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Jerba Cromarty

SARAH KENNEDY takes a VW T6 conversion on a wild camping trip around Scotland

PRODUCING VW T6 CONVERSIONS from a remarkably small business unit just outside North Berwick in East Lothian, Jerba has an orders book that's full for months ahead, and having taken out the Cromarty with my husband around the west coast of Scotland, it's easy to see why.

Jerba is a VW-registered Vehicle Body Builder, so the team takes the windowed body, cuts the roof off, strips it down to the shell and starts adding quality. Everything about this conversion is clever - from the initial layer of insulation put in pre-build to the zip-out canvas sides of the extending roof, and the shoehorning in of ample storage while leaving the maximum amount of living space.

The result is a cosy, sensible layout where the two of us had plenty of space to move, even during meal preparations when so often someone is sitting just in front of the locker you need.

Having driven the winding Scottish roads before in a motorhome, I particularly appreciated the ease with which the T6 held the roads, feeling not much bigger than many modern family cars. We happily ventured down to parts of the west coast that I certainly wouldn't have attempted with a larger motorhome, finding some beautiful, wild places tucked well out of the way in the process.

SEATING AND EATING

I liked the large floor space with a seating area at either side, each with its own table. The front and passenger seats swivel around and are served by a fold-down table that stows flat against the back of the passenger seat during travel. This table also swings out when the door is open, making it a useful surface for outdoor use. The bench seat at the back of the van seats three comfortably, though the third would have to sit a little awkwardly to access the table that clips on to the side locker and is supported by a central leg.



LIGHT AND VENTILATION

The van came into its own at night. Insulated black-out blinds covered the back window and similar curtains pulled along each side, while the front of the van had a separate curtain that attached using press-studs and hooks. Adjustable spotlights located over the main seats and above the bed along with strip lighting over the cooking area gave illumination exactly where it was needed.

However, it is the unique cotton Ventile sides to the elevating roof that are most impressive. Watertight but breathable (so no condensation), there are multiple options for light and ventilation with three semi-circular windows, two with midge-proof mesh and one with clear plastic, or the whole thing can be unzipped and rolled up to let in fresh air.




COOKING

The galley area is compact but well thought out, with a stove top next to a sink with an integral chopping board cover. Our model came with the amazing diesel-fuelled Wallas combined hob and heater, which meant no need for gas bottles. That freed up space for a useful cupboard for crockery and pots, plus plenty of room for a 62-litre fridge with freezer box. There's limited control over temperature but once heated up it makes short work of boiling a kettle or saucepan. And toast made on a non-stick baking tray liner direct on the hob was a revelation.



SLEEPING

Sleeping in campervans is always a problem for us given that my husband is 6ft 6in and neither of us is small. We had no such difficulties with the Cromarty. The main bed - made up of the back locker shelf, the bench seat and the seat back - folded easily into place giving a perfectly flat bed only marginally narrower than a standard double. My husband was delighted with the extension piece that slotted into holes at the end of his side giving him an all-important additional six inches of space.

The Cromarty also has a second double that pulls down from the extended roof. Suitable for the light and agile (since getting in would have involved climbing on to the front seats), the slatted base and mattress looked extremely comfortable. 



ON TEST



at a glance

Price as tested £47,800
Prices start at £43,100
Club Care insurance £290
Engine as tested 2.0 litre, 102bhp, five-speed manual gearbox
Base vehicle VW T6 Long wheelbase

Emissions category Euro 5
Electrics Two 230V sockets; 12V socket; two USB sockets
On-board tanks 38-litre fresh water
Length x width x height 5.3m x 2.3m x 2m
Berths Five travel and four sleeping

Bed sizes Double 1.86m x 1.3m; roof bed 1.86m x 1.2m
Mass in Running Order 2,367kg
Maximum Authorised Mass 3,000kg

User payload 633kg
C1 licence required No
Warranty Three years base vehicle; two years conversion
Supplier Jerba Campervans
Tel 01620 890374
Web www.jerbacampervans.co.uk

verdict

A high quality van for the wild at heart who also like a few comforts.

