

MMM MOTORCARAVAN MOTORHOME MONTHLY

JANUARY 1990

£1.20

WIN A
SUPER
HOLIDAY



- TESTED: AUTOHOMES VW KOMET WITH 2.1 LITRE ENGINE
- NEW MOTORCARAVANS AT THE CARAVAN SHOW
- DIY: BRIGHT IDEAS FOR READERS FROM READERS
- COMPREHENSIVE BUYERS' GUIDE TO CURRENT MODELS

ISSN 0141-9269



9 770141 926002

BEST SELLING MOTORCARAVAN MAGAZINE FOR 20 YEARS

www.vwT25camper.info - a useful website for owners and enthusiasts of VW T25 / T3 / Vanagon Campervans



The Autohomes roof is designed to give maximum headroom over the standing area in the centre of the caravan. The step down at the rear means that the roofrack does not increase the overall height. Four headlamps, spoiler and wrap-around bumper are now standard equipment.

AUTOHOMES VW KOMET

with 2.1-litre 112bhp fuel injection motor

"Four star fuel for five star motoring," says John Hunt.

This particular sample of the famous Komet range offered comfortable cruising in a compact kar with in-kredible performance and carrying capacity.

Truly, for driving purposes, I can remember no other motorcaravan among the hundreds sampled which gave such unadulterated motoring pleasure. Whilst we occasionally enjoy smooth, fast travel in other people's cars (seeing no need to possess one of our own), there is always the penalty of a restricted view out, especially for those who have to sit in the back, when the scenery is more often the gutter or the hedgerow rather than the countryside beyond.

The Komet provided the same comfort and performance as a quality medium car — with the advantage of a high travelling position and a commanding view of the scenery — from the back seat as well as the front. In addition, no rear seats in any car that I know can offer the legroom of a Volkswagen Transporter.

When we took off from Poole, I made my usual VW error of forgetting to change into top gear for many a mile. The ratio before top is fairly high and the motoring so quiet that this is an easy omission. However, I had wondered why the engine seemed a mite inflexible when pulling away at a walking pace, when what I thought was 'second' was not the gear it seemed to be on other VWs —

until it dawned upon me that this was a five speed box! "Why on earth," said Penny Smith when trying the vehicle later, "cannot Volkswagen arrange their gears like everyone else?"

It can be confusing, having the first gear out on a limb, over to the left against a strong indent spring. 2, 3, 4 and 5 are arranged in the conventional 'H' gate fashion and, once you are rolling, it's simpler to think of the box in this fashion, reserving first for starting, when you'll have time to think about its position. Of course we testers, who drive a variety of vehicles and sometimes find ourselves operating the wipers when intending to indicate a turn, may be more susceptible to confusing the controls than those who live with one make. We both found that one soon becomes accustomed to VW's odd gear arrangement and, once the brain box is in tune with the gear box, the right ratio comes first time — and a lot more slickly than with those first five-speed boxes imported by VW years ago.

Fourth was a particularly useful ratio. Fifth was fine for ambling quickly along fast main roads until a burst of acceleration was needed, perhaps to pass a slower HGV. A quick flick into fourth — and you're on the wrong side of the road for the shortest possible time, which must be a contribution to safety. To give VW their due, it's probably quicker to snick down from fifth to fourth on their box

AUTOHOMES VW KOMET



The wide side door slides open easily to reveal a clear floor area, allowing Komet to double as a light removals van. Drain cock for optional waste tank can be seen below floor.



The two-burner cooker has a glass lid whilst wooden lids conceal other units. Below are grill pan, cutlery drawer, gas master cocks, refrigerator and cupboards.



The rear, narrower part of the furniture unit houses the compartment for the Porta-Potti and gas bottle. In the cupboard above is the mains trip switch.



The larger table on its island leg in front of the settee. Table legs are clipped to the front of the settee base. Curtains add a spot of colour to an otherwise rather neutral interior.



The downstair bed is quickly made by pulling forward the settee base which is supported by the furniture unit and one folding leg. Entire kitchen remains accessible.

than when fifth is out to the right, all on its own.

We have made many journeys to Autohomes along roads now familiar; never has one been accomplished in less time and in greater comfort than in this particular Volkswagen. It was smoother and, I think, faster than the previous Komet we tried with the same engine but the heavier syncro four wheel drive. Four star petrol was essential in the test vehicle and the filler was marked accordingly. However, news from Volkswagen declares that the latest 112bhp models can be adjusted for unleaded.

You have to be careful. It is easy unwittingly to exceed the dual carriageway speed limit of 70mph. It is not until you have broken the law that the steering begins to feel rather light. For law-abiding motorists, this is an essentially safe vehicle, with enough acceleration to get you out of trouble and the power to stop rapidly in a straight line if need be. One of the available additions which we have yet to try is anti-lock braking. The standard servo brakes on the test sample seemed pretty good, though.

The new breed of Transporters supplied to VW's approved converters has several alterations and additions to the standard van specification. There wasn't much night driving but the four halogen headlamps seemed more than adequate for the speeds attainable. The front spoiler is not just pretty; I'm sure it aids stability, especially on motorways — an opinion reinforced by readers who have fitted one to older Volkswagens.

Other additions from Volkswagenwerke include a cigar lighter

(useful for running accessories), padded steering wheel, trough on driver's door, heated rear window with wash/wipe, dipping interior mirror and an illuminated vanity mirror on the passenger's sun visor. The powerful cab heater has a three speed fan which will also demist the screen or circulate cool air. What a pity, however, that Volkswagen now deny us the option of cool heads and warm feet — just because continental drivers prefer an all-round fug, they say. I don't believe it!

The caravan

Komet follows the standard Autohomes VW layout, which has proved popular and practical over the years. Latest models, however, incorporate several detail improvements, not least of which is the quality of the finish and a big reduction in the use of that plastic edging strip which no doubt performed its function well enough, made the coachbuilder's job a little easier and so kept down the price. Cupboard doors and furniture edges are now trimmed in hardwood, to the enhancement of the whole appearance. The Volkswagen is not a vehicle that will attract buyers seeking the cheapest package on four wheels; it deserves a better than average finish inside and Autohomes have gone a long way to providing it.

Here is an essentially practical layout for a couple or two-plus-two. In truth, it is a full four berth motorcaravan with an upper bed that is as big as the one below — and as comfortable, too, once



The upper bed in its folded state with removable restrainer bar to hold light, bulky items. The vent opens five different ways and roof windows are top hinged.



The bed base panel on the left is normally stored on the upper bed at the rear. Autohomes recommend climbing through the gap shown and then pulling this section back.



The high level unit houses the Zig panel and thermostat control for the space heater when fitted, plus water gauge, mains and 12 volt sockets and a cupboard.



Here, at the front, is one island leg table that does not rock, for the forward end is supported by the dashboard where the special flat topped storage unit can be seen.



The above-cab unit has a central cupboard which will house the optional television set. Also shown are the two smaller cupboards and the sliding units for drinks and crockery.



The slide-out unit on the offside is shown with the standard set of high quality plastic crockery for four which includes egg cups, salt and pepper pots.

you are up there. I did manage to persuade my bulk into the upper bunk. It is not, however, a place I would personally choose to sleep, with its restricted headroom, but I'd imagine children or younger, more agile couples would find it suitable.

The lower bed is made from the rear settee in a simple rock and roll action. Audrey and I prefer to have our heads at the rear, where there is a tailgate to lean against if you like to sit up. There are no vents or opening windows at that end and it does get a bit stuffy in warm weather. Autohomes recommend sleeping with heads forward, where there is a roll on the front of the cushion which may stop pillows sliding to the floor. But there is nothing to lean against and it is more difficult to crawl into bed.

There is plenty of free floor space for undressing and even the swivelling front seats to sit on when the bed is made. (Couples could breakfast at the front dinette before unmaking the bed.)

We were glad to find that all kitchen amenities were accessible whatever the state of the beds and, when reverting to settee position, the backrest now clicks securely into place without the need to fiddle with shoot bolts.

Kitchen and storage

The entire kitchen unit runs along the offside. The worktop houses the two-burner hob and grill with cutlery drawer, the sink has the gas master taps behind a fall front below. In the narrower section of the unit towards the rear is the separate drainer, a baize lined vanity locker with mirror (conveniently by the settee for Madame) and a deep wire basket atop the spare gas cylinder. All are concealed when not in use by hinged lids, wooden except for the cooker which has glass. The wardrobe is at the extreme rear, accessible from inside or outside.

www.vwT25camper.info — a useful website for owners and enthusiasts of VW T25 / T3 / Vanagon Campervans

AUTOHOMES VW KOMET



The small wardrobe at the rear, seen over the settee's backrest, is also accessible through the tailgate. Cautionary 'Advice to Occupiers' notices are on the door.



When removing the drawer cases to get at the engine, there are two little wing nuts to be undone. When replacing, their bolts are easily dislodged.



The cushion over the engine deck forms one third of the lower bed. Two wide, shallow drawers are accessible from the exterior. This is the only place to stow the table tops.



I checked that the engine was accessible, having removed mattress, drawers, drawer case and engine cover. Water and oil levels are serviced behind hinged number plate.

Below the worktop is the 2 cu ft refrigerator, with its flue outside far enough away from the fuel filler cap. There are also several cupboards, including one to house the Porta-Potti and another the Camping Gaz bottle in use. The rearmost cupboards have thoughtfully been provided with sliding doors that may be opened when the bed is made.

Above the window line is a unit which houses a shallow cupboard, water gauge, 240 and 12 volt sockets and, when fitted, the Zig electrics panel and thermostatic control for the blown air heater. The latter takes up a very little room in the cupboard below the cooker. The bulkhead above the rear settee contains another cupboard and a spotlight which is more convenient for those on the settee than when sitting in bed.

The overcab compartment contains three cupboards. The central larger one conceals the optional built-in television set which is removable. At the sides are slide-out lockers, one fitted for drinks bottles, the other for the crockery set.

There is no bedding locker as such, for the space beneath the settee is occupied by the large water tank. Bedding will normally be stored over the engine deck behind the settee's backrest or on the upper bed, where there is a removable restraining bar to hold it in place. There are two wide drawers for flat items (folded clothes, perhaps) beneath the cushion above the engine deck, accessible only when the tailgate is opened.

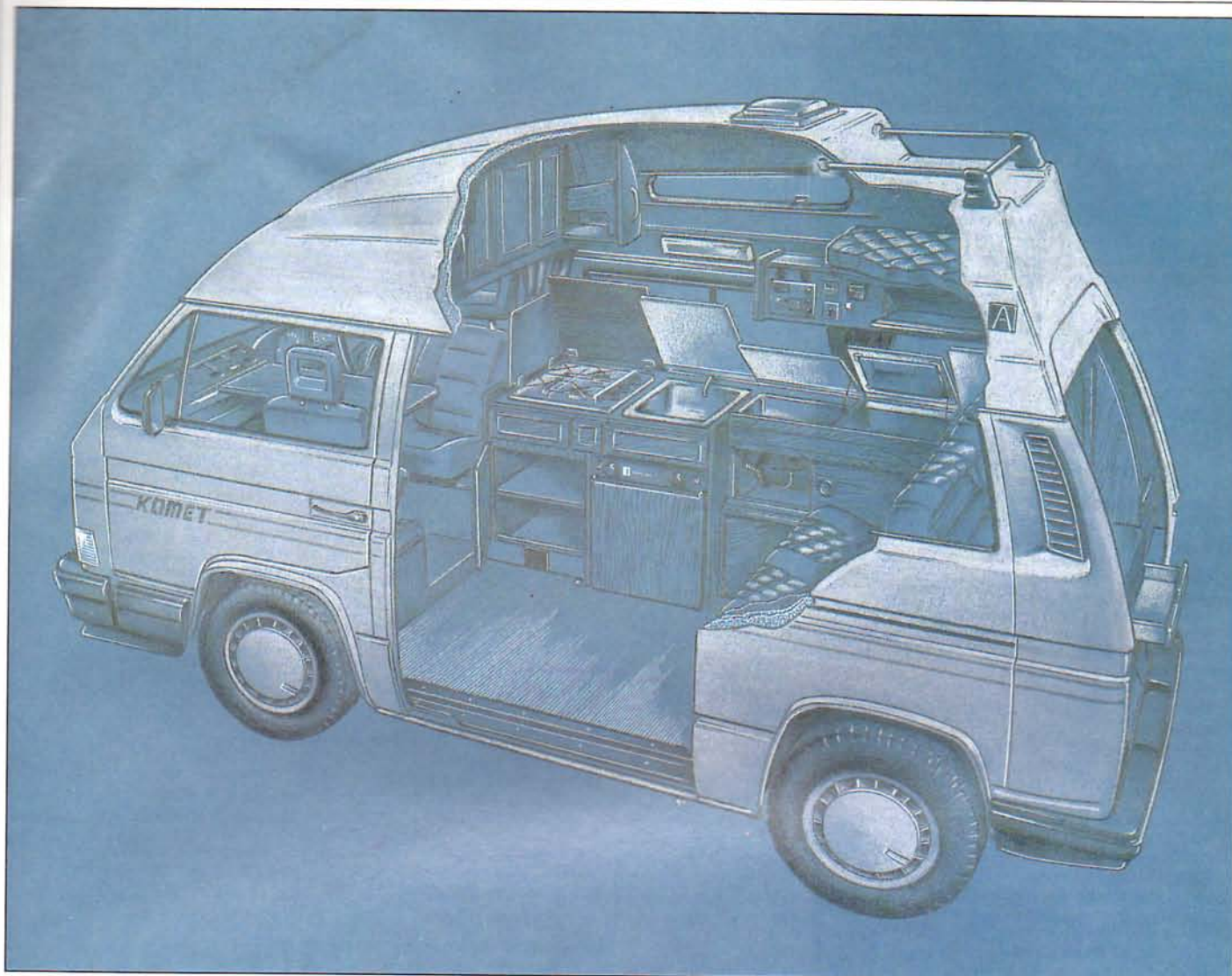
The rear settee is a comfortable place to lounge, to dine at the island leg table or to travel, when there are twin lap restraint belts available and a good view both forwards and to the sides. The ride quality here is beyond criticism, Audrey assured me after doing her customary stint.

We were sorry when Komet had to be returned, having enjoyed the motoring to the full. It is a practical camper too and a versatile all-rounder with a finish that has been greatly improved since the first models were introduced.



The roof rack's ladder is mounted on the tailgate and does not obstruct its opening. The rear window is heated and has a wash-wipe facility.

www.vwT25camper.info - a useful website for owners and enthusiasts of VW T25 / T3 / Vanagon Campervans



I liked

The pleasure of driving
Quiet, smooth cruising
Acceleration
Spoiler that aids stability
Stopping power
Powerful headlights
Rear wash-wipe
Rear heated window
Dashtop storage
Practical caravan layout
Well finished interior
Standard front dinette
Five-way roof vent
Opening roof windows

Comfortable bed
Rear restraint straps
Safe mains electricity
Pull-out crockery and drinks
Roof rack and ladder
Versatility: car, camper,
removals van.

I would have liked

More conventional gear layout
Warm feet, cool heads
Ventilation at rear
Stowage for table tops
Fixed bolts for drawer cases



www.vwT25camper.info – a useful website for owners and enthusiasts of VW T25 / T3 / Vanagon Campervans

SPECIFICATION (standard model)

THE VEHICLE

Base vehicle & engine type: Volkswagen Transporter with 2.1-litre fuel injection petrol engine at rear.
Output: 112bhp at 4800rpm (82kw).
Max torque: 127 lb/ft at 2800rpm (174Nm).
Compression ratio: 10.5 to 1.
Gearbox & drive: 5 speed, rear wheel drive.
Brakes: Discs front, drums rear, servo assisted dual circuit with pressure regulator.
Steering: Rack and pinion, maintenance free.
Suspension: Independent all round.
Fuel tank capacity: 13 gal (60 l).
Fuel consumption during test: 22mpg.
Instruments: Speedo with odometer and trip, fuel, coolant temp, analogue clock.
Warning lamps: Turn signals, generator charge, oil pressure, high beam, coolant temperature/level, handbrake/brake warning, hazard flash, rear window heater, rear fog light.
Windscreen wiper controls: Stalk, 2 speeds + intermittent, wash/wipe, rear wash/wipe.
Heater controls: 3 levers, warm or fresh air distribution, heat output, 3 speed fan. No separate cool air to face.
Other features: Dashboard tray, cigar lighter, padded steering wheel, trough on driver's door, glove box, heated rear window with wash/wipe, dipping mirror, illuminated vanity mirror on visor, dual headlights, front spoiler and wrap-around bumpers.

THE CARAVAN

Body type & construction: Panel van, unitary body/chassis.
Insulation: Glass fibre in panels, including hightop.
Windows and doors: 4 glass windows, 1 opening over kitchen. Sliding side door, rear tailgate.
Additional ventilation: One 5-way roof vent.
Blinds/curtains: Unlined curtains all round.
Mains electricity/electrical sockets: Mains inlet with ELCB, 13 amp socket.
Batteries & control panel: Option: Zig CF8 with switches, fuses, battery condition monitor and second battery*.
Lighting: 1 double fluo, 1 single fluo, 1 spot, 2 cab courtesy.
Cooking facilities: 2-burner hob with grill.
Extractor fan/cooker hood: None.
Refrigerator: Electrolux 212F, 3-way, electronic ignition.
Sink & drainer: GRP sink and separate drainer.
Water pump: Submersible with foot switch near sink.
Fresh water tank: Beneath rear seat, 12 gal (54.5 l).
Fresh water level gauge: Zig, with set button on face.
Waste water tank: Optional, underfloor, 12 gal (54.5 l)*.
Waste water level gauge: None.
Heating system: Optional: Propex Compact 1600 blown air in front cupboard*.
Gas locker: Internal access, in kitchen unit, takes Camping Gaz bottle with compartment for spare.
Seating/dining/sleeping: Rear settee makes double bed, cab seats swivel to make dinette, upper double bed, 2 island leg tables.
Tables: Two; clips for legs, no specific storage for tops.
Wardrobe: Offside rear, accessible from inside or outside.
Flooring: Carpet throughout, including cab.
Additional features: Rear access drawers above engine deck. 2 lap restraint belts for rear settee. Pull-out lockers above cab for crockery and drinks.

DIMENSIONS (Imperial and metric)

Overall length: 15ft 0in (4570mm).
Overall width, excl mirrors: 6ft 0.75in (1850mm).
Overall width, incl mirrors: 6ft 10in (2085mm).
Overall height: 8ft 6in (2590mm).
Turning circle: 35.1ft (10.7m).
Driver's max leg length: 40in (1015mm).
Step up height to caravan: 18in (455mm).
Interior length from dash: 12ft 5in (3785mm).
Interior length behind cab: 9ft 2in (2795mm).
Interior width at waist level: 5ft 2in (1575mm).
Interior height: 6ft 7in max (2005mm).
Work surface height: 33.5in (850mm).
Table dimensions: 32 x 20in (815 x 510mm), 32 x 16in (815 x 405mm).
Bed dimensions:
(1) Lower double **Mattress length:** 73in (1855mm).
Mattress width: 48in (1220mm).
Mattress depth: 4in (100mm).
Available headroom: 35in (890mm), 28in (710mm) with heads at rear.
(2) Upper double **Mattress length:** 72in (1830mm).
Mattress width: 49in (1245mm).
Mattress depth: 3in (75mm).
Available headroom: 17in (430mm) max.
Wardrobe (Height from rail): 36in H, 24in W (av), 10in D (av) (915 x 610 x 255mm).
Other principal cupboards: Gas locker 13.5in H, 9in W, 12in D (345 x 230 x 305mm). Spare gas locker 19in H, 9.5in W, 12in D (485 x 240 x 305mm), includes drop-in wire basket at top.
Gross vehicle weight: 2.35 tons (2390kg).
Unladen weight: 1.72 tons (1752kg).
Load capacity: 0.63 ton (638kg).
Price for standard model at test date: £15 159 incl car tax and VAT.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS AVAILABLE

Base vehicle options: 112bhp petrol engine 5 speed £923*; 1.6 l turbo diesel engine 5 speed £1503; 1.7 l diesel engine 4 speed £652; auto transmission 78bhp petrol £731; auto transmission 112bhp £437; 4x4 syncro 78bhp £4843; 4x4 syncro 112bhp + 205 tyres £5408; 4x4 syncro turbo diesel £6181; spare wheel carrier for syncro £115.
Caravan options: Built-in TV and aerial, Zig control panel and second battery*, blown air heating*, water heater, waste water tank*, child's cab bunk, flyscreen for kitchen window.

* Included in test model

Approx price of model as tested: £16 798.

COLOUR SCHEME (external and internal)

Off-white exterior with tan, orange and brown striping. Flecked fawn carpet throughout; rust chenille curtains, cab seats tweed with small pattern in fawn/tan/brown; rear seat fawn velour with inserts of toning colour bands; seat bases lined as floor carpet; medium light oak effect woodwork with toning laminate worktops; fawn carpet type lining to sides, tops and doors; cab doors in fawn vinyl; black fascia.

VW Komet supplied for evaluation and converted by:
 Autohomes (UK) Ltd, 59 Old Wareham Road, Poole, Dorset BH17 7NJ
 (Tel: 0202 715000).

E&OE

SHOWS FOR MOTORCARAVANNERS

Readers are advised to confirm dates with organisers or their advertisements.

Jan 10 — 14	Bristol: Caravan and Camping Show at Exhibition Centre.
Jan 25 — 28	Manchester: Caravan Leisure Home Expo at G-Mex Centre.
Feb 7 — 11	Glasgow: Scottish Boat, Caravan, Camping and Leisure Show at Exhibition Centre.
Feb 17 — 25	Birmingham: Boat, Caravan and Leisure Show at National Exhibition Centre.
Apr 28 — 29	Slough, Berks: 9th Thames Valley Caravan/Camping Leisure Show at Upton Court Park.
	Brands Hatch, Kent: Motorcaravan Jamboree.
July 28 — Aug 4	Shepton Mallet, Som: FICC International Rally at Bath and West Showground.
Aug 10 — 12	Blackpool, Lancs: Northern Motorcaravan, Camping and Caravan Show at Ribby Hall.

COMPETITION RESULTS

OCTOBER Logic 1 power system and microwave

Among the hundreds of entries, only a handful agreed with the two most important features selected by the judges. Four got the first three placings right and from those two agreed on all six (3, 5, 2, 4, 6, 1), necessitating the use of the tie breaker.

The prize of a microwave oven coupled to a Logic 1 power system goes to: M J Elliott, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 1QE, for the all correct solution plus the tie-breaker: 'It would make my mother-in-law speechless with envy.'

This adaptable appliance, which can be used in home or

motorhome and will even power other mains appliances from a 12 volt battery, is valued at £545-65. Unsuccessful entrants can obtain details from Logic 1 Ltd, 33 Amber Court, Tamworth Business Park, Amington, Tamworth, Staffs B77 4RP.

November Crossword Solution

Across: 1. Kamper 7. Italy 8. B&I 9. WCM (West Country Motorhomes) 10. Iveco 12. Florin 15. Tiffin 18. Adria 19. Sea 20. V&A 21. Civic 23. Airing. Down: 2. Akial (Laika) 3. Power 4. Rimini 5. AA 6. By Noon 11. Elf 12. France 13. Oar 14. Itasca 16. Flair 17. In Van 22. VW.

www.vwT25camper.info — a useful website for owners and enthusiasts of VW T25 / T3 / Vanagon Campervans