

Roger Cox

@outdoorscots

Turning a surf trip into a snow trip is easy when you take your accommodation with you



The VW T5 camper van at Arisaig, inset

I'm a habbinna porridge," grins the two-year-old, his face and pyjama top plastered in oats. "I'm a habbinna porridge *inna kampa*." The four-year-old also seems pleased with his new surroundings, although he's too busy eating to add anything to the conversation. That's probably just as well, because about six inches away from my right ear my wife is still sleeping peacefully, oblivious to the oaty apocalypse that's making her lie-in possible.

This is Day Two of a week-long jaunt around Scotland in a VW T5 camper van, and our first morning waking up en famille in its compact but cleverly thought-out interior. Yesterday, if you'd asked me whether I'd be able to make breakfast for our two noisy boys in the T5's dinky kitchen while somebody slept on the bed-shelf housed in the pop-up roof space directly above, I would have laughed, shaken my head a little patronisingly and told you it couldn't be done. But today, thanks to a combination of ingenious German design and the blissed-out, wide-eyed reverence brought on by the koolness of the kampa, we have achieved the impossible. Bowls, spoons, milk, oats and dried fruit all seem to come effortlessly to hand, appearing as if by magic from perfectly-positioned cupboards and shelves. I am at one with the machine, a veritable kampa ninja, and the boys are behaving eerily like model children. Deep down I know the spell will soon be broken, but for a few glorious minutes I allow myself to believe that van life will always be this easy.

After picking up our T5 from Jerba Campervans in East Lothian – a custom variation on the long wheelbase factory model which they've dubbed The Cromarty – our original plan had been to head up to

Sutherland on a surfing safari. As we were preparing to leave Edinburgh, though, it became increasingly obvious that Mother Nature wasn't going to deliver on the wave front. Glencoe Mountain ski centre, on the other hand, was reporting buckets of fresh snow with more on the way, so surfboards and wetsuits were hastily unpacked, to be replaced with snowboarding gear. That, I suppose, is one of the great advantages of the camper van life – you can change your plans as often as you like.

Still, the boys have been promised some beach time, so we make first for the white sands and turquoise waters of Arisaig, where we've arranged to meet up with our neighbours – long-time camper van owners full of helpful tips and advice – and their three kids. After what seems like several hours of coaxing, pleading and reckless bribery, five

is to use. If it has a flaw at all, it's perhaps that, when confronted with a 35-mph wind, the canvas sides of the upper sleeping compartment can get a tad flappy. To mitigate this, we chose our Arisaig campsite carefully, parking at the bottom of a steep, grassy hill, partially sheltered by a row of trees. On the day we're due to leave to go to Glencoe, however, we realise that this might not have been such a great idea after all. Already, during the preceding two days of heavy

showers, we've noticed regular-sized cars getting bogged down further up the slope. How will two fully-loaded camper vans fare?

Not too badly, as it turns out – with a bit of pushing and the judicious placement of wooden planks under the wheels to give traction we manage to escape with minimal slipping and sliding. Still, by the time we arrive at Glencoe it's already mid-afternoon, and as it's



PHOTOGRAPH: ROGER COX

I allow myself to believe that van life will always be this easy

small, excitable people are finally asleep in their beds, and the grown-ups are able to light a fire, crack open a few beers and bask in the balmy evening air – just four degrees Celsius and lent an extra frisson by a stiff north-westerly breeze knifing in from the Atlantic. Not quite what we'd been hoping for in early May, but at least it isn't raining.

As reinterpreted by the folks at Jerba, the T5 is a bona fide icon of industrial design, easily on a par with the iPhone and the Anglepoise lamp in terms of how pleasing it

the last day of the season it's now or never. Selfishly abandoning spouses and offspring, two determined dads bolt for the access chairlift, run-jog-walk across the plateau, leap onto the Cliffhanger chair and just make it to the queue for the top T-bar as they're calling "last run". Then, having posed for exhausted photos at the summit, we are ushered off the mountain by ski patrol, our unexceptional runs marking the end of Glencoe's exceptional winter.

www.jerbacampervans.co.uk

HOROSCOPES Your life in the stars

CASSANDRA NYE

♈ ARIES 21 Mar - 20 Apr

After a couple of weeks when your thoughts have been fairly scattered, this week gets off to a good start.

♉ TAURUS 21 Apr - 20 May

The security that you are looking for may be delayed because of a new idea. This often happens around a New Moon.

♊ GEMINI 21 May - 20 Jun

News about a new friend can be disappointing. Put it down to experience and move on. Don't let it make you bitter.

♋ CANCER 21 Jun - 22 Jul

As this week begins, the New Moon heralds change. Perhaps a long-standing relationship will take a different turn.

♌ LEO 23 Jul - 22 Aug

A strong attitude during this New Moon could see you a little confused. Has someone changed an arrangement?

♍ VIRGO 23 Aug - 21 Sep

When a friend makes an uncharacteristic decision, feel free to point the matter out. Then you can agree to disagree.

♎ LIBRA 22 Sep - 22 Oct

With the New Moon this week comes the chance to get both finances and business sorted out. Don't procrastinate.

♏ SCORPIO 23 Oct - 21 Nov

Friends and relatives seem able to solve any problem but you will still have to make a big effort to sort out the situation.

♐ SAGITTARIUS 22 Nov - 21 Dec

Partnerships are strongly highlighted this week, the time of a brilliant New Moon. It's time to reconsider an old idea.

♑ CAPRICORN 22 Dec - 20 Jan

Demands on your finances next week need consideration. Save before you spend. Love is in the air just now.

♒ AQUARIUS 21 Jan - 18 Feb

With the emphasis on personal relationships at the moment, be prepared for change. Consider any move carefully.

♓ PISCES 19 Feb - 20 Mar

An urge for travel and new experiences is triggered this week. Yes, that New Moon is really pulling at your adventurous spirit.