



THE BEE'S KNEES

Bilbo's Nektar on LWB 2.5TD VW

Peter Vaughan heads off to Belgium in the latest version of the Nektar - a long wheelbase high top VW with more space and comfort than you might expect

Whilst the average coachbuilt motorhome seems to grow bigger by the year, there are still a significant number of British motorcaravanners who prefer a more manageable panel van conversion. Probably these buyers wish to restrict themselves to a single vehicle for leisure and everyday domesticity. Perhaps they want a vehicle that is more suitable for escaping off the beaten track, something more in tune with our increasingly overcrowded roads. Certainly, for those to whom 'car-like' is the most important watchword, the VW roundel has been the badge of preference almost since motorcaravanning began.

We've come a long way since the 1200cc air-cooled split-screen days and, whilst Bilbo's campers do not date back quite that far, the company is probably Britain's most established and experienced converter of VW Transporters. Rear-engined T3s still regularly feature amongst the used stock at the Surrey sales site, whilst David Latham's company was the first in the UK to tackle the front-wheel drive T4.

Incredibly, the T4 is now a decade old, but still it has yet to truly meet its match. Bilbo's, meanwhile, now offer Breakaway and Celeste with the traditional side kitchen, Breakaway Kompak as the new entry-level model, and Nektar with single beds and rear kitchen. Include short and long wheelbase versions of all four models and you have a VW-based range that no one else can match.

Nektar evolution

The Nektar first appeared in 1997 as a long wheelbase camper with a double forward-facing seat behind the cab on the offside and twin rear kitchen units either side of a central gangway. This was then joined by a short wheelbase Nektar with two separate forward-facing seats, thus offering single beds in a Bilbo's camper for the first time. This SWB model, with a Low-Lie rising roof, went on to win the coveted caravan industry award for the best motorhome at the 1999 Earls Court show. A year later and the long wheelbase model was revised to include the single bed layout - and thus become, effectively, a SWB Nektar with more space in the kitchen area (especially enhanced in terms of storage). Short and long wheelbase models have, from the start, been available with either the side-hinged Low-Lie rising roof (keeping overall height to just 6ft 6in) or a Skyliner high top.

Our test vehicle was registered especially for MMM when another manufacturer let us down (due to the late arrival of a base vehicle). The TDI-engined Nektar in Fresian Green was selected from stock and we collected it with just 50 miles on the clock. It was presented in exemplary condition and we used it to visit friends and relatives over the weekend, before crossing the Channel to try living in it for six nights.

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Volkswagen cab gets re-trimmed seats with elasticated map pockets on their backs.

First impressions

Based on the Kombi derivative of the Transporter, the Nektar comes with factory-fitted single-glazed glass windows all round (except for the double-glazed acrylic windows in the sides of the high top). There is a large sliding door on the nearside and a lift-up tailgate with wash/wipe and heated window at the back. The one-piece rear window greatly improves rear visibility in comparison with rival 'vans with twin hinged doors.

The bold green paint may not be to everyone's taste, but it is bright and makes a welcome change from white. Few Bilbo's campers are built in white; buyers simply choose other colours if they are given the choice. Furthermore, this green didn't show the dirt as badly as white and nor did it cost the earth, unlike Volkswagen metallic colours.

All long wheelbase T4s come with the larger, five-cylinder engines that also bring with them the advantage of the modern stylish front end, which was originally reserved for the Caravelle people carrier. In our case the grille wore a TDI badge with a blue 'I', meaning 88bhp. The silver 'I' translates as 102bhp, while the red 'I' (nothing to do with poor quality portrait photography) is the sole preserve of lead-footed autobahn-blasting Germans who may need 150bhp to stay in the fast lane.

The Nektar has refreshingly subtle graphics and the high top (or rising roof) is colour-keyed as standard - nothing in motorcaravanning circles offends my eye more than the penny-pinching use of a white roof on a coloured 'van. Optional alloy wheels could have further enhanced the Nektar's good looks, but instead there were (thankfully) no cheap plastic wheel covers to be lost.

The Skyliner high top suits the VW's lines and there's little else to interfere with the original Wolfsburg design. No ugly fridge vents, for the compressor fridge does not need them, and just a colour-keyed mains flap and black (lockable) fresh water filler along the offside.



Door trim is all grey on recent T4s and door pockets with drinks holders feature on both front doors.

Driving quarters

The T4 cab has been gradually updated over the years, but still retains the basic design of the original model. A smaller, neater steering wheel, all-grey door trim and larger instruments with brilliant blue night-time illumination are amongst the most notable changes.

The seats, even back in the air-cooled days, were a VW forte and the latest Transporter continues to lead in this area. Whilst others offer many more methods of adjustment than the T4's simple reach and rake, the VW seats just seem to be intrinsically right. They are also closer to the floor than in larger vans, thus resulting in a driving position more akin to an MPV than an HGV. Bilbo's T4s come with armrests as standard, but restricting this to a solo armrest on the driver's seat does make swivelling the chair easier.

Using VW seat fabric for the rear seats is the most economical way of upholstering the Nektar, but we preferred the Bilbo's fabric used in this example to the rather drab German trim. It adds £335 to the price. Otherwise, the cab is totally standard VW, though you can add removable carpets front and rear for £152. We were perfectly content with the standard vinyl flooring, which is so easy to keep clean.

The VW cab includes large door pockets (with drink holders) on both cab doors, deep elasticated pockets (ideal for road atlases) on the cab seat backs, and a lockable glovebox of fair size. It also includes an RDS radio/cassette, to which Bilbo's had added a pair of additional (extra cost) Kenwood speakers in the rear of the high top. The instrumentation is well laid out and features a rev counter and a digital clock - and few passengers fail to comment on its striking blue illumination. Overall the design has stood the test of time extremely well and the fascia and cab fittings still have a feeling of durability that beats the opposition.

You don't have to travel up front to appreciate this VW though, for the RIB seats in the rear are big and comfortable - perhaps just a little too big





General view from the rear, with kitchen on the right and lounge area in the forward half of the camper.

for some shorter passengers, but absolutely ideal for my 5ft 10in frame. The rear seats are rake adjustable and have substantial steel-framed bases, head restraints and three-point inertia reel restraints using the original VW mounting points on the side walls. Strangely, however, an oversight meant that the seatbelt clasps were missing from 'our' vehicle.

The cab heater (with four-speed fan) seemed to do an excellent job of warming the driver's feet and demisting the 'screen, while the centre vents allowed a separate blast of cold air to keep him/her alert. Rear passengers are rarely so pampered in a motorcaravan, but as this Bilbo's space heating system was diesel-powered we could have used it to keep rear passengers warm and snug. Equally, we could warm the living quarters before arriving on site. That did rather mess up our fuel consumption figures though. We'd usually expect around 32mpg from this TDI engine, but of course using a diesel-fired heater every evening (and on minimum setting overnight) does rather make a mockery of miles per gallon figures. We used the heater for six nights and still covered 527 miles on a tankful, resulting in a fuel consumption figure of 32.2mpg. So I reckon that Webasto heater is pretty efficient, as well as quiet and powerful.

TDI motoring

VW's five-cylinder diesel engines have always been highly regarded, and this 88bhp TDI (the entry-level engine for a LWB Nektar) is no exception. Indeed, it is so good that it is hard to justify an extra £1304 for the 102bhp version, unless you need the automatic option (which is not available with the lower power TDI).

This TDI is amongst the smoothest and most refined diesel engines available to motorcaravanners. The extra cylinder seems to bring with it a silkier power delivery, plus a subdued warble that is characteristic of five-cylinder motors. Acceleration, right through the rev range to the 4400rpm red line, is instant and free from turbo lag, and making the most of the power is easy, thanks to the slick, floor-mounted gear shift. Even though 88bhp may not sound a lot, the T4 can keep pace with rivals that claim more. Indeed, anyone coming to the VW from a typical family saloon should not be disappointed by the TDI T4's performance. Neither will they suffer from the dreaded motorhome orchestra of rattles - wrap a tea towel around the grill pan and all is quiet from this conversion.

The VW is equally happy to potter along or match the French autoroute speed limit of 130km/h (82mph) - with more still in reserve. On the two and



General view from the front - high furniture in nearside rear corner and sunroof above.

three laners it feels more surefooted than its SWB cousins, with strong crosswinds being felt but causing no alarm. Likewise, on twisty roads the extra wheelbase length adds to the VW's already class-leading poise, which is matched to a comfortably absorbent ride. The Transporter does lean a little more through the bends than a Vito or a Boxer, but it leaves the driver feeling more relaxed and in control. Driving a T4 has always been a pleasure, while adding the TDI engine makes it even more enjoyable.

The only area of the T4 that is easy to criticise is the walk through from the cab, which is hindered by the gear lever and handbrake, and further restricted by the cab armrests. The standard specification of the base vehicle can be enhanced to include almost all the modern safety and comfort features that you might wish for, but with anti-lock brakes and air-conditioning adding (combined) over £2500, you may have to think twice about the options you really want. For me, it would be central locking (for convenience) and an alarm (for peace of mind).

Conventional, or not

The Nektar's layout, with four forward-facing seats that convert to two separate dinettes or twin beds, followed by furniture units either side of a central gangway, is hardly groundbreaking. Put this design into a different base vehicle and it would be considered traditional, but (oddly) the Nektar has no direct VW-based rival. Others have tried (often with limited success) to squeeze a shower and toilet into this LWB Volkswagen, while others simply stick to the tried and tested side kitchen format.

You may be surprised, therefore, to discover how well the Nektar's layout works, combining a comfortable four-seat lounge area with a roomy kitchen and plenty of storage space. Light coloured furniture, a wide rear gangway, and a glass sunroof over the kitchen all help to create the airy feel that makes the Nektar feel more spacious than other VW campers.

Lounging and dining

It is unusually easy to twist the cab chairs around to face the rear seats. In so doing you create a lounge that has plenty of room for four adults, each in their own comfortable, reclining seat. Certainly you do not feel as if you are in a small motorcaravan.

Those who like to relax with their feet up may be thinking, however, that the Nektar is not for them, as there is no settee. In actual fact, this Bilbo's camper goes one better, with a pair of chaise longue. Making up the single

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Both front seats turn easily to face the rear, making a four-seater lounge. Flooring is vinyl throughout, removable carpets are optional.



Small table on cranked leg tips to vertical when not required, so no separate storage location is necessary.



Nektar has two tables of differing sizes. Nearside table is on single cranked leg, offside one clips to wall.



Single beds also make excellent chaise longue for on-site feet-up relaxing.

beds (of which, more anon) leaves the cab seats undisturbed and facing rearwards. What better places to sit then but here, with the backrest wound back to a suitably casual angle? You could even put the TV on the end of the kitchen unit and be really lazy.

For dining there is a wall-mounted table on the offside that stores between the nearside furniture unit and the tailgate when not required. It is rather narrow, so facing diners have to place their plates almost side-by-side, but a larger table might be more awkward to store. Our test vehicle also came with a second table on the nearside. This smaller table is fitted on a cranked leg and it is left in situ during the day, with the top simply tipped to vertical. Having a small table so instantly available is ideal for coffee stops and snacks.

Kitchen

Unlike in traditional VW campers, the Nektar's chef can work away at the rear of the 'van, unhindered by the comings and goings of his/her fellow campers. The main kitchen unit is on the offside, while the fridge, wardrobe and extra storage are opposite. There's even a cook's seat behind the rear offside seat, so there's somewhere to perch while waiting for the kettle to boil.

Hob and sink are stainless steel Smev fittings with flush glass lids set

into an aqua green worktop that contrasts with the otherwise mottled grey cabinetwork and adds a splash of colour. The two-burner hob (with push-button ignition) has a splashguard to protect the adjacent tailgate curtain and is supplemented by a separate Smev grill/warming oven below. The sink is fed with cold water only from the underfloor tank and there's no drainer as such, though the hob (which has a drain hole) can double up if it has been allowed to cool sufficiently. A full-sized boiler would rob you of too much storage space, but the small Elgena 230V water heater would be a useful addition to the options list.

A hinged worktop panel at the forward end of the kitchen ensures that the cook has adequate space to prepare, while low-level storage includes three very large metal-framed drawers (one fitted out as a generous holder for cutlery and kitchen implements). The steel-lined gas compartment is in the rear end of the kitchen, accessible via the open tailgate to swap over to the second Campingaz 907 cylinder. Bulkier gas storage should not be an issue, as the Nektar requires butane for neither the fridge nor heating (as tested). And you don't have to open the tailgate to turn off the gas at the cylinder; the gas locker door can be opened sufficiently to reach in with the tailgate shut.

The fridge, on the nearside, is a 50-litre compressor type by Waeco. It has a simple 'volume' control on the front and, once switched to the desired



Offside kitchen unit has tinted glass covers for flush-fitting cooker and sink. Contrasting green worktops look attractive.



Sink and cooker lids raised, worktop extension unfolded, and the kitchen is ready for action.



Waeco compressor fridge is so simple to use and works well. Control panel is above and toilet storage cupboard below.



Easy to understand Bilbo's control panel includes RCD and MCBs, caravan fuses, polarity indicator, battery and water level gauges.

coolness, can just be left to do its thing. It runs quietly from the 12V auxiliary battery, which in turn is topped up by mains hook-up or motoring. Anyway, a 110 amp hr battery should keep it going for a weekend without either. The Waeco fridge is also extremely tolerant of being parked on a slope (far more so than the more common absorption-type fridges) and it reaches operating temperature very quickly - it is an ideal fitting in this type of camper. Above the fridge is the control panel with caravan fuses, water pump and battery charging switches, fresh water level and battery condition gauges, polarity indicator, and the RCD and three MCBs all in one neat unit.

More storage

The bases to the rear forward-facing seats are both long and deep, so even though the offside one houses the Webasto heater, there's still lots of storage here. There's also a large overcab locker, made possible by not removing the cab roof (unlike many other T4 conversions), and this was an



Three large drawers make for practical and accessible kitchen stowage space.



Large overcab locker is ideal home for bedding. Shelves at sides of roof can house umbrella etc. Roof windows are top-hinged.

ideal home for our bedding.

The cook's seat also houses a deep locker, into which our test vehicle had secluded a built-in safe (ideal for travel documents). The nearside wardrobe has a front-to-rear hanging rail, but its jacket length capacity behind twin doors stretched to 16 items (including two fleeces and a thickly padded leather jacket.) Alongside, an equally tall, shelved cupboard proved ideal for towels, washing kit, folded jumpers and underwear.

High-level cupboards on three sides in the kitchen are quite shallow but useful nonetheless, and there's a fiddle rail above to secure a few more odds 'n' ends. Deep shelves run forward of these high-level lockers (above the lounge) and these recesses are ideal for umbrellas.

Toilet and shower too

The Nektar would feel very much smaller inside if Bilbo's had tried to include a separate toilet compartment, but it does have an onboard loo. The

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Nearside high-level furniture includes the fridge, wardrobe (with double doors, centre) and more storage (ideal for folded clothes).



Cook's seat behind offside rear forward-facing seat hides the built-in safe. Cupboard is also deep enough for storing bottles upright.



Electric flush Porta Potti is much larger than usual portable chemical loos and stores conveniently under the fridge.



Privacy curtain clips into place to turn the rear of the camper into changing room.

Theford Porta Potti 465 electric flush toilet is every bit as convenient as a fitted cassette loo and it stores much more discreetly in a cupboard under the fridge. A strap attached makes it easy to drag out into the gangway for use, and a folded full-height curtain simply clips to the high-level fiddle rails for privacy.

'Our' Nektar also had a shower, but an external one with cold water only. It was fitted on the end of the offside kitchen unit and would be ideal for hosing off sandy shoes (or children) after a day on the beach.

At night

Curtains pull all round, except at the cab windows (these have a one-piece curtain held in place by press-studs and suckers). The roof windows have blinds. The cab curtain avoids the need for curtain tracking around the cab (which could be a safety hazard) and the curtain simply folds away and stores in a matching pouch.

Lighting is by a trio of stylish fluorescent tubes with chrome surrounds, plus a single anglepoise lamp over the passenger cab seat. We'd have liked two more of these lamps over the rear seats, especially for bedtime reading.

Bed make up is simple. With the cab seats already facing the rear, the squabs of the rear seats are flipped over, through 180 degrees to meet the cab seat bases. Then the rear head restraints are removed and the backrests folded flat. The resultant single beds are unusually flat and wide

for this size of 'van. They're quite firm and very comfortable, though the lengths are quite different. The offside bed is more than 7ft long, while the nearside bed is under 6ft in length - tall men with smaller wives, or tall women with smaller husbands, will be well suited to this design!

With the beds made up, the centre gangway leaves easy access to the kitchen and all its facilities, the loo and the rear tailgate. There's also plenty of room to undress, and returning beds to seats in the morning is equally quick and fuss-free. The Webasto diesel-fired heater easily kept out the overnight chill (running on a low setting) and using its rotary dial could not be simpler.

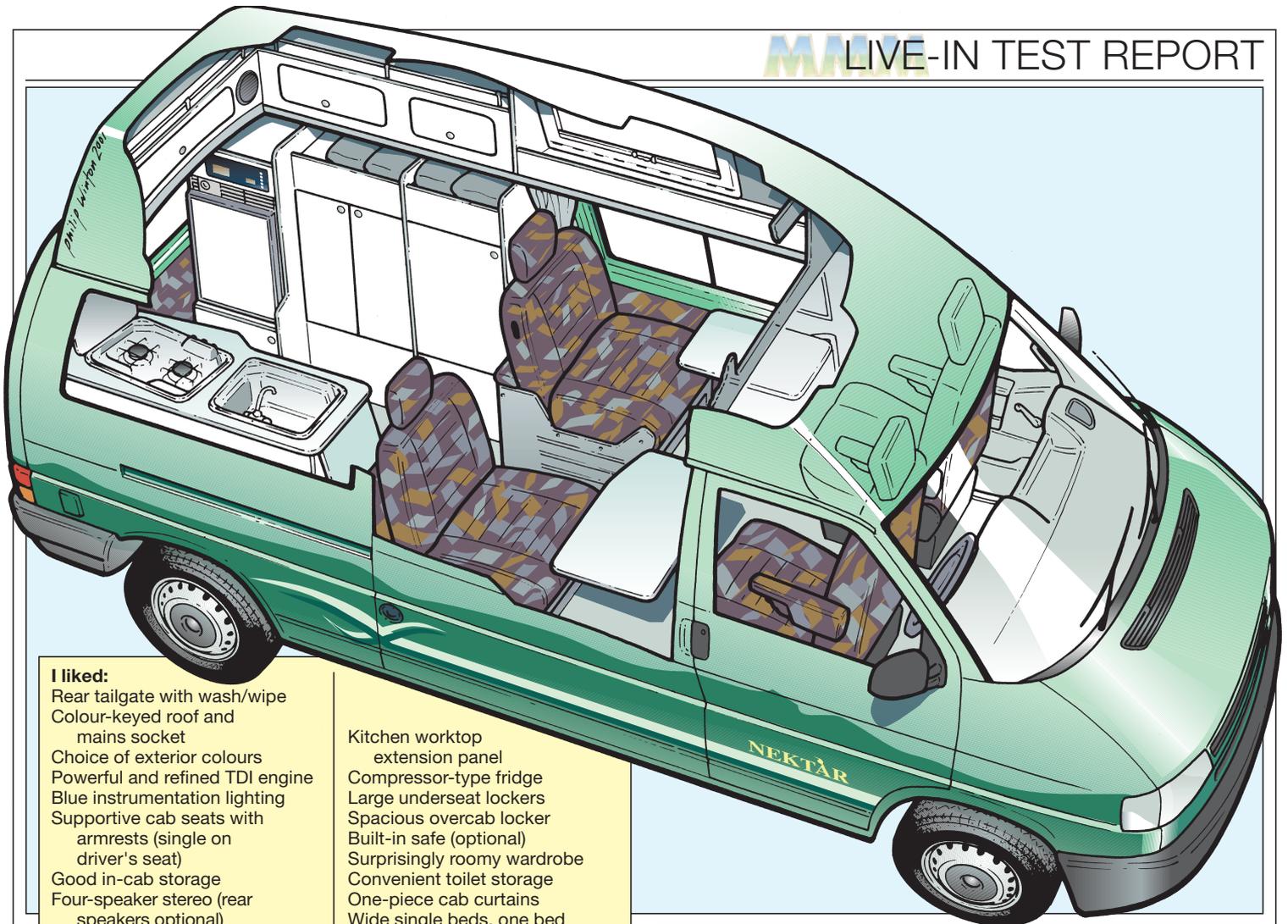
Conclusions

With fuel becoming ever more costly and our roads increasingly congested, the arguments in favour of a compact motorcaravan seem more valid than ever. Arguably, therefore, the long wheelbase T4 is the perfect size - small enough to use everyday, large enough to feel roomy inside. Of course, there are compromises - no onboard shower, no toilet compartment, no hot water (hardly necessary without a shower), and no double-glazing (so you have to wipe the windows clear of condensation each winter morning).

Viewed as the ultimate multi-purpose vehicle, or as the VW camper that's come of age, however, the Nektar is a high-quality product that has been designed and tested by people who actually use their own



Twin single beds are generous in width, and offside bed will suit the tallest of motorcaravanners.



I liked:

- Rear tailgate with wash/wipe
- Colour-keyed roof and mains socket
- Choice of exterior colours
- Powerful and refined TDI engine
- Blue instrumentation lighting
- Supportive cab seats with armrests (single on driver's seat)
- Good in-cab storage
- Four-speaker stereo (rear speakers optional)
- Rake adjustable rear seats with three-point belts and head restraints
- Diesel-fired Webasto heating system (optional)
- Lack of conversion rattles
- Absorbent ride
- Surefooted handling and excellent stability
- Sunroof over kitchen (optional)
- Comfortable four-seater lounge
- Two different-sized tables (small table optional)

- Kitchen worktop extension panel
- Compressor-type fridge
- Large underseat lockers
- Spacious overcab locker
- Built-in safe (optional)
- Surprisingly roomy wardrobe
- Convenient toilet storage
- One-piece cab curtains
- Wide single beds, one bed very long too
- Large kitchen drawers

- I would have liked:**
- Additional reading lights over rear seats
 - Optional double-glazing
 - Optional compact water heater

- I disliked:**
- Cost of some base vehicle options



One-piece cab curtain folds and stores in matching bag.



Simple rotary control for Webasto heater is positioned on front of kitchen unit, along with double mains socket.



Looking through rear tailgate - table storage on left, exterior shower and gas locker on right.

motorcaravans. That shows, for the Nektar is stylish and yet practical, sacrificing no showroom appeal for its sensible touches like vinyl flooring. Even in mid-March we were able to live comfortably in the Nektar for a week, and to revel in its manoeuvrability, rather than bemoan its interior dimensions. The successful combination of Bilbo's and VW is as natural together as fish and chips and as appealing now as it ever has been. □



BILBO'S NEKTAR ON LWB 2.5TD VW **MMM** LIVE-IN TEST REPORT

SPECIFICATION

The vehicle

Base vehicle & engine type: Volkswagen Transporter Kombi long wheelbase panel van with factory-fitted windows and 2.5-litre indirect-injection turbocharged diesel engine
Output: 65kW (88 bhp) @ 3600rpm
Max torque: 195 Nm (143lb ft) @ 1900-2500rpm
Compression ratio: 19.5:1
Gearbox & drive: Five-speed manual, floor change (automatic optional); front-wheel drive
Brakes: Dual-circuit hydraulic, split front/rear with servo assistance, disc brakes front and rear, brake pressure regulator controls pressure differential between front/rear brake circuits with varying vehicle load
Steering: Power-assisted rack and pinion
Suspension: Independent front suspension with torsion bars, upper and lower wishbones and anti-roll bar. Independent rear suspension with mini coil springs, semi-trailing arms. Telescopic double acting shock absorbers
Tyres fitted: 205/65 R16 (Goodyear Cargo G26)
Spare wheel position: Beneath rear floor in cradle
Fuel tank capacity/type of fuel: 80 litres (17.6 gallons), diesel
Instruments: Speedometer with LCD trip meter, fuel level and coolant temperature gauges, rev counter, digital clock
Warning lamps: Coolant temperature/level, oil pressure/level, main beam, direction indicators, hazard warning lights, alternator, handbrake on/brake fluid level, rear fog light, heated rear window, glow plugs, seatbelt not worn, low fuel level
Windscreen wiper controls: Stalk control, two speeds plus intermittent and flick wash/wipe, rear intermittent and wash
Immobiliser/alarm: Not fitted (alarm and immobiliser, or immobiliser only, available as options)
Other features: Door pockets on both cab doors, lockable glovebox, Beta radio/cassette, re-trimmed cab seats with swivel bases, height-adjustable seatbelts, anglepoise lamp above passenger seat, heated rear window, driver's door mirror with wide-angle section, cab armrests (single on driver's seat)

Performance & economy

Achieved 30 - 50mph acceleration time: 7.0 seconds (3rd gear)
Fuel consumption during test: 32.2mpg (8.77 litres/100km) - see text

The caravan

Body type & construction: Steel bodied panel van with factory-fitted safety glass side windows, glass fibre high top roof added by converter
Insulation: Miothene insulation in side walls, floor of 15mm poplar and balsa plywood
Conversion NCC approved: No. Although we are told that the standard specification Nektar with roof vent in place of the sunroof (to give permanent ventilation) is approved. Sunroof reduces overall height.
Warranty: One year on conversion, three years on base vehicle
Number of keys required: Three - one VW key for all doors, ignition, glovebox and fuel filler, one for fresh water filler, one for optional safe
Windows & doors: Single-glazed glass side windows (one sliding on nearside, one sliding and one fixed on offside), one top-hinged double-glazed acrylic window on each side of high top, fixed heated tailgate window. Sliding side door on nearside, rear lift-up tailgate
Additional ventilation: Optional opening (wind-up) glass sunroof
Blinds/curtains: Unlined curtains at all low-level windows, one-piece curtain held in place with press studs around cab, privacy curtain to divide rear toilet/changing area. Blinds and flyscreens fitted to high top windows, sunroof has integral blinds
230V AC system: Mains hook-up, battery charger, RCD and three MCBs, polarity indicator, double switched power point in kitchen
12V DC system: Auxiliary battery in base of wardrobe
Capacity of caravan battery: 110 amp hr
Lighting: Three fluorescent tubes (one over kitchen, one on front of overcab locker, one above offside rear seat), one anglepoise reading lamp over cab passenger seat, cab courtesy lamp activated by sliding door and cab doors
Cooking facilities: Two-burner stainless steel Smev hob with glass lid and drain hole, separate Smev grill/mini-oven
Extractor fan/cooker hood: Not fitted
Refrigerator: Waeco Coolmatic MDC 50-litre 12V compressor-type fridge
Sink & drainer: Stainless steel sink with glass lid, hob has drain hole and can double as drainer
Water system: Underfloor fresh water tank with lockable exterior filler, electric pump serves sink and optional external shower
Water heater: Not fitted
Fresh water tank: 57 litres (12.5 gallons) underfloor
Fresh water level gauge: Gauge on control panel, push button to read
Waste water tank: 38 litres (8.35 gallons) underfloor
Waste water level gauge: Not fitted
Space heating: Optional Webasto diesel-fired blown-air heater with outlet under rear offside forward-facing seat (gas-fired heater also available)
Gas locker: In extreme rear corner of offside kitchen unit, steel lined, capacity for two Campingaz 907 2.72kg cylinders
Shower compartment: Not fitted, optional external cold water shower fitted to test vehicle
Seating: Two swivel cab seats with armrests (two on passenger seat, one on driver's seat), two forward-facing reclining rear seats with head

restraints and steel-framed bases, inward-facing cook's seat (not suitable for travel)

Table(s)/storage: Wall rail-mounted table on offside, stores between rear nearside furniture unit and tailgate, optional second smaller table mounted on single cranked leg on nearside

Berths: Sleeping accommodation for two, travelling seats for four

Rear restraints: Forward-facing rear seats fitted with three-point inertia reel restraints

Wardrobe: Double-door wardrobe on nearside with front-to-rear hanging rail, auxiliary battery stored in base

Flooring: Vinyl flooring throughout, optional removable carpets available

Additional features: Large overcab storage locker, shelves with deep lips over lounge windows, fiddle rails above high-level cupboards, storage locker below fridge contains Thetford Porta Potti 465 electric flush toilet, kitchen with three large metal-framed drawers (one fitted for cutlery), folding kitchen worktop extension flap, sliding door and tailgate internally trimmed to match upholstery, choice of fabrics and exterior colours

Dimensions

(* denotes figure supplied by base vehicle manufacturer or converter)

Overall length: 5.05m (16ft 7in)*

Overall width (excl mirrors): 1.84m (6ft 0in)*

Overall width (incl mirrors): 2.17m (7ft 1in)

Overall height: 2.40m (7ft 10.5in)* with sunroof fitted (rather than standard roof vent)

Length of wheelbase: 3.32m (10ft 11in)*

Length of rear overhang: 901mm (2ft 11in)* - 27 per cent of wheelbase

Turning circle (kerb to kerb): 12.9m (42ft 4in)*

Driver's max leg length: 1090mm (43in)

Step-up height to caravan: Side door 370mm (14in), then 90mm (3in).

Rear 460mm (18in)

Door aperture: Side door W 1055mm (41in), H 1365mm (54in). Tailgate W 1440mm (56.5in), H 1290mm (51in). Usable loading width between kitchen units 480mm (19in)

Interior length from dash: 3.71m (12ft 2in)

Interior length behind cab: 2.91m (9ft 6in)

Interior width at waist height: 1.625m (5ft 4in)

Interior height: 1.88m (6ft 2in)

Work surface height: 865mm (34in)

Table dimensions: Offside wall-mounted table 365mm x 790mm x H 720mm (14.5in x 31in x H 28.5in). Nearside swivel table 335mm x 410mm x H 720mm (13in x 16in x 28.5in)

Bed dimensions:

(1) Nearside single mattress length: 1.75m (5ft 9in)
 mattress width: 0.61m (2ft 0in)
 mattress depth: 175mm (7in)

(2) Offside single mattress length: 2.16m (7ft 1in)
 mattress width: 0.61m (2ft 0in)
 mattress depth: 175mm (7in)

Wardrobe: 400mm x 535mm x hanging height from rail 840mm (16in x 21in x H 33in)

Gas locker: 415mm x 220mm x H 315mm (16.5in x 8.5in x H 12.5in)

Gas locker door aperture: 215mm x 255mm (8.5in x 10in)

Max authorised weight: 2700kg*

Unladen mass: 2155kg*

Load capacity: 545kg*

Price (all prices include VAT)

Standard model: £30 846 on the road (2.5 TDI 88bhp)

As tested: £32 961 on the road

On the road charges: Included

Optional extras (starred items fitted to test vehicle)

Base vehicle options: Anti-lock brakes and traction control (£1316), cab air-conditioning (£1244), driver's airbag (£276), driver and passenger airbags (£500), remote central locking (£425), colour-keyed bumpers (£446), cruise control (£365), electric windows and mirrors (£497), front fog lights (£226), special order paint finish (£192), tinted windows (£277), metallic paint (£1325). Alternative mechanical specification - 2.5 TDI 102bhp (£1304), 2.5 TDI 102bhp with automatic transmission (£2926), 2.5 TDI 102 bhp with Syncro four-wheel drive (£5605), 2.5-litre petrol 114bhp with automatic transmission (£1833)

Caravan options: Awning rail (£163), bike rack (£187), cab window wind deflectors (£56), removable carpets front and rear (£152), Propex gas-fired blown-air heating (£411), Webasto diesel-fired blown-air heating (£1052)*, headlight protectors (£30), mosquito screens (£50), mud flaps (£53), cranked leg table (£115)*, power inverter 300W (£110), solar panels 30W (£261), alloy wheels (£495), towbar (£230), roof bed (£382), sunroof (£294)*, Low-Lie elevating roof in place of Skyliner high top (no extra cost), power-assisted Low-Lie elevating roof (£675), radio upgrade (£169), rear speakers (£81)*, CD-player (£212), external shower (£150)*, cab seats re-upholstered (£335)*, deadlocks (£575), alarm and immobiliser (£499), immobiliser only (£183), cab seat safe base (£81), security safe in cupboard (£88)*

Bilbo's Nektar kindly supplied for evaluation by:

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