

weekend away | Jerba sanna

# top scotch



## Here's a new VW camper with a loo. It's beautifully built – in Scotland – and named after a remote bay on the Ardnamurchan peninsula

**S**URELY Jerba are the most scenically sited motorhome manufacturer in the UK? Situated on the Scottish coast, just east of Edinburgh, this test necessitated a little long-distance driving in order to enjoy the best the area has to offer. After all, where would I rather spend a long weekend than right here in North Berwick?

It's a shame I didn't have the opportunity to travel further in Jerba's VW Transporter-based Sanna, however, as it's such a superb vehicle to drive. Its car-like driving position and willing engine are a joy, and the vehicle's small dimensions make for easy manoeuvring. Also, the low height of just 1.99m (top down) should result in excellent fuel economy figures. In fact, fuel economy is even better than it appears as the diesel-powered Webasto heater takes its fuel from the vehicle's tank – and that also means that you'll never be without a bit of winter warmth.

As standard, the Sanna comes based on the Transporter SE – an upgraded version of the standard LWB T5 that offers loads of extras over and above the standard van. These include items such as colour-coded bumpers and mirrors, a window in the sliding door, extra storage pockets in the cab, additional engine noise suppression, and wheel trims – as well as other on-board comforts. You can ask for your Sanna to be based on either spec of base vehicle, although around £1000 extra for the SE seems like a bit of a bargain.

Whichever you choose, you won't find any holes or unsightly vents cut into the side of this camper – not even the mains lead connection or water point is on show. A small hatch has been fitted to the offside corner of the rear bumper where both of these connection points are found. And the optional metallic green paintwork seen on this Sanna lacks any ostentatious stickers or decals declaring its provenance, so if you enjoy wild-camping in Europe (or just kipping outside a friend's house), the Sanna looks more like an MPV – especially if you keep the roof down at night.

The elevating roof is a front-hinged model from German company SCA. On the

Words & Pictures | Jo Vaughan





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outside it is sprayed to match the bodywork (isn't it horrible to see a coloured camper with a white roof?), and there are three vents/windows around its canvas sides. Jerba have used this SCA roof instead of the more commonly seen Reimo one as it is lower in total height – just 1.99m when shut, enabling the camper to get under most height barriers and into many car parks.

The roof's only disadvantage is when you need to lower it – it's a long stretch to reach! – although this results in a massive amount of internal headroom (an amazing 2.30 metres to be precise). The retracting handles are almost at the uppermost point, though, and even kneeling on the kitchen unit I struggled

to reach them. Jerba do put some extra hanging straps to pull on if required, though – but (at 5ft 2in) I wasn't even tall enough to reach these! Perhaps I should have packed a free-standing step, especially as this would also be helpful when entering the camper from the rear tailgate.

Don't presume you've guessed the interior layout just because of the Sanna's VW pedigree. Jerba do offer a standard 'VW layout' in the form of their Tthree, Cromarty and Spirit conversions, but the Sanna has four forward-facing single seats, a kitchen along the nearside, and a wardrobe and toilet compartment on the offside. The two rear travel seats hail from RIB and are crash-

tested, with head restraints and three-point seatbelts, making this a camper for four to travel in safely.

The RIB seats are chunky and well-proportioned (and even have some storage within their bases) but this does leave a narrow aisle – just 10 inches to be precise. In fact, let's say now that this is not a camper for the more generously proportioned. I squeezed from the lounge to the kitchen while packing, and the story is the same when using the fixed cassette toilet, as the gap between the wardrobe and the toilet controls isn't huge.

On the plus side, every inch of available interior space has been put to good use. There's an amazing amount of storage in this little motorhome – something which can be a struggle in some conversions of this layout. Even with my cameras, laptop, and a bucket that's used in lieu of a waste tank, there were enough cupboards for all my other gubbins – and more. The kitchen unit has a giant, shelved, double-door cupboard beneath the sink and an integral three-burner hob (which can act as a draining board). Next to this is another cupboard with a flip-down door, perfect for toiletries as it is opposite the toilet. And the drawer above is deep enough for plates and bowls – but not mugs.

On the other side of the camper, in front of the fixed cassette toilet, is a tall wardrobe



#### FACT FILE

PRICE FROM £40,150

PRICE AS TESTED  
£45,834

BERTHS 2

TRAVEL SEATS  
(INC DRIVER) 4

DIMENSIONS 5.29m L,  
2.28m W, 1.99m H

INTERIOR HEIGHT Max  
2.30m (roof up)

MAXIMUM WEIGHT  
3000kg

PAYLOAD 460kg

BEDS Twin single beds  
1.85m x 0.60m

FRESH WATER  
38 litres (underfloor)

WASTE WATER  
None fitted (option)

LEISURE BATTERY 90Ah

MAINS SOCKETS 2

#### BASE VEHICLE

VOLKSWAGEN  
TRANSPORTER T5 SE  
LONG-WHEELBASE

ENGINE 2.0TDI 102bhp  
standard, 140bhp version  
as tested

#### COOKING/HEATING

COOKING 3-burner hob,  
spark ignition

FRIDGE 51-litre Vitrigo  
12V compressor

HEATING Webasto Airtop  
diesel blown-air

BOILER None

worth a fortune



Just a handful of miles from North Berwick's town centre is East Fortune Farm – home to two small campsites, both overlooking open scenery. The first is a 15-pitch commercial site, separated by stables and a field from the five-pitch Caravan Club CL. Neither have a toilet block but both have electric hook-ups and share information, waste disposal and Elsan points. The 15-pitch area is further away from the road onto which the CL backs, although it is closer to the railway line that is just the other end of the field.

The CL was awarded a Regional Commendation for Scotland in the CL of the Year Awards and it's not surprising. The views over the hills are spectacular, and there are barbecues to borrow if you wish. There's plenty of dog walking space around the farm's perimeter, and there are some attractive landscaped flower beds. Fresh eggs are available via an honesty box in the information office, and you can enjoy looking at the farm animals, which include horses and two pigs. Its success in the Awards has meant an increase in popularity, so pre-booking is advised. The standard cost for both pitching areas is £11 per night, which includes a hook-up. There's no extra charge for dogs.

**East Fortune Farm**

6 New Row, East Fortune, North Berwick, EH39 5JU 01620 880231  
www.brandleisure.co.uk



which has three large compartments for folded clothes – much more useful in a small camper than offering this as hanging space. Forward again, beneath the fridge, is another cupboard that held all my pots and pans – and there's a shelf above for cutlery. My sleeping bag and pillow snugly tucked behind the rear seat's backrest, and I didn't even need RIB's base storage cupboards with their front access doors with push-button locks. These compartments are smaller than often seen, as they house the extra support bars for the double bed. This is made by pushing the two RIB seats together (although you'll still have a gap in the mattress at the foot end).

The aisle between the seats may be narrow, but it opens up around the kitchen units, giving you plenty of room to cook and create – especially as there's loads of worktop available. There's also more worktop above the fridge, where there are two mains sockets and a Sargent control panel that has an alarm facility. The Webasto heater controls are adjacent too and couldn't be easier to work – just twist the dial according to how much heat you need and warmth blows

**FOR**

- STORAGE
- GREAT TO DRIVE
- QUALITY CONVERSION
- NO VISIBLE VENTS/FILLERS IN BODYWORK
- NEAT ON-BOARD TOILET FACILITIES
- KITCHEN WORKTOP SPACE
- RIB CRASH-TESTED REAR SEATS
- LOW OVERALL HEIGHT

**AGAINST**

- HARD BEDS WITH SLOPING ENDS
- HEIGHT OF HANDLES TO PULL DOWN ROOF
- NARROW AISLE BETWEEN REAR SEATS

**RIVALS**

- BILBO'S ELEGANS
- CMC REIMO
- MULTI STYLE
- DANBURY ROYALE



out of a vent positioned on the driver's seat base. The temperature dropped to around five degrees at night during my test, yet still I barely turned the dial more than a quarter of the way round.

At mealtimes, two tables are available – one is wall-mounted and sits on the offside (the table stores vertically just below this rail when out of use, for easy access). The other is permanently pushed against the back of the nearside cab seat on an island leg – although I found this got in the way when trying to swivel the passenger cab seat so I'd probably leave it at home. As it is, four can easily dine and you can cater for everyone too. I managed to get a large frying pan and a saucepan on the hob at the same time, and the ignition switch for the gas meant I didn't need to mess around with matches.

The sink is well proportioned, although there's no boiler on board so I had to boil water on the hob for washing up – better than losing a storage cupboard to a bulky boiler. The water tank has a 38-litre capacity – adequate for a long weekend.

The 51-litre fridge is a compressor model, which runs on 12V power. Compressor



beautiful north berwick



North Berwick has a huge amount to offer visitors. The High Street is full of individual stores and boutiques which will tempt your purse from your handbag over and over again. There's an array of cafés and restaurants too, although my eye was drawn towards the beach and the ice cream van that seemed permanently stationed beside the harbour.

The beach has a self-filling swimming pool that changes its water with every tide. Even though the weather was too cold for swimming, children were paddling and floating small plastic dinghies around the pool, and dogs were splashing around in the shallows. The sandy expanse is long and wide, with just enough rocky outcrops to produce perfect rock pools, and fishermen stood at the shore casting lines out into the choppy waters.

At the harbour end of the beach is the Scottish Seabird Centre, which is a five-star award-winning tourist attraction. You can control interactive live cameras that show the birds in their natural habitat, while boat trips are available to see the local puffins. There's a Kids' Zone with soft play, Environment and Migration Flyaway zones, and a wildlife theatre. Tickets cost £7.95 for adults or £5.95 for concessions, while children from four to 15 enter for £4.50.

But before you go home make sure you stop at 'The Law' on your way back to the campsite. This strange hill is the inner cone of an ancient volcano that has been worn away over time. Some paths to the top have been eroded, but stick to the marked trails and you'll find a replica whale's jawbone at the top!

**The Scottish Seabird Centre**  
The Harbour, North Berwick, EH39 4SS  
01620 890202  
www.seabird.org



fridges not only save on gas usage but also have other benefits such as the ability to work on sharper gradients, are more efficient in reaching their working temperature, and you don't have to remember to change their power source manually. The only disadvantage is that I decided to sleep on the offside bed – the fridge was just behind my pillow and the noise of it switching on and off to maintain its temperature did wake me up once or twice.

It also took me a couple of nights to get used to the relatively hard beds, but I can't complain about the ease of bed make-up. You will already have lifted the cab seats to their maximum height in order to swivel them, so all that's left to do is wind the front seats' backrests forward a little and push the bases forward as far as they will go. The bases of the RIB seats then flip through 180 degrees to sit flush with the cab seats, while the backrests fold flat to complete the bed. I would have liked a small wedge-shaped infill cushion for the cab seats' bases, though, but Jerba are looking into offering this in future.

**QUALITY COUNTS**



There's no doubting the high quality of this little camper, with the cabinetwork all being well finished, everything fitting properly and drawers that run cleanly. The space between the cab curtain's front poppers could be slightly wider as it was a tight fit to the cab, and the privacy door-cum-wardrobe door could do with a strap (attached to the kitchen worktop) to keep it open when parked on a slight slope – but Jerba are looking into this.

Privacy is via a series of black-out curtains that fasten to the wall on press studs. The cab curtain is the only one that is loose (the rest are attached permanently), but this stored neatly on top of my bedding behind the offside RIB seat. You don't need to pull all the curtains if using the toilet during the day, however. The wardrobe door has a flap that opens out to cover the aisle, creating a small washroom compartment, so the only curtains you need to pull are those behind the kitchen and the rear window. Men may struggle to stand up to use the toilet, though, as there isn't much shoulder room.

While washing, or cooking, you can use the section of full-width worktop that sits above the toilet as a convenient stool. There's even a little mirror on the back of the wardrobe door, so you can put on your make-up while seated here.

The Sanna is a relatively unusual take on a VW camper, although it's not revolutionary. Where it wins is on storage space available in such a small area. There are some small snags concerning the height when retracting the roof and the sloping ends of the beds, but these are a small price to pay for the VW's on-road capabilities, on-board facilities, seating comfort and Jerba's superb construction standards. The UK has always been home to small van convertors that are big on quality, and Jerba can only add to this reputation.

**which motorhome says** ★★★★★

Choosing a VW T5 camper has never been so difficult. Jerba are now amongst the best in this class.

