Autohomes



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n August 1992 our cover was highlighted with a flash to draw attention to the test of Autohomes' latest coachbuilt. The

title page of the test called the Explorer "stunning" and our introduction called it "the first British coachbuilt to have a true 1990s look and feel to it".

Clearly, the Explorer was one very stylish motorhome that made good use of GRP mouldings to achieve those modern lines, but how did it fare on the

Our test van came with the two-litre petrol engine, which gave the

Autohomes' coachbuilt a top speed of 86mph and away from rest she was pleasingly nippy". Less impressive though was the need to use the gearbox to maintain speed on the hills. We were pleasantly surprised how well the handling compared with T4 high top campers, but the heavy unassisted steering got the thumbs down. Fuel consumption was fairly typical of a petrol-engined coachbuilt at just over 20mpg.

The Explorer featured the classic rear dinette layout which has been popular in British coachbuilts for many years, but items of decor such as the fabric-covered exterior walls of the bathroom and the recessed high-level lighting brought the design up to date. That rear lounge proved a comfortable place to relax and a good dinette too, but would seat no more than four.

The brochure described the Explorer as a four-berth, but the layout with no forward facing seats in the rear) and the small overcab bed make

this VW a two-berth in reality.

The rear lounge made a comfortable bed, but the width was not generous at 3ft 11in. The overcab bed seemed more

of a single than a double and was only 5ft 9in long and had limited headroom (like so many overcab beds).

Of the kitchen we said "you're unlikely to find better in a 19ft motorhome" and the specification included three-burners plus grill, a thermostaticallycontrolled oven, an extractor fan, ceramic sink, large fridge, and plenty of storage. We were equally enthusiastic

about the bathroom, which could neatly extend to make a large changing area incorporating the wardrobe.



Plus points: Exterior styling, good to drive, bathroom cum changing room, excellent kitchen

Minus points: Only really a two-berth, narrow double bed, unassisted steering



The Which verdict: Rival manufacturers must be rushing back to their drawing boards ... a sensational-looking coachbuilt that will drive as well as many a high-top ... well-equipped ... stylish bathroom ... well-planned kitchen ... will sell on her looks alone.

Peter Vaughan Make: Autohomes **Model: Explorer** Test date: August, 1992

Performance data Fuel consumption: 20.4mpg Comfortable cruising speed: 55-60mph Maximum speed attained: 86mph Acceleration times: 0-60mph: 25.5 seconds 40-60mph: 14.4 seconds

Base vehicle Make: Volkswagen

Model: Transporter Type: Chassis cab

Power unit: Two-litre, petrol, producing 84bhp @ 4,300rpm

Conversion

Type: Overcab coachbuilt Overall length: 5.89m (19ft 4in) Overall width: 2.11m (6ft 11in) Overall height: 2.72m (8ft 11in)

Basic construction: Sandwich construction side walls with smooth aluminium outer skin, extensive use of GRP including one-piece roof.

Steel bodied cab

Gas storage: Exterior access lockable compartment Water heating: Carver Cascade storage water heater Space heating: Propex blown air heating to lounge and bathroom Refrigerator: Electrolux RM212 gas/12V/240V Cooker: Spinflo three-burner hob and grill, Vanette 2001 thermostatically controlled oven, Optimus extractor fan

Toilet: Thetford Cassette

Bed sizes: 6ft 7in x 3ft 11in 5ft 911/2in x 3ft 6in

Electrical equipment: Electrical control panel with charger, second battery, mains hook-up incorporating earth leakage and overload circuit breakers

Lighting: High-level mood lighting with high/low settings, reading

Windows: Double-glazed acrylic top-hinged windows all-round Manufacturers: Autohomes (UK) Ltd, now Elddis, Delves Lane, Consett, Co. Durham DH8 7LG, tel: 0207 503477

www.vwT4camper.info - a useful website for owners and enthusiasts of VW T4 Transporter Campervans