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MOTORCARAVAN MOTORHOME MONTHLY

SEPTEMBER 1987
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CONTENTS



Your Letters	5
Personally Speaking	14
Roundabout	18
Competition results:	
Passport to Entertainment	22
Motorcaravanabout	24
Shows for motorcaravanners	26
Bowers' Bonanza by John Hunt	28
VW Komet Supervan Syncro by John Hunt	33
The sun shines on Autohomes again by John Hunt	38
Pastimes and Pursuits with a motorcaravan, No 8 by Michael Hayward	40
Part 2: Ruby goes to Turkey by Mary Tisdall	44
Island Crossings Stan Pollard	50
All roads lead to the Canaries by Daphne Bradley	53
Competition — 2 DIY carports to be won	58
Meeting motorcaravans and their owners — Old Faithful by Mary Tisdall	59
Road Test — Autohomes' Ford Frontier by John Hunt	61
A motorcaravan for work and play Part 2: by Bill Taylor	68
The Starcraft DIY motorcaravan by John Hunt	73
Travel Stan Pollard	78
What's On	83
Ford Advantura 4 '79 Secondhand Choice/ owner assessment by Andrew Stothert	85
Shop	90
Interchange — Caravan	94
Interchange — Mechanical	97
DIY — A 3rd bed in a 2 berth conversion by M E Davey	100
DIY — Draining fitment for water tank by Jack Phillips	102
DIY Products	103
Buyers Guide	106



John Hunt ventures . . .

“to boldly go where no van has gone before”

(with acknowledgments and apologies for the split infinitive)

The Komet Supervan from Autohomes brought out the spirit of adventure. For a couple of days we had fun searching out the steepest hills, the wettest grass and the muddiest tracks in a vain endeavour to disprove Volkswagen's claim that the Syncro could be taken almost anywhere.

Try as we would, we could not get Syncro stuck in the mud. The thinking machinery took us out of trouble every time. Using an ordinary off-road vehicle, I had been taught to bring the thing to a halt, engage low ratio and four wheel drive

before venturing on to doubtful ground. With Syncro, you can forget all that. When four wheel drive is needed for adhesion or grip, VW's box of tricks engages it for you, imperceptibly. The driver is unaware that any change has taken place. From effortless 70 mph cruising on a level road, the vehicle can be turned in to a muddy field without further thought or action.

If a wheel begins to slip, say on an icy road, the four wheel drive gives added adhesion automatically — and so effectively that a warning is printed in the

instruction book against driving too fast for the prevailing conditions. On ice or compacted snow, you may be able to keep going when others have ground to a halt but braking distances will still be greater than normal.

Assistant Editor Penny Smith had already driven the Syncro in Scottish snow, egged me on to venture in places where I never would have believed a non-tracked vehicle could survive. We couldn't beat the system and seldom needed the locking differentials. There are separate diff locks



for front and rear wheels, engaged by pressing a button rather than shoving a lever. These locks are specifically for off-road motoring. With both front and rear engaged, accurate steering becomes almost impossible — so the front diff lock is for emergency use only but it is reassuring to know that it is there. A crawler gear is fitted and is useful on extremely steep hills or really rough ground. It is selected with the one gear lever like any other ratio.

Some of the farm tracks we tried were deeply rutted by tractors and it was

fortunate that the Syncro's ground clearance is greater than on ordinary VWs. Vital parts underneath are protected by heavy guards. The petrol tank, normally slung admidships, has been moved to the rear and the Komet's spare wheel was on a roof rack. That considerable weight high up did not seem to affect cornering ability and we could not detect any greater tendency to roll because of the higher centre of gravity.

The 112 bhp, 2.1 litre fuel injected engine takes four star petrol. It gave

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sparkling performance on the road and the only cars that passed us were exceeding the legal limits. This was essentially a safe vehicle, however, for one spent little time on the wrong side of the road when overtaking.

The Autohomes Supervan has a level of equipment to match the base vehicle. Space heater, water heater and television were fitted and Karisma's drinks and crockery sliding lockers flanked the TV set above the cab. Furniture and fittings were all as quiet on the road as the Volkswagen

itself or, put another way, there were no rattles.

As Penny remarked whilst we were enjoying ourselves in the Komet, "There are worse ways of earning a living than driving somebody else's £18 000-worth of machinery and trying to get it stuck in the mud!"

£18 000? Quite a bit more in fact. But the final price is up to the purchaser. The basic 78 bhp Komet comes out at £13 506 and the standard specification includes two double beds, two dinettes, refrigerator,



cooker, sink, piped water, storage for a chemical closet and stainless steel roof rack. Like the other Autohomes VW models, body and roof are fully insulated and come with mains electric link-up with earth leakage trip. Among the caravan options are water heater, space heater, TV, fitted crockery, second battery and control panel, waste water tank, child's cab bunk, flyscreen, rear seat restraint belts and the super Fiamma awning which rolls out as a handle is turned. Exterior racks for cycles

or surf boards are also available.

The VW itself is the base vehicle with more options than any other. There are the 112 bhp, 2.1 litre fuel injection engine and Syncro four wheel drive which we tried, adding about £5000 to the price. Also available are automatic transmission, 1.6 litre diesel engine or turbo diesel.

As the Autohomes brochure claims, "You name your specification and we'll build it."

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