

Wicked Warwick

Having been a rock 'n' roll star back in the swinging sixties, Mike knows a thing or two about touring in a campervan...

WORDS & PHOTOS Mike Eastman

I have had many campervans in my life. My first one, after I passed my test, was a Bedford CA with a split windscreen, and a three-speed column change gearbox. I started a band in the late 60s, and we had a succession of group vans. A high-top Commer van, followed by a few Ford Transits. The favourite modification for vans back then was the fitting of 'aircraft seats' to replace the standard Ford fitting – there was no crash testing back then! Some bands even had the lusty V6 engine fitted for more speed on the motorways between gigs.

Later on when I made some money, like many musicians back then, I owned two American cars in succession – a Ford Mustang Mach 1 and then a Pontiac Trans Am, and our road managers drove the group vans for us! Fast-forward a few years, I got into the film and TV industry, and was travelling all around the country, keeping unusual working hours. I needed some form

of sleeping arrangement in my vehicle so I converted the back of my Range Rover into a camper of sorts. Being 6ft 1in tall, I soon outgrew this arrangement and started to look around for a dedicated campervan. Enter our first Auto-Sleeper Frisky. By this time I was also back playing in bands, so a towbar was fitted to tow a twin-axle trailer to carry our musical equipment.

Moving on up

The Frisky was replaced by a Ford Travelhome IV but our pleasure was short lived, as it was stolen – never to be seen again! When the insurance finally paid out, we upgraded to a Ford Transit Herald Squire 400RL. This 'van was an incredible performer and we owned it until the mileage went over 77,000 and then upgraded to a Swift Sundance 600S coachbuilt motorhome.

We loved the layout but this was not to be our long-term vehicle because it



This camper truly is a one-off with its unusual ironing board! The 'ib' edition...

was just too wide to safely be able to drive in and out of our yard at the back of the house. So after a couple of seasons, we downsized to a Fiat-based Trigano Tribute. We loved the size and performance of the 'Tribby', but the layout was not ideal for us with its central double bed arrangement, so off we went to the Birmingham NEC Show.

We were impressed with a Swift Mondial we saw on one of the stands, so decided to take the plunge and left a deposit, only to be told a few days later that another salesman had sold it earlier that morning! We were a bit disappointed, to say the least, but agreed to leave the deposit with the dealer and to look on his website to see if any of his stock appealed to us. And we spotted our current camper! Unfortunately, it was at the dealer's





Best trip

We recently explored Shropshire and the Welsh borders, and then on to the Cambrian coast. We stayed on a great site here that was walking distance from both the heritage site of Harlech Castle and a fabulous beach, and used the trains to take us on some lovely scenic railway journeys!

Hampshire depot and I think the salesman felt guilty about selling our Mondial, so he agreed to have it brought to a branch nearer our home. Bingo! On the day we visited the dealership, there in the corner of the forecourt, stood majestically, our Auto-Sleeper Warwick, silver in colour, black tinted windows, alloy wheels, awning, cab air-con... the list went on and on. It also had the unusual Fiat three-litre engine upgrade under the bonnet with just 8,000 miles on the clock. Jo, my wife, and I both agreed that it would not be on sale for long, as it would quickly be snapped up, so we rushed over to see our friendly salesman to do the deal. Within a few days the Warwick was ours, and it became our sixth 'van back in 2010.

Life with a Warwick

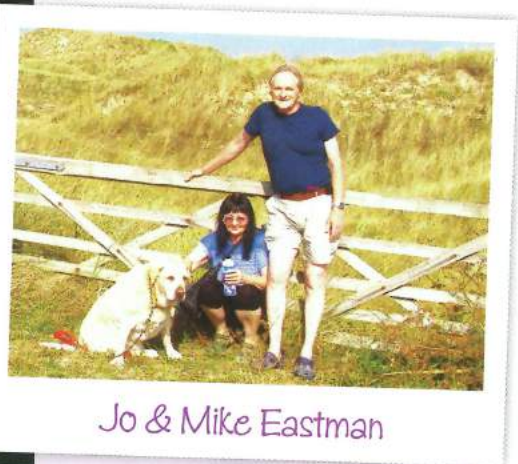
The upgraded Fiat three-litre engine is smooth, exceptionally quiet, and you would be forgiven for thinking you were driving a six-cylinder petrol engine. It also has the twin overhead camshafts driven by chains running in oil, so there are no timing belts to renew every few thousand miles.

The six-speed manual gearbox is as

smooth as silk and the short dash-mounted lever is perfectly to hand, but the clutch is too 'car-like' and light for my liking. The upgraded servo-assisted disc brakes all round are also excellent, no doubt assisted by the ABS system.

Both front passenger seats have armrests, and the passenger's can be easily turned to face rearwards on a swivel, and makes a comfortable armchair when on site, but the main area for relaxing is in the rear lounge. Here we have two settees with lift-up bases, which reveal large storage areas beneath. There is also a middle folding box arrangement at the rear by the back doors with a matching cushion that makes a U-shaped lounge. The standard Avtex television/DVD swings down from beneath one of the top lockers on the offside, and completes a comfortable den.

Come bedtime, the two settee bases slide easily out, and the backrests drop in to fill the gap, to make the most comfortable of double beds. The settees themselves are not quite long enough to sleep on lengthways, but I have on occasions made up a transverse single across the rear using



Jo & Mike Eastman

Base vehicle 2008 Peugeot Boxer LWB

Conversion type Auto-Sleeper Warwick by auto-sleepers.com

Owned since 2010

Drive Front-wheel drive

Engine 3.0-litre turbo-diesel

Power 160bhp

Economy 31 - 38mpg

Gearbox Six-speed manual

Travel seats 2 Berths 2

Leisure battery 110 Ah

Payload 407kg

Length x width x height 5.99m x 2.26m x 2.79m

Equipment Cab air-con, cruise control, alloy wheels, colour coordinated bumpers, metallic paint, athermic privacy glass, blinds and flyscreens, awning, electric side step, Hella daytime LED running lights, mudflaps, mirror guards, Truma Combi gas and electric boiler, 230V microwave, Eberspächer electric and diesel-fuelled blown-air heater, three-way fridge with freezer box, Theford cassette toilet and shower compartment, dual-fuel stove with four-burner hob, grill and full oven. Accessories include dash-cam, trucker's sat-nav, sheepskin seat covers.

Insurance £320 (Adrian Flux)

COSTS SO FAR

The van.....	£31,765
Daytime running lights.....	£160
Winter cab cover.....	£100
Sundries.....	£100
Total costs to date	£32,125





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the box and middle cushion, when using the 'van solo. Each settee has two swivel reading lamps fitted on the under side of the roof lockers, too.

The kitchen's where it's at

The kitchen is fitted along the offside wall and has a full dual-fuel cooker, complete with an oven and grill, and an overhead hood with extractor fan. We also have a 230V microwave, but Jo finds it's fitted a little high, so exercises great care when bringing hot food out to serve up!

We love the long worktop area (longer than in many coachbuilt motorhomes), containing a stainless-steel sink with mixer tap and dark glass lid. A large 70-litre fridge is fixed below the worktop plus two large cupboards, so it must be almost the perfect cordon bleu kitchen!

Unusually, at the rear end of the worktop is a slide-out ironing board – yes, I did say ironing board! Small but perfectly formed and unique in my estimation. It has proved useful instead of using the laundry rooms at

campsites. I had in mind to stick chrome letters on the back door, as is the current fashion, with the legend "3.0 Hdi IB"... then when asked if I had the latest engine modification, or body style, the "IB" version, I could reveal it stands for "ironing board", and then watch their faces!

No slumming it

We must be one of the few people who actually use our shower room and toilet on site so it was quite important that the campervan had good facilities, and the Warwick's shower room doesn't disappoint. It's fitted with a bench-type electric flush toilet, a drop-down sink with mixer tap, and a mirror-doored bathroom cabinet, as well as a small Heki rooflight with ventilator.

A longer shower curtain, courtesy of Ikea, on a ceiling mounted rail, slides round and keeps the entrance door dry. The shower tray has two drains, one in each corner, thus ensuring adequate drainage. The room is illuminated with a long LED lamp attached to the side wall, with its own switch, which is

more than bright enough for the job.

The whole camper is glazed externally all round with athermic tinted glass, and looks really tasteful and smart – more like a classy limousine than a campervan! Inside all of the windows have sliding blinds and flyscreens, with the exception of the rear door glass, which has lined curtains. The driving cab area has two full curtains, which slide from a post on either side and have press-stud fixings where they meet in the middle.

Natural light is abundant with the fitting of two Heki rooflights complete with their own flyscreens and roller blinds in the kitchen and the rear lounge. Internal lighting consists of ceiling lights, downlighters, and a fluorescent light over the kitchen worktop, and on the outside an LED awning light.

Modification-wise, I have fitted wiper arm washer jets to improve screen cleaning, and at the front I have fitted Hella daytime running lights using a dedicated Fiat kit, and they look as though they were original fittings. I also added mudflaps to each wheelarch with an aftermarket kit. Under the bonnet, I have put a plastic cover to fit over the top of the engine and added extra drainage pipes to the windscreen scuttle. I also lengthened the waste water emptying pipe.

Inside the 'van, the original dining table was too low, so I raised it with wooden blocks fixed underneath the tabletop, and the legs refitted to them. It's now taller but still stores in its original place in the overcab area. The fridge door now has a satin black decorative infill to look like the latest spec. Oh, and a fire blanket was an added extra, too!



The kitchen is really well appointed with a proper hob and oven, and a microwave above



I fitted wiper arm washer jets to improve screen cleaning, which work a treat!