

# gas-free camper

Jerba Campervans have some innovative ideas, including a gas-free T5 camper

**V**W campers all look alike, don't they? A kitchen down the side, bench seat at the back, swivel cab seats and a pop-up roof. Here, though, the age-old recipe has been given a dash of chilli paste, care of Jerba Campervans. This Scottish firm may be a relative newcomer but innovative ideas give their campers a taste of their own.

So who are Jerba? Well, Simon Poole founded the company back in February '06, putting to use experience of touring with a 1970s VW camper in Canada and later ownership of a T4 in the UK. Their first conversion - as with many fledgling converters before them - was built at home. It was subsequently rented out to bring in enough income to start manufacturing. Now they offer a range of T5 campers for both rental and retail customers.

It seems the firm is also coming of age, with first an appearance at last October's NEC show, and now becoming a supplier of VW's motorhome-spec base vehicle. And customers are not just from Scotland, but all over the UK as Jerba are developing a reputation for being able to tweak their designs to individual requirements. Their Tiree (short-wheelbase), Cromarty (long-wheelbase) and Taransay (rear kitchen) layouts are a good starting point, but if you

have specific wishes in how your VW should look, then almost anything is possible.

So what's different? We tried Jerba's Tiree demonstrator, based on a pre-facelift Volkswagen T5 SWB. And it has to be said, it looks - and drives - like any other VW camper, which is a pretty good start. Even a glance inside doesn't have you in awe of the changes that Jerba have made, though the high standard of build is immediately evident. No, the difference is in the detail.

On the outside, for example, you'll search in vain for the mains hook-up socket and fresh water filler, not because they're not there, but because they've been oh-so-neatly secreted away beneath the (now hinged) corner trim panel under the offside rear light. Step inside, and the grey Vöhringer furniture board with edge-banding and the RIB rear seat on a sturdy steel frame are familiar stuff, but that flat hob most certainly isn't. It looks like an electric cooker but actually it's diesel-powered. And yes, we cooked the bacon and eggs in the photos on it. The hob takes about four minutes to warm up but is very easy to use. Crucially, along with diesel heating (also by Webasto, with the option of hot water and even engine pre-heating) and an all-electric fridge, it means this Tiree is totally gas-free,

creating more storage and meaning that you'll never have to change a Campingaz or Calor cylinder again.

The diesel hob is an option, but other neat ideas are standard - like the underfloor battery cages. Our test 'van had two 60Ah leisure batteries mounted out of the way and out of the living area, while you can upgrade to one 60Ah and one 90Ah. Even the elevating roof, a perfectly standard Reimo pop-top to the untrained eye has been fitted with midge-proof insect screens to cope with Scottish camping. And there are little touches like re-siting the original VW courtesy lights over the sliding door and tailgate rather than simply losing these when the roof is cut out.

More general lighting is well thought-out too, with 'flexible wand' LED reading lights provided for both cab seats and both sides of the rear bench, plus a fluorescent tube over the galley and a rotating LED lamp over the head of the bed. A bed which is an absolute doddle to make and has the bonus of a rake-adjustable mattress at the pillow end, whichever way round you sleep.

The standard (gas hob) Tiree has a slightly wider bed and also gains a small drawer over the fridge, but otherwise this camper seems to have all the usual storage solutions addressed. There are mini-lockers over the offside windows, two large under-seat cupboards (one housing an optional Fiamma Bi-Pot chemical loo), and locker space for folded clothes (or a wardrobe, if you prefer) in the rear corner. The fridge, and most of the cupboard space, are accessible with the bed made up and the rear boot can carry much bigger loads with the rear mattress cushion tipped up to vertical.

There's plenty more we could add about this highly bespoke VW but our only real gripe was with the height of the rear seat. Anyone much under 6ft will need a footrest to avoid backache after long periods of sitting - a pity as the seat is well-shaped and has adjustable headrests.

## FACT FILE

**PRICE FROM** £35,250

**PRICE AS TESTED**

£42,359

(Prices refer to new facelifted VW T5)

**BERTHS** 4

**TRAVEL SEATS (INC DRIVER)** 4

**DIMENSIONS** 4.89m L, 1.90m W, 2.00m H

**INTERIOR HEIGHT** 1.86m

**MAXIMUM WEIGHT** 3200kg

**PAYLOAD** 800kg

**BEDS** Roof bed 1.87m x 1.11m, main bed 1.86m x 1.10m

**FRESH WATER** 38 litres (underfloor)

**WASTE WATER** Not fitted (29 litres optional)

**LEISURE BATTERY** 2 x 60Ah

**MAINS SOCKETS** 2

## BASE VEHICLE

**VW TRANSPORTER T5 SWB**

**ENGINE** 2.5TDI 130bhp (now replaced by 2.0TDI 140bhp in latest T5)

## COOKING/HEATING

**COOKING** Webasto 2-burner diesel hob

**FRIDGE** Vitrifrigo 51-litre compressor

**GAS:** None

**HEATING** Webasto diesel blown-air

**BOILER** Not fitted. Webasto diesel hot water system optional

## RIVALS

BILBO'S CELEX

CMC REIMO TRIO STYLE

VW CALIFORNIA



← T5  
Tiree demo 'van on pre-facelift T5

WHICH motorhome says ★★★★★

With bespoke build and great finish, the Tiree has a lot going for it - especially in this gas-free version.

Words & Pictures | Peter Vaughan



Crucially, this Tiree is totally gas-free, creating more storage

