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ON TEST



Stowford Camper Vans VW T5

High-quality Volkswagen campervan conversions have never been more popular. **STUART KIDMAN** checks out one example straight out of a Devon campsite's workshop

STOWFORD Farm Meadows is a well-known and popular campsite in the rolling North Devon countryside.

What's perhaps less well-known is that members of the Stowford team are hard at work in an on-site workshop producing high quality campervan conversions, mainly based on low-mileage, pre-owned VW models.

During a week-long stay at the campsite, I managed to have a closer look at a 2015-registered VW Transporter T28 Highline conversion that had been almost exclusively fitted out at Stowford.

The metallic blue colour immediately got my vote (I loved the electric vibrancy of it) and straight away I could see the high-end finish that Stowford has sought to achieve - the five-spoke 18-inch alloys were a dead giveaway.

The vehicle I looked at was registered in March 2015, so the warranty from VW runs until March 2018. Stowford Camper Vans, meanwhile, guarantees the conversion for a year.

For £36,995 the unit was really nicely fitted out - black leather seats upholstered by a local specialist, an attractive mahogany-like wood finish on the fixtures, an Austops pop-top roof system, Sargent control unit, Smev two-burner hob and sink, and a Waeco fridge.

Better still was the RIB seating that, once mastered, converted easily into the lower bed. Stowford uses the Kiravans Installation System here and three-point seatbelts to ensure a high safety factor.

The Kiravans system was also used up front to enable the front twin seats to swivel in place, meaning the living space provided ample seating for four, with minimal fuss.

Also on-board was an 85A leisure battery and 230V built-in charger. There were two internal 230V plug sockets and LED lighting was used throughout to create a bright interior at the expense of less power consumption.

The roof popped up easily, though the storm straps securing it down were a little fiddly to stow away. Up here was the second sleeping area, with zips to open windows on three sides.

Throughout the unit, good use was made of the available space and there was plenty of storage at hand considering the size of the vehicle. A couple of lockers were accessed via the rear barn-style doors, while there were further cupboards in and around the kitchen area, plus another small high-level locker at the rear.

The central table could be unscrewed from the floor and had its own stowing rack on the rear door. Curtains on the side windows were of good quality, and made of a weighty fabric to keep out the light.

This particular vehicle had a 2-litre engine with five-speed manual transmission and at the time of the test had barely passed 1,100 miles on the clock. Other extras include a stereo CD system, which is functional rather than being packed with features, and air-conditioning.

For the price, the conversion and the fittings you get with this vehicle are of a really high specification. The bonus is that the workmanship, with the exception of the tinted windows and lining, has all been done on-site by the knowledgeable Stowford team, so there's plenty of traceable expertise behind the build.

The dark interior may not be to everyone's tastes but you can't argue with the attention to detail.

at a glance

Price as tested £36,995
Club Care insurance £212
Base vehicle Volkswagen T5 Transporter Highline
Engine as tested 2.0-litre, 102bhp, five-speed manual gearbox
Emissions category Euro 5

Electrics Two 230V sockets; 12V socket with TV aerial point; 85Ah leisure battery
Gas locker Space for 2.75kg cylinder
On-board tank 9.5-litre fresh water

Length x width x height 4.9m x 2.3m x 2m

Berths Four travel and sleeping
Bed size Double 1.8m x 1.1m; roof double 1.8m x 1.1m

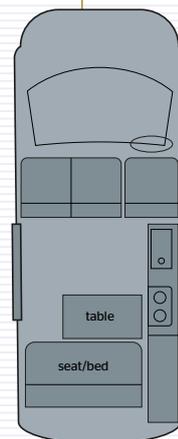
Mass in Running Order 1,917kg

Maximum Authorised Mass 2,800kg
C1 licence required No
Warranty One year conversion

Converter Stowford Campervans

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verdict

A super van with plenty going for it if you enjoy compact campervanning holidays. A little dark inside, but a quality finish.