of a tortoise for its logo: "Firstly, he carries his home with him wherever he goes, a bit like a motorhome really. Secondly, he's not in a rush. We pride ourselves in not rushing our customers, some of the best choices in life take a bit of time, and we think that's just fine." **MMM**

## KEY INFO

**2026 franchises:** Auto-Sleepers, Carthago, Etrusco, Laika, Landseer, Malibu, McLouis Fusion, Swift

**Other facilities:** Black Horse finance approved dealer, accessories fitting, website blog and advice (including video tutorials), National Caravan Council approved on-site workshops offering mechanical and habitation servicing

**Interesting fact:** Choose Leisure is the nearest UK motorhome dealership to Europe. It's just 20 minutes' drive away from the port of Dover

**Find out more:** Choose Leisure, Howfield Lane, Chartham, Canterbury, Kent CT4 7HG

**T** 01227 733557 **W** [chooseleisure.co.uk](http://chooseleisure.co.uk)

**Nearest Premier Park campsite:** Homing Park **W** [motorhome.ma/homingpark](http://motorhome.ma/homingpark)

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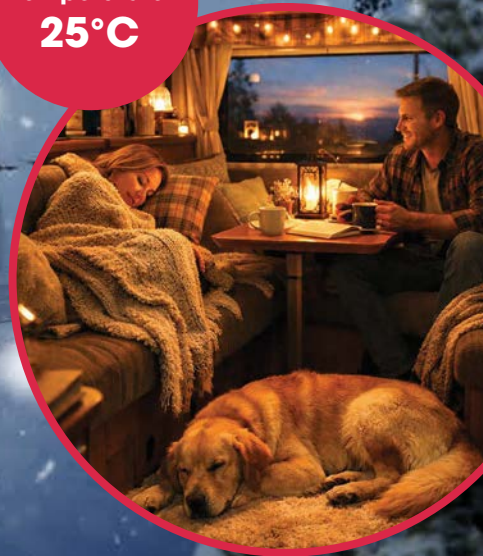
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## FLYING COLOURS



**Dethleffs  
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Bürstner B66 644 C



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# In this issue of **What motorhome**



Hyundai Staria Camper Concept

Hyundai

The campervan market continues to grow in the UK – Auto-Trail reckons that 60% of its production is now panel van-based, a big change from the days of its tag-axle motorhomes being seen on every dealer forecourt. That growth means there's now a huge amount of choice, not only from the big players but smaller manufacturers, too. The Bürstner, CMC HemBil and Maverick in this issue all go about things differently to the norm, while the Dethleffs uses bold colours to stand out.

What none of these campervans do is break away from diesel power and, so far, EVs have been extremely niche in the leisure world. Maybe it'll take a major motor manufacturer to change that. Hyundai recently showed its Staria



Camper Concept at the CMT Show in Stuttgart. Apart from futuristic styling, its pop-top and side kitchen seem run of the mill. But the details are interesting – a 520W solar panel on the roof that can power on-board facilities or extend the EV range plus electronically adjustable tinted glazing for starters. Then, not only are the roof and rear seat-to-bed conversion electrically powered but so are the cab seat swivels. There's 218hp, fast charging and nearly 250 miles of range. Let's hope it becomes a production model.

## PETER VAUGHAN EDITOR

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# Bürstner B66 644 C

An unusual mix of rear lounge and drop-down bed



**WATCH THE VIDEO**  
[motorhome.ma/B66short](http://motorhome.ma/B66short)



**T**HE campervan formerly known as Eliseo is now part of the B66 range, which also includes our Campervan of the Year. Celebrating the company's sixty-sixth anniversary, the latest incarnation of this unusual rear lounge model is better value than ever before, with a super-inclusive spec that means everything from the awning to the automatic gearbox is standard.

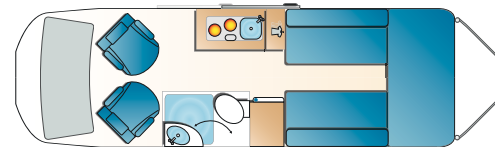
Finished in non-metallic Lanzarote Grey paint and fitted with alloy wheels, front fog lamps, a large overcab sunroof and flush habitation windows, the B66 gives off a premium air

straight away. As you might expect, the sliding door is on the offside but it's the unglazed barn doors at the back that take the shine off the appearance just a tad.

There's no view out of the back because here is the garage. Swing open the rear doors and you'll find a space that's 56cm deep, 1.08m high and 1.84m wide – the sort of storage that is more typically associated with larger motorhomes. There are two fixed lashing points per side here and access to the inboard 100-litre fresh water tank. You can even remove part of the settee base to slide long loads into the living area.

Of course, access to the living area is through the side door, where you'll find a flyscreen and access to the gas locker (for one 2.75kg cylinder) through the back of the galley. Heating is via Truma's diesel/230V 6kW Combi boiler, so your reliance on gas is much reduced.

Of course, the star feature of the model is the rear lounge, which doesn't have the triple-aspect glazing of rivals (because of the garage) but is still a very comfortable place to relax, especially with the table stowed away behind the passenger cab seat. You have to stoop as you enter this part of the campervan (headroom is only 1.56m), but



## FACT FILE

**BASE VEHICLE** Fiat Ducato

**PRICE FROM** £66,395

**BERTHS** 4

**TRAVEL SEATS** 4

**LENGTH** 6.36m

**WIDTH** 2.08m

**HEIGHT** 2.65m

**GROSS WEIGHT** 3,500kg

**PAYLOAD** 438kg



## ADVANTAGES

- Large garage
- Very comprehensive standard spec
- Comfy rear lounge
- No bed making – drop-down bed!

## DISADVANTAGES

- Dining table too big
- Main bed needs a ladder for access
- No rear windows

## VERDICT

If you're looking for a campervan that maximises storage space and bed size then this Bürstner could be for you. The fact that you need a ladder to get into bed will be a turn-off for some but the high spec, great value and unusual design will be hugely appealing to others.

you'll soon get used to that.

The reason is the drop-down bed above. It lowers manually and lines up with an upholstered section over the top of the garage to give generous lengthways sleeping. You do need a ladder to reach this bed but your bedding can stay in situ with it stowed away. The best part is the sheer size of the mattress – 2.02m by 1.57m.

You can also turn the seats into another bed below (that's why the dining table is so large – too large!). There are seatbelts and Isofix back here, too, so Bürstner markets the 644 C as a

four-berth – it's much better as a comfy couples' camper. You probably wouldn't want to travel far sitting back here over the rear axle with just a limited view through the side windows (the offside one is a slider, the nearside top-hinged).

However, with the bed lowered and occupied there is still the option to use the swivel cab seats, trimmed in the same plush faux leather (choose from three colours) as the rear sofas.

Just behind the cab, behind a tambour door, is the washroom. It has a swivel cassette toilet and a parallelogram-shaped basin, designed to give you legroom on the loo. An opening window and

roof vent provide ventilation, but the former is only visible when the washbasin is hinged over the toilet to create a good-sized, curtain-free shower cubicle. There are two outlets in the tray and a drying rail for wet gear.

Opposite, the kitchen has a combination hob/sink unit, while a flap by the entrance and a raised section over the small wardrobe ensure that there's a reasonable amount of worktop. The 87-litre compressor fridge is opposite but most notable is that Bürstner has also squeezed in an oven here. It doesn't incorporate a grill but at least you can cook a pizza.

# CMC HemBil Drift

The side kitchen camper that lets you cook al fresco



**T**HE choice of side kitchen, pop-top campervans is bewildering, so it's always best to stick with long-established converters that type-approve all their vehicles and use top-quality components. Few fit the bill better than Kent-based Concept Multi-Car (CMC for short), a family-run firm that has been in business for 37 years, using the very best fittings from German firm, Reimo.

CMC's HemBil range focuses on practicality, with a durable finish that is well proven. With Reimo roofs and the same company's Variotech sliding seat systems, they are never going to be the cheapest option but the German engineering

is worth paying a little more for.

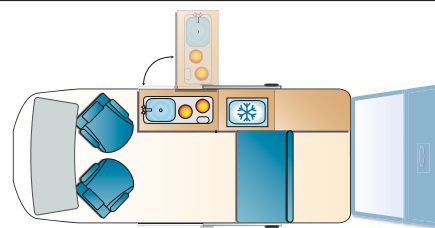
With the Drift conversion, you're also getting something a little different from the norm. Open the nearside sliding door and it might look like your typical side galley layout (just with clean lines and a superior quality finish), but the fact that there's an offside sliding door, too, hints at the model's USP. With the second sliding door open you can unscrew a single bolt and swing the kitchen outside.

With a Multitrail fitted on each side, you could fit a canopy over the kitchen and a full driveway awning on the opposite side. Or just take advantage of the through view with both doors

open. This novel feature doesn't just keep cooking smells al fresco but makes the camper feels a lot more spacious inside.

The demonstrator vehicle shown here is based on a Ford Transit Custom in top-of-the-range Trend trim – priced from £75,495 as a 136hp diesel with manual gearbox up to £79,115 for the 232hp plug-in hybrid PHEV version. Or you can now order your Drift based on the latest Volkswagen Transporter, which is of course virtually the same vehicle. The VW comes with the advantage of a five-year warranty and service plan but costs more, starting at £76,495 for the T30 with 110hp motor and stick shift and up to

**WATCH THE VIDEO**  
[motorhome.ma/review361](http://motorhome.ma/review361)



**FACT FILE**

**BASE VEHICLE** Ford Transit Custom or VW Transporter T7  
**PRICE FROM** £75,495 (Ford), £76,495 (VW)  
**BERTHS** 4  
**TRAVEL SEATS** 5  
**LENGTH** 5.05m  
**WIDTH** 2.03m  
**HEIGHT** 2.03m  
**GROSS WEIGHT** 3,200kg  
**PAYLOAD** 700kg



**ADVANTAGES**

- Clever inside/outside kitchen
- Reimo sliding seat system
- Top-quality components and finish
- Reimo high-quality pop-top with Comfort roof bed

**DISADVANTAGES**

- Outside cooking won't suit short chefs

**VERDICT**

All the things we love about CMC HemBil campers – great quality and practical design with the best Reimo components – but with the USP of being able to cook outside.

£82,875 for the 150hp automatic with 4Motion all-wheel drive. All Volkswagens are again in the highest spec, called Commerce Pro. A long-wheelbase version of either Ford or VW adds £2,500 to your bill.

Returning to the vehicle seen here, it comes with flush-fit sliding windows – no wind noise-inducing inset panes or silly pop-out sections that give minimal ventilation. And, for max fresh air on site, the Reimo roof is the Open Sky version which can be opened to, err, the sky. It also comes with a 'comfort' roof bed on a slatted base and LED strips set into the bed base. It is secured with a buckle and clasp mechanism

rather than the previous straps. A 100W solar panel mounted on top is an option, while the 100Ah AGM battery can be upgraded to a 180Ah lithium unit.

Unlike in cheaper campers, you'll find very little carpet trim inside the Drift, while the Variotech bench seat not only slides forward for greater boot space or to bring kids closer to parents, but also offers a much more comfortable seat height. It has three seatbelts and three height-adjustable head restraints and converts very quickly into a completely flat double bed measuring 1.97m by 1.26m. There are swivels on both cab seats, too.

Going back to the kitchen, the hob and sink can be used inside or out – the single Campingaz cylinder is in the swing-out section while the two 12-litre water carriers (easy to refill) store below the wardrobe. There's plenty of kitchen storage (including a cutlery drawer), while the 20-litre top-loading compressor fridge is in the fixed part of the kitchen – and it will hold more than you'd think.

The galley comes with two 230V and two 12V sockets (more can be added), while the corner wardrobe is fitted with both a hanging rail and a removable shelf. Eberspächer diesel heating is included as standard.

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# Dethleffs Globetrail Iconic Edition

Celebrating a milestone with a bold new look...



**W**HITE was once pretty much the universal colour for larger campervans before silver metallic took over as the top choice. More recently, it has been various shades of non-metallic grey, which the wags suggest is simply primer. But now – at last – there seems to be a resurgence of colour – real colour.

We couldn't miss the Matt Sierra Green Dethleffs campervan at the Caravan Salon Düsseldorf but at that stage we left the stand with long faces as this striking newcomer wasn't yet confirmed for the UK market. Now it is and you can also choose from Eternal Blue and Matador Red, both in a matt paint finish.

This is the Globetrail 75k Iconic Edition, which celebrates 75,000 campervans built at the Isny factory since 2004 – quite a milestone! And these special campervans don't just add colour but a host of extra equipment, too.

Unlike the equally eye-catching Laika Kosmo Supremo, with which they will surely be compared, the Iconic Editions are offered across the whole Fiat-based Globetrail range, so you can choose from nine different versions.

Starting with the compact, medium-wheelbase 540 DR and ranging up to the extra-long 640 EK, ER, ES and HR models, the Globetrail Iconic range offers fixed bed layouts with transverse or lengthways sleeping as well as

5.41m, 5.99m and 6.36m overall lengths. There are also three versions of the washroom.

As well as the unique new exterior colours, the Iconic Editions campervans come with 18in bronze-coloured alloy wheels and matching design accents. Meanwhile, additional equipment includes adaptive cruise control, automatic climate control in the cab, an electronic parking brake, an awning and a radio with integrated sat-nav, while the exterior features flush, framed habitation windows.

Each model has a half-dinette lounge with swivel cab seats, two floor compartments under the table for extra storage and a spotlight that can be repositioned anywhere along its rail. The



# Dethleffs Globetrail 75k Iconic Edition



## FACT FILE

<b>BASE VEHICLE</b>	Fiat Ducato
<b>PRICE FROM</b>	£74,150 to £77,450
<b>BERTHS</b>	2/5
<b>TRAVEL SEATS</b>	4
<b>LENGTH</b>	5.41m to 6.36m
<b>WIDTH</b>	2.05m
<b>HEIGHT</b>	2.65m
<b>GROSS WEIGHT</b>	3,499kg
<b>PAYLOAD</b>	Various

## ADVANTAGES

- Choice of three overall lengths
- Choice of three washroom designs
- Choice of three exterior colours

## DISADVANTAGES

- 'Compact bathroom' has a shower curtain
- Bunk beds in 640 HR have limited headroom

## OUR VERDICT

If you thought all campervans looked the same, then the bold matt paint finishes of the Iconic Edition may be exactly what you want. Otherwise, they offer all the huge range of choice that comes with the Globetrail range.



wall-mounted table has a swing-out extension leaf, while the diamond-patterned, automotive-style upholstery is described as Scandi Bronze.

In the bedrooms, cold foam mattresses sit on disc springs to ensure a good night's sleep. Spotlights, again, are movable and bed bases fold to get large items on board. In models with longitudinal beds you can choose from singles or one giant bed, while the 640 HR model has a drop-down bed so that you can adjust the height of the bed and the garage underneath. This model allows a low bed once bikes have been unloaded and extra-wide storage as there's no gas locker intruding into the space. Alternatively,

you can add a second bed and turn the 640 HR into a bunk bed layout.

Those requiring extra berths can add an adult-sized transverse bed in the lounge area. Or you can add a pop-top with panoramic opening canvas and a 2.09m by 1.43m mattress on real wood slats.

The Globetrail washroom comes in three designs. The 'centre bathroom' version has a tambour door that extends the space into the gangway, where a shower tray is recessed into the floor. The 'compact bathroom' is a more conventional design that requires a curtain to be used when showering. Then, the 'swivel

bathroom' has a swing wall to transform the toilet area into a practical, plastic-lined shower cubicle.

Kitchens come with a two-burner hob, sink and an 84-litre compressor fridge (sometimes mounted at waist height, while in other models it is at the end of the galley where it can be reached from outside). Furniture finish is Ambers Oak.

Prices for the Iconic Editions range from £74,150 to £77,450, based on the 140hp Ducato. Options include an automatic gearbox, overcab window, a lithium battery, diesel (instead of gas) heating, a heated/insulated waste tank and a wide selection of Dethleffs accessories.



**75k** ICONIC  
EDITION



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***Dethleffs***

# Etrusco CV 640 SB PLUS

Single beds and an optional pop-top, Italian style...



**E**TRUSCO may not be the best-known name on the UK campervan scene but it is gaining ground with four English dealers, one Welsh, one Scottish and one in Northern Ireland now giving you a good chance of seeing these Italian vehicles without travelling too far. The brand is part of the Erwin Hymer Group, too, with its manufacturing base at the state-of-the-art Laika factory in Tuscany, so this is no small concern.

Predictably, its campervan range – prefixed CV – centres on the Fiat Ducato in either 5.99m or 6.36m lengths with fixed bed layouts. The 640 featured here is obviously one of the longer

models, with SB signifying single beds.

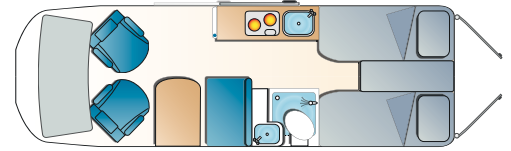
It comes as standard with the 140hp motor and manual gearbox, with the auto as a £3,000 option. The exterior is white, with Expedition Grey or Metallic Black available at extra cost (£560 and £680, respectively), along with a painted bumper with integral fog lamps. The 16in matt black alloys are standard. The 3,500kg maximum gross weight suits those with only a standard car licence, while still offering a respectable payload of over half a tonne in standard form.

The optional Safety Pack (£1,410) adds an emergency braking system, lane keeping

assistance, driver drowsiness detection and automatic lights and wipers.

Framed habitation windows are also fitted, as is a 4m awning with a casing in anthracite. The overcab Skyview is another welcome feature that's part of the standard spec, creating a much lighter, more spacious feel in the front lounge.

Here, it's the typical half-dinette arrangement with swivel cab seats and a two-seater bench. The table features a swing-out extension leaf and for transporting little ones the rear seat has Isofix. There's a choice of four different upholsteries, too, so you can tailor the camper to your taste. LED ambient lighting creates a



## FACT FILE

**BASE VEHICLE** Fiat Ducato

**PRICE FROM** £63,190

**BERTHS** 2/5

**TRAVEL SEATS** 4

**LENGTH** 6.36m

**WIDTH** 2.05m

**HEIGHT** 2.70m

**GROSS WEIGHT** 3,500kg

**PAYLOAD** 532kg

## ADVANTAGES

- More interior décor
- Overcab Skyview as standard
- Vario washroom

## DISADVANTAGES

- Not a well-known brand in the UK
- No oven or grill

## VERDICT

One of the more affordable campervans in this 6.36m class, even in Plus spec, much of the appeal here may be down to the Italian aesthetics inside.



relaxing environment after dark and there are plenty of charging ports to keep your laptop, tablet, etc, topped up. The Italian aesthetics, meanwhile, mix graphite-coloured worktops and white furniture for a contemporary feel.

If you have kids, the most important option may be the pop-top roof, which comes with the lid finished in black. The 'sleeping roof' costs £5,140 and includes a large double bed (2.09m by 1.43m claimed) and a panoramic opening section around the whole of the front three-quarters of the canvas. Even when the roof is down, there's extra daylight coming into the camper as a large opening skylight is

incorporated. Note that the roof reduces payload by 150kg.

Of course, the main sleeping area is at the rear of the vehicle, where long single beds offer comfortable sleeping and easy access to the washroom in the night. The beds are 1.92m by 1.08m and 1.84m by 86cm (manufacturer's figures). Of course, there's a large storage area under the beds, reached through the barn doors at the back, and, with the offside bed hinged up, you can even get a full-sized bicycle on board.

The kitchen comes with a two-burner hob and sink, as well as an 84-litre fridge at the end of the unit, where it can be accessed via the open

sliding door when you're enjoying al fresco life. There's a rail for kitchen accessories and a useful amount of work space for the cook. The cupboards and drawers feature soft-close mechanisms.

Behind a sliding tambour door, there's a Vario washroom that quickly converts the toilet area into a shower in one simple movement.

Standard equipment includes a 100-litre fresh water tank and 90-litre waste tank (heated and insulated as a £470 option). A second side window in the bedroom is also available, at £470, while upgrading the heating to Truma's Combi 6 E gas/electric unit is £560.



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SCAN ME



# Florium Black Pearl 63 LJ

A premium-spec campervan with twin beds...

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THE VIDEO**  
[motorhome.ma/  
fleurette26](http://motorhome.ma/fleurette26)



#### FACT FILE

<b>BASE VEHICLE</b>	Fiat Ducato
<b>PRICE FROM</b>	£66,490
<b>BERTHS</b>	3
<b>TRAVEL SEATS</b>	4
<b>LENGTH</b>	6.36m
<b>WIDTH</b>	2.05m
<b>HEIGHT</b>	2.59m
<b>GROSS WEIGHT</b>	3,500kg
<b>PAYLOAD</b>	430kg

**F**LORIUM is the sister brand to Fleurette, the sister that got the keys to the designer wardrobe. But whereas both brands offer the same layouts in motorhomes, the Black Pearl campervans are only dressed with the Florium logo. Two layouts are available, each with familiar continental floorplans – the 59 LT (5.99m long with transverse double bed) and the 63 LJ (6.36m with single beds). Both are new to the UK market this season.

A black pearl is typically cultivated from the black-lipped oyster in French Polynesia, unless you're referring to Captain Jack Sparrow's pirate ship in *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Neither seems

particularly relevant to campervans, especially as the metallic black exterior seen here isn't the only option – Artense Grey and Expedition Grey are also available.

What we have here, then, is this marque returning to a sector it left in the 1980s, now seeking to serve buyers wanting a compact but premium model. With its overcab Skyview sunroof, luxurious cream faux leather upholstery, handcrafted furniture, Truma Combi diesel heating and Vario washroom, the Black Pearl campervans don't miss out on comfort.

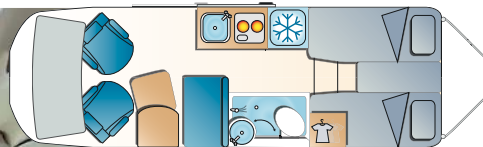
These are vehicles that are also designed for a degree of off-grid camping, with their 100Ah

lithium battery and compressor fridge (in addition to that diesel heating). A 150W solar panel is optional.

Like most rivals, the Black Pearl 63 LJ is based on an extra-long Fiat Ducato panel van. It comes with the 140hp motor, Eco Pack (with stop/start), front fog lamps, a leather steering wheel and alloy wheels. The Pearl Pack adds an electric parking brake, reversing camera, heated mirrors, cab blinds, a flyscreen for the sliding door and a wide electric entry step. Notably, the Skyview is in glass and comes with a de-icing function for those winter mornings.

Key to any layout of this type, of course, is the





### ADVANTAGES

- Premium-quality finish and spec
- Diesel heating
- Lithium battery
- Large compressor fridge

### DISADVANTAGES

- No oven option
- Limited UK dealer network

### OUR VERDICT

The layout is the familiar single bed campervan formula but the lithium battery, large compressor fridge and diesel heating are all major pluses, along with the neat Vario washroom. A premium offering in a crowded sector.



rear bedroom and here the conjoined berths each measure 1.99m by 80cm. The comfy mattresses are Evoluflex high-resilience items. There are reading lights on long flexible wands and, while windows are fitted on either side, importantly the rear doors remain unglazed so you can comfortably sit up in bed.

Under the foot of the beds, the nearside furniture has easy access with sliding doors, while drawers are fitted opposite. Further to the rear, the garage area is 1.05m wide and measures 48cm high – more with the dividing false floor removed (underneath is a practical chequerplate floor with lashing points). The inboard water

tank has a generous 110-litre capacity, while the gas locker takes one 13kg cylinder (heating is diesel-powered, remember). The 85-litre water tank is frost-protected, too.

Enter through the wide sliding door and you'll note little details like the extra handle to aid its closing. Then there's the attractive du-tone cabinetwork and the ergonomically shaped half-dinette bench with extending squab to ensure that taller passengers are comfortable. The top lockers push to open and have a nice quality feel.

The side kitchen may be compact but that's not a word you'd use for the compressor fridge,

which boasts a 135-litre capacity. A worktop flap extends the preparation space alongside the sink (with loose cover), while a two-burner hob is your only cooking option. So, there's no oven or grill here, but that has allowed Florium to maximise the storage with supersized drawers. Both 12V and 230V sockets are fitted to the front of the galley.

Opposite, the Vario washroom means that there's plenty of space to use the loo but a swing-wall transforms the area into a decent-sized shower with a convenient place for your gel. A clothes drying rail is fitted into the roof vent but the wall recesses need deeper lips to be practical.

# BLACK PEARL



## EXPERIENCE ENDLESS ADVENTURES ABOARD THE FIRST ONE FLORIUM FITTED VAN

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AVAILABLE IN TWO LAYOUTS

59 LT - Transverse bed



63 LJ - Twin beds



# Hillside Birchover Classic T7

All the approvals and a five-year warranty



**E**VEN an entry-level campervan is a big investment these days and many buyers do so with the idea of keeping their vehicle for a good few years. With that in mind, it's reassuring to feel that you have the support of the manufacturer beyond years one and two.

The latest Volkswagen Transporter comes with the 5+ Promise – five years' warranty, five years' servicing (with three MoTs) and five years' roadside assistance. Hillside Leisure is matching this with a five-year warranty on its conversion – but then perhaps you'd expect nothing less from this leading VW campervan conversion company – few firms build more Volkswagen

campers. Hillside is one of just six businesses in the country that is included as a Volkswagen Motorhome Qualified Converter, it is also NCC (National Caravan Council) approved and its vehicles have Whole Vehicle Type Approval.

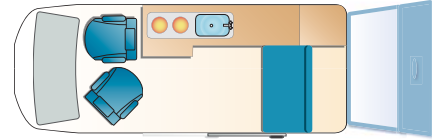
So, a new Hillside camper is big news and, of course, this latest Birchover Classic is part of a whole range based on the latest Transporter, which is a tad bigger and more spacious inside than the old T6.1. The Derby-based company hasn't just made the Birchover fit the larger van, it's given the model a fresh new look.

This is still a conventional side kitchen camper but all the carpentry has been completely

changed, now with a squarer design and edge banding. There are new domestic-quality resin worktops with integrated mood lighting and new colours for the cabinets – choose from Cement Grey, Dust Grey, Harbour Oak, Nordic Black and Nordic Pine.

Also ameliorated are the cupboard catches and there are new soft-closing mechanisms, while a cutlery drawer has been added. The new Victron control panel has a cover and now includes a water level gauge (the underslung tank holds 30 litres).

Despite all the updates, Hillside has tried to keep its campervans affordable, so the starting



## FACT FILE

**BASE VEHICLE** VW Transporter T7

**PRICE FROM** £65,000

**BERTHS** 4

**TRAVEL SEATS** 4

**LENGTH** 5.05m

**WIDTH** 2.27m (inc mirrors)

**HEIGHT** 2.07m

**GROSS WEIGHT** 3,000kg

**PAYLOAD** TBC

## ADVANTAGES

- VW Motorhome Qualified Converter
- Whole Vehicle Type Approval
- Smart new furniture and lighting
- 65-litre fridge and grill
- Sprung roof bed

## DISADVANTAGES

- Height of RIB rear seat
- Limited daylight in roof unless fully opened

## VERDICT

One of the most respected VW converters has updated its best-selling Birchover Classic, giving it a much more contemporary look to suit the new T7. There's a generous spec as standard but still room to make the camper suit your needs and budget.

point (£65,000) is a 110hp Commerce-spec base vehicle. Commerce Plus (from £66,500) adds parking sensors, a reversing camera, leather steering wheel and Cat 1 alarm. Then Commerce Pro (from £68,550) adds adaptive cruise control, heated cab seats, wireless phone charging, alloy wheels and more. More powerful (150 or 170hp) motors, automatic transmission, 4Motion all-wheel drive and even fully electric versions (from £79,995) are also offered.

Hillside still uses a German SCA pop-top but now with a dimmable halo light around the roof and a sprung roof bed with plastic Caraflex springs. Webasto programmable diesel heating

is also standard, while the leisure battery is now a 175Ah lithium unit linked to an app to monitor its condition. A 100W solar panel is £595 extra.

The side kitchen retains the previous Birchover's distinctive L-shape with the deeper section behind the driver's seat allowing the inclusion of a grill and (larger than usual) 65-litre fridge. Both are hidden behind a door that incorporates a shelf for condiments, etc. A new oversailing worktop maintains preparation space in front of the hob with the door open.

The rear seat is still a fixed two-seater from RIB, here shown with optional (£2,595) leather upholstery. You don't sleep on the hide side when

this is folded down into a 1.77m by 1.20m double bed. There are dimmable spotlights above the head of the bed, which can be raised chaise longue style. Vanshades blinds provide privacy and a portable loo is included, stored under the back seat.

Open the rear tailgate and you'll discover a larger cupboard at the side and plenty of boot area storage. There's an outside shower, too, with hot and cold water.

So there's more standard spec here than with most VW campers but you can still add more. The Warm Green metallic and 20in alloy wheels seen here are £800 and £1,195 respectively.

# Maverick Outdoors Exp

A VW campervan designed for adventure... inspired by a four-legged friend



## FACT FILE

**BASE VEHICLE** VW Transporter T6.1 (used)

**PRICE AS TESTED** £58,995

**BERTHS** 4

**TRAVEL SEATS** 4

**LENGTH** 4.99m

**WIDTH** 1.99m

**HEIGHT** 2.02m

**GROSS WEIGHT** 3,000kg

**PAYLOAD** TBC



**F**OR many, a campervan is more than mere transport. It's a gateway to the outdoors: the thing that nudges you out of bed at silly o'clock, points you towards a hiking trail or a windswept beach and quietly enables all those moments that turn into memorable weekends.

Warwick-based Maverick Outdoors clearly understands this mindset, because the Expedition isn't trying to be all things to all people. Instead, it's aimed squarely at those who measure a good trip in muddy boots, wet dogs and tired smiles.

The inspiration, literally, is Maverick the Cocker Spaniel. Founder, Toby Webb, says the

campervan was designed to capture the energy and sense of freedom his dog brought with him as a pup – and it shows. This is a 'van built around movement, flexibility and the reality of using and transporting outdoor kit.

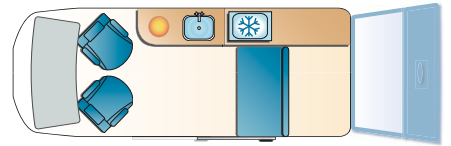
Based on the VW Transporter T6.1, the Expedition's defining feature is its modular rear set-up. This isn't a campervan where bikes are an awkward afterthought. Thanks to the Mobiframe rail system, you can carry a couple of bikes securely inside and still deploy the bed – a huge plus for both security and convenience. Opt for a long-wheelbase conversion and you can fit four bikes inside.

Climbers aren't forgotten, either: there's provision to hang ropes, and plenty of anchor points to stop kit sliding about. That said, because the area below the seat is open on both sides of the under-seat drawer, there's nothing to stop anything that can't be secured from sliding forwards when you hit the brakes.

The rear doors feature clever detachable soft bags that can live in the house until you're ready to roll, then Velcro straight into place. Perfect for dog bowls, leads or the miscellaneous paraphernalia that seems to multiply with every trip. The modular approach also allows taller cabinets to be

# edition

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**ADVANTAGES**

- Modular storage system
- Contemporary interior

**DISADVANTAGES**

- Limited access to kitchen storage when bed is down
- Some rough edges on kitchen cabinets

**OUR VERDICT**

The Maverick Outdoors Expedition is a campervan for a lifestyle that values freedom and flexibility and genuinely works with your adventures rather than against them. It feels like a campervan designed by someone who actually uses one – probably with a dog waiting impatiently by the door.



Words Iain Duff



added if you require more than just the basics.

The Clayton power system features a 2kWh lithium-ion battery for off-grid living, backed up by a 200W solar panel. The gas-free set-up means cooking is handled by a single Sterling Power induction hob, while heating comes courtesy of an optional 2kW diesel heater.

Despite its rugged intentions, the Expedition doesn't ignore aesthetics. Inside you're greeted by wooden worktops, tambour door overhead lockers and a clean look. The Skyline pop-top with panoramic canvas opens fully, flooding the campervan with light and fresh air – ideal when you're parked above a

Cornish cove (as long as the rain stays off). Up top there's a double bed, while optional Scandi-style wooden slats and LED strip lighting give the interior a contemporary feel.

The main bed is created by folding the rear seat flat; although, frustratingly, access to the kitchen storage is restricted when the bed is down. There is still a generous drawer under the rear seats for essentials, though.

There's a 50-litre top-loading fridge and Maverick has already addressed another niggle: future builds will include a strut to hold the lid open while you rummage, rather than the current, awkward, manual approach.

Both cab seats swivel to form a dining area, with the table neatly stored in the sliding door. There are blackout curtains and thoughtful touches like rails for hanging accessories – including dog leads and harnesses, of course.

On the outside, the Expedition looks the part, riding on 17in alloys with all-terrain tyres and stealth lights integrated into the front bumper. An underslung 42-litre tank provides the water supply for the rear shower.

As tested the camper comes in at £58,995, based on a low-mileage, used base vehicle. The conversions are not type approved, although its future T7 conversions will be.

# Pilote Vega V630S

Multiple configurations for the bedroom in this new family campervan...

## FACT FILE

**BASE VEHICLE** Fiat Ducato

**PRICE FROM** £68,400

**BERTHS** 4

**TRAVEL SEATS** 4

**LENGTH** 6.36m

**WIDTH** 2.05m

**HEIGHT** 2.67m

**GROSS WEIGHT** 3,500kg

**PAYLOAD** 555kg



**P**ILOTE has been perfecting its campervan range of late, with high-spec Évidence models and improved layouts. Then there's the V630S, which is all-new and boasts a highly modular bedroom/garage area at the rear.

If you want maximum load-carrying potential, then it's possible to create a full-width, full-height garage. Open the unglazed barn doors and headroom here is 1.81m with a depth of 94cm and there are lashing points at the sides, while unusually there's no intrusion from water tanks, gas lockers, etc. In this format, the bedroom (entirely separated, forward of the garage) has two single beds,

one above the other, bunk style. There are reading lights and USBs on a rail system, while top cupboards are replaced by suitcases that clips onto the walls – as they are removable, they don't reduce sleeping space, and they can be carried indoors for packing.

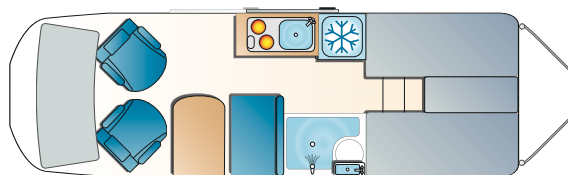
Alternatively, if you need four berths, the top bed can be extended into a transverse double (1.85m by 1.70m). Headroom here is 58cm and there's a rooflight for ventilation.

Underneath, you can turn the space into a larger double bed. On this lower level it's possible to sleep lengthways, with 1.99m mattress length on the offside, 1.85m nearside.

And because the bed fills the width of the 'van, it's 1.81m across. Headroom, though, is still limited (to 65cm) because you have another bed above. But you retain full-width storage under the end of the bed, with a height of 42cm – plenty of room for outdoor furniture.

But those are just two of the possibilities. You can have an upper double bed and still have enough room for bikes in the garage down below. Or you can slide the top bed back into single-berth mode, to create more headroom (and easier access) for those sleeping below. Or you can remove a section of the lower bed to make two singles. And, of

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**ADVANTAGES**

- Modular, configurable garage and bedroom
- Four berths without a pop-top
- Full-height garage possible
- Neat removable suitcase-style storage

**DISADVANTAGES**

- Limited headroom in rear beds
- Washroom with shower curtain and tiny basin

**OUR VERDICT**

A fixed bed campervan that offers numerous permutations of sleeping and storage for active families on the move, but check out the beds to ensure they'll suit everyone.

course, you can switch it all around for different trips, depending on how many people are travelling or what kit you're taking. Just remember that, as this is an H2 panel van and not the extra-high H3 version, space to get in and out of each bed is quite limited and, of course, you need a ladder to reach the upper bed.

Most of the rest of this campervan is much more conventional. The base vehicle is a 6.36m extra-long Fiat Ducato with 140hp engine and manual gearbox (the automatic transmission costs £2,640 extra). It comes with all-season tyres, a 90-litre fuel tank, ESP

and Traction+. The Bumper Pack adds colour-coding and front fog lights for £440, while an electric parking brake and automatic headlights are packaged together at £880. The Safety Pack (£1,320) encompasses all the usual driver aids. Alloy wheels are £880 and a variety of extra-cost paint finishes are offered as an alternative to the standard white.

The lounge is the typical half-dinette (quite comfortably shaped) with Isofix for child seats and a wall-mounted table with swing-out extension leaf. There's a choice of upholsteries, Anancy or Pyla furniture, and a flyscreen is fitted on the sliding door. An overcab Skydome

sunroof can be added for £1,320.

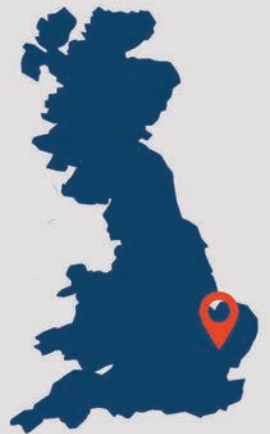
The side kitchen, adjacent to the entrance, has good drawer-based storage and a worktop extension flap, while a two-burner hob and sink are in a combination unit. The standard 90-litre compressor fridge can be upgraded to a 138-litre model, as seen here.

Split tambour doors (one sliding each way) make for easy, wide access into the washroom with a swivel cassette toilet, tiny basin and the option to add an opening window and duckboard. Showering requires a curtain but you don't have to pull it all the way around, just across the wall side.



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# Sunlight Vanlife 540 V

Upstairs – real stairs – to bed in this unusual campervan

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THE VIDEO**  
[motorhome.ma/  
VanlifeShort](http://motorhome.ma/VanlifeShort)



## FACT FILE

**BASE VEHICLE** Fiat Ducato

**PRICE FROM** £61,690

**BERTHS** 2/3

**TRAVEL SEATS** 2

**LENGTH** 5.41m

**WIDTH** 2.05m

**HEIGHT** 2.81m

**GROSS WEIGHT** 3,500kg

**PAYLOAD** 551kg

**I**n most campervans you live on one level, like in a bungalow. The Sunlight Vanlife, then, is more like a house – you really do go upstairs to bed.

In other ways, it's not so surprising. It's based on the ubiquitous Fiat Ducato panel van. It has a rear lounge, plus a kitchen and washroom. But, although you can make the rear seats into a bed (perhaps if it's windy or stormy outside), the intention is that you climb those stairs up to the roof bed.

It comes as standard with the 140hp engine, eight-speed automatic gearbox, Traction Plus, ESC, ASR, crosswind assist, a leather steering

wheel, black alloy wheels (with M+S tyres) and white paint (metallic black, Expedition Grey or Lanzarote Grey are optional extras). An awning is included in the £61,690 price tag.

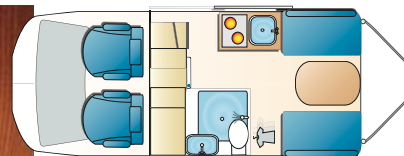
The Chassis Package (£1,580) adds parking sensors, an electric parking brake and electric folding mirrors and the Digital Package (£2,810) gives you automatic air-conditioning, a 10in touchscreen, wireless phone charging and a rear view camera. The Safety Pack (£1,460) then completes the spec with adaptive cruise control, automatic lights and wipers, and various driver assistance systems.

The Vanlife, as its numbering suggests, is

based on the medium-wheelbase Ducato, at just 5.41m long. Where it differs from just about every other mainstream model is that the cab bulkhead remains in place, so there's no access from the front into the living area. You have to get out and go around to the sliding side door, or rear barn doors, but at least it's a smaller area to heat in winter without heat loss through the cab area (always the coldest zone and the hardest to keep cosy).

At the back of the camper, there's a small rear lounge that allows that desirable inside/outside feeling with the barn doors open when the weather is suitable. It's probably the most





## ADVANTAGES

- No bed-making – just go upstairs!
- Cold cab separate from the living area
- Big roof bed
- Diesel heating

## DISADVANTAGES

- Showering features a curtain
- No cab to living area access
- Extras can bump up the price

## OUR VERDICT

This new Sunlight won't suit everyone but if you're happy to sleep in the pop-top and don't mind the lack of cab to habitation access, it offers a totally different concept with bags of appeal.



conventional part of this campervan and comes with a free-standing table that stores under the false floor between the benches (access is by opening the rear doors and stepping outside). If you turn the lounge into a bed, it's only 1.80m by 1.00m, so more of a single than a double – it's also a £300 option.

Better then to go upstairs to bed. The stairs face the sliding door (which is fitted with a flyscreen) and back onto the cab; they hide extra storage and the 64-litre compressor fridge. Up top, the typical campervan pop-top is unlocked electrically, raised manually and features a big bed with a 2.06m by 1.43m cold

foam mattress on a sprung base. There's a panoramic rooflight in the lid and a full flyscreen for hot summer nights. And, of course, those stairs are much easier to negotiate for a night-time loo visit than a ladder.

The washroom comes with a foldaway backless basin, an opening window for ventilation and a bench cassette toilet. Unfortunately, you do have to use a curtain when showering, but you can also pull the showerhead out through the window when you're on the beach. And there's a rail in the washroom to hang up your wetsuit. A wooden duckboard is £80 extra.

The kitchen has been kept quite simple, too, with a stainless-steel combination unit incorporating the sink and two-burner hob. There's a reasonable amount of storage, and hot water (and blown-air heating) comes from a 4kW diesel Truma Combi. The leisure battery is a 95Ah AGM unit (add a second similar one for £290), while water tanks are 100 litres for fresh and 90 litres waste (the latter can be heated and insulated for an extra £520).

Other options include pre-cabling and a bracket for a TV (£290), framed habitation windows (£570), a bike rack (£480), spare wheel (£260) and full LED headlights (£950).

Sunlight 

# Not made for standing still



From the slopes of the mountains to the waves of the ocean, the CLIFF Vanlife is your perfect companion. With its pop-up roof and spacious living area, it reinvents the traditional layout – delivering an exceptional sense of space in a compact design. Experience freedom and new horizons with Sunlight.




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2014 Autotrail VLine 600	Sleeps 2	Fiat	<b>£37,995</b>	2023 AutoSleepers Warwick XL	Sleeps 2	Fiat	<b>£67,995</b>
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2016 Elddis Signature 115	Sleeps 2	Peugeot	<b>£39,995</b>	2024 Chausson Titanium Ultimat 640	Sleeps 4	Ford	<b>£69,995</b>
2019 Elddis Vogue 115	Sleeps 2	Peugeot	<b>£42,995</b>	2020 Hymer Grand Canyon S	Sleeps 2	Mercedes	<b>£74,995</b>
2015 Autotrail Savannah	Sleeps 4	Fiat	<b>£45,995</b>	2022 Autotrail GF 80	Sleeps 4	Fiat	<b>£79,995</b>
2017 Swift Coastline 694	Sleeps 4	Fiat	<b>£46,995</b>	2024 Dethleffs Globebus I.6	Sleeps 4	Fiat	<b>£81,995</b>
2022 Elddis Autoquest 115	Sleeps 2	Peugeot	<b>£47,995</b>	2025 Burstner Lyseo Harmony 744 TD	Sleeps 4	Fiat	<b>£81,995</b>
2021 Volkswagen Highline T6	Sleeps 2	Volkswagen	<b>£48,995</b>	2023 Rapido 854f	Sleeps 4	Fiat	<b>£84,995</b>
2017 Benimar Tessoro 463	Sleeps 4	Fiat	<b>£49,995</b>	2024 Knaus Live I700 MEG	Sleeps 4	Fiat	<b>£89,995</b>
2018 Adria Compact + SP	Sleeps 3	Fiat	<b>£51,995</b>	2024 IH Camper 710 Ifig	Sleeps 2	Iveco	<b>£89,995</b>
2015 Dethleffs Esprit I71502eb	Sleeps 4	Fiat	<b>£51,995</b>	2023 MAN Three Bridge Convers	Sleeps 2	MAN	<b>£95,995</b>
2024 Autotrail Excel 675b	Sleeps 2	Ford	<b>£55,995</b>	2021 Carthago CTourer 150 QB	Sleeps 4	Fiat	<b>£99,995</b>
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2024 Elddis Sunseeker 194	Sleeps 4	Peugeot	<b>£61,995</b>	2020 Niesmann + Bischoff Flair	Sleeps 4	Iveco	<b>£199,995</b>

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## Crossword

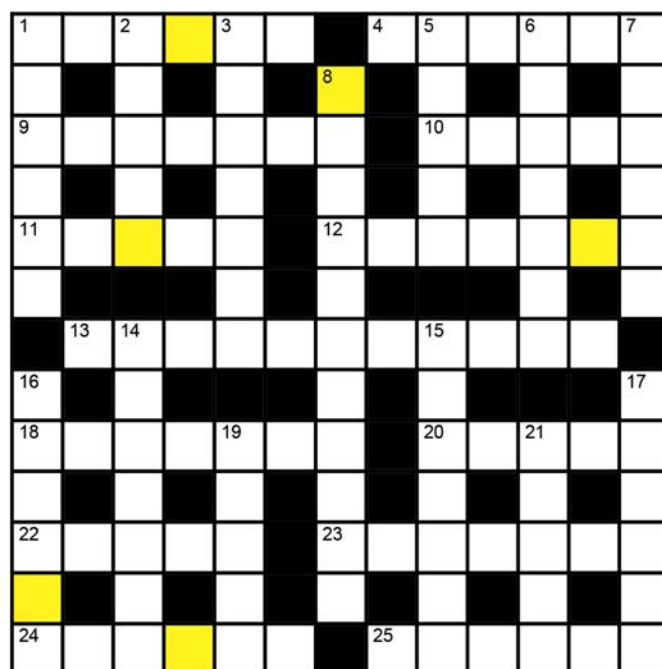
When you have solved the crossword the coloured squares highlight a motorhome-related anagram

### ACROSS

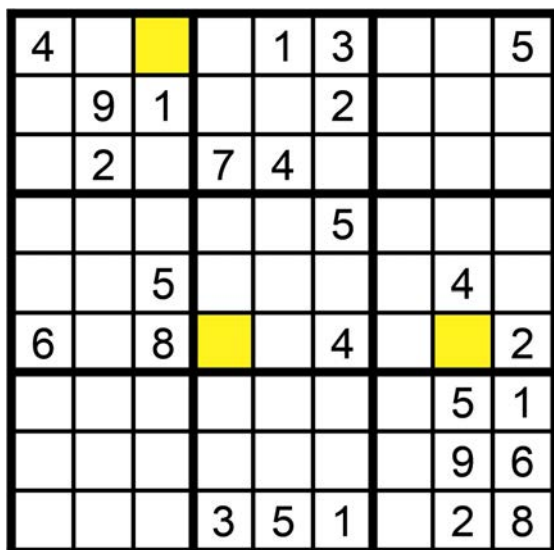
- 1 Zero (6)
- 4 Coax or persuade (6)
- 9 In a stunned manner (7)
- 10 Rotating part of a machine (5)
- 11 Fold of cloth on jacket front (5)
- 12 Deep red colour (7)
- 13 Social skill and tact (6-5)
- 18 Board a train (7)
- 20 Capital of Ghana (5)
- 22 Short piece of writing (5)
- 23 Throw from saddle (7)
- 24 Expel or send away (6)
- 25 Safe to eat (6)

### DOWN

- 1 Small lump or swelling (6)
- 2 Open a fastener (5)
- 3 Spanish nobleman (7)



- 5 Frame for drying clothes (5)
- 6 Data point far from others (7)
- 7 One who makes money (6)
- 8 Occurring at the same time (11)
- 14 Skilled craftsman (7)
- 15 Embarrassed or ashamed (7)
- 16 Echo effect in sound (6)
- 17 Type of flower cluster (6)
- 19 Deep chasm (5)
- 21 Chocolate substitute pod (5)



## Sudoku

When you have solved the sudoku you will have three figures in the coloured squares, reading from the top to the bottom

Enter the numbers for sudoku and the anagram for the crossword on the online form (see below).

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# Tech help!

Our panel of motorhome-owning experts are here to help you solve your motorhoming problems, however small

TECH HELP EDITOR



Nick Fisher

Base vehicle expert

## Q Can I repair the handle on my Dometic toilet cassette?

One leg of the telescopic handle on the cassette for my Dometic CT4110 toilet will no longer fully retract. The handle had to be removed to get the cassette back in place.

Pushing the offending lug back in allows retraction of the handle but, as the lug is inaccessible with the handle fitted, this isn't a permanent solution. I have tried to dismantle the handle to see if I can repair it but it has defied all my attempts.

Have you come across this problem, and do you have any ideas as to how to repair it? As a replacement from Dometic costs north of £80, I should very much like to fix it if that is possible.

**Robert Davis**

**CLIVE MOTT** You have a bit of an upmarket toilet with a ceramic-lined bowl and swish electronic control panel and spares do not come cheap, I am afraid. I managed to find a replacement grip extending handle assembly from a UK supplier of genuine Dometic parts at a little less than your 'north of £80', but not by a lot at £73.99, at The Leisure Warehouse. I also found several others well north of your £80. I must admit it is a long time since I have seen a Dometic loo in a UK motorhome as most nowadays seem

to be from Thetford.

Australia, however, does seem to favour Dometic and was my first source of information on this model. The bit you require is Dometic Cassette Spare Grip Extending Handle CT4110, which includes two screws (Dometic Part 242601045).

Before you order this, though, just try some silicone spray on the parts of this extending handle as it may be as simple as that.

The replacement kit includes two screws which I guess secure the handle to the cassette tank, hence I would assume that removing the handle assembly is as simple as removing two screws and withdrawing the handle assembly. Do you want to try this first and see what you find once it is removed and in your hands?

Our motorhome is a Knaus Sky TI of 2016 vintage so its German origin perhaps explains why virtually all the kit is Dometic. I had to remove the handle from the cassette to get the cassette back under the toilet and close the hatch door.

As you say, it is simple enough – just needs a bit of a wiggle to get the ends off the lugs. I have tried drowning it in silicone spray, but to no avail; the bits that work then slide








very easily indeed but the one bottom lug refuses to retract. Even after removing all the screws in the plastic crossbar at the top, it refuses to come apart and using more brute force would just break something.

I have ordered a replacement from The Leisure Warehouse as you suggested, the last one it had in stock. My 'north of £80' find was on a three-week delivery from the factory, so your Leisure Warehouse option was better all round. The old handle was always a bit reluctant to retract so I will lubricate the new one when it arrives.

**Robert Davis**

**NEED AN ANSWER TO YOUR TECHNICAL QUESTION?** Just email MMM's team of experts who are here waiting to help you [mmmtech@warnersgroup.co.uk](mailto:mmmtech@warnersgroup.co.uk)

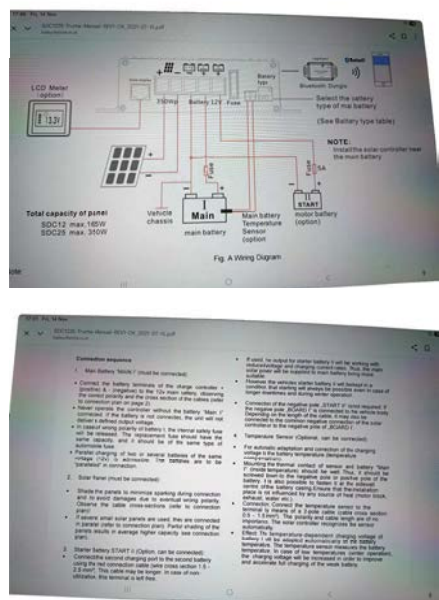
MEET OUR CONTRIBUTORS

					
Andy Stothert	Clive Mott	Mike Hill	Barry Norris	Ivan Anketell-Clifford	Andy Harris
General advice	Electrical expert	Bodywork expert	Technical & legal advice	Cleaning & chemicals	TV & 12V expert

# Q How do I wire my solar charger up to top up the engine battery?

My Elddis CV20 has a Truma solar charge controller which is only wired to the leisure battery. There is a connector to enable trickle charging to the vehicle battery, which I would like to do.

The wiring instructions show the negative from the vehicle battery connected to the same negative as the leisure battery. However, there is also a statement saying "Connection of the negative pole START II is not required if the negative pole BOARD I is connected to the vehicle body. Depending on the length of the cable, it may also be connected to the common negative connection of the



## We've got chills...

Those of us with three-way absorption fridge/freezers know that, when preparing for a trip, it can take up to six hours to lower the temperature prior to loading.

Rather than repeatedly opening and closing the door to check the temperature, I use a domestic temperature monitor that came from Amazon for under a tenner.

Steve Bovey

**NICK FISHER** Having one of these might open up many other possible uses. Brilliant, and cost effective, thanks Steve.



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solar controller or to the negative pole of BOARD I".

Do I need to make a negative connection from the vehicle battery back to the Truma controller?

Robert Elwell

**CLIVE MOTT** Both the engine starter and the leisure battery have their negatives connected to the vehicle chassis. Your Truma solar regulator will already have a connection to negative and adding another connection to negative will not cause your solar regulator to charge both batteries if the regulator only has a single output. However, I can see that you have a dual-output

solar regulator, so the simple answer to your question is no.

For other readers who don't have a dual-output solar regulator, the easiest option would be to fit a StandBy Charger unit from Votronic. Just two wires to connect.



## Q Can we swap our motorhome to an auto gearbox?

We went to the NEC show recently to look at a new campervan with a view to changing our A-class Pilote G600L. Although it's perfect for our needs, we're 10 years older than when we bought it and our priorities have since changed.

To change it would cost £50k-plus for something that would be a big compromise, so:

1. Is it technically possible to swap our existing manual gearbox for a new Fiat automatic gearbox either with or without a new engine?
2. If so, what would be the likely cost, give or take a couple of thousand?
3. How easy would it be to remove the drop-down bed and all furniture in front of the kitchen bulkhead, turn the fresh water tank through 90 degrees and fit two opposing sofa/single beds? The water tank is currently under the nearside sofa and captain's chairs are turned to use as bed extensions for feet. Neither of us are tall, so we know from trials that the length would be OK on both sides. We may need to move the fixed table a bit, which I assume would be relatively easy?

**Peter Dixon**

**RACHEL SCHOLES** A good adaptor such as Coachbuilt GB might be able to do modifications such as the beds and sofa, etc, but the automatic is a much trickier problem. Although there is an auto clutch system...

**NICK FISHER** I would agree that there are many motorhome converters and constructors around the UK that would be able to make the modifications that you need to your existing vehicle. I don't think that is a problem. It would be a matter of finding someone near to you and having a discussion. The most important thing would be that you feel confident in their ability to do what you want and to be able to see some of their work. Don't focus too much on motorhome-specific people, either, there are many other types of coachbuilders that produce mobile exhibition units, tour buses and the like that would be able to help.

Rachel also mentions the possibility of an auto clutch conversion. I did a quick search for this and found a Lion Vehicle Systems website that does little to explain how this works and has a video that I watched, and I still came away quite confused. I suggest that you have a look at this website and make up your own mind whether this would be worth pursuing.

If, and it is a big if, the engine that you have could be mated to an automatic gearbox, this would be both difficult and expensive. The vehicle ECU will have to be

replaced, along with parts of the dashboard to include the gear selector and the instrument panel along with a good deal of the wiring loom and the body control module. The engine management, body computer and emissions control systems work together and have to be of the correct type to avoid warning lights and incorrect functionality. The gearbox will require different mountings and there are going to be a number of other differences under the bonnet.

If you were to find someone that was prepared to figure all of this out, they would not be able to get any support from a dealer because the dealers will be well aware of the many issues that can arise from a major change such as this. I would expect to have to pay something over £10,000 for the gearbox alone and even if there were no other parts required, the complexity of this would lead to an estimate of several thousand pounds in labour and any quote would be open ended because it could take many, many man hours to iron out any kinks and get it completed with no support from the manufacturer. This could easily be a £25-£30,000 job and I do not know anyone that would undertake it or provide any guarantee that it would work, pass MoT tests or continue to be reliable for the coming years.

If you did find an engine and gearbox at a vehicle breaker, the same would apply in that most of the wiring looms, dashboard and ECUs would need to be swapped over and may not suit your existing conversion.

While the vehicle may be more desirable to you going forwards, and maybe for the next owner, there would be so much about it that is not as originally built; that I think the value would be impacted. Insuring it would probably be an issue, too.

For many reasons, I have to declare this a non-starter.

I would be reasonably confident in changing a 1990 Transit (or Ducato) from petrol to diesel or manual to automatic (in the case of the Ford) or even dropping a V6 in as well, but that was when the electrics were simple and the dashboards did not communicate much more than temperature, speed and glow plug operation. There were no emissions control devices, and the wiring looms were 5% of what we have to deal with now.

It is possible, of course, that the Lion system might be just what you need. However quirky it is in operation, it might be just the ticket. I have no experience of it.

It would be fascinating to learn what you decide to do, so please keep in touch.

**ED** A reader wrote in about getting a hand-operated electric clutch system fitted in October 2022. Read on [Exact Editions \*\*W\*\* motorhome.ma/Oct22project](https://www.outandaboutlive.co.uk/motorhome/Oct22project)

Also Peter has got back in touch to tell us he has modified the front seats to be singles, and we'll be running this project in a future issue.

## Q Can I repair my damaged campervan bumpers?

We have a campervan on a Fiat Ducato with damage to both front and rear bumpers. A bodywork garage has supplied a quote for new parts.

Thinking especially about the front bumper, can you offer any insight to the possibility of repairing rather than replacing?

Marion Cook

**NICK FISHER** I did run this by Mike Hill, and he agrees with me that to repair these bumpers to an acceptable standard would not be cost effective.

The images suggest these are standard bumper parts and not the predisposed for painting items. The rear one looks to have been repaired before, and has had some sort of coating applied.

Generally speaking, body repairers and smart repairers

would not work on anything this extensive; over 100mm is considered the breaking point between cost/likelihood of success/time and a new part.

The rear bumper corner would need to be removed from the vehicle to properly repair this crack. This is generally done by using hot staples which will hold the assembly together, and then some melting of the surfaces and filling (like soldering) can take place at the rear. Then you would snip off the legs of the staples and flatten the outer surface, fill, prime, texture coat and finish.

I have spent (wasted) many, many hours trying to repair plastic bumpers and by the time you have spent all that effort and texture coating, etc, I don't think it is worth it. This is despite the fact the front corners can be a pig to



replace because of all the ancillary parts that will be unwilling to be removed.

If, on the other hand, you have the necessary time and skills, plus all of the equipment and materials to hand, you could always have a go. And if you don't mind if it looks a bit less good than it was before the damage, what have you to lose?

## Q Are wet timing belts more prone to failure?

I haven't yet seen any reference to wet timing belts in the magazine. You often review and recommend Transit based 'vans, but don't mention the fact that some (?) of them have wet belts.

I follow a garage on YouTube which specialises in changing these belts and is absolutely scathing of the design and longevity they afford.

It would be really interesting to read your thoughts on this.

Philip Fisher

**NICK FISHER** I can't speak for the rest of the magazine, but the subject of wet belts has been discussed two or three times over the last 18

months in the Tech Help section.

The bottom line seems to be that this piece of engineering has a miniscule effect on the efficiency and emissions of the engine when new, while presenting several pitfalls for owners.

On the whole, it would seem that a lack of proper maintenance is the cause of most, if not all, of the premature failures. Oil changes must be carried out on time and preferably more frequently than the manufacturer indicates.

The oil level must be regularly checked, too.

The cost of repairs, in the event of a belt becoming damaged or even just degraded can be very high, but not that much more than a dry cambelt failure would be. The cost of replacing a belt when it is due (or sooner) is higher than that of a dry belt for sure.

However, once you take into account that the exercise will include new oil and a filter at the same time, I have found that the costs are probably 30% more than for a dry belt.

My advice for our readers continues to be that you should replace your oil and filter annually, or at half of the manufacturer's stated mileage interval; whichever comes first. No matter what you are driving and whether it has a 'wet belt' or not, good-quality oil and a manufacturer or quality branded filter will always be far better value than new engines or protracted arguments with dealerships.

Check your oil level carefully and often. Do not add more oil unless the level is below halfway between the minimum and maximum marks. Some engines do not like to have the level at maximum.

## Q Can we power an electric blanket on 12V to help keep warm?

My daughter camps in the back of her Renault van. They have an inflatable mattress and she asked me about 12V electric blankets.

She has a battery power pack to start a vehicle so wondered if the blanket would work from that?

William Phillips

**CLIVE MOTT** Many motorhomers started out in the back of an estate car or an old van so this background is not unfamiliar to me.

The first advice has always got to be to insulate the leisure area for starters. That's the floor, walls and

roof with a non-flammable layer of insulation. Then any original van windows will be single glazed and will allow any heat generated inside to very rapidly escape. Good well-fitting blinds or even some DIY hardboard-based pop-in insulated screens will make a massive difference.

If this insulation is done well then the heat generated by two bodies alone will elevate the inside temperature significantly.

The front windscreen is a massive heat leak so detailed attention to this is paramount.



Things such as external insulated wrap-around screens provide an outside layer of insulation, but at a cost. Internal two-piece insulated panels can also work well and store under the bed when travelling. If you have an internal bulkhead between the cab and the living area then this can be the insulated dividing wall.

Just be mindful that some airflow

## Q Are compressor fridges suited to off-grid camping?

Over the last 11 years, we have enjoyed extensive travel throughout Europe in both summer and winter. This was both on and off-grid in two different motorhomes, both of which were fitted with three-way absorption fridges. I have found these both efficient and relatively reliable.

I note that a considerable number of new motorhomes are now being fitted with compressor fridges. I am nervous that, if off-grid for more than a couple of nights, the power consumption of these devices is likely to become a limiting factor and the source of battery capacity anxiety.

Are my concerns justified or are the latest compressor fridges super-efficient?

Chris Miles

**CLIVE MOTT** You are correct in your worries. An absorption fridge may only be 50% as efficient as a compressor fridge,

but when camping off-grid it takes all of its working energy from the LPG you have on board. A typical 6kg propane bottle contains a similar amount of energy to about 64 100Ah lead acid batteries.

Compressor fridges have improved a bit over the years, but battery technology is the difference as it has come forward in leaps and bounds.

On lead acid units, you do not discharge them below 50% to maintain a good lifespan. The new lithium iron phosphate (LiFePO<sub>4</sub>) can regularly be discharged down to the last 10% capacity and still have a service life well exceeding even the best lead acid can offer.

Consequently, in the same space and for about half the weight, you can have double the usable capacity.

Then, there are solar panels. As always, the more the better and couple them with an MPPT (maximum power point tracking)

solar regulator. Votronic and Victron with its Bluetooth phone app seem to top the list of these.

Charging these LiFePO<sub>4</sub> batteries needs a little care so look for solar regulators that include a lithium algorithm. Then there are battery to battery chargers (B2B) which enable the leisure battery to be charged quicker and under more control when the engine is running. Again, go for the one with the lithium algorithm.

You also need to ask yourself what else you will be running from your leisure battery.

As a very rough approximation, a compressor fridge draws an average of 3A every hour, that is 72Ah per 24-hour period. That is why the classic Adria Twin campervan needs two 100Ah lead acid batteries to last 48 hours during the winter.

This will be a bit better perhaps in the summer when the solar panel is working, but conversely the ambient temperature will be higher so the fridge will be working harder.

is needed to stop suffocation and expel damp, as in breath. Choosing mineral wool, cellular glass, or closed-cell insulation that is incombustible and non-absorbent provides the highest level of fire safety. Such types of insulation won't add to the spread of fire, nor release toxic smoke and fumes. They are available from many places on the web as well as B&Q.

Do not forget that natural wool is also classed as flame retardant and a good insulator. Do your research.

Now electric blankets. Yes, there are many that operate from a 12V supply; some have high approval ratings, others not so. Read the reviews first before you decide to obtain one of these.

Most have a thermostat so will periodically switch on and off to regulate the blanket temperature. Typically, these things will consume about 5A when on and zero when off, so an average of 20Ah a night.

Although some may suggest solar panels to make up for this energy during the day, this argument does not stack up as you won't need an electric blanket in the summer and during the winter the solar benefits will be very much reduced just when you need it the most.

You mentioned a Jump Start pack. If you carry this for an emergency start as your vehicle starter battery is a tad suspect, then discharging it to heat your blanket does not sound like a good idea. If it has never been

used for its original intended purpose then you could consider it.

What is its capacity? I had a look at some of the offerings from Halfords but the actual Ah capacity of the lithium cells are not listed. I suspect only the most expensive packs would have sufficient capacity to operate a blanket overnight.

Do you drive every day, charging up your leisure battery each day? If this is the case, then a good 100Ah leisure battery and a split charging arrangement should suit you fine without going to the expense of lithium. I did spot some camping electric blankets marked as powered by USB, but the power supply for these is too limiting to provide sufficient warmth.

## Q What is causing earthing problems when using an inverter?

Not being an electrician, I am at a bit of a loss. When my motorhome is plugged into EHU the earth runs back to the supply socket. When using the inverter, how are the 13A sockets earthed?

After our 25-plate motorhome went back to the dealer for some snagging, upon collection, I was told not to use the inverter again as the 13A sockets were not earthed.

Having just contacted it again to find out what was happening, I was told it is still working on a solution.  
David Dransfield

**CLIVE MOTT** This is a genuine problem, and I will offer you a solution. The earth leakage in your motorhome works because the incoming mains hook-up supply has the neutral connected to earth back at the supplying transformer and also many times along the distribution path.

Your motorhome will most likely be fitted with a residual

current device (RCD) of one form or another. This accurately compares the amps coming up the live wire to the amps going back down the neutral wire in your hook-up lead. If these two figures differ by any more than 30mA then this means that some amps are getting back to the supplying transformer via the earth route and you have an EARTH fault. The RCD will trip and disconnect the supply. That's how it works.

Most inverters provide a fully isolated supply at the outgoing 13A socket fitted to them. If this is all you are going to need to power just one appliance then this is considered safe. However, if this inverter-generated mains supply is to be fed to several sockets, then the situation has greater risk and this needs to be attended to.

Most motorhomes have one circuit breaker designated to supplying the 13A sockets in your motorhome which is convenient



as you only need the inverter-generated mains supply to power the 13A sockets, nothing else.

Some inverters are supplied with internal mains switching. Hymer, for example, then fits a second mains RCD in a second mains enclosure to be able to provide earth leakage detection when running from the inverter. It is the automatic mains switching feature that typically fails first in many inverters.

Or you can use a simple inverter and use a Cliveway unit that does both the mains switching and has that all-important earth leakage detection feature, all using industry-standard components. The limitation is 13A.

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# ACCESSORIES

A round-up of the latest gear and gadgets

## FOOTWEAR

The Grubs Bearline Wellington Boots feel purpose-built for the outdoor life, where muddy pitches, wet grass and late-night dog walks are often all part of the deal.

Designed for cold, wet conditions, the Bearline uses a tough rubber outer with a warm, insulated lining that keeps feet comfortable on frosty mornings without feeling bulky. The fit is reassuringly snug around the calf, helping to keep water out while still allowing easy on and off when you're hopping in and out of the 'van.

Underfoot, the sole offers solid grip on slippery fields and gravel, with enough cushioning to stay comfortable during longer walks. They're not fashion boots, but they look smart enough for a café stop after a coastal walk. Durable, warm and practical, the Bearline is a dependable pair of wellies that earns its keep on year-round trips across the UK. Price £99.95.

**W** [fave.co/4b2j77Q](http://fave.co/4b2j77Q)



## E-BIKE

### E-GO CARBONLITE

Electric bikes are all the rage at the moment and it's not hard to see why. You'll be able to tackle steeper hills or go a little further on your adventures, while still being out among the great outdoors. However, not everyone has the space for a full-sized bike in the 'van, but electric folding options can be expensive and heavier than normal bikes.

That's why this new bike from E-Go with a carbon fibre frame, stem, handlebars, seat and wheels is worth a look. Weighing only 14kg, including mudguards and battery, manoeuvring this in and out of storage spaces should be easier. The frame folds in half making it suitable for those with smaller spaces for outdoor gear.

There is a TFT screen integrated into the handlebars to show battery levels, etc, and the front and rear wheels are quick-release options, further helping those with limited storage.

The 7Ah Samsung battery is in the seat post, which has a lock included and the cost is £2,777 with colour options of duck egg blue or grey. There is a slightly heavier (15.3kg) 3S version that has Nexus 3-speed rear hub gears instead for £2,283.

**W** [motorhome.ma/egocarbon26](http://motorhome.ma/egocarbon26)



## BLANKET

### THE ORIGINAL OLPRO BLANKO

When browsing our online shop this month, this new blanket instantly caught our eye. With an almost eighties retro look, this insulated blanket is lined on one side with fleece and polyester on the top with that striking spruce tree pattern.

So you could use it as a traditional blanket for evenings on the sofa or extra warmth when sleeping. But equally, thanks to loops and clips at both ends, as well as a central opening you can also fashion this into a cape or poncho for campsite toilet trips, even in bad weather; that polyester outer offers a little rain and wind resistance. The price is £49.

**W** [motorhome.ma/blanko26](http://motorhome.ma/blanko26)



## DRINKWARE

### LIFESTRAW SIP

We won't be the first to say it, but paper straws are just rubbish. Buy a cold drink or an iced coffee while out and about and we know your heart sinks when they hand over that tube of future mushy paper. However, there is another way if you carry a reusable straw and this one has another trick up its sleeve.

Billed as the world's first reusable stainless-steel water filter straw, the LifeStraw Sip is capable of removing microplastics, bacteria and parasites from water to make it safe to drink. Ideal for trips at home or abroad, it includes a leak-proof carry case and, for every LifeStraw product purchased (priced £30.50), a child in need receives safe water for an entire school year.

**W** [fave.co/4s7cG9J](http://fave.co/4s7cG9J)



## INTERNET

### ACER CONNECT ENDURO

The modern motorhomer wants to be able to get online on their travels and this mobile hotspot is purpose-built for use in the outdoors. The Connect Enduro uses Acer's SignalScan technology to find the strongest signal wherever your adventures take you and keep you connected.

It's built to withstand drops, dust and splashes and has a long-lasting battery to keep you connected through full days of exploration. The price is £199.99.

**W** [fave.co/4aSUBG1](http://fave.co/4aSUBG1)





# My project

*Derrick Davies upgrades his battery in pursuit of a wilder life...*

**M**y Auto-Trail Excel 620G was supplied with a LiFePO4 lithium battery, but at only 70Ah, it struggled to cope being off-grid for much more than a day or so. So, I started a search for a larger-capacity battery.

It not only needed to be larger capacity, but had to fit within the existing space, meaning I would not have to make any other modifications and not invalidate my warranty.

After much research, I settled on a Fogstar Drift 300Ah battery. This battery has built-in Bluetooth, internal heating and a battery management system (BMS). Fogstar's customer service department was also very helpful with my enquiries.

Once the old battery was removed, the Fogstar mounting tray was installed and screwed

down using the Pozidriv no2 screwdriver to the floor beside my existing mains inverter.

I installed an MRBF (marine rated battery fuse) fitted with a 150A fuse for the inverter supply. The vehicle supply cables were then attached to battery connections with the supplied bolts and a 13mm socket and ratchet. It is important to follow the recommended torque for connections, as specified in the manufacturer's literature.

Finally, the securing strap was tightened to stop the battery moving.

Fogstar has recently updated its app for monitoring the battery.

This upgrade has now enabled me to stay off-grid for five days, so it's safe to say that I'm very pleased with the outcome. I'm grateful to Fogstar for its help and assistance during this project.

**T** 01527 757980 **W** fogstar.co.uk

As always, if in doubt, contact a professional for further assistance as required. [MMM](#)



The new Fogstar Drift 300Ah battery

## What I spent

The Fogstar Drift 300Ah battery cost £699

## How long it took

Approximately two hours

## Project summary

With limited battery capacity, I was struggling off-grid for more than 24 hours. So, I fitted a new one!



Existing mains inverter



Fogstar underfloor mounting tray



The new fitted Fogstar battery

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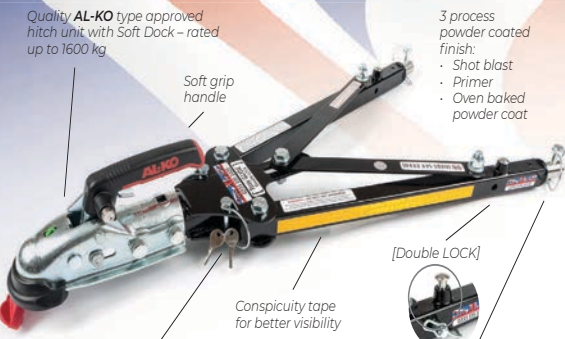
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Contents subject to change

**SPRING TRAVEL** Take an epic drive across Italy, from the Alps all the way to Puglia on the Adriatic coast, or uncover the quieter charms of western France. We revisit old favourites in Exmoor and head to Killin for a scenic Scottish walk. And when night falls, look skywards with our UK stargazing guide.

**TESTED** We hit the road in three very different motorhomes. For families, there's the Rimor Kilig 79, with rear bunks for the kids and a drop-down bed for the adults. Downsize should check out the Benimar Benivan 122, which packs a generous rear lounge into a compact campervan.

And for those after luxury touring, we put a sumptuous Carthago, also with a rear lounge, through its paces. Plus, first looks at new models from Auto-Trail and Swift.

**TECHNICAL, BUYING AND MORE** Collecting a brand-new motorhome? One reader shares their handover experience, while our regular technical Q&A tackles your questions. There's also DIY projects, readers' tips and photos.

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Martin Watts...

...has swapped his Westfalia Joker high-top for a bigger, comfier Auto-Sleeper coachbuilt with a 'smiley' face, and is really enjoying a more modern classic

# Vintage 'vans

## Expert advice on buying and running an older motorhome

**THIS MONTH** Passion still fuels the pages for a nation that loves the open road

As anniversaries go, this year marks a big milestone for this publication. One man's vision to produce a monthly magazine for the UK camping fraternity saw the launch of 'Motor Caravan and Camping' (MMM).

The late John Hunt had been a driving force in the formation of the Motorcaravanners Club in 1960 and later became the editor of its club magazine. John loved the great outdoors, and all things camping, from tents to trailer caravans, and of course motorhomes. His vision to make the club magazine available commercially to the wider UK camping enthusiasts proved unsuccessful. So, John set about launching his own publication with the assistance of his wife, Audrey, and some close friends.

It will not surprise you to learn that MMM today still closely resembles the original



magazine format set out by John in those early publications. From product reviews to new model road tests, travel guides, expert advice, readers' letters, and very often some forthright editorial banter from John. There were no colour pictures back in 1966, and the magazine was evenly divided in content between tent camping, caravans and motorhomes.

We began to see a gradual increase in motorhome content as the 60s progressed; as subscriber numbers increased, so did the adverts from various businesses in the motorhome world. Two of the first motorhomes to appear as full-page adverts within the magazine were for the Jennings Roadranger and the Commer Highwayman. The Highwayman and the Ford Transit Freedom were two of the early motorhomes to be given a road test in 1966.

As the magazine progressed, so too did John's road tests, and he would often offer his suggestions on improvements which could be made, which quite often the manufacturer would take note of and incorporate into future models. As the only motorhome publication on sale in the UK, John quickly established his reputation both as a writer and road tester, gaining a great deal of respect within the industry.

In addition to MMM celebrating its



### Classic corner

As the popularity of campervans began to grow, so did the use of canvas extensions, to give occupants extra room and sleeping space. From side and rear awnings to roof rack-mounted canvas pods, its only limitation back then was the human mind.

The VW pictured above from a 1966 Motor Caravan and Camping publication is proof that the concept of roof-mounted tents on campervans and 4x4 vehicles is nothing new.

Martin Walter (Dormobile) was quick to react to the canvas attachment craze, introducing a Dormobile tent and Sun Awning as illustrated in the advert above.

This lovely Pathé film clip about a roof tent on a Vauxhall Cresta from 1956 will make you smile, [W britishpathe.com/asset/36533](http://www.britishpathe.com/asset/36533)

And here is a 1965 clip featuring the Tentomatic roof tent, with the Mini Caraboot entering this 60s camping show in London, [W britishpathe.com/asset/87264](http://www.britishpathe.com/asset/87264)



**SHOW OFF YOUR CLASSIC!** Tell everyone about your vintage 'van or maybe you want to ask our expert about a golden oldie... [mmm@warnersgroup.co.uk](mailto:mmm@warnersgroup.co.uk)

ON THE MARKET

This month, Martin looks at a pair of modern classic models from the millennium, spotted on [Woutandaboutlive.co.uk](http://Woutandaboutlive.co.uk)



sixtieth anniversary of publication, this year also marks my thirtieth anniversary with the magazine. After corresponding with John for some years via letters, he invited me to assist him with the editing of readers' letters. John taught me a huge amount about editing, writing and the art of diplomacy!

I would meet up with John and Audrey at various shows, and I also spent a couple of weekends with them, camped on their drive in our 1967 Commer Car-Camper (pictured below). During such meetings I was learning so much about the history of motorhomes from him, build techniques, and who was who within the industry.

He was also kind enough to gift me his spare set of MMM publications, starting from the first issues in 1966. They have proved to be an invaluable source of material over the years.

I would later become editor of the technical pages within MMM, liaising with experts on many topics, to answer reader queries. When John opted for retirement in the 90s, the new team of Mike and Jane Jago quite rightly assumed that my knowledge of the classic models would be put to better use within their own section, and thus this column, originally called 'Life in the Slow Lane', was born.



THE ARCHIVES

The luxury Jennings Roadranger was one of the few motorhome adverts in early 1966 publications.

The Roadranger was introduced by J H Jennings of Sandbach in 1964, and was available on the Austin-Morris J2, Commer, Leyland 20 (Standard Atlas) and later, the Ford Transit.

This established coachbuilding company had been in operation for over 100 years when it entered the motorhome market. The Roadranger continued in production until 1972, when Jennings was absorbed into the ERF truck business.

THE WEBSITES

I have picked out a selection of project 'vans (which can have a myriad of meanings!) from [W ebay.co.uk](http://W ebay.co.uk). Do any of this pique your interest?

There was a 1983 Bedford CF Bedouin requiring welding for just £1k, a 1991 Mercedes Auto-Trail Cherokee diesel needing TLC for £1,750, a 1989 Adria Peugeot Boxer motorhome at £1,795, a 1999 Auto-Sleeper Ravenna Peugeot, last on the road three years ago for £1,995 and a VW T25 Devon campervan, in good order all round, except for a nonfunctioning gearbox; priced up at £2,900.

ROLLER TEAM ARABELLA



- Year: 2001 ● Mileage: 30k
- Base vehicle: Fiat Ducato ● Berths: 5

Martin says...

A little over £12k in price, and with only 30k miles on the clock, this five-berth motorhome will certainly appeal to the family searching for value for money. It is well presented, with an attractive mid-tone wood-effect interior finish, and an abundance of storage areas inside. Internal layout has a side dining area/bed, with the kitchen opposite, and a further two-person dining area at the rear, transforming into a single bed. A further double bed is found in the overcab area.

AUTOCRUISE VISION 2000



- Year: 2001 ● Mileage: 49k
- Base vehicle: Peugeot Boxer ● Berths: 3

Martin says...

Another well-presented motorhome, again with low miles from new, and this one comes with the 1.9-litre diesel engine. This example has the rear kitchen, washroom and wardrobe, with a central lounge. It has a dinette on one side and a long settee opposite for those who enjoy a stretch for daytime reading or taking a nap. There is a huge array of eye-level storage lockers throughout the interior, and those all-important front swivel cab seats for entertaining.

# My view

*Sue Hannah finds poetry in motion in every season*



“In an increasingly overstimulated and digital world of light, noise and 24/7 living, people always seem to be seeking a more tranquil state.

Having been an English teacher all of my working life, words – and their meanings – fascinate me. In a world where nothing seems to stand still, where towns and cities run at full throttle, even the language we now use is associated with pace.

We ‘grab’ a coffee, ‘jump’ on the internet, ‘nip’ to the shops, ‘chase’ that next deal – just some of the expressions that suggest pace and speed. So, when my Year 11 students asked me why I head off in my motorhome at every available opportunity, I confidently and without hesitation answered, “For stillness.”

The literal definition of stillness is a lack of movement. But that’s physical stillness. Emotional stillness is defined as having a sense of peace or tranquil silence, a calm, quiet state. The word has been around since the Old English period pre 1150 – and it seems we are still searching for it now!

Poets across the centuries have captured stillness in nature, beautiful words written during times in history when the world around them was far from still. They seek stillness through observing and reconnecting with the natural world – so back to why I motorhome!

How about W H Davies poem, Leisure, where the poet asks why we have no time to “stand and stare” in our world “full of care”? So much of the language in poetry across the years embraces each season’s quiet beauty and even the language is quiet and still – “whispers of frost” in the winter, “mellow fruitfulness” in autumn, nature’s “soft lullaby”.

Motorhoming gives us all of this stillness in bucketloads if we breathe, take time to reconnect with nature and press pause on our busy lives at home. And it’s on our doorstep, so to speak!



Imagine the wide, expansive skies across the Norfolk Broads in spring, the silence and stillness of a spectacular sunset across the water. Our five-van campsite was next to the water, only separated by a hedge. In every direction you could see beauty – trees in pink and white blossom, horses with heads down in the fields and sheep closely followed by their bleating lambs. Over the hedge the tidal waters splashed rhythmically against the bows of moored boats.

Stand still and listen to the skylarks, unseen in the skies above, as you look across fields and fields of crimson poppies in the Cotswolds in early summer. Our campsite here was on a working farm where the sound of chickens early in the morning and the smell of newly cut hay soothed our senses. Grey tiled roofs and pale stone walls of houses lined many village roads, making me think of how the lives of the generations who had lived there had unfolded over the years.

Or picture the dramatic, treeless landscape of the Isle of Skye in autumn where all you can hear is the wind in your ears. The wide horizons were punctuated by isolated, whitewashed buildings and a thin ribbon of road wound upwards into mountains where grass became grey scree. Our campsite was on top of a hill with water views on one side and land on the other.

Winter in the New Forest brought a quietness. Fog in the mornings swirled between the trees and ponies standing still in the heather and bracken, their breath misting in the cold air. Our campsite was in the forest and the ponies wandered freely past our motorhome.

And yes, our weather isn’t always warm and sunny, but there’s beauty and a sense of peace, too, in the rain on the ‘van roof and the quietude of snowfall and whispers of frost. Being tucked up in your motorhome encapsulates that feeling of warmth and reflection.

If you stand and stare, embrace each season’s quiet beauty and reconnect with nature, physical and emotional stillness is your rich reward.”

## TELL YOUR STORY

Funny, poignant or annoyed – tell readers about your motorhoming experiences and you could earn £80 [motorhome.ma/myviews](https://motorhome.ma/myviews)



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