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Up-to-date guide to all the latest models



Top trio - new-look VWs side by side

GROUP TEST



Three very different vehicles from VW-recognised stables. From left, Auto-Sleeper Trident, Holdsworth Villa, Autohomes Komet

Top trio

Who says when you've seen one VW-based conversion you've seen them all? Our testing this month takes a different slant with this article which looks at three models from the different VW-recognised converters in this country.

Don't expect us to say which is best, that is not the purpose of this article. Indeed, the final decision on such matters often comes down to individual preference for the colours and materials used by each converter. Hopefully our extended specification panels can give you some instant comparison. From then on, it's up to you.

First choice is whether to go for a high-top or an elevating roof version. Each of the VW-recognised converters here offers both types. High-tops

Here's an in-depth analysis of three different conversions from Volkswagen-recognised converters – Autohomes Komet, Auto-Sleeper Trident and Holdsworth Villa.

are the preferred choice these days for their extra storage space, while the lower height of the elevating roof design should mean less susceptibility to side winds and the chance to get under some (if not all) height barriers, as well as a slight improvement in fuel consumption.

Also, if garaging your motorvan is a prime factor, the vehicle's height will have to be taken into consideration. And returning to the subject of fuel consumption, it's worth remembering that the standard petrol-engined VW will run on two-star or unleaded without any adjustment. Our road tests on a variety of VW-based conversions lead us to expect

owners to get around 25 miles per gallon.

For more economical motoring, consider the diesel and turbo-diesel engine options, especially as the fuel is often cheaper on the Continent. Or if performance is more important, the 2.1-litre, 112bhp petrol unit has a turn of speed which is more than handy. Volkswagen offer a host of other base vehicle options which are listed in our data panel below.

Our thanks go to Berkshire Motor Caravans, of Chieveley, Berkshire, who supplied us with the vehicles analysed here. If you're still undecided which model to go for after reading this, Berkshire are

one of a few motor caravan dealerships with franchises for Autohomes, Auto-Sleepers and Holdsworth conversions.

Standard to all three vehicles here – Autohomes Komet, Auto-Sleeper Trident and Holdsworth Villa – is the floor layout: a furniture unit along the offside houses the refrigerator, cooker, sink, drainer, wardrobe and various storage locations; this extends from behind the driver's seat to the rear of the van. The rear seat is located aft of the nearside sliding door and folds flat to combine with a mattress over the engine area and form a double bed.

This layout has proved most successful in overcoming the problem of the VW's rear engine configuration which means the floor level rises at the back of the vehicle. Of the three converters here, only Richard Holdsworth offers a

different interior layout with the Vision, which also utilises Volkswagen's own high-roof design.

Whereas the main difference between each conversion is the choice of materials used it must be said that the base vehicle itself is no spring chicken. Launched in the 1950s the basic concept of a rear-engined, rear-wheel

drive panel van remains today. However, in certain areas the VW still is a class leader. It will cruise happily – and quietly – at our maximum speed limits and is a very pleasant vehicle to drive.

Recent criticism of the basic level of trim has been answered by this 1989 version which has been updated inside and out. The front spoil-

er, full wheel covers and rectangular twin headlamps give the VW a new look.

Inside, cab equipment has been extended to include a driver's door tray, cigarette lighter (so useful for those 12v accessories which can be plugged in), padded steering wheel, dipping rear view mirror, illuminated vanity mirror, intermittent front wipers set-

tings, heated rear window and rear wash/wipe.

We hope the following provides good basis for comparison. And if you want further information on each individual conversion, copies of our test reports are available at £1 each from MOTOR CARAVAN MAGAZINE, Link House, Dingwall Avenue, Croydon CR9 2TA.



Rear views from the top, Komet, Trident and Villa



Useful additions to the VW's spec for 1989 include door tray...



... and cigarette lighter which has 12v DC socket

BASE VEHICLE DATA

Model: Volkswagen Transporter panel van.

Standard engine: 1913cc, 4cyl horizontally-opposed, water-cooled. Max power 78bhp at 4600rpm, max torque 104lb.ft at 2600rpm.

Transmission: four-speed manual; rear engine, rear-wheel drive.

Steering: maintenance-free rack and pinion. Turning circle 35½ft

Tyres: 185 R 14C.

Chassis: frame and floor assembly with longitudinal and transverse girders, bumper bar deformation element in front section and energy absorbing front.

Suspension: front independent, coil springs with upper and lower wishbones, anti-roll bar, telescopic shock absorbers; rear independent trailing arms, coil springs, tele-

scopic shock absorbers.

Brakes: front discs, rear drums; dual-circuit, power-assisted.

Fuel tank capacity: 13.3 gallons.

Warranty: one-year unlimited mechanical warranty, one-year recovery service; two- and three-year options at extra cost.

Servicing: major service 20,000 miles or 12 months; lubrication service 10,000 miles (5000 miles diesel).

Factory-fitted options: 1.7-litre diesel, 1.6-litre turbo-diesel, and 2.1-litre petrol engines; five-speed gearbox; automatic transmission on petrol engines; four-wheel drive syncro; power assisted steering; anti-lock brakes; electrically-operated door mirrors.

Supplier: VAG (UK) Ltd, Commercial Vehicle Division, Frankland Road, Blagrove, Swindon SN5 8YU. ☎ 0793 40231.

GROUP TEST

Autohomes Komet

Stylish roof design and a high level of equipment for this version

£14,796

Converter

Autohomes (UK) Ltd, 59 Old Wareham Road, Poole, Dorset BH17 7NJ.

☎ 0202 715000

Other models (test dates):

Kameo high-top (Aug 1986; Kamper elevating roof); Komet tested Dec 1986 and Dec 1988; Komet syncro tested Oct 1987.

BODY

Type: high-top.

Construction: Volkswagen Transporter with high-top roof and additional windows fitted by converter. Cord carpet-lined interior walls.

Insulation: glass fibre mat in side walls, styrene in roof, double-skinned floor.

Windows: twin opening double-glazed acrylic units in roof sides; extra windows in toughened glass, offside slides open.

Dimensions: overall length 15ft, overall width 6ft 10in (6ft 1in excluding mirrors), overall height 8ft 6in.

INTERIOR

Toilet storage: floor locker in offside furniture unit; portable toilet standard.

Gas system: shared compartment with portable toilet takes two 6lb cylinders. Separate isolator switches for each appliance. Flame failure devices for hob rings.

Electrical system: 240v input wired through ELCB and fuses to 13-amp switched socket and fridge; 12v socket and plug.

Lighting: cab courtesy; rear courtesy over seat; twin-tube fluorescent unit over kitchen and single-tube fluorescent unit by overcab storage; one reading lamp.

Kitchen facilities: Electrolux RM 212 refrigerator operating on gas/240v mains/12v DC; enamel two-ring hob with hot-plate area and grill; matching enamel sink with separate drainer.

Work surface height: 34in.

Water system: built-in 12-gallon fresh water tank in rear

seat base with electrically-pumped supply; water level gauge; lockable exterior filler.

Furnishings: wood composite material for cupboards, push-push door catches; velour upholstery; melamine worktops; melamine-backed ply ceiling.

Beds: double bed is formed by pulling rear seat squab forward (fold down leg supports nearside) and folding down backrest; dimensions 6ft 1in x 4ft 1in, 4in mattress. Occupants sleep with heads towards front of vehicle. Upstairs: removable retainer for luggage, bed sections pull forward; mattress 6ft x 4ft 1in.

Tables: 32 x 20in main dinette table, 32 x 16in cab dinette table, both single-leg; table-tops store behind rear seat; legs clip to underseat base, when not in use.

Storage: wardrobe rear offside 21 x 7 x 35in max depth; overhead lockers on offside and behind rear seat; small cubby hole overhead nearside; lined vanity unit with mirror; storage bin (10 x 8½ x 19in deep) adjacent to vanity units includes removable wire tray; cutlery drawer under sink unit; shelved cupboard below cooker 18½ x 16 x 25in deep; twin lockers with sliding doors; overcab area comprises one double-door locker, one single door locker, pull-out bottle holder and pull-out crockery holder.

Standing room: 6ft 6in max. Dinette floor space 59in x 47in max.

Other equipment includes: both cab seats swivel; rear lap restraints; full set of crockery for four; rear roof rack and ladder in stainless steel; push-up roof vent with flyscreen; dashtop storage pod.

Factory-fitted options: black and white television with sockets, wiring and aerial; blown air heating system; water heater; waste water tank; flyscreen for sliding window; Paulchen bicycle and sail-board racks; electrical control panel incorporating battery charger, fuses, battery condition indicator and second battery; child's cab bunk.



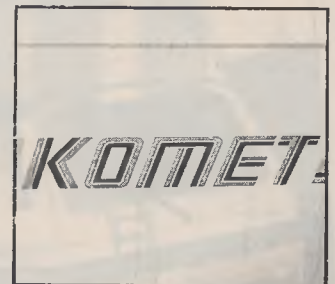
Autohomes opt for extra, high-level storage over offside unit



Swivelling cab seats and dashtop storage are standard



1989 style badgework...



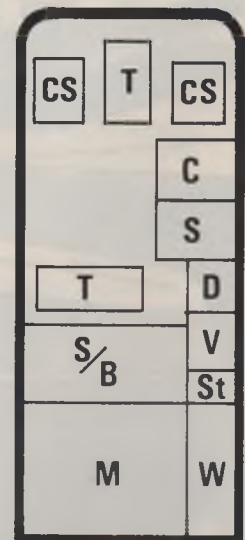
... and side decals



Porta Potti stores offside



Variety of over-cab storage



Key: CS cab seat, S sink, D drainer, C cooker, St storage, SB seat (converts to double bed), M mattress, W wardrobe, T table.





GROUP TEST

Auto-Sleeper Trident

Best selling VW-based motorhome last year has a high standard of finish

£15,098

Converter

Auto-Sleepers Ltd,
Orchard Works, Willersey,
Nr Broadway, Worcs WR12
7PT. ☎ 0386 853338.

Other models (test dates):

Trooper elevating roof; Trident (VHT as was) tested Feb 1986 and Oct 1987.

BODY

Type: high-top.

Construction: Volkswagen Transporter with glass fibre high-top roof and additional windows fitted by converter. Cord carpet-lined interior walls.

Insulation: glass fibre wool in side walls, styrene in roof, double-skinned floor.

Windows: fixed windows in roof sides; extra windows in toughened glass, offside with flyscreen slides open.

Dimensions: overall length 15ft, overall width 6ft 10in (6ft 1in excluding mirrors), overall height 8ft 3in.

INTERIOR

Toilet storage: floor locker in offside furniture unit; portable toilet standard.

Gas system: shared compartment with portable toilet takes two 6lb cylinders. Separate isolator switches for each appliance.

Electrical system: 240v input wired through ELCB and fuses to 13-amp switched socket and fridge; 12v distribution panel with jack plug and socket, battery condition meter, main switches and fuses.

Lighting: cab courtesy; rear courtesy over sliding door; two twin-tube fluorescent units; one reading lamp.

Kitchen facilities: Electrolux RM 212 refrigerator operating on gas/240v mains/12v DC; Fellows stainless steel two-ring hob and grill; combined stainless steel sink and drainer.

Work surface height: 34in.

Water system: underfloor 10-gallon fresh water tank with electrically-pumped supply;

water level gauge; lockable exterior filler.

Furnishings: hard wood edgings and light oak-style veneer for cupboards, inset plastic door handles; leather-effect wipe-clean moulds around side windows; velour upholstery; melamine 'wood grain' worktops; piano-style and brass hinges for worktop lids.

Beds: double bed is formed by opening out supporting flaps, undoing backrest bolts and pulling out seat squab; dimensions 6ft 4in x 3ft 10in (min)/4ft (max), 4in mattress. Occupants sleep with heads towards front of vehicle. Upstairs: ladder/retainer for luggage; bed section pulls forward on to locating lugs; mattress 5ft 9in x 3ft 11in.

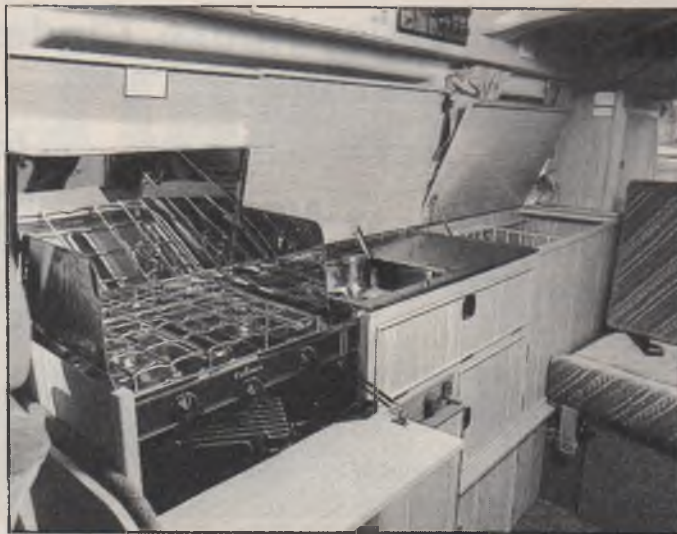
Table: 29 x 19in single leg. Table slots away behind driver's seat; leg stores under-seat, when not in use.

Storage: wardrobe rear offside 20 x 7 x 35in max depth; rear overhead locker; storage bin (31 x 18½in deep) adjacent to sink includes two removable wire trays and three bottle clips; cutlery drawer under sink unit; cupboard below sink unit 14½ x 15 x 11in depth; shelved cupboard 21 x 10 x 25in deep; underseat area 46 x 12 x 13in max depth; over-cab area comprises crockery locker surrounded by large locker; twin drawers over engine compartment.

Standing room: 6ft 7in max. Dinette floor space 56 x 45in max.

Other equipment includes: passenger's cab seat swivels; rear lap restraints; cab seats in matching upholstery to rear; full set of crockery for four; rear roof rack and ladder in stainless steel; wind-up roof vent with flyscreen; parcel rack; dashtop storage pod.

Factory-fitted options: thermostatically-controlled blown air heating, waste water tank, swivelling driver's seat and table, opening roof windows, flyscreens for opening roof windows.



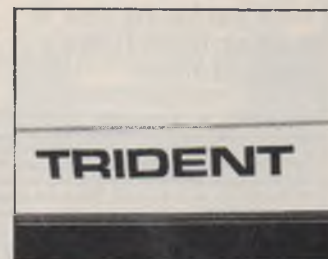
Splashguards all round Auto-Sleepers' cooker



Cab seats are trimmed to match rear seat



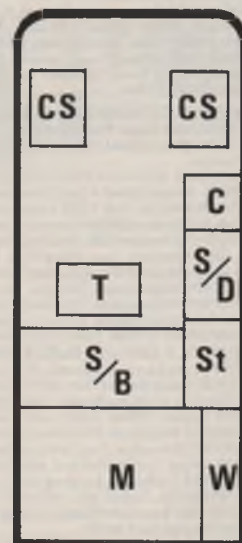
Exterior graphics are painted on



Offside toilet storage



Central control panel



Key: CS cab seat, SD combined sink and drainer, C cooker, St storage, S/B seat (converts to double bed), M mattress, W wardrobe, T table.

GROUP TEST

Holdsworth Villa

Always the emphasis on quality but ever trying something a little different. This is the elevating roof version

£15,271

Converter

Richard Holdsworth Conversions Ltd, Headley Road East, Woodley, Nr Reading, Berks RG5 4NE. ☎ 0734 692900

Other models (test dates):

Villa high-top £15,450, (Aug 1988); Vision high-top £16,029 (Sept 1987 (syncro version), Nov 1986). Villa ER tested Jan 1988.

BODY

Type: elevating roof.

Construction: Volkswagen Transporter with fitted windows. Plywood inner skin on some interior walls, with open-weave covering. Exterior-grade plywood inner floor. Richard Holdsworth elevating roof and plinth in GRP with steel/polystyrene/plywood sides.

Insulation: air space between outer walls and inner ply lining; air space between floor layers. Glass fibre mat insulation in walls available at extra cost.

Windows: fixed double-glazed windows in roof sides; extra windows in toughened glass, outside slides open.

Dimensions: overall length 15ft, overall width 6ft 10in (6ft 1in excluding mirrors), overall height (roof down) 7ft 1in.

INTERIOR

Toilet storage: nearside top-hinged flap for compartment in rear seat base.

Gas system: slide-out tray in cupboard behind driver's seat takes two 6lb cylinders, one in-line, one spare. Separate isolator switches for each appliance.

Electrical system: mains electric 16amp, 240v inlet socket wired to earth leakage circuit breaker, fridge and 13-amp switched socket in seat base. Zig charge/control unit and secondary battery. 12v distribution panel with fuses and switches for main appliances.

Lighting: cab courtesy; rear nearside courtesy; twin-tube fluorescent unit over kitchen; twin spotlights in mini bulkhead over rear seat.

Kitchen facilities: Electrolux RM212 refrigerator operating on gas/240v mains/12v DC; combined, enamelled round sink and mini drainer; Spinflo MkXII two-ring and grill in matching enamel.

Work surface height: 34in.

Water system: underfloor 12-gallon fresh water tank. 12v water pump with foot switch control; water level gauge; lockable exterior filler.

Furnishings: beech edgings and light ash-style veneer for cupboards, timber door handles; leather-effect wipe-clean moulds around side windows; velour upholstery; laminated worktops; brass piano-style hinges.

Beds: double bed is formed by pulling forward rear seat base on rock-and-roll hinge; dimensions 6ft 3in x 3ft 8in (min)/4ft 1in (max), 4in mattress. Occupants sleep with head towards tailgate. Upstairs: four exterior clips for elevating roof which then pushes into position on gas struts; mattress 5ft 4in x 3ft 8in.

Table: 30in x 19in single leg. Table slots away behind driver's seat; leg stores under-seat, when not in use.

Storage: wardrobe rear offside 22½ x 12 x 30½in depth; small locker for bottle and glass storage on worktop adjacent to wardrobe; rear overhead locker; storage bin (23½ x 16½ x 17in deep) adjacent to cooker includes cutlery tray and drawer; underseat area divided between toilet compartment (17 x 16½ x 13½ max depth) and area 20 x 16½ x 13½in max depth; storage under sink; shelved cupboard adjacent to fridge; shelved storage at rear of van, accessible from tailgate.

Standing room: 6ft 8in max with roof up. Dinette floor space 46in x 45in max.

Other equipment includes: passenger's cab seat swivels; rear lap restraints; cab seats in matching upholstery to rear; exterior roof storage.

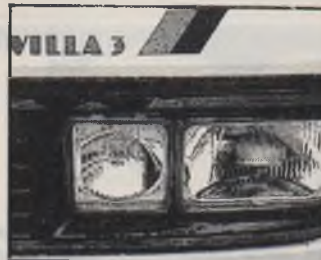
Factory-fitted options: swivelling driver's seat and occasional table, blown air heating.



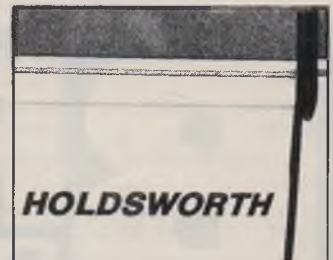
Enamel finish for hob, drainer and sink; melamine-covered splashbacks



Floral upholstery for cab seats



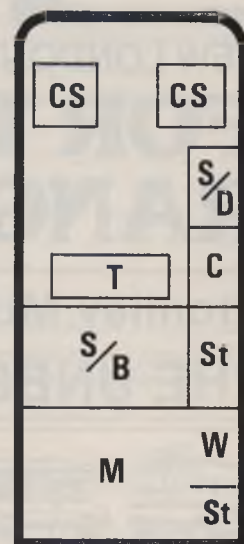
Striped front and sides for 1989 Villa



Underseat loo storage



Extra storage on offside



Key: CS cab seat, S/D combined sink and drainer, C cooker, St storage, S/B seat (converts to double bed), M mattress, W wardrobe, T table.

