

DIGGING FOR A NUGGET

Westfalia Nugget on SWB 2.0TDCi Ford Transit



At last, a Westfalia is available in Britain with right-hand drive. But is it Brit-friendly? Di Johnson dons her jeweller's loupe to find out

Frequent glimpses of tasty Westfalia conversions, whilst cruising European byways, set me wondering why we have not seen more of this well-established German brand in Britain. The problem, in part, has been that they have not, until now, been available in right-hand drive. A short wheelbase 'van the size of the Nugget (only 4.83 metres long) is likely to be used as a dual-purpose/ everyday vehicle, so it's important that it has its steering wheel in the right place for the UK.

Westfalia is a company that is intent on producing versatile conversions. For the Nugget it has utilised the Ford Transit as the base vehicle - here with a GRP high top. In 2003, VW bowed out of its partnership with Westfalia, so the company shifted its emphasis to converting vehicles from other manufacturers.

PROSPECTING THE NUGGET

On the forward-facing three-seater bench seat (which forms part of the lounge and dining area) each place is equipped with a three-point seatbelt, making the Nugget a useful personnel carrier. With its large and super-long double bed on the lower deck, and a huge kennel in the roof with space for a veritable tribe of sprogs, this is



The Nugget's interior is dominated by a forward-facing bench with three inertia-reel seatbelts.



The view forward from the kitchen sees forward-facing three-seat settee with a sliding door on both sides of the vehicle. Inserted between the kitchen and settee is a deep shelf that proved invaluable for tea, coffee, cereals and other stuff.

a camper that may interest families.

The Nugget has no washroom (just a Porta Potti in a cupboard), only single glazing, no hot water, and no oven or grill. On the face of it, these omissions seem to indicate that this 'van is more a people carrier with weekender potential than a serious motorhome for long holidays.

Mind you, when I think back to the months we used to spend in foreign parts with only a similar Auto-Sleeper Trident for shelter...

In the end, it seems, we are only limited by our imagination and the readiness to accept a little less comfort than we are used to.

It was on the forecourt of Roy Wood Transits, in Berkshire, that managing director Steve Wood gave me my first introduction to the Nugget. Its

medium steel blue colour, with silver, metallic grey, and dark grey graphics, tinted windows, and optional alloys, all added up to a 'van with quiet, businesslike assurance. Its short wheelbase and overall length promised easy manoeuvring, while its tall stance spoke of comfortable headroom for my motorhome-unfriendly husband; at 6ft 1in he struggles in many 'vans of this type.

Whilst on the forecourt, I noticed a family from New Zealand with a large Ford-based motorhome. Later, we discovered that they were camped on the same Caravan Club site as us, near Henley-on-Thames.

Having bought a 'van from Steve Wood, they had been touring Europe for six months with their four children. This was despite having had

no previous experience of motorhomes! They had returned to Roy Wood Transits to have some damage repaired and were then due to visit Scotland.

Getting back to the Nugget - despite its height, I liked the look of the 'van. Not a grab your attention style, perhaps, but it had that indefinable something that would bestow pride of ownership. The flush, single-glazed, smoked glass windows in big panels along the sides help to raise its pizzazz quotient. The addition of alloy wheels also helped the Nugget stand out from the crowd.

On the model we tested the nearside sliding door - if enthusiastically opened - nudged the electric hook-up point cover. Hopefully this will be modified on future Nuggets to prevent it from happening.



At last, a Westfalia with a steering wheel in the right place. The display and control unit resides atop the dash (above the radio).



A top-hinged rear door provides ventilation and shelter from the sun or rain.



What a step forward in door pocket design. I could reach the top two sections from the seat, and one was even big enough to accept a road atlas.

An Eberspächer Airtronic diesel space heater is installed under the offside, with its exhaust running to the nearside beside the waste water outlet. These are both positioned below the sliding door.

On entering the 'van I would have benefited from an external step, but, since it would be impractical to have one fitted to all of the doors, it would be a difficult decision as to where best to site it.

ENTERING THE MINE

When climbing into the Nugget you're presented with several choices. You could enter through one of the cab doors or, maybe, get in through the tailgate, which would take you straight to the kitchen area. This top-hinged door can also help shelter you from the rain when cooking your bacon and eggs. Also, there is the option of entering through one of two side sliding doors. Yep, that's two sliding doors, one on each side.

I really liked this feature. If touring in Britain you can use the nearside, then, when in Europe, you can swap - and always be able to enter and leave the 'van from the kerb side. What a smart idea. As a fresh air nut this arrangement really appeals. With the tailgate and both sliders open, you experience authentic outdoor living. Oh yes, and haven't we all been inconvenienced by the twit that parks uncomfortably close in a supermarket car park? With this 'van, you can be smug in the knowledge that you can easily load your supplies from the other side.

There are lots of possibilities for adjusting the driver's seat - making it fit both my tall spouse and myself. However, we would both have appreciated an adjustable steering column. The tight turning circle of the Ford makes it truly car park friendly, but the floor-mounted gearchange quickly reminded us how clutter-free 'vans with dash-mounted gearsticks are.



There's no washroom but the Porta Potti in a cupboard will save trips across the campsite at night.

The Transit's ride felt a little harsher than the Fiat Ducato on some of the rough byways that we travelled on, but this may be the result of tyre choice. Altogether though, the nippy driving experience is such that the Nugget could make an excellent choice for a sole vehicle. Heated rear window and windscreen are nice, though the driver can't see much to the rear (other than a high slice), due to the settee headrests.

A small but nagging deficiency of our own Fiat is that we cannot place our coffee mugs anywhere when seated in the front. There is only provision for a healthy bottle of water! The Transit, however, is more than amply endowed, with three positions for mugs. There are two in a drop-down container between the driver and passenger, and one on top of the dashboard on the passenger side.

Lots of well thought-out storage in the Transit cab makes bunging all your oddments away easy peasy. Little places are provided for a phone,



The pale pearwood of the transverse L-shaped kitchen warms the grey interior.



Feet on floor seating like this is, for me, a rarity in a motorcaravan. Note the two sliding doors.



The small kitchen is well laid-out but there's no grill or oven.



A deep shelf runs across, above the rear door. There are two cupboards above the wardrobe for clobber.



Westfalia supplies a good solid table on a splined post but some aspects of dining can be tricky.

specs and small change. There's a reasonable glove box too, (despite the optional passenger airbag which was fitted to the test 'van'). Best of all is the door-based storage. I find it difficult to reach down to the pockets in a lot of vehicles. The Transit, however, has door bins at two levels. Hooray! I can keep my girly stuff where I can reach it and (more importantly some would say) big road atlases will sit within easy reach in one of the two high pockets.

DIGGING DEEPER

The living area can be reached from the cab, though negotiating the gear lever and handbrake needs care. Once safely past this obstacle course, you'll find a forward-facing three-seater settee on the nearside, with a transverse L-shaped kitchen directly behind. Storage, comprising high lockers, wardrobe, Porta-Potti cupboard and a waste bin, lies on the offside.

The décor owes more to the office than the cottage, which I liked, but my better half Pete felt it was a bit plain. Covering the front and rear seats is three-tone grey diamond-patterned upholstery. The high roof is lined with vellum-coloured suede-effect fabric over a good layer of insulating foam. The kitchen is finished in a pleasant pearwood shade with satin-silvered trim. The pale wood-effect warms the interior and ensures that it is imbued with a friendly, homely air. I would like to have seen some of this finish in the lounge too.

I sat on the rear settee and puzzled as to what was different. Something was amiss but I couldn't quite put my finger on it. Ah! Never mind finger not being on it. It was feet on it that had confused me. I was sitting in the back of a motorcaravan with my feet on the floor... almost unheard of for me, as many of the 'vans I test have seating far too high off the floor for someone of my modest proportions. Take note, motorhome manufacturers; it can be done.

Both cab seats are height adjustable. So, when swivelled to the back, I could also reach the tiny bit of the cab floor available behind the front seats (if I pushed the seat as far into the cab as possible). So, there was comfortable feet-on-floor seating in the front and rear for little me. What a tremendous difference to comfort levels this detail ensured.

Sadly, the base of the roof bed over the cab could not be lifted. If this were possible, it would have preserved my husband's head and temper. Every time he got up from the settee he whacked his head. You'd think he'd have learned after the first couple of biffs.

I'm a sensible height, it seems, for a motorhome and had no difficulties; an air of smugness was very definitely apparent!

With the front seats swivelled, seating for five is possible and reasonable, although we couldn't get the driver's seat to turn a full 180 degrees. With two aboard, one traveller could sit with feet up along the settee, the other could slump on the passenger seat with their feet on the other cab seat. Not bad for comfort.

The clear view from the single-glazed windows is a vast improvement on the plastic, double-glazed variety. However, in cold weather condensation might be a problem, though the effective Eberspächer heating system should quickly clear it.

GRUB FOR THE PROSPECTORS

Cooking in the Nugget will have to be of the straightforward variety. With no grill or oven and only two gas burners, the cook is going to need to be adaptable. Of course, there are legions of recipes for one-pot meals, and then there's the saving in washing up...

Also, there are some positive benefits, ventilation for a start. No extractor fan

necessary here, simply open the tailgate and one, or both, sliding doors and you could cook Bombay Duck and get away with it. Not really, only joking; but I wouldn't mind cooking a normal fish dish with that amount of ventilation.

What greets you, if you climb in from the back of the 'van, is an L-shaped kitchen with a little top-loading 12V compressor fridge on your left, the lid of which is used as worktop. I had expected to find using a chest fridge awkward. However, because it's small, finding and retrieving items was not a nuisance. Behind the settee on the nearside is a two-burner hob and circular stainless steel sink. There's no spark ignition provided for the hob, so you need matches to hand.

A hinged metal plate lifts up to protect the side from heat when using the burners.

As in many Continental motorhomes, there's no draining board provided; not that there's room for one. A small tray should suffice for this purpose. The swish modern tap in the sink yields only cold water and your kettle has to provide hot, but there's none of the wastage entailed by the necessity of running off the cold before hot water arrives at the tap. With a tray placed over the closed glass lid of the hob, a reasonable washing-up station is achieved. If you're on a campsite it would probably be easier to wash the dishes at the site sinks.

Two cupboards lie under the fridge, one of which contains the freshwater dump valve. There isn't much room in this cupboard as it lacks depth due to its being in front of the fridge, though it's an excellent place for tubes of crisps and the like. Its partner however, has greater capacity. I persuaded a saucepan and a frying pan into these spaces, among other stuff, after a little experimenting. Another high half-cupboard present here could take crockery and more.

Lighting is provided by a series of small inset spotlights along the side above the fridge and over the rear door. Additionally, two small multi-directional spots on bendy arms are placed in a handy position either side of the kitchen. Bent the other way they light the lounge or roof bed.

A long, inset shelf, between the lounge/diner and the kitchen, is useful for holding coffee, tea and cereal packets. A similar, deep version sits



The settee converts into a good double berth with the foot extending under the kitchen unit. Now that's what I call a flat bed!

above the rear door. A pullout four-shelved wire spice rack is a surprise addition. A towel rail, the essential small cutlery and implements drawer, plus a 230V socket, complete the kitchen. Not bad at all for a 'van of this size. I found the whole thing very user-friendly.

When carrying food forward from the kitchen, childbearing hips would require that you turn sideways. This situation could be improved by removing the drop-down armrest provided on the end of the settee; personally, I'd keep the armrest.

IN THE CHUCK WAGON

Eating in the Nugget is a little problematic. It has a good solid table, with an offset socket, which is fixed onto a splined post, positioned with a bias to the nearside between the settee and front seats. When two people are eating the front and back nearside seats are good options, though the rear diner has to reach a way forward. This

can be solved by shunting the rear settee forward for eating. However, it's heavy to move so many may prefer to put up with a bit of a stretch. The driver's seat is again a bit far from the action. However, with a bit of cooperation, two adults and three children could be fed in the dining area. If all else fails, a tray for the driver would solve the problem. The Continental preference for no draining area would make a tray an essential piece of kit in this 'van anyway.

The table in the Continental version of the Nugget hangs from the side with a drop-down leg and can therefore be stored under the settee. In the British adaptation the table can't be hung in this way because of the additional sliding door. The wardrobe provides an adequate alternative stowage, but - since this 'van is very much a prototype - Westfalia may come up with a different solution in time.

A bright, centrally mounted spotlight takes





Under the kitchen unit are waste and fresh water tanks, massive leisure battery, and innovative gas cylinder storage.

care of lighting and there are outlets for the Eberspächer blown-air heater (which can be controlled from the dashboard) in both the lounge area and kitchen. If you want to plug in your laptop or hairdryer, there's a 230V socket near the offside door plus two 12V sockets on the back of the cab seat plinths. Lastly, two speakers in the rear allow you to entertain the kids with your favourite music... Ha, ha!

BUNKING DOWN FOR THE NIGHT

A combination of rock-and-roll and flip-up sections makes up the generous 2.00m x 1.30m (6ft 7in x 4ft 3in) downstairs bed. I struggled to pull the settee section towards the front of the 'van on its rails, which is the first stage in the process of bed making. (A squirt of silicone spray might ease it.) Pulling the settee forward reveals another cushioned area, located under the kitchen.

This also has a cushioned front. Lift up the front and pull down a supporting leg and half the bed is made. Now lift what is normally the seat of the settee (under which your bedding can be stored), then pull the back section and lower. Voila, you are left with an exceptionally flat double berth. No bumps or awkward rolls blight the Westfalia bed.

A combination of both rail-hung and stud-fixed curtains provides privacy. I much prefer rails, as the chore of doing up all the studs last thing at night is tedious. On the sliding doors, the studs were easy to use, but those in the cab were awkward. Here, it would certainly be preferable to have rail-hung curtains.

We slept well, but found it uncomfortable reading in bed as there was nothing to lean on. On the second night we sussed that by leaving the cab seats facing forward (with the backs also inclined forward) we created some excellent headboards.

UTILITIES

Beneath the cushion and plywood base that form the part of the bed under the kitchen sink (where your feet go), are the utilities. There's a waste water tank with a massive 140 amp hr gel-type leisure battery in front of it (nicely protected from the cold in the middle of the 'van). A fresh water tank is to the right of this, and it's here that things get interesting.

Moulded into the centre of the water tank is a cylindrical space, with a gas-tight lid, into which neatly fits a 907 Campingaz cylinder (a clever example of lateral thinking?). The waste water release valve is situated low down by the offside of the battery; down in the nether regions you might say. And you'd be right if you think this is not ideal. If the 'van were mine I would be looking for a drill, and someone on the end of it, to make a small opening in the side of the furniture to allow easier access when dumping grey water. Beside the fresh water tank and against the side of the vehicle is the mains consumer unit; again with tricky access.

UPPER STORAGE OR NURSERY

The roof bed is made up thus. Pull rearwards a bi-folded base section, and allow it to flatten out from its attached mate. These two sections are on rails on a lower level than the next two sections, which



A vanity mirror on the passenger's sun visor means there's no lippy halfway up my cheek in the Nugget!



There's room for a whole school class of kids in the spacious roof bed.

follow out on another higher set of rails. These rails start high then sink to join the first sections. This sounds fiendishly complicated but, in reality, it isn't. The whole exercise is designed to make the bed easier to pull out, by having less dead weight to shift. And it works. The size of this bed, at 2.00m x 1.52m (6ft 6.5in x 5ft 0in), is so big that you might be tempted to take your children's whole school class along. A slight exaggeration perhaps, but having climbed up via the kitchen worktop, and found I could sleep across the 'van, I speculated as to just how many children could be fitted into this space.

The mattress could not be described as thick but with some extra padding I would happily sleep up here. The two lights on stalks could be made use of for reading, and ventilation is amply covered by two small, opening double-glazed windows with Seitz blinds. Additionally, a small roof light illuminates the interior. The essential cargo net is provided and looked capable of restraining any number of exuberant kids.

AND ANOTHER THING

All fixtures and fittings seem very well constructed and solidly built, and removable carpets add to versatility.

This little 'van should appeal to quite a wide selection of buyers. Its handy short length, nippy engine and practical layout will win it approval for those who don't want to carry too much clutter, and who mainly plan to stay on campsites. The Nugget hasn't the storage of some of its larger cousins, but if travelling with only two people, the upper bed could be divested of its mattress, leaving a lot more room for carrying bedding, clothes and other lightweight items.

Anyway, none of these details matter; it's what's stuck to the passenger's sun visor that's important. Yippee! A vanity mirror. At last. Someone must have heard my voice from the wilderness.



There's room for lots of bedding under the settee.



The fresh water dump valve is positioned in the right-hand cupboard under the fridge.



WESTFALIA

IN BRIEF

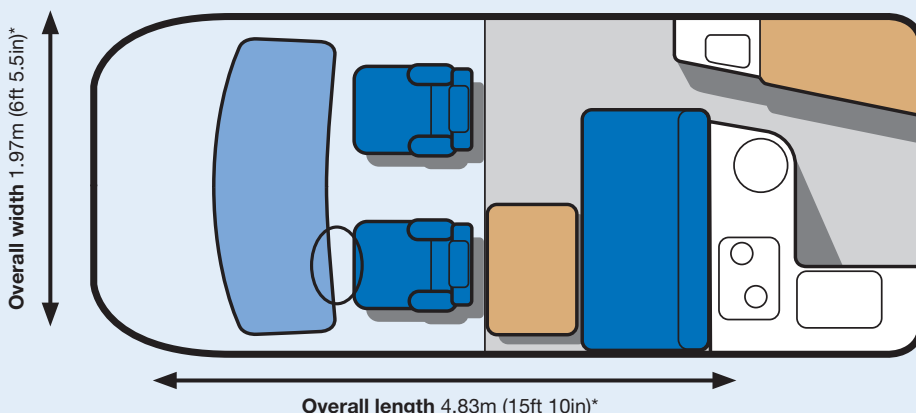
- **Base vehicle:** Ford Transit T300 short wheelbase window van
- **Engine type:** 2.0-litre common-rail direct injection turbocharged and intercooled diesel: 92kW (123bhp) @ 3800 rpm
- **Gearbox and drive:** Five-speed manual gearbox, floor-mounted gear lever, front-wheel drive
- **Make and model:** Westfalia Nugget
- **Body type and construction:** High top window van with two side sliding doors and rear tailgate. Moulded GRP roof
- **Conversion NCC badged as EN1646 compliant:** No
- **Electrical equipment:** 230V hook-up with RCD, consumer unit, fuses and leisure battery charger. 140 amp hr gel leisure battery, dash-mounted control panel. Two mains sockets, one each in lounge and kitchen. Two 12V sockets on rear of cab seat plinths
- **Lighting:** Diffused striplight behind cab, three spotlights in kitchen, two spotlights on flexible stalks illuminate either kitchen area or roof bed
- **Cooking facilities:** Cramer two-burner manual ignition hob
- **Refrigerator:** Dometic 40-litre 12V compressor chest fridge with lid set in kitchen worktop
- **Water heater:** None fitted
- **Space heater:** Eberspächer D4 Airtronic, 2.5kW diesel-fuelled (from vehicle's tank). Three output levels, blown-air outlets in lounge and kitchen
- **Fresh water tank:** Inboard, 42 litres (9.24 gallons)

- **Waste water tank:** Inboard, 42 litres (9.24 gallons)
- **Gas locker capacity:** One Campingaz 907 (2.72kg) cylinder in moulded recess within the fresh water tank
- **Rear restraints:** Three forward-facing seats with three-point inertia-reel seatbelts
- **Additional features:** Heated windscreen, heated rear window, electrically heated and adjustable door mirrors, Ford 6000 CD/radio. Isri swivelling cab seats with armrests. Three-position push-up rooflight above kitchen. Two high-level top-hinged Seitz windows with screens and blinds in roof bed. Dark tinted windows in living area. Press-stud fastened curtains around cab and on sliding doors, rail-hung curtains on rear door and kitchen windows. Removable carpets. Porta Potti 335 toilet in dedicated locker

DIMENSIONS

(*data supplied by manufacturer)

- **Length:** 4.83m (15ft 10in)*
- **Width:** 1.97m (6ft 5.5in)*
- **Overall height:** 2.85m (9ft 4in)*
- **Interior height:** 2.16m max (7ft 1in)



- **Bed dimensions:** Roof double 2.00m x 1.52m (6ft 6.5in x 5ft 0in), lounge double 2.0m x 1.30m max (6ft 6.5in x 4ft 3in)
- **Max authorised weight:** TBA
- **Load capacity:** TBA

PRICE (All prices include VAT)

- **Standard model:** To be confirmed, but around £27,500 (on the road) with 100PS (74kW) engine As tested: Prototype – no price available at time of test
- **Warranty:** Three years base vehicle, three years conversion, one year appliances

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

(*starred items fitted to test vehicle)

- **Base vehicle options:** 125PS engine (£703)*, passenger airbag (£176)*, alloy wheels (£470)*, cab air-conditioning (£940)*
- **Caravan options:** None listed

Westfalia Nugget kindly supplied for evaluation by: Roy Wood Transits Ltd, 429 Reading Road, Winnersh, Berkshire RG41 5HU (tel: 0118-979 0202; web site: www.roywoodtransits.co.uk)

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