

Long wheelbase high top campers are all the rage at the moment, but which layout is best? We take a detailed look at two of these new classics



he world of panel van conversions is on the up with a recent increase in market share. The introduction of the new Sevel-built (Fiat Ducato, Peugeot Boxer) vehicles has also revitalised the type, as the

new panel vans are wider, squarer and longer, giving converters more options design-wise.

So far, most firms have applied their talents to the long wheelbase high top version - its additional overall length offering the potential to make comfortable and spacious motorcaravans.

It's just such a pair of vehicles that step into the spotlight this month, as Autocruise launches its first panel van conversion and legendary panel van converter Auto-Sleepers offers its first high top to be built on a long wheelbase Peugeot Boxer.

Many folks choose a van conversion because they want a compact vehicle that is easy to drive and can be used everyday without hassle. Do bear in mind though, that although the long wheelbase Boxer is slimmer than a standard coachbuilt, at six metres it's quite long. Indeed, there are many coachbuilt 'vans that are shorter and that six-metre length is a very tight squeeze in the average car park space. Even so, advantages of the type include sliding side, and twin rear doors that make shopping easy, even if you're off to the local builders' merchants or Ikea.





it upfront, while Auto-Sleepers' Warwick loungers live in the rear. Both layouts have unique features, advantages and drawbacks, which will be loved or hated, but in the end, the type of lounge on offer will be the reason to buy, or not to buy.

It was also interesting to test the Tempo's mettle as this, the latest Autocruise conversion, enters the high top fray.

Although both 'vans use the Peugeot Boxer, one crucial difference is the fact that the Warwick is based on the window van. This features Peugeot factory-fitted glass side windows with

windows fitted by Autocruise.

The Tempo breaks no new ground design-wise and it seems that Autocruise has decided - with an ever-popular front lounge layout - to play it safe with its first camper.

Warwick's rear lounge layout is however, more unusual, as it places its washroom on the nearside, something that similar designs from other converters do not. It's also worth bearing in mind that both test vehicles were prototypes, so all may not have be exactly as production versions.

## **MOTIVE POWER**

OVERALL WIDTH: 2.05m (6ft 8.5in)

The latest batch of Peugeot Boxer engines is superb and the best yet. Complying with the latest (strict) Euro 4 emissions rules, these units burn cleaner and are more fuel efficient. That said, they also produce more power; put pedal to the metal too often and you may well find your thrilling ride sees you using more diesel.

The Tempo was fitted with the 120bhp motor, although I'm told (and the price list confirms) that a 'chipped' 130bhp version of this 2.2-litre engine will grace production Tempos. Under the Warwick demonstrator's bonnet lurked the range-topping 3.0-litre motor - a power unit that promised 'lively' performance as it provides 157 horsepower and massive torque.

Cabs are pretty much identical - the most noticeable difference being the way you gain them in the first place. The Warwick was fitted with remote central locking, the Tempo with the key-operated version. It may well be that production Tempos will have remote locking fitted and I hope so, as no keyholes are fitted to nearside cab and side sliding doors. This made locking and unlocking the 'van a bit of a faff, as I needed to keep trotting round to the driver's door each time.

Once aboard, Tempo you discover two height-adjustable seats and a smattering of











- 3 Kitchen dominates the rear end
- 4 Front lounge gives way to nearside washroom and offside kitchen
  - 5 The kitchen majors on working surface and storage space
- 6 Big, comfy lounge takes full advantage of the side door, but Tempo's table proved inadequate

## I LIKED

- Easy-driving base vehicle
- 2.2-litre engine
- Big comfortable lounge
- Capable kitchen with good storage
- Choice of double or single beds
- Factory-based service centre

## I WOULD HAVE LIKED

A reading lamp over the nearside seat

#### I DISLIKED

■ The lack of positive latching on overhead locker doors

faux wood on the dash. It's just the driver's pew that goes up and down in the Warwick, while dash trim is a more stylish grey 'carbon fibre'.

As expected, electric windows and mirrors, plenty of storage and useful things such as trip computer and variable wiper delay are present in both 'vans. Both also feature the standard driver's airbag, but I look forward to the day when a passenger airbag is also standard.

Both cabs also have a Peugeot-fit plastic shelf above. It's a useful receptacle, but also a bit of a napper knocker when you move to and from the rear.

#### **ROAD MANNERS**

The Sevel-built (Peugeot Boxer and Fiat Ducato) are almost ubiquitous as European motorhome base vehicles, and if you're a habitual reader of MMM road tests you'll probably have read quite a lot about them. You might expect that I know them well too, but there's always something new to try and this was my first drive of both the 2.2-litre 120bhp (Tempo) and 3.0-litre, 157bhp (Warwick) engines, installed in a high top motorcaravan.

Both 'vans share the same excellent disc brakes, light steering and dash-mounted gearchange - seeming much the same, that is, until you put your foot down! The Tempo's 120 horses are delivered progressively with no detectable turbo lag and with the kind of sophistication that made this 'van pure pleasure to drive. Although it has a six-speed gearbox, top gear only gives a 300rpm advantage over 5th, so 70mph comes up at an easy 2,500rpm. Good acceleration and relaxed cruising make the 120 horsepower motor perfect for this size of motorcaravan.

The optional 157bhp engine fitted in the Warwick made it a bit of an animal. Even driving feather-footed, this motor propels the Warwick at very impressive velocities - be sure to know your speed limits if you go for this option!

Seriously though, the standard 120/130bhp motor is more than powerful enough and will save you some serious wedge. Neither 'van was perfect in the conversion noise stakes, but much of the din seemed to be coming from the cooker in both cases: as usual, a few tea towel dampers should solve the problem. Do bear in mind that only the Tempo offers a rear travel seat with one three-point belt and this could be someone's important reason to buy.

## **LOUNGE AND DINE**

Like scenes from a home makeover show, both 'vans present interiors decorated in neutral colours: coffees and creams enhanced with browns and silver trim may be unadventurous, but they are easy to live with.

Warwick scores points with its positive-

#### I LIKED

- Easy-driving base vehicle
- Standard TV
- Cosy lounge
- Easy-to-make bed
- Diesel-fired heating
- Well-equipped kitchen

#### I WOULD HAVE LIKED

- A smaller engine
- I DISLIKED
- The small dining table

latching upper lockers, furnished with strong metal handles. Tempo lacks any sort of latching on its high-level lockers and aside from the consequences of an accident; anything stored in these will need to be securely retained. I could imagine heavy items emerging at speed if a sudden swerve is required.

Slide the Warwick's side door open and you're faced with part of the washroom wall, taking up space to the rear of the door's aperture. This narrows the doorway to the extent that it's more akin to entering a coachbuilt motorcaravan than a van conversion. Here the cab seats play no part in the living area and as such have no swivels fitted. That said, Auto-Sleepers tells me that a passenger seat swivel and dogleg table will be available as an option. It struck me that if one partner likes to lay abed while the other rises early, the cab so adorned will provide a welcome separate seating area.

In the rear, Warwick provides a pair of four-foot-plus sofas that offer feet-up lounging and great views from the four windows that surround. Fresh air fiends will be pleased to discover that the narrow seat across the rear is removable, thus allowing the rear doors to be opened to let the outside in. This is very much an equitable lounge as both partners get their own sofa, while the standard-fit TV drops down from beneath an adjacent locker for easy viewing. The nearby kitchen worktop also provides the ideal place for drinks or lunchtime snack.

Socialising will see four folks accommodated in comfort, with six close friends squeezing in.

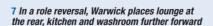
Tempo's lounge is a high top motorcaravan classic and one of the most popular designs around. Side sofa, swivelling cab passenger seat and forward-facing rear pew combine to offer plenty of seating in a spacious area. Its position, next to the side-sliding door, offers easy access and unfettered access to the great outdoors. The single long sofa means feet-up lounging will be 'won' by just one partner. This leaves forwardfacing rear seat and swivelled cab pew for the loser. Bear in mind that the living area floor is lower than the cab, thus the cab seat comes high to the lounge. Autocruise has recognised this glitch however, and I discovered a simplebut-effective carpet-covered footrest lurking in a locker. TV can be enjoyed with set locations provided in two locations: a locker above the rear travel seat and the end of the adjacent kitchen unit are furnished with the appropriate power and aerial sockets. Six friends can sit here in comfort.

Mealtimes in both 'vans require the erection of freestanding tables and both are securely stowed in their wardrobes. Both tables are lightweight and easy to erect, with fold-down metal legs easily deployed. Both, however, have drawbacks. The Warwick's table is easy to use, but a tad narrow, meaning



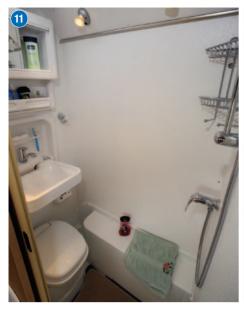






- 8 Front-end layout sees cab seating isolated from lounge
- 9 This 'van's main selling point is its rear-end, U-shaped lounge, where mealtimes are comfortable, but the table is narrow
- 10 Kitchen is extremely well equipped







the supplied china dinner plates (part of a set that includes mugs and wine glasses) must be placed offset for sensible use. Dining here is strictly a two-person affair.

Tempo's table has the potential to sit in front of the side sofa, allowing eating while sitting on the sofa and the forward-facing rear seat: the swivelled cab pew comes too high to be used. Unfortunately, this table - quite literally - shoots itself in the foot. The T-shaped feet proved to be too wide to fit in the aisle formed by the adjacent sofa and forward-facing seat bases. This meant that the only way to use the table was to place it at right angle to the sofa, end-on to the side door. Dining in this fashion is fine from the single seat. Sitting on the end of the sofa with my legs either side of the table's leg proved less successful. A simple table leg mod would seem to be the solution: shame Autocruise hadn't seen fit to do it.

## **COOK'S QUARTERS**

It's in the kitchens where the new long wheelbase van's extra internal length is most obvious, as oceans of work surface is available in both. Both feature excellent cookers. Tempo's mini slot-in unit provides three burners, grill and oven in the same space. The Warwick goes more than one better, with three gas burners, an electric hotplate and separate grill and oven. The presence of a smart stainless steel microwave above completes a suite that achieves domestic standards.

Warwick's sink does much the same thing; it's a superb device with a deep drainer and spacious bowl. The Tempo's sink comes with a lid-mounted oddments rack, washing-up bowl and cutting board/drainer, but it's not equal to the Warwick's best-practice design.

Both galleys have good upper locker space, the Warwick using one to house the iconic Auto-Sleepers china and glass set.

Down below, however, Tempo wins, offering loads of storage space, a decent cutlery drawer and a larger fridge. Warwick's 'downstairs' is a couple of cupboards and a pullout plastic cutlery tray that would be a joke if it was discovered in a doll's house!

> 11 Tempo washroom is conventional, but benefits from a space-saving tambour door

12 Two single beds will suit many motorcaravanners

## **HEAD-TO-HEAD DATA**

From, as tested: £33,850 OTR (plus cost of awning)

## BASICS (\*manufacturer's figures)

- Berths: 2
- Three-point belted seats: 3 (including driver)
- Warranty: Three years base vehicle, two vears conversion
- Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant: No
- Construction: Steel bodied high top panel van
- Length: 6.18m (20ft 3.5in) including rear step\*
- Width: 2.05m (6ft 8.5in)\*
- Height: 2.55m (8ft 4.5in)
- Wheelbase: 4.03m (13ft 3in)\*
- Rear overhang: 1.20m (3ft 11in) ■ Maximum authorised weight: 3500kg\*
- Payload: 680kg\* (after the vehicle in working order)

## THE VEHICLE

- Chassis: Peugeot Boxer long wheelbase high roof panel van
- Engine: 2.2-litre common rail turbo-diesel producing 120bhp
- Transmission: Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive
- Brakes: Discs all round
- Suspension: Front: Independent. Rear: rigid
- Features: Key-operated central-locking, ABS, driver's airbag, electric windows and mirrors, trip computer, Blaupunkt radio/CD player, steering wheel-mounted audio controls, variable wiper delay, height-adjustable driver and passenger seats, overcab shelf, central 'laptop' locker, twin door bins

## **INSIDE**

- Layout: Swivelling cab passenger seat ahead of forward-facing travel seat, offside inward-facing sofa, offside kitchen, nearside wardrobe and washroom
- Insulation: 10mm Thinsulate
- Interior height: 1.90m (6ft 3in)

## **KITCHEN**

- Sink: Stainless steel with washing-up bowl, hinged lid/oddments rack, removable cutting board/drainer
- Cooker: Spinflo Triplex integrated stove with three-burner hob, grill/oven, hinged glass lid, electronic ignition

## **AUTOCRUISE TEMPO**

Fridge: Dometic RM727IL manual energy selection. Capacity 81 litres

## **WASHROOM**

- Toilet: Thetford swivel-bowl electric-flush cassette
- Basin: Drop-down unit with single-lever swivelling mixer tap
- Shower: Mixer tap, showerhead/riser rail, two-outlet tray floor enclosed by nylon curtain

### REDS

Lounge double

Length: 1.85m (6ft 1in)

■ Width: 1.70m (5ft 7in)

Alternative singles Nearside:

Length: 1.86m (6ft 1in) ■ Width: 660mm (2ft 2in)

Length: 1.86m (6ft 1in)

■ Width: 770mm (2ft 6.5in)

## **EQUIPMENT**

- Fresh water: Underslung. 66 litres (14.5 gallons)
- Waste water: Underslung, 50 litres (11 gallons)
- Water heater: Truma Ultrastore boiler, gas-mains operation
- Space heater: Truma E2400 with blown-air, gas-only operation
- Leisure battery: 85 amp hr
- Gas: Capacity 2 x 7kg cylinders
- Lighting: Three halogen ceiling lamps, two adjustable spotlights in lounge, three adjustable spotlights in kitchen, two adjustable spotlights in washroom, multi-LED awning light
- Sockets: 230V: 3 (two in lounge, one in kitchen), 12V: 2 (lounge, kitchen)

## **OPTIONAL EXTRAS**

Fitted to test vehicle

- Base: None
- Conversion: Wind-out awning (£TBA)
- Other options
- Base: 157bhp engine (£1350), alloy wheels (£TBA), cab air-conditioning (£1095)
- Conversion: Roof bars (£TBA), Rear ladder (£TBA), TV aerial (£TBA)

E&OE





## **HEAD-TO-HEAD DATA**

#### **PRICE**

- From: £37,095 OTR. ■ As tested: £39.192 OTR
- BASICS (\*manufacturer's figures)
- Berths: 2
- Three-point belted seats: 2 (including driver)
- Warranty: 3 years base vehicle, 2 years conversion
- Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant: Yes
- Construction: Steel-bodied high top window van
- Length: 5.99m (19ft 8in)\*
   Width: 2.05m (6ft 8.5in)\*
- Height: 2.52m (8ft 3.5in)\*
- Wheelbase: 4.03m (13ft 3in)\*
- Rear overhang: 1.01m (3ft 4in)
- Maximum authorised weight: 3500kg\*
- Payload: 399kg\* (after the vehicle in working order, driver, passenger, essential habitation equipment)

## THE VEHICLE

- Chassis: Peugeot Boxer long wheelbase high roof window van
- Engine: 3.0-litre common rail turbo-diesel producing 157bhp
- Transmission: Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive
- Brakes: Discs all round
- Suspension: Front: Independent. Rear: rigid axle
- Features: Remote central-locking, ABS, driver's airbag, electric windows and mirrors, trip computer, Blaupunkt radio/ CD/MP3 player, steering wheel-mounted audio controls, variable wiper delay, heightadjustable driver's seat, overcab shelf, central 'laptop' locker, twin door bins

- Layout: Offside kitchen, nearside washroom and wardrobe, rear-located, twin-sofa lounge
- Insulation: Thinsulate branded insulation material installed throughout
- Interior height: 1.89m (6ft 2.5in)

### **KITCHEN**

- Sink: Stainless steel with deep drainer and hinged glass lid
- Cooker: Spinflo Caprice with three gas burners, on electric hotplate, grill, oven, all

## **AUTO-SLEEPER WARWICK**

flames have electronic ignition. LG 700W stainless steel microwave oven

Fridge: Dometic RM 7270 manual energy selection. Capacity 77 litres

### **WASHROOM**

- Toilet: Thetford C400 with wheeled cassette with built-in flush water tank
- Basin: Drop-down unit with Whale mixer tap
- Shower: Separate mixer tap, riser rail, shower head, twin-outlet shower-tray floor, nylon curtain

### **BEDS**

Lounge double

Length: 1.88m (6ft 2in) ■ Width: 1.34m (4ft 5in)

## **EQUIPMENT**

- Fresh water: Underslung, 105 litres (23.1 gallons)
- Waste water: Underslung. 53 litres (11.7 gallons)
- Water heater: Truma Ultrastore boiler, gas-mains operation
- Space heater: Eberspacher Airtronic blown-air, diesel-fired
- Leisure battery: 110 amp hr
- Gas: Capacity two 7kg cylinders
- Lighting: 3 halogen ceiling lights, 7 halogen downlighters, 4 adjustable reading lamps,
- multi-LED awning and washroom lamps

  Sockets: 230V: 2 (kitchen, lounge), 12V: 2 (kitchen)

## OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Fitted to test vehicle

- Base: 3.0-litre 157bhp engine (£1350), cruise control (£164), alloy wheels (£435),

  Conversion: Roof bars (£148)
- Other options
- Base: Cab air-conditioning (£823), passenger airbag (£212), wheel trims (£141), metallic paint (£352)
- Conversion: Pull-out roof bed (£259) optional upholstery (£205), Swivel passenger seat and swing-arm table (£434)

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Waste bins are present in both 'vans; the Tempo fixes a decent-sized unit to the inside of a cupboard door. The Warwick provides a little unit set into the worktop that'll be good enough to take peelings and tea bags, but not much else.

Critique aside, both these kitchens would be considered good in even a large motorhome; in these compact van conversions they can claim excellence and easily get away with it.

## **BATHING SPACE**

Conventional best describes both washrooms as the design can be found in many high top panel van conversions on the market today. Standout feature in both is a fold-down washbasin. Although these units are considered by some commentators to be old-fashioned, they help make the best use of space in a compact bathing area, as offered by both Tempo and Warwick.

Warwick's basin, however, is a superior unit - bigger and more stylish. The Warwick's loo is better too - the Thetford bench-style toilet fitted here is the swish model with easy-toshift wheeled cassette. Tempo makes do with the more ubiquitous swivelling bowl unit, but to be fair, the presence of a rear wheelarch precludes the fitting of the other. Storage in both little rooms is limited to mirrored cabinets with slippery plastic shelves, although the Warwick's cupboard has retainer-equipped shelves, while the Tempo offers a bin-style shelf below its cabinet.

Showering is courtesy of separate mixer taps and riser rail/shower heads served by twin-drain shower tray floors and nylon curtains.

Finally, and although both washrooms are much the same, the Tempo's offers a bit more internal space and has an easy-to-use (and easy to leave open at night) sliding tambour door to the Warwick's standard hinged item.

## **BED TIME**

If you desire or need single beds in your motorcaravan then the Tempo will be your automatic choice, as the Warwick offers only

The Warwick's cab is distant from its

13 Warwick's double bed is the only option

14 Conventional washroom features high quality kit









15 Transverse double bed is very wide

16 Storage aplenty under all the lounge seating

17 This forward-facing travel seat in the rear could be a deal clincher

18 Bedding stows under the lounge seating

19 The Warwick's nearside washroom narrows its entrance

20 Possibly the most bizarre motorcaravan feature ever, yet the pullout ironing board could prove itself on longer trips

lounge-based bedroom and is enclosed by curtains in the standard manner. Tempo's cab forms part of the living area, so its cab's windscreen blind and insulated side window panels are welcome, leaving space in the cab uncluttered. The fact that Autocruise hasn't fitted cab side window blinds puzzled me, but I guess it's to avoid the blind spots their frames create when driving.

Blinds and curtains easily enclose the Warwick's lounge, while the transverse bed is equally easy to make. A latch on the front of each sofa base allows sprung-slat-equipped steel frames to pull together. Drop in backrests and you're there.

The Tempo provides those (possibly essential) single beds as its first base to bedtime bliss. It's a bit of a struggle to transfer the sofa's backrest into the cab, but do this and drop in a small infill behind the driver's seat and you're left with a nice wide single bed. On the nearside a catch is released to allow the single rear seat to flatten. Another infill completes a second single bed that is long but narrower. Double bed fans now pull the sofa base into the aisle and add the backrest to create a transverse double of equal comfort.

### **STORE ROOM**

As both 'vans have underslung tanks so there's lots of space under all the seats for stashing your gear. This is a good thing, as the latest Boxer's overcab locker is a slim affair. The old model provided enough room to store bedding, but the new does not - under the sofas is the place to stash your duvet and pillows. Even so, there's still a lot of room for other kit and the Tempo offers front flaps and top access to underseat space. It also features a huge wardrobe and a full-height cupboard at the rear behind the washroom. Unusually, the gas locker is very deep and big enough to carefully stow hook-up lead, wedges and tools. The Warwick, like the Tempo, has overhead lockers in the lounge, a cupboard just inside the side-sliding door and a good-sized wardrobe. Tempo scores a few extra points with a range of cubbies located in rear and side doors.

### **LIFE SUPPORT**

The Warwick's standard-fit TV is obviously a standout item kit-wise, but both 'vans are well equipped. Lighting is comprehensive, with spots and ceiling lights aplenty. The only area lacking in this respect is the nearside of the Tempo's lounge where a reading lamp is needed to serve the single seat and single bed. Both 'vans have stripstyle, multi-LED awning lights and the Warwick features a similar lamp in its washroom.

Space heating in the Tempo goes the standard route with a Truma blown-air unit that runs on gas alone. Warwick's blown-air warmer is a diesel-powered Eberspacher unit running on fuel from the vehicle's tank. This means that as long as you've got fuel in your tank you can stay warm and save gas. However, these units tend to be noisier outside than their gas-powered counterparts, so if you pitch next to tent

campers you may disturb them. In both 'vans, water is heated by Truma's trusty Ultrastore boiler which runs on gas and/or mains electric.

Wind-up Heki rooflights serve both lounges, while the Tempo usefully has a Mini Heki above the cooker. The Warwick provides an extractor hood above its cooker. Water tanks are good-sized with the Warwick's 105-litre fresh container outstanding. The Tempo is equipped with a combination water filler/external shower/water filter unit that I'd not seen before. This features a plug-in system for both the shower and the fresh water filling system, which can use a submersible pump for on-pitch top-ups.

And finally we arrive at what is possibly the most bizarre piece of kit that I've ever seen in a motorhome. Tug on a handle at the aft end of the Warwick's kitchen and out pops an ironing board! Err... me and ironing really don't get on, but you may love it!

## CONCLUSION

The long wheelbase Peugeot Boxer high top panel 'van is a superb base for a motorcaravan. Squarer and wider at the rear than its predecessor, it allows among other things the inclusion of a decent-length transverse double bed, something of which both the Tempo and the Warwick take advantage. Which 'van you buy could simply be down to whether or not you want single beds: if so, the Tempo may float your motorhome boat.

Warwick has the cachet of the Auto-Sleepers' brand and is very well equipped in standard form. Its rear lounge layout creates a cosy atmosphere well suited to foul-weather camping, although it's still possible to open the twin rear doors when the sun shines. The Warwick's nearside washroom design also creates more of a coachbuilt feel as it narrows the 'van's entrance, while the cab plays little part in the living area. Do bear in mind that if you are folks who rise at different times, the cab (especially with the expected swivel cab seat and additional table) will provide a separate seating area for the early bird.

The Tempo is a good first effort for Autocruise and is well priced, especially considering the level of equipment. However, I did spot one or two rough edges, while the lack of latches on the overhead locker doors is a concern.

Both washrooms are unremarkable, but the kitchens shine - the Warwick with equipment, the Tempo with storage space. Both are excellent galleys.

Finally, both Autocruise and Auto-Sleepers have factory-based service centres that should bring owners piece of mind. One thing's for certain, having chosen either based on it offering your ideal layout, you're unlikely to be disappointed.

# VEHICLES LOANED FOR EVALUATION BY:

Autocruise Tempo: Autocruise, Swinton Meadows Industrial Estate, Meadow Way, Swinton, Mexborough, South Yorkshire, S64 8AB (tel: 01709 571 411;

web site: www.autocruise.co.uk)

Auto-Sleeper Warwick: Auto-Sleepers Ltd, Orchard Works, Willersey, Worcestershire WR12 7QF (tel: 01386 853338;

web site: www.auto-sleepers.co.uk)







