

Autohomes Kamper

Plus points: Unbeatable price, not just available in white!

Minus points: Lacks some of the refinement of more expensive VW conversions

Britain's lowest priced high-top from a Volkswagen-recognised converter — that's just one of the boasts for the Autohomes Kamper. It was also available in a choice of red, white or blue at no extra cost.

When tested in 1995, you could get a petrol-engined Kamper on the road for less than £19,500. We tested the diesel engine version which, with its five cylinders, is the more refined and economical once fully run in — this takes as much as 10,000 miles, but it's worth it.

Red was the colour preference for the *Which Motorcaravan* test of July 1995. Interior was a direct contrast, with its blue velour upholstery and a light ash finish to the furniture.

We compared the Kamper to the more highly equipped Autohomes Komet tested in our June 1994 issue, questioning the level of equipment you should expect from what is a small motorcaravan. We suggested blown air heating in the rear was possibly the only optional extra

which could be considered an essential, and even then if you're using the Kamper in colder weather.

Kamper's layout differs little from the huge majority of Volkswagen-based high-top conversions. The rear bench seat comes with twin seat belts and is wide enough to accommodate two adults; the furniture runs the length of the offside aft of the driver's seat and the inventory of standard equipment is comprehensive enough to include an Electrolux fridge with electronic ignition, two-ring hob and grill, wardrobe, and sink with drainer.

Among the minor criticisms were: cupboard finger catches can be a bit of a fiddle; the waste tank is a little small; there's only provision for one gas bottle which was also criticised for being tricky to access.

We also found inside the cord carpet trimwork was a little untidy in places, the curtains could be thicker, and some of the



"Gear selection is easy, the foot pedals lights and positive — although the brakes had their customary VW softness — and power-assisted steering is now, thankfully, a standard fitting on the majority of new motorcaravans," were the comments in our test report.

This was one of the later Volkswagen Transporters — a facility to recirculate air in the cab and variable interval for the windscreen wipers were among the improvements. The cab seats — standard VW reupholstered by Autohomes — were praised for being firm in the right places. A swivel facility for the cab passenger's seat was standard.

A double bed is made by folding flat the rear seat. It's not as easily done as in some VW conversions. There's sleeping for four thanks to a double bed in the roof, although access, thin cushions and limited headroom up here will probably mean this is where the children, or grandchildren will sleep; if you don't need it for sleeping, this area makes for excellent storage provision.

At mealtimes, we liked the table — it's free-standing so can be used inside or outside. The list of standard fittings was not as skimpy as you might expect. "It's good to see important safety features — fire blanket, fire extinguisher, smoke alarm — have not been ditched in favour of keeping the costs down," we noted. ●

Nick Harding

exterior graphics appeared to have been a little hastily applied. "But you keep coming back to that so-low, all-forgiving price," was our redeeming comment.

Even with a new engine, our test returned 33mpg overall and a best of 37mpg. And we noted: "Key to the Volkswagen's success as one of the most popular base vehicles is it's just such a pleasure to drive. It faces stiffer competition than ever from the rival base vehicle offerings of Peugeot/Fiat, Renault and Ford, but arguably the VW is still a nose ahead as far as driving is concerned."

We did, however, query the normal assumption that any VW conversion is simply like a big car to drive: "Possibly not. You get a better all-round view from a motorcaravan because you sit higher than a car; also, other car drivers seem to show a bit of respect for the perceived extra size of a motorcaravan."

We wrote that the Kamper was just the sort of vehicle for anyone considering making the change from car to motorcaravan ownership. Taking a test drive was particularly recommended, for the VW has always been a preferred choice for drivers —

Spec check Spec check Spec check

Make: Autohomes
Model: Kamper
Type: High-top
Payload: 520kg

Base vehicle
Make: Volkswagen Transporter
Type: Kombi van
Power unit: 2.370cc, five-cylinder diesel producing 78bhp @ 3,800rpm

Conversion
Basic construction: Steel bodied panel van with additional windows fitted plus high-roof added by converter
Fresh water capacity: 75 litres
Waste water capacity: 29.5 litres
Gas storage capacity: Single 3.9kg propane/4.5kg butane bottle
Water heating: Optional
Space heating: Optional
Refrigerator: Electrolux RM4207 operating from gas/12V DC/240V AC
Cooker: Spinflo two-burner hob plus grill
Toilet: Space for Porta Potti in floor locker
Electrical equipment: 240V mains 16amp mains inlet wired through RCD to single 240V socket. Second battery and

split charger
Lighting: Labcraft twin-tube fluorescent units over kitchen, overhead (x two), twin reading lights, courtesy lights in cab and over sliding door
Standard equipment also includes: Free-standing table, fire extinguisher, smoke alarm, fire blanket, ladder for bunk bed, vanity mirror
Windows: Double-glazed top-hinged acrylic units in roof, single-glazed glass all round. Side windows slide open
Upholstery: Classic Furnishings blue patterned velour
Overall length: 4.66m (15ft 4in)
Overall width: 1.84m (6ft 1in) excluding mirrors
Overall height: 2.50m (8ft 6in)
Bed sizes: Main double 1.86m x 1.16m (6ft 1in x 3ft 9in); upstairs 1.83m x 1.22m (6ft x 4ft)

Test date: July 1995 (Which Motorcaravan)

Manufacturers: Autohomes Ltd, Delves Lane, Consett, Co Durham DH8 7LG, tel: 01207 503477.

The Which verdict:

Hard to beat for value, pleasing to drive, red exterior a bonus, but watch for some of the detail work, an ideal first purchase.