



Dr Howe with her sons (left to right) David, William and Jamie, and dogs, Torres and Holly



AUTHOR IMAGES



## Leisure

# Me and my campervan

*Dr Kathryn Howe*, a GP in the Scottish Borders, recommends campervanning for relaxation

I learned to drive in a campervan – my parents owned VW Campervans dating back to 1975 and our childhood holidays usually involved camping.

I always felt a strong draw towards getting my own van, and when we had our children, my husband and I decided to do the campervan thing.

The only problem was finding a van that had properly safety-belted seats for three children. Most vans will only accommodate two rear seat passengers.

### Converted campervan

In the end, we bought an ex-rental VW Transporter and had it converted by Jerba Campervans in North Berwick, to include a fold-down double bed, a raising roof with a pull-down bed, a fridge, sink and storage.

Jerba offered a choice of conversion options, which included suitably safe seating, and came well recommended by friends.

We can now camp with all five of us plus our two (medium and large) dogs. We have a large attached tent to use if we feel the need for more

space, and it really does pop up in a couple of minutes.

Our first trip to northern Spain and south-west France was particularly memorable. We camped on a cliff-top and watched beautiful sunsets, travelled through the Pyrenees and drove north through the Dordogne.

We moved on every few days, making the holiday feel like an adventure, and we loved the feeling of being free to stay or move on a whim, or depending on the weather.

Quite a few patients know about my campervan habit and it can lead to animated discussion on the pros and cons of a long wheelbase, or the inclusion (or otherwise) of a portable loo.

I often hear that patients with significant disabilities are regular campers. There are many gadgets available now to make camping more accessible and comfortable, and there is far less creeping around trying not to bump your head than you find in tent camping.

We are planning another trip to France and perhaps Italy, for summer 2015. I have fond memories of

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GP, Scottish Borders

camping by Lake Garda as a child and would love to take the family there.

Before that, though, we will be camping at St Mary's Loch in the Scottish Borders for dinghy sailing, the Lake District for walking (me) and triathlon (my husband), and around the Scottish Highlands when we have a chance to get away for a weekend.

### Antidote to stress

I would encourage other GPs to take up campervanning as an antidote to the busy, frenetic day job. I also find time at home is consumed by an endless cycle of chores, so getting away from the house is really relaxing.

Renting a van before you decide to buy is a possibility, and would help with the decision about which facilities are essential.

Our van has been a great investment – it is tailor-made for us and we plan to keep it, but well-converted campervans hold their value. My parents' 1979 van is still on the road. Maybe ours will last 35 years too.

• More about Jerba Campervans at [www.jerbacampervans.co.uk](http://www.jerbacampervans.co.uk)