



# AUTO~SLEEPER VW HI~TOP

**A classy, award-winning four-berth whose future is likely to lie in the two-berth market. Check to see how our conclusions were drawn**

**Voted Best Conversion at the 1985 Motor Caravan Fair, the Auto-Sleeper VW Hi-Top is a standard four-berth best suited to two adults and two children. Best suited, that is, in terms of sleeping accommodation. As for the fundamental matter of eating, the standard model really only serves two people.**

This paradox is explained by the fitting of a main double bed at the rear, and a smaller double berth in the roof. There is, how-

ever, only one table – not quite big enough for two people – on the standard model. As an option a much smaller table is offered for locating between the cab seats, but is only suitable for light refreshments during roadside stops. All of which makes us think that most owners of this model use it as a two-berth.

Based on the VW Transporter delivery van, the VHT, to give it its factory code, is unchanged

for 1986 and is out to enhance Auto-Sleepers' reputation for good workmanship and good taste. The converters must be careful, however, not to rest on their laurels, since there is no proper body insulation on the VHT. Instead they rely on carpet-type lining on the single-skin roof, and on air spaces in the walls and floor.

VW's cab roof and central body strengthening bar are retained, and the converters add a

stylish, well-contoured roof to which is fitted a stainless steel roof rack and ladder. The virtues of the roof's aerodynamic properties are borne out by the conversion's road performance. Stability was better than we had expected, even in strong, gusting winds. The ride comfort, however, is very much on the firm side.

#### Sunroof bonus

There are two fixed side windows and a conventional roof-light in the roof, plus the considerable bonus of a tinted sunroof (with its own roller blind) just behind the cab. The sunroof's presence goes a long way towards alleviating any impression that there are not enough opening windows. Apart from the cab door windows, the only other openers are the louvre sections behind the kitchen units.

Exterior fittings include sporty, imitation alloy wheel trims and a mains inlet socket on the offside. The filler for the underfloor fresh water tank is just inside the nearside cab door.

Our test van was finished in magnolia and carried coach-strips in brown and orange at waist height along the sides and tailgate, and across the front of the roof.





*Swivelling cab passenger seat and 21-piece crockery set are standard; the cab table is optional*



*Tasteful decor and cabinetry was easy on our eyes, though the table top is not big enough for two people*

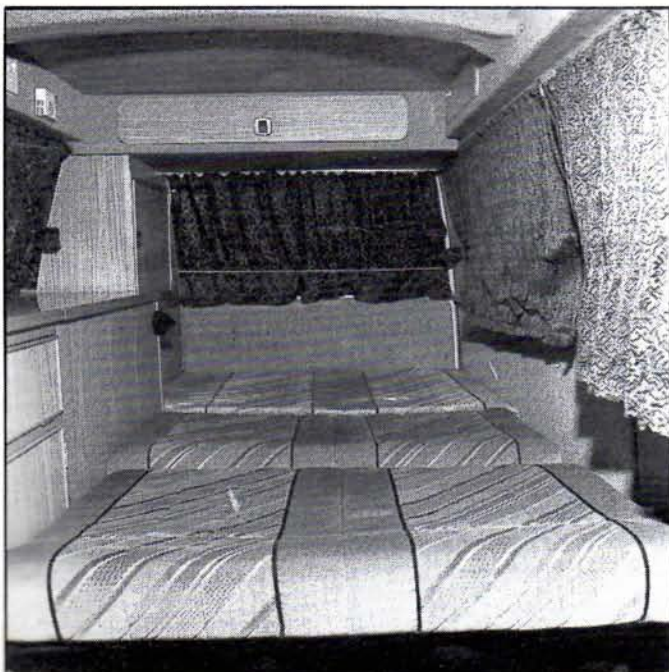
Layout of the essential items is fairly conventional for a Transporter conversion, but there is considerably more central floor area (56 x 46½in) than in some. Kitchen units are ranged along the offside wall. There is a forward-facing settee seat in front of the rear engine compartment, and a wardrobe

in the offside rear corner. The over-cab area is allocated to a huge, cavernous storage locker and a glass-fronted locker for a 21-piece crockery set (supplied as standard). The settee is rearranged to mate up with a mattress section on the engine compartment deck to form the main double bed. There are two

parts to the roof bed, which has maximum headroom of only 16in. There are 40in between the main double and the roof bed's platforms. Maximum headroom in the central area is a towering 6ft 7in.

Access to the living quarters can be from the cab or through the nearside sliding door.

Much ribbed, carpet-type material in beige is in evidence for lining the roof, and cladding the undersides of the roof platforms, the fronts of the over-cab lockers, the nearside wall and tailgate panel. Cream GRP mouldings are fixed round the louvre windows and nearside rear window.



*A somewhat soft surface is provided by the three-piece mattress of the main double bed*



*There's ample room for access from the cab to the kitchen, which retains stainless steel equipment*



# STAR TEST



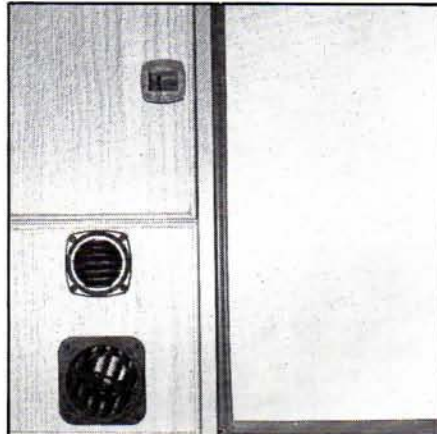
Three gas isolator taps are plumbed in line, and there's a home for two gas bottles and the standard loo



Kitchen storage is enhanced by this large chest which contains two sliding wire baskets



Electrical fittings include a 12v water gauge and a mains socket



Sealed compartment below a cupboard contains optional blown-air heater

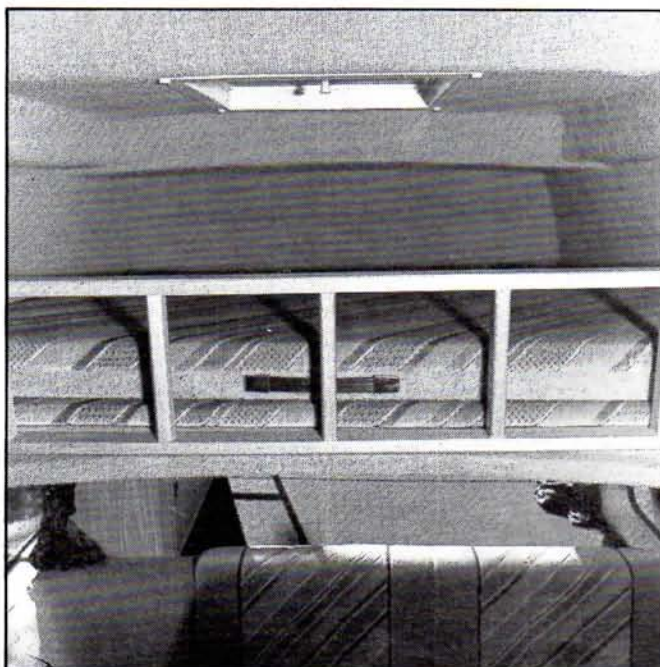


Underfloor 8gal waste tank is fitted with a drain tap for discharge

Choice of decor appealed to our testers. Combined with the beige lining are attractive Dralon velour seat covers, including those in the cab (with headrests), based on beige but with panels of diagonal stripes in various tones of brown. A hard-wearing, brown and beige carpet is extended into the cab. The curtains, in a traditional weave, are coloured dark brown flecked with gold thread; there is no lining on them, but then they are thick enough not to need it.

## Well-cut curtains

All the curtains on the test van were cut to generous sizes, with the exception of those for the two roof windows. Auto Sleepers say they have taken steps to rectify this fault on all production vans. Those curtains round the cab and along the sides have press-studs for securing them closed, while the tailgate curtain uses a bottom wire for retention.



Maximum headroom for the roof bed is a restrictive 16in, but the berth is a cosy one for small children

The class of cabinet work is up to Auto-Sleepers' usual high standard. Furniture is clad in good-quality, light woodgrain photoveneer, and worktops are in a sturdier, clear-coated laminate with darker woodgrain effect. All but one of the cupboard and locker doors are panelled.

Ample overall lighting is provided by 16W fluorescent tubes.

## Good hinges

It was good to see piano hinges used on the three kitchen worktops, which are smooth edged. The tops cover the cooker, sink-drainer and a large storage chest with two sliding wire baskets. The sink is fed by a single spout with micro-switch and piped to a rather noisy Evenflow 12v water pump. Water is stored in an underfloor 8gal tank, and the waste runs to another underfloor tank of the same capacity and which is fitted with a drain tap. Main switches for the pump



and fridge, plus the water gauge, are close at hand on a panel above the kitchen windows and next to a four-fuse box.

On one side of the sink is a Fellows stainless steel cooker with two burners and grill. Back and side splashguards are provided for the cooker. The large chest is located between the drainer and wardrobe. An Electrolux 212E electronic fridge has cupboards on either side. Beyond one of these cupboards on the test van was a boxed-in section containing the optional Hotbox blown-air heater. Kitchen storage capacity is very high, comprising three cupboards and the chest. Below one of the cupboards is a correctly vented compartment for two 6lb Camping Gaz cylinders and a Porta Potti 35 toilet, supplied as standard.

Though the main table, which

swivels on a column leg, stands at a reasonable height of 28in, we feel that the 29 x 19in top is just not big enough for two adults. When the table is in use there is room to accommodate a larger top, and we suspect that the reason for the converters sticking with this top is because its storage spot, behind the driver's seat, would have to be relocated. A smaller (18 x 18in) table is available as an option to be dropped in between the cab seats; it is supplied as a package with a driver's swivelling seat.

#### Softish mattress

Half the simple task of making up the main double bed has been done in advance, since a large section of mattress can be left *in situ* on top of the engine compartment. The settee base lid, squab and backrest are pulled forward to meet up with

the other mattress section; they are supported by a lip on the furniture on one side, and by a hinged section of the base on the other. The 6ft 5in x 3ft 8in berth offers a fairly soft surface. If the occupants wish to sleep with heads at the rear (most likely because the tailgate lining acts as a headboard), then the rear parcel shelf must be slid out and found a resting place.

The 1½in thick mattress of the 5ft 11in x 4ft 0in roof bed is substantial enough for children. The bed platforms are in two sections, one of which has to be slid forward and rested on wall ledges. A timber ladder for access is provided; when not in use it can be bolted in place across the front of the bed area to act as a storage guardrail.

What with the roof bed area and the big over-cab locker, there is no shortage of general storage space. And that's not

forgetting the locker attached to the roof bed's underside, and the decent-size wardrobe with a hanging height of 35in.

Like most conversions on the VW Transporter, the Auto-Sleeper uses the rear engine compartment deck as part of the base for the main double bed. This is the only sensible use that can be made of the compartment's cover.

Since the water-cooled 'boxer' engine was introduced at the same time as the redesigned Transporter three years ago, it has proved a big success. The optional 78bhp 1.9-litre engine in the test van permits comfortable cruising at 70mph. Standard engine fitted is the 60bhp version. Its maximum torque of 104lb ft at 2600rpm means the van is suitable for touring in any kind of terrain likely to be encountered. Expect around 24-26mpg when touring. □

## AUTO-SLEEPER VW HI-TOP

£11,299

### Converter

Auto-Sleepers Ltd, Orchard Works, Willersey, nr Broadway, Hereford & Worcs WR12 7PT

☎ 0386 853338

### BODY

**Type:** high-top.

**Berths:** two adults, two children.

**Construction:** Volkswagen Transporter standard walls, floor and windows (except kitchen louvre windows). Plywood inner skin on some walls; chipboard inner floor. Auto-Sleepers single-skin, moulded GRP roof. Two windows and sunroof in high-top.

**Insulation:** carpet-type material roof lining; air space between outer walls and plywood lining; air space between floor layers.

**Doors:** rear tailgate; sliding, nearside.

**Fittings:** stainless steel roof rack and ladder.

### INTERIOR

**Toilet room:** no.

**Gas system:** in-board capacity for two 6lb Camping Gaz cylinders; in-line taps for cooker, fridge and space heater.

**Electrical systems:** mains electric 16amp inlet socket, earth leakage circuit breaker, one mains interior socket; van battery, one 12v interior socket.

**Lighting:** two 16W strip lights, one corner reading light, two courtesy lights (one in cab, one inside sliding door).

**Standard equipment includes:** Electrolux 212E electronic fridge; Fellows stainless steel cooker; stainless steel sink/drainer; underfloor 8gal fresh water tank; underfloor 8gal waste tank; 12v Evenflow water pump; 12v water gauge; wardrobe; chemical toilet; 21-piece crockery set.

**Factory-fitted options:** 1.9-litre 78bhp petrol engine £264; automatic transmission (78bhp engine only) £591.68; five-speed gearbox £220.97; 1.6-litre diesel engine £746.24; turbocharged 1.6-litre £1266.67; swivelling driver's seat and cab table £108.67; Hotbox thermostatically controlled blown-air heating £315.16; rear seat restraint strap £45.89.

### BASE VEHICLE

**Model:** VW Transporter delivery van.

**Engine (as tested):** 1913cc, 4cyl in-line. Max bhp 78 at 4600rpm. Max torque 104lb. ft at 2600rpm.

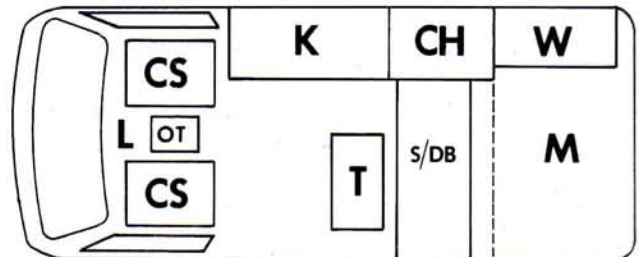
**Transmission:** four-speed manual, rear-wheel drive.

**Suspension:** front independent coil spring with upper and lower wishbones, anti-roll bar, telescopic shock absorbers; rear

independent trailing arm, coil springs, telescopic shock absorbers.

**Tyres:** 185SR 14C.

**Supplier:** VAG (UK) Ltd, Yeomans Drive, Blakelands, Milton Keynes MK14 5AN. Tel: 0908 679121.



**Key:** CS cab seat, OT optional table, L over-cab lockers, K kitchen, CH storage chest, W wardrobe, M section of double bed mattress with parcel shelf, locker and double bed above, S/DB settee seat/double bed, T table.

