



All good things come in pairs...

...as Nick Harding discovers on a trip to Somerset in an Auto-Sleeper Warwick Duo

There's something slightly incongruous about taking a Warwick to Somerset (see *Snail Trail*, page 54), but staying in possibly the UK's friendliest county in an equally user-friendly high-top 'van proved an ideal complement.

How can we improve the Warwick seems to be the question Auto-Sleepers had set itself. There was an easy answer: make it a couples-only vehicle, and the lounging and sleeping will be better. Then came a few bonuses: what if we added a gas tank? A TV/DVD? A floor safe? Microwave oven? Water-purifying system? It all adds up to a highly promising package called the Duo.

EXTERIOR

★★★★☆ Those black side windows give the Warwick a distinctive look. They're single-glazed units and,

although they claim Athermic (heat retention/repellent) qualities, I'm still to be convinced about their performance versus the usual acrylic, double-glazed units days, even in van conversions.

The silver paintwork here is a £352.50 option that looks to be worth every penny. Other options on this pre-production model include alloy wheels (£399.50) and a reversing camera (£282) – very attractive, but they push the price over the critical £40,000 mark, and that's before you come to other desirables, such as cab air con, passenger airbag and passenger seat swivel, plus table.

A loose step is supplied for access via the twin rear doors, but it appears almost an afterthought. It's bulky and best stowed in the washroom for travel. Or, like me, you can kid yourself you're still too

sprightly to need such an aid and leave it at home.

ON THE ROAD

★★★★☆ *Practical Motorhome* was first to put any meaningful miles on this Warwick, as it had covered fewer than 100 miles when delivered. Some 400 miles later, I was impressed at achieving 32mpg overall – though I know this will be bettered by owners.

Meantime, driving the Duo was always a pleasure, albeit this particular model did develop some rattles – the microwave and the usual blinds were the prime culprits.

Like its Fiat Ducato stablemate, Peugeot's long-wheelbase Boxer offers two engine options: 2.2- and 3.0-litre turbodiesels, though the 120bhp 2.2 unit, with smooth, six-speed manual gearbox, should prove more than acceptable to most buyers. It cruised quietly at

70mph all the way down the M5 to Somerset, then tackled the often winding and narrow roads there with equal aplomb.

LOUNGING AND DINING

★★★★☆ From the curved fronts of the UK-sourced furniture to the four scatter cushions, there's an air of comfortable confidence to the living quarters. The opportunity to spread out on the settees is what makes an end-lounge layout like this so attractive to couples.

As ever, Auto-Sleepers uses memory foam for its cushioning – it takes some getting used to, but it's worth it. And it promises longevity, as does the upholstery, which has a durable quality that's a cut above.

KITCHEN

★★★★☆ It's amazing how many van conversion kitchens are

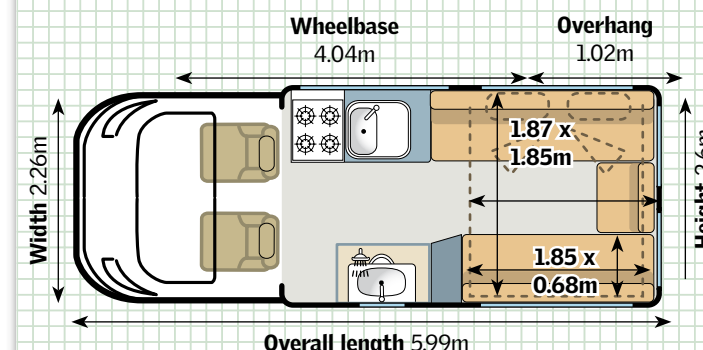


1 The lounge has long sofas and a wall-mounted flatscreen TV (inset) 2 The well-specified kitchen 3 A drop-down sink saves space in the washroom 4 The rear lounge sleeps two in either singles or a double bed 5 The sliding side door provides easy access to the accommodation area



AUTO-SLEEPER Warwick Duo £38,995 OTR

Base Peugeot Boxer LWB panel van Berths Two Engine 2.2-litre turbodiesel Torque 236 lb/ft @ 2000rpm Power 120bhp @ 4000rpm Fuel 90 litres MTPLM 3500kg Max payload 536kg Gas 25-litre refillable tank Fresh water 69 litres Waste water 40 litres Battery 110Ah



Contact Auto-Sleepers, Orchard Works, Willersey, Nr Broadway, Worcestershire WR12 7QF Tel 01386 853338 Web www.auto-sleepers.co.uk

COMPARE IT WITH...

TIMBERLAND DESTINY X1 SB Timberland's Destiny is based on the Fiat Ducato, and this interpretation of the traditionally British rear-lounge layout benefits from quality build and materials; it abounds with clever touches, while maintaining the homely and traditional feel for which Timberland is renowned.



superior to rival offerings in full-blown coachbuilds. Here's a case in point. The Warwick Duo kitchen is one unit along the offside, offering generous equipment levels and worktop space, plus excellent storage.

The truth is, everything's in the right place and there's no apparent stinting on any aspect of this kitchen, from the full cooker (with electric hotplate) to the extractor unit above it and microwave oven over that.

SLEEPING

★★★★☆ It's the ideal choice: twin singles or a double. Whatever your preference, you benefit from easy-to-manoeuvre slatted bed bases. And the feet of the bed extensions are screwed for adjustment, so the framework won't shift out during travel.

Lighting is courtesy of 12-volt units in the ceiling, which impinge on headroom, plus

a mix of adjustable reading lamps and LED downlighting.

In these days of fixed blinds and insulation screens for cab windows, the use of curtain (even though it's lined) seems outmoded. It would be more effective with more press studs to guarantee better privacy.

WASHROOM

★★★★☆ No matter how ingenious the converter, there's rarely enough space in high-top washrooms. So, they almost become emergency facilities (Auto-Sleeper owners are welcome to correct this assertion).

The Warwick is a typical example. There's a bench toilet, and a fold-down sink (I've never been a fan of these but there's little alternative in this type of vehicle). The shower tray has two plugholes (useful) and hooks and towel rails haven't been forgotten. There's

even a soap dispenser, although this is something I've always considered superfluous. All it lacks is one commodity – space.

STORAGE

★★★★☆ Full marks to Auto-Sleepers for putting positive catches on all its locker doors and providing as good a level of storage as you could expect in a high-top.

One overhead locker is taken up by that Auto-Sleeper essential – a full set of crockery. There's also a full-size wardrobe. Storing the free-standing table in the overcab area is forgivable in such a compact design. And having the water tanks (frost protection is an option) under the vehicle means lots of storage space in both settee lockers. Likewise, the gas tank saves money and space by doing away with the need for a cylinder locker.

Safety hasn't been forgotten, either, with items such as smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, fire extinguisher and floor safe, all as standard.

VERDICT

★★★★☆ Nearly 50 years after its first van conversion, Auto-Sleepers remains the master of this art. This example is almost perfect at providing a high-top with rear lounge layout for two. Plus, it boasts enough quality and campervan know-how to put it on anyone's viewing list. Bearing in mind this is the first version produced, I reckon there are a few improvements to come – that TV fitting merits a rethink, for example.

Don't underestimate the Auto-Sleepers badge, either. It counts for even more in these credit-crunching times. The Warwick should hold its value better than its contemporaries.