



A QUARTZ IN A PINT POT

EMC Quartz Pro-line on SWB Volkswagen T4 2.5TDI

Dave Hurrell finds a VW camper with an innovative interior design

The Volkswagen Transporter is *the* vehicle that coined the term campervan and, in its present T4 guise, is one of the best to choose as an everyday car that is also a usable, mobile holiday home. In Britain, most VWs are converted by small companies such as Euro Motor Campers. (Who also convert other potentially desirable base vehicles including the new Renault Trafic and the Mercedes Vito.)

Camper purist

The Quartz Pro-line is a short wheelbase Volkswagen rising roof camper. White coachwork is relieved by green and bronze coachlines with simple lettering that tells you its name. The addition of a set of attractive alloy wheels helps to transform the looks from potential delivery van to stylish leisure vehicle. The body is insulated as far up as the fixed

portion of the roof, making three-season camping a possibility.

A low-line front-hinged rising roof gives real height-barrier-beating potential and bonded Volkswagen side windows complete a factory-finished appearance. Internal layout departs from the usual short wheelbase bench seat and side-mounted furniture and places two single forward-facing seats directly behind the cab area, with all other furniture located to the rear. A nearside kitchen faces the wardrobe (with fridge below). A fitted cassette toilet is sited in a dedicated cabinet in the rear offside corner. The front-hinged rising-roof gives full standing headroom in this area, and further forward, too.

If only everything in life...

In the cab there is the general feeling of quality that pervades all Volkswagen products, albeit with a slightly dated appearance. (Note: this conversion will also be produced by EMC on the T4's imminent replacement, the T5). The seats are upholstered to match the rest of the furnishings in a deep blue fabric with abstract detailing. Settling myself in the driver's seat, I noticed a rather high driving position, and indeed the swivels that allow the cab seats to turn have also elevated them by around 35mm. Careful adjustment is necessary to achieve a decent driving position that also gives a good view of the dash.

The instrument cluster contains twin LCD displays with clock and odometer with trip, as well as the usual gauges, and, when the



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The single forward-facing seats give family car potential in this short wheelbase camper.



▲ The front-hinged rising roof creates generous headroom above the kitchen. The inner pair of struts supports the 'kids bed' in the roof.

► Looking forward, we can see good headroom is maintained above the rear passenger seats.



ignition is turned on, the pointers to each of these illuminate, making them easy to read. Driving impressions are good, with the 2.5-litre, non-intercooled, turbo-diesel pulling enthusiastically. Brakes, steering and gearchange were up to the standards expected from a modern vehicle. The only fly found floating in this particular bowl of Volkswagen soup seemed to be a higher than

usual level of road noise, which could have been caused by a lack of soundproofing or an unfortunate choice of tyres.

The test vehicle did not have some of the other features that are becoming the norm on modern motorcaravans, such as central locking, electric windows and ABS, but EMC assure me that the whole Volkswagen options list is up for grabs (watch the prices, though).

Handling and ride is in the love-it or hate-it category with the all-round independent suspension producing a floaty ride with neck-aching sideways swaying over some bumpy road surfaces. Motorway cruising proved effortless, with loads of power in reserve for overtaking and the feeling that a trip to Monte Carlo would most definitely leave out the 'or bust' suffix!

Rear passengers benefit from two comfortable and strong seeming forward-facing seats. They both come mounted on steel frames and are (we are told) fully crash tested. In the test vehicle these seats were fitted with lap-only seatbelts, but three-point inertia reel belts are listed as a standard fitting and should provide safe rear seat travel for two passengers.

Relax and eat

Whether you're pitched, or just parked up for lunch in a picturesque location, the key to comfortable and convenient use of the camping bits is to raise the roof. Headroom in the rear is severely restricted with the roof down and the kitchen area can only be used properly while standing. Release two buckles at the rear and a good shove sees the flexible nylon-sided roof rise on gas struts to give excellent headroom as far forward as the rear passenger seats.

Swivel the cab seats - the driver's may make you swear gently as you try to manoeuvre it around the steering wheel - to face the rear and you have the choice of four chairs in which to relax. This seating is quite formal in character with the cab seats being



Rear furniture allows easy access day or night. The kitchen with hob and sink is on the right, while opposite is the wardrobe with pull-out fridge below and toilet cabinet beyond.



Deploy the beds and you can have feet-up lounging for two.



The location of the floor sockets for the table legs made it very difficult to get your feet under the table.



Two small tables create twin dinettes.



Tabletops are stored behind rear passenger seats.

the most comfortable 'armchairs' owing to their adjustable backs and twin armrests. Couples can utilise the bed mechanisms to create two day beds for feet-up lounging.

Dining is simply a case of adding tables in between each pair of seats. The tops are stored behind each rear passenger seat and, along with a leg fitted into each floor socket, create two twin dinettes. If couples use the offside one only, there is clear access to and from the 'van through the side sliding door. This dining set-up is normally very good to use, but I was disappointed to find that the table leg floor sockets had been fitted too close to the bases of the rear seats, making it very difficult to get your feet past them. However, as far as I could see, it should be a simple matter to relocate these a bit further forward to achieve foot-friendly dining.

Camper kitchen

Being able to use the kitchen to cook, then serve a meal onto the dining table, and sit down to eat it in one seamless operation is the strength of this layout. In traditionally designed Volkswagen campers with a bench seat and kitchen down one side, the table can get in the way when cooking. Here the kitchen area is separate and can be used at all times, even when the beds are made up - a big plus in a small camper.

The rear nearside kitchen unit, which like the rest of the hard furnishings is finished in light wood laminate with silver trim and blue top surfaces, has a fresh modern appeal. The kitchen benefits from a drainer-less Smev stainless steel sink with folding tap. There's a



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What appears to be a kitchen cupboard opens to reveal a full-sized, electric flush toilet.



A slide-out unit reveals the top-loading fridge. It is awkward to use and a normal front-loading model would be far better.

matching two-burner, push-button ignition hob. Both have hinged glass lids. Below these is a Smev grill/warming oven, also with push-button ignition. This really is a practical little galley with more usable work surface than some bigger 'vans and enough space for the cook to work in.

Chilled food storage is taken care of by a top-loading 12V compressor fridge. It is mounted in a slide-out unit under the wardrobe and should glide out to give easy access to cooled food and drink. This was my least favourite feature as the unit had no proper handle to pull it from its lair and was almost impossible to extract when the 'van was leaning to the offside (you had to try to drag it uphill). If we were leaning to the nearside this crazy cooler threatened to rush from its resting place and trap your hands against the kitchen unit opposite. Add to this a lid without any support to hold it open and it would not be long before bewildered fellow campers would see me trying to jam it in the nearest campsite rubbish bin!

I think compressor fridges are great. They don't use precious gas and you don't need to keep switching them from one power source to another. Please let's keep a compressor fridge here, but make it one with normal front-opening door.

The wee room

Rising roof campers aren't noted for washrooms - palatial or otherwise. You boil the kettle and wash in the sink and, if you need to use a toilet, there may be a Porta



The main kitchen unit has matching hob and sink in stainless steel with grill unit below. The top of the toilet locker, opposite, is a handy place to put things while working.

Potti waiting to be dragged from a locker. You mustn't forget to get it out before you go to sleep, 'cause once the bed is up you can't get at the thing! Well, Quartz campers may still be washing in the sink, but when the time comes for a midnight tinkle, they'll be using the same type of toilet as the folks in the seven-metre

coachbuilt on the pitch next door!

A clever folding locker in the rear offside corner conceals a full-size electric flush, swivel-bowl toilet, which is always ready for use. Once again, the design of this 'van allows the toilet to be used at any time, although during the night is going to be the most likely as all the curtains and screens need to be deployed for privacy.

The singles scene

The freedom to move around and use all the facilities at any time is best served by using the single bed layout offered here. Having previously swivelled the cab seats, all you need to do to create two single beds is release a catch on the squabs of the rear seats and swing them up and over to meet the front of the cab seats. Then hinge the rear seat backs down to fill the hole left by the squabs and you have two comfortable beds with heads to the rear and feet resting on the cab seats.

The single beds are only six feet long, so give them a good try out as sleeping is one of the things you do most in any motorcaravan. Sitting on the cab seats and facing rearwards provides feet-up lounging during the day. Meanwhile, up in the roof, a front-hinged bed board descends on gas struts to provide occasional night-time accommodation for the kids.

Both the roof bed and a kit to turn the two downstairs singles into a double are optional extras, but this 'van functions best when used



With beds made up the central aisle is left free, giving access to the kitchen and toilet at all times.



Mini wardrobe would be better with shelves.



Rear seat bases form the main storage areas: pack carefully if you want to fit it all in.

with just the two singles. Either person can more easily get up to use the kitchen or toilet. Or even exit through the tailgate, leaving their partner to have a lie in. The same thing applies when returning after an evening of 'wine tasting'. Just enter through the tailgate and climb into those pre-made beds.

Put it away

Storing all your stuff when on the road can be a problem in a small camper, so plan carefully when deciding what to take. Unnecessary clutter will make living in a small space a nightmare.

Two large storage areas are located under the rear passenger seats. Simply hinge up the squabs to reveal space enough for larger items, although the offside seat base also houses the leisure battery.

The kitchen has two large cupboards, both with shelves, but no cutlery drawer. Above the fridge is the wardrobe with a 430mm drop - not a lot of use unless you're a bolero enthusiast! However, to the rear, a slot that extends down behind the fridge allows for the hanging of a couple of jackets, with the rest of the space being more suitable for folded clothes. Indeed, if I owned a Quartz, I'd have this area shelved - so much better for my shorts-and-tee-shirt lifestyle.

At floor level behind the rear seats are two cubbyholes just right for water hose and hook-up lead. Formal storage ends at this point but there is still space behind the toilet.

Along with the cab door bins and handy elasticated pockets on the back of the cab seats, most holiday necessities can be tucked away safely.

Making it all work

Gas, water and electricity are the lifeblood of any motorcaravan and input and output devices are required to make everything work. EMC have made a conscious effort to install all the plugs, lids and hatches without cutting the bodywork - a great idea, as every hole that contains a fitting can not only look unsightly but also encourage corrosion. The cassette toilet is serviced through the tailgate and compressor fridges don't need air vents. That's two of the biggest holes of the way, but even the little ones have been taken care of by mounting the water filler inside the passenger door and the mains hook-up socket inside a dummy rear fog lamp.

The fresh water tank is underfloor and the pump feeds pressurised water to the single cold tap on the sink. This simple set-up means winter camping would be possible, albeit with a water container kept inside and the main system drained down. There are no waste water tank, water heater or space heater, but as a small converter EMC is happy to discuss individual customer requirements.

The electrical control panel deals with both 12V and mains circuits and incorporates a charger to top up the leisure battery when on site. I was pleased to see a 110 amp hr



The electrical control panel deals with both mains and 12V circuits and is housed - along with the single cylinder gas locker - in the base of the kitchen unit.



The toilet is serviced through the tailgate.



A dummy fog lamp is removed to reveal the hook-up socket.



Stylish 12V fluorescent lamps are fitted throughout. I would have some spots as well, to soften the overall lighting effect.

battery, as the compressor fridge increases demand from the 12V system. No blinds are provided, but these would be a useful addition, especially in the kitchen area (the fitted curtain could be a fire risk as it comes close to the hob).

The gas locker is metal-lined and vented in the correct manner and has room for one Campingaz 907 cylinder. This should last for ages, as it is only needed to power the hob and grill. There is also good news when the time comes for a refill, as these cylinders are almost universally available across the Europe.

When evening comes, the interior is fully illuminated by a barrage of stylish-looking fluorescent fittings that chase away shadows

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very effectively. My Quartz would have some spotlamps fitted as well, to soften the mood a little and provide illumination for my favourite book. If you have a large collection of tapes, you'll love the cassette-based sound system, which also produced excellent radio performance and worked without the ignition turned on.

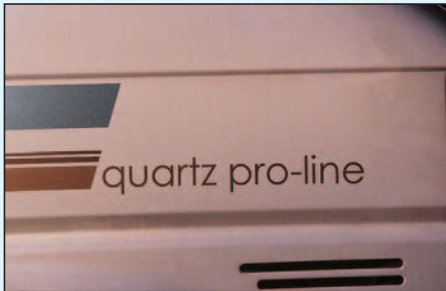
Capable camping car

The purchase of any motorcaravan, even a

smaller camper, is a complex job. It's vital to do lots of research, followed by lots of testing, during which time you should decide how you want to live in, and with, your chosen 'van. The Volkswagen T4 is the ideal everyday vehicle-cum-holiday-home and this short wheelbase model packs a lot into a modest space. Little bigger than an MPV and as easy to drive, its engineering has more in common with cars than commercials, with a build quality to match.

Choosing your new 'van from a small converter such as EMC can be a good thing, as you can talk directly to the people that build it and commission additions and modifications - something larger manufacturers may not be prepared to allow.

Four forward-facing passenger seats, single beds, a good kitchen and a ready-to-use full-sized toilet could be a tempting recipe for a comfortable camper that can also be the family car. □



In brief

Base vehicle: Volkswagen T4 SWB panel van

Engine type: 2461cc five-cylinder turbo-diesel

Output: 88bhp (65kW) @ 3600rpm

Gearbox and drive: Five-speed manual, front-wheel drive

Make and model: EMC Quartz Pro-line

Body type and construction: Panel van with EMC low-line, front-hinged, rising roof

Conversion badged as compliant with EN1646: No

Electrical equipment: Mains hook-up with CEC

power management control panel with RCD and MCBs. Two mains sockets, two 12V sockets.

110 amp hr leisure battery with built-in charger

Lighting: Five chrome-finished, 12V fluorescent

strip lights including one under raised tailgate

Cooking facilities: Smev two-burner stainless steel hob and Smev grill/warming oven, both with push-button ignition

Refrigerator: Waeco 36-litre slide-out, top-loading, 12V compressor type

Water heater: None fitted

Fresh water tank: 60 litres, underfloor

Waste water tank: None fitted

Space heating: None fitted

Gas locker capacity: One Campingaz 907 cylinder (2.72kg)

Rear restraints: Two lap belts fitted to rear seats with steel subframes. NB: three-point inertia reel rear belts are normally fitted

Additional features: Swivel cab seats with armrests and head restraints, full-sized electric-flush swivel-bowl toilet in dedicated compartment, gas strut-assisted roof bed, internal insulating screens for windscreen and tailgate

Dimensions

Overall length: 4.70m (15ft 5in)

Overall width: 1.85m (6ft 1in)

Overall height: 2.00m (6ft 7in)

Interior height: Roof down 1.42m (4ft 8in), roof raised 2.26m (7ft 5in) max.

Bed dimensions: Lower single beds 1.83m x 0.61m (6ft 0in x 2ft 0in), roof bed 1.85m x 1.57m (6ft 1in x 5ft 2in)

Max authorised weight: 2700kg

Load capacity: 650kg

Price

Standard model (as tested):

£26,600 on the road

Optional extras

Base vehicle options: All Volkswagen factory options are available

Caravan options: EMC state they are willing to consider extras and modifications to individual customer requirements

Vehicle kindly supplied for evaluation by:

Euro Motor Campers, 1 Foundry Lane,

Racca Green, Knottingley WF11 8AU

(tel: 01977 676028).

