



# TEMPTING TINTOP

FOR THE SECOND MONTH IN A ROW, GEORGE HINTON SPENDS TIME WITH AN AUTO-SLEEPER – THIS TIME A VAN CONVERSION

Sliding electric step and athermic tinted windows are two excellent features on the Warwick

**T**HE LAST panel van conversion through our hands big enough to sport a shower and toilet was Devon's mighty 6.95m long Mercedes Sprinter-based Sapphire in March last year. Auto-Sleepers introduced its long-wheelbase 6.23m Peugeot Boxer-based Warwick in 2007, but it has been quite a rare sight since. In response to customer demand, last year the 6m Warwick Duo was born, with a modified interior sporting the flexibility of two single beds or a large double, rather than the original transverse double only.

## CONSTRUCTION AND LAYOUT

The original Warwick concept was for a motor caravan that didn't look like one. I'd

hesitate to say Auto-Sleepers went for the classy MPV look, because the LWB Boxer is too big to pass for an MPV, no matter how dark the night. Nonetheless, the Warwick is based on a Boxer minibus bodyshell, with factory-fitted dark-tinted athermic insulating glass windows all round. These offer greater privacy, scratch-resistance and the convenience of heated rear windows for improved visibility. They also resist condensation as athermic glass absorbs a surprising amount of heat from the sun, even on a winter's day.

The Warwicks have been laid out with their washroom extending more than halfway across the opening of the nearside sliding door, giving the advantage of easy cassette toilet servicing from outside

without need of a hole in the van's bodywork – just open the door and there it is.

A sliding electric step halves the 47cm (18in) climb up, but is not technically possible for the rear doors, where a steel portable step is provided, but where to put it on tour? The standard Warwick has a fixed rear step, but this does add some 23cm (9in) to its length.

A very generous full kitchen on the offside is actually longer than that in the Broadway EL, tested last month, then there are parallel settees in the rear. The extra length for the two full single beds has been gained by taking the bottom off the nearside wardrobe, so your feet go underneath it, while on the offside that

ironing board has gone, replaced by a slim shelved cupboard.

## ON THE ROAD

Although the high-output 2.2 HDi engine is fitted as standard, panel vans get only 120bhp, rather than the Camper chassis-cab's 130. However, I'd challenge anyone to tell the difference in a blindfold test. Steering seemed a bit more positive than in the Broadway, though still very light, and it remains relatively easy to wrong-slot the narrow gearbox gate and end up in third when you want first.

The headlights' dipped beams were better than in the coachbuilt model too, so maybe the quality of the bulbs varies? Tyres were Pirelli Chrono this time, with official pressures of 59 and 65psi, giving a firm ride, perhaps marginally more compliant than the coachbuilt Boxer. In this layout, cooker and microwave are right behind the driver, so you might expect it to be a bit noisy, but it wasn't bad once loose parts were removed. One or two creaks, approximately from the wardrobe area, were more noticeable.

Again, we were pleased to find no transmission problems apparent in either direction, and again, there was only a driver's airbag.

Brim-to-brim fuel consumption measured over 122 miles was 25.2mpg, a modest and appropriate improvement over the wider coachbuilt. Performance is virtually identical though, hitting 50mph from standstill in around 13.6 seconds, with full tanks but otherwise unladen.

The standard Boxer radio/CD player is retained – so it cut out after 20 minutes on site, and is best replaced with an aftermarket unit – but you *do* get a pair of rear speakers. The optional Veba reversing camera's screen replaces and doubles as the Peugeot's interior mirror. It takes about three seconds for the image to appear on it after you select reverse though, and it really needs to function more quickly.

The underslung spare wheel sits accessibly in a rear cradle and, like on the Broadway, a remote air-valve enables you to easily check and maintain its tyre pressure.

## LIVING ABOARD

The electrical control panel is on the end of the washroom wall as you enter, just above switches for step and LED awning light. A shelved cabinet in the doorway at floor level, employing surplus space from the washroom, is handy for your 'house' shoes. There's also a double chrome hook for jackets. It's not as easy to get out as it is to get in, as I really had to throw my weight against the sliding door to get it moving off its seal and along its runners. Closing it from inside isn't that easy either, due to the restricted space. Electric operation would be the answer.

The 5in Reflex foam-filled cushions by Premier Furnishings have an additional topping of memory foam for extra comfort. The four bolsters are really one too many as there is no point having one under the hanging wardrobe, but there are also four scatters. With walls and pillars covered in plain and patterned upholstery cloth, which is basically grey with orange and beige highlights, coupled with plain dark grey velour borders, this is a very sociable rear lounge, capable of seating seven. The darkened glass doesn't make it too gloomy inside, and in any case there's a large Remis rooflight.

The wardrobe end and two of the rear side window pillars carry cloth storage pockets, useful for evening reading. As with the Broadway, you can have full or part leather or an alternative cloth as cost options. Carpet too is the same loop-pile felt-backed polypropylene that we found in the Broadway, clipped down over the planked effect vinyl floor in separate sections for lounge and kitchen.

A Truma gas/electric Combi boiler located beneath the offside sofa provides blown warm air and hot water. Fuel is LPG but instead of a gas locker, there's a 25-litre underfloor propane tank, which takes Autogas at around 50p a litre, a dash-mounted LED level gauge monitoring contents. A carbon monoxide detector has been added to the smoke detector and 1kg fire extinguisher, while the 110Ah leisure battery is housed under the driver's seat.

All cushions have press-studded restraining straps, so nothing ends up on the floor after a journey. A 20cm (8in) square safe has been discreetly installed flush with the floor in one bed locker. On the nearside there are two access flaps, while the shorter offside locker has a drawer beneath. The slatted tops are hinged, naturally.

The wardrobe has a 19in rail with a 34in drop and a mean depth of 20in. The little fold-up TV/DVD player is a multi-standard Avtex, but we struggled to find the auto-setup menu, so didn't give it a test, other than to find that it won't stay folded up when driving.

The Warwick dining experience is quite cosy, with only 40cm (16in) between the sofas dictating a narrow free-standing table, 3ft long. Kneeroom is a bit limited and the sofa is 53cm (21in) high. I fitted, but with little room to spare. Lucky it's only a two-berth. The table stows on the overcab shelf.

For coffee breaks or at bedtime, there is a small folding table attached to a rail on the nearside rear door, which unfortunately has to be opened before you can slide it free of the bed base to its central usage position. For using or charging electrical equipment, there's a 12V socket approximately at the base of the offside rear light cluster, just below cushion level, and a 230V mains socket on the bed base next to the kitchen.

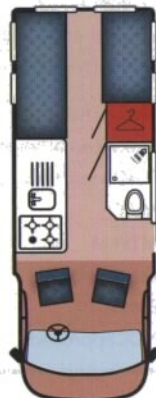


## KITCHEN

At 1.66m (5ft 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in) long, this superlative kitchen kicks all the imports into touch. There's the full-size dual-fuel cooker plus 700W (mains) microwave oven, 77-litre Dometic fridge, a shelved foot-wide cupboard between cooker and fridge that houses the gas valves and Sargent EC155 power supply unit with all the fuses and

ABOVE: Big kitchen boasts full-size cooker  
BELOW: Drop-down basin sits above bench toilet

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ABOVE: By night, a transverse double...

RIGHT: ...by day, a lounge for up to four

BELOW RIGHT: Dining in the Duo is a little cosy



breakers, with a second cupboard, 8in wide with two shelves, at the lounge end of the unit. An 11 in-deep pan locker sits beneath the oven (hot air ducting runs behind), while the small sliding plastic cutlery tray sits in the cupboard under the sink.

The base of the 20-litre microwave cabinet is lowered slightly, putting the base of the machine 1.52m (5ft) above floor level, which is better than most.

The recessed, linen-finish stainless sink/drainer under a Chinchilla glass cover will be familiar – the extra kitchen length has gone into the work surface, which measures 44cm (17in) square, though it is longer still in the regular Warwick. A small, clear Remis rooflight above the cooker area is fitted with fans, but there's also a Dometic extractor hood with twin spotlights right above the cooker, so you can boil away for all you're worth.

This could be useful in summer, as there are only two small sliding side windows, one each behind the cooker and in the sliding door – although you need two hands to operate them. Sevel has got the water sealing and drainage sorted out though – Volkswagen and others please note – with water ducted from the bottom sliding channel to emerge through the gap at the bottom of the window.

The usual set of white china for four is flanked by four Cristal d'Arque stemmed wine glasses in the lined centre roof locker, with automatic lighting. General lighting is good, with an 8W dome light above the drainer-worktop area, which is home to the 230V and 12V sockets, and two more LED downlighters in front of the china cabinet.

**WASHROOM**

This has to be compact (90cm long and 57-67cm wide (35½ x 26¼/4in), and Auto-Sleepers has made a pretty good fist of it, though you don't get a domestic-thickness door, and we didn't quite 'get' the little 38 x 20cm (15 x 8in) folding shelf with tooth mug recess, on its inside at first. There isn't space inside to use it with the door closed, but this is a van for couples, so you just leave the door open while you're having a wash or brushing your teeth and close it at other times. Where else to put your washbag etc?

The latest, larger Thetford C403L bench toilet has a shallow drop-down basin above, replete with four toothbrush holders and a soap-dish above the mixer tap, though there is also a liquid soap dispenser

alongside. A small mirrored cabinet is set above the sink with a second mirror inside the door.

The shower gets its own mixer tap, while the 60cm (24in) square shower tray has two drains under its grey PVC deck mat. There's a light above the shower with a five-way roof vent above the sink area (no window). For a compact vehicle it does all it needs to.

**SLEEPING**

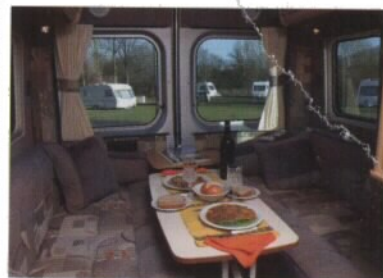
Most people choosing the Duo over the regular Warwick will want to use the two single beds, giving easy access to all its facilities at night. This saves swapping cushions over to move the knee rolls to the extremities of the double bed, but you would still want to remove the backrests to get the full 2ft 4in width available.

To make the double, you just pull the two slatted bases together and drop the backrest cushions down to fill the gaps. The cushions seem to get comfier the longer you are curled up on them – a characteristic of memory foam.

Five circular 9-LED lamps fitted above roof lockers cast their eerie bluish glow, but with four 5W halogen spotlights below, as well as the ceiling dome light, strategically placed to illuminate inside the wardrobe, lighting is excellent overall. Curtains are fitted to the rear doors, around the cab and for the small exposed area of sliding door window. The rear glass is all fixed, and equipped with pleated blinds but no flyscreens, but you have the big Remis skylight for light and air (it winds open) and this has both blind and flyscreen.

**VERDICT**

As with developing Sigma into Broadway, Auto-Sleepers clearly had a good vehicle to start with in the Warwick, and nothing it has done in the Duo has detracted from that. The new flexibility of the rear lounge makes this a great all-rounder for couples, who should seriously consider it against a compact coachbuilt. I know I would! ■



Vehicle supplied for test by:

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Insurance: 0800 028 4809  
Info: auto-sleepers.co.uk

Technical	
RRP/as tested	From £36,991 ex-works (from £38,191 OTR)/£38,950 ex-works (£40,150 OTR)
Options	160bhp: £38,263 ex-works (£39,463 OTR); roof rack and ladder £343; optional upholstery £201; part-leather trim £488; full leather £1956
Options fitted	Cab air-con £805; metallic paint £345; colour reversing camera £276; 15in alloy wheels £138; two-way extractor-fan rooflight £142
Engine	Peugeot Boxer 2.2 HDi 120bhp
Transmission	Six-speed manual, FWD
Overall length	5.99m (19ft 8in)
Internal length inc cab	4.23m (14ft 7in)
Overall width	2.69m (8ft 10in) inc mirrors; 2.26m (7ft 5in) exc mirrors
Overall height	2.60m (8ft 6in)
Max internal height	1.90m (6ft 5in)
Fuel/econ/tank cap	Diesel/25.2mpg/90 litre (19.8gal)
MIRO	2964kg (58.34cwt)
MTPLM	3500kg (68.9cwt)
User payload	536kg (10.55cwt)
Berths	2
NCC approved	Yes

**VERDICT**

