

OUTDOOR LIFESTYLE

Motorhome began life as a van



THE Warwick Duo motorhome is based on the long wheelbase Peugeot Boxer van. It is built by Auto Sleepers, who were established in 1961 by the Trevelyan family, and are based at Willersey in the Cotswolds.

The latest two-berth Warwick Duo measures a little less than 20ft in length, which brings the advantage of cheaper ferry crossings, no camp site length restrictions and easier parking at home or in town.

As it is a van conversion the Warwick Duo does lose out a little on overall width compared to a coachbuilt motorhome, however it is only noticeable between the shower room and the kitchen area.

Many people prefer van conversions to coachbuilt motorhomes because the external width is narrower and also cheaper and easier to repair.

The spacious sleeping and dining area is at the rear with two large doors that can be locked open for access and for dining



Andrew Morland has a weekend away in one of the latest motorhomes from Auto Sleepers

with an uninterrupted view. The dining area can seat five comfortably should one invite other campers in for drinks and meals.

Compared to Auto Sleepers standard Warwick motorhome the Duo has a large cutaway under the cupboard in the dining area to allow for a massive double bed of 6ft 2in by 6ft 1in or the equivalent two single beds. The kitchen has a full size cooker with three gas rings and one electric hotplate, a microwave and a 77-litre fridge powered by electricity or gas.

The Duo comes with a 25-litre LPG

tank which is refillable from an outside fuel cap, making it cheap and convenient. The interior has many storage lockers, pockets and a large compartment above the cab. The bathroom is the usual shower/toilet compartment with the added luxury of blown air duct heating. The 69-litre capacity fresh water tank is bigger than most and should last over a long weekend.

Standard equipment includes a single disc CD player and radio in the cab and a flat screen TV with DVD in the living area. There is a simple electronic system with a touch screen for checking water, waste and power levels. It is easy to see and to understand.

The model in this test had the standard Warwick Duo 2.2HDI Peugeot 120hp turbo diesel engine, with a six-speed manual gearbox, which is more than adequate for most use.

The other engine option is the Peugeot 3.0 HDI diesel, producing 160hp, which could be useful for those that tow heavy

trailers and boats. A route around Dorset, Somerset and Gloucestershire to Pembrokeshire, of over 600 miles, produced a fuel economy of 31mpg. This included a good mix of A and B roads, dual carriageways and motorways without exceeding 65mph.

The driving position is good with all the controls within easy reach and the ride and handling are excellent.

On test, the Duo, with its long-wheel base, was not unduly affected by storm force cross winds which hit the camp site.

The Warwick Duo with the 120hp 2.2 diesel engine is priced at £40,000. The 3-litre 160hp engine brings the price up to £41,530.

■ The Warwick Duo was supplied for test by the Marquis Motorhome dealership in Poole, Dorset. Sales: 01202 738777. The Devon Marquis dealership is at Lee Mill, Ivybridge, Plymouth. Sales: 01752 892977.



Volkswagen launches 'escape' website

OVER the last 60 years, Volkswagen campers, vans and kombis have become unique style icons, used to escape from our daily routines to the reality of having fun doing what we want in our leisure time.

To celebrate this heritage, Volkswagen has launched a new website, www.vwescape.co.uk to showcase the modern equivalents of these vehicles – the Caravelle people carrier, Transporter kombi and California campervan. The website will also encourage people to share their own personal "escapes", as well as play host to a competition which people can enter to win their own Volkswagen escape in a California, plus much more.

The website includes links to Facebook, YouTube, Flickr and Twitter pages where Volkswagen wants people to show how they escape to reality. This means the time when they're not working, but doing exactly what they want to do, whether that is surfing or bird watching, spending quality time with friends or family, having a day out at a local attraction, or a longer adventure further afield.

To set an example, Volkswagen has appointed some sporting brand ambassadors who will be uploading images of themselves in action with their vehicles.

These include windsurfer and Olympic medallist Bryony Shaw, professional wakeboarder Matt Crowhurst, and Radio One DJ Jo Whiley. To bring all this to life, two boldly decorated "Escape" vehicles will be



touring the country attending various summer events detailed on the website to show the versatility of the seven-seater Caravelle and California campervan, while at the same time meeting people, seeing how they are having fun, and uploading a host of photos and videos taken along the way.

The first summer event they attended was the Blackheath Bike and Kite Festival in London on June 13/14.

This was followed by the Gold Coast Ocean Festival at Croyde Bay, Devon, on June 19/21 and the Cornwall Holiday Beach Hop last weekend. For more information visit www.vwescape.co.uk

Volvo's XC60 scoops top towcar award

THE Volvo XC60 beat 38 rival vehicles to take the coveted overall winner title at the Towcar Awards 2009.

The five-door crossover's towcar talents were examined at the MIRA vehicle testing facility in Warwickshire, where its exceptional performance left the judges in no doubt that it was not just the best vehicle in its class (1900kg-plus kerb weight), it was also the best towcar overall.

David Motton, contributing editor at Practical Caravan Magazine and head judge at the Towcar Awards, said: "Many cars made our judges sit up and take notice, but one stood out above all others: the Volvo XC60. Great to look at, great to travel in and tow with, the Volvo just had to win."

"Already a winner at the What Car? Car of the Year Awards 2009, it's a winner as a towcar, too. Stylish, stable and practical - what more do you want?"

The Towcar Awards 2009 are run jointly by Practical Caravan Magazine, What Car? and the Camping & Caravan Club. Testing was

divided into categories, with each vehicle being marked on its towing ability, practicality and cost of ownership (purchase price, running costs and resale values). On-the-road assessments included measuring vehicle stability, hill starts (for handbrake strength and traction), acceleration and braking tests.

Judges said the Volvo XC60 D5 SE Geartronic model's all-round talents meant it scored higher during the vehicle trials than any of its rivals, which included the Audi Q5, Jaguar XF, Skoda Superb, Jeep Cherokee and Vauxhall Insignia.

Peter Rask, managing director at Volvo Car UK, said: "This is fantastic news for Volvo and yet another endorsement for the XC60's many talents."

"Volvo has a strong track record in delivering award-winning towing vehicles so it's great to see the latest XC60 model continuing that proud tradition."

The Volvo XC60 is priced from £24,995 for the entry level 2.4D DRIVE S model and features City Safety as standard.