

DIRTY-

WEEKENDER

ADVENTURE VANS

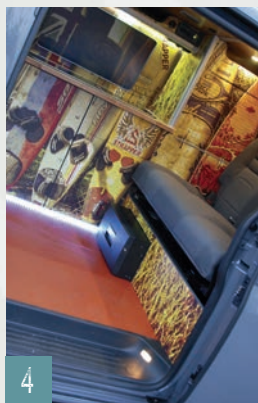
*Still! not a good bedtime read ... but
definitely more interesting than a flyer*

MAG 5



*Meet Stealth Dave
DW Camping weekend
Some very happy customers*

See what we've been up to ...



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WELCOME

Welcome back to the Dirty Weekender magazine, another glimpse into world of DW. A look at all we have been up to in the last 12 months and all that's been happening.

It really is difficult to believe this is the 5th edition! In those five years so much has changed and developed, echoed in this year's whopping 32 pages. The first one only had 10! For anyone who has just picked up this mag, here's a little introduction to what we do.

Dirty Weekender van conversions is based in Worcester. Concentrating primarily on the VW T5 we offer a huge range of services from full bespoke conversions through to glazing and seating options. We also have the Reimo centre and showroom on site too, allowing you to come and see the options available and see how they work.

We understand that 'one size' most definitely does not fit all and that everybody has a different set of ideas and a different approach to a conversion and the purpose for it. We enjoy working closely with our customers to be able to give them exactly what they want, using high quality and safe products to achieve a professional finish.

This year has been another great one. As you will discover, we have done some really interesting and different projects for customers as well as creating our very own Astroturfed van! You can meet Stealth Dave on pages 6&7.

The shows last summer were good fun as always and we even picked up a couple of awards in the Show & Shine fields.

In May we had the first of our annual DW Camping weekends in North Devon, hiring a whole campsite and filling it with 42 vans and fantastic customers.

Again, this too has grown dramatically and has almost quadrupled in numbers since the first one!

At DWHQ the workshops have grown too, extending the space by over double has given us the ability to keep everything in one place and work on even more projects than before!

As always this year has seen some incredibly hard work with really special results, meeting all the new faces and seeing their vans develop as well as keeping up with all the travels and adventures of previous ones.

We would really like to thank everyone who is involved in what we do, for all the help and continuing support you give us.

Have a read and carry on Camping!!

Natie

THE SERVICES WE OFFER CONTINUE TO GROW.

WITH OUR ONSITE REIMO SUPERSTORE & VAN WORKSHOP THE LIST IS EVER EVOLVING. WITH OUR OTHER COMPANY WAS AUTOCENTRE ON THE SAME SIGHT WE CAN ALSO OFFER ALL MECHANICAL SERVICES

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO WHAT WE CAN DO:

- FULL PART AND BESPOKE CONVERSIONS
- NEW AND USED VEHICLE SOURCING
- FULL REIMO CONVERSIONS INCLUDING CITY VAN TRIOSTYLE SPORTSCAMPER AND BIKE & SURF
- REIMO ELEVATING ROOFS CLASSIC AND EASY-FIT
- DIRTY WEEKENDER BLACK FURNITURE
- FULL LINING AND INSULATION THROUGHOUT
- REIMO SLIDING BED SYSTEM
- RIB SEATS BEDS AND FRONT SEAT SWIVELS
- CAPTAINS SEATS FRONT AND REAR SEATING OPTIONS AND RE-TRIMMING
- ELECTRICS 12V AND 240V HOOKUP
- LEISURE BATTERIES
- LARGE RANGE OF SMEV DOMETIC WAECO AND VITRI FRIGO AND NOW FULL RANGE OF WEBASTO APPLIANCES
- REIMO AND VW ACCESSORIES
- GENUINE VW GLAZING
- TINTING
- DIRTY WEEKENDER BLINDS AND CURTAIN OPTIONS
- AUDIO UPGRADES AND IN-CAR (VAN!) ENTERTAINMENT
- WEBASTO DIESEL HEATING SYSTEM
- TOWBARS AND CYCLE CARRIERS WESTFALIA, WITTER AND VW
- H & R SUSPENSION KITS
- EXTERIOR STYLING AND COLOUR CODING
- WHEELS, TYRES, AND VW ALLOYS
- REIMO MULTIRAIL SUPPLY AND FIT AND A LARGE SELECTION OF AWNINGS
- REPAIRS SERVICING AND MOT



It's all about the contrast

Chris Chambers sets himself apart

We booked the ferry from Plymouth to Roscoff in September 2013 to avoid a long drive in the beautiful pale blue T25; it was lowered, had silly big wheels, was noisy and liable to break down.

The ferry workers went on strike for our return trip. Not just at Roscoff but across the whole North Coast of France. The nearest operating ferry station was Calais, a good 7 hours away. Emma was pregnant and not feeling at all well.

During the long, cold, jarring drive I pretty much decided that was it for the old vans. We'd had 4 and I've loved every one of them, but with the baby on the way and no desire to replace another blown engine ever again, I'd had enough.

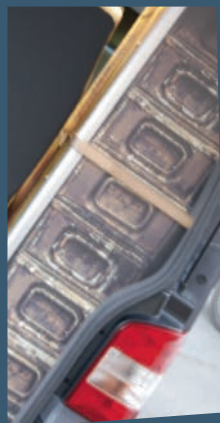
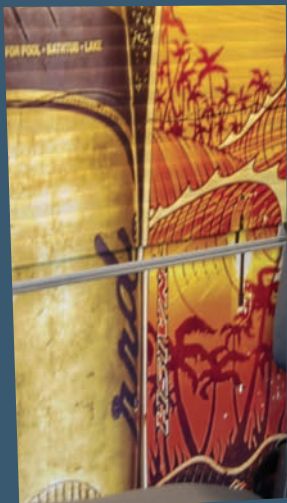
Soon after returning, the hunt for the impossible was on; a high spec list of 'needs' and a limited budget.

After the obligatory hunt around eBay and the like, the first visit to DW let me know we were going to use Johnny,

Katie and the team for the conversion. We hit it off right away and the ideas were getting brilliantly ridiculous in minutes (quote "we could build the furniture out of ammo boxes...."?!). But finding the van was not going to be easy, so, 'just for fun', I set to work on the numbers for a new van, which were frightening. I'd never spent more than £2k on any vehicle before. But with a careful, thoughtful conversion, a solid van choice in a good colour, and the expectation of at least a decade of use, I decided it was simply a cash flow issue! – so we jumped in and did it.

4 vans teaches you what works and what doesn't, so the design came pretty easy - it was trying to think of a few things to set the van apart that was the hard bit. Because this is a long-term project, I didn't need or want to get everything done right away. We planned out the bits I didn't want to buy cheap, or buy twice, and made them priority. I was also keen





to keep a stealthy, subtle exterior, which meant the interior really had to 'pop'. I love the contrast between inside and out. It's a good metaphor for dub life – I don't want to attract too much attention, but when I'm inside my van I want to be transported somewhere else.

We had the original steels banded and the suspension lowered by a sensible amount to improve stance and handling. The stock tyres were stretched to fit, no wastage, and the overall effect was cheaper than new alloys and tyres. Once these tyres are worn I intend to replace them with some good chunky winter tyres, and invest in some nice alloys and summer use tyres at that point. To protect the investment, a good quality reversing camera was fitted too.

The other extravagance was referred to throughout the project and on the quote as the 'RIB Bed End Cap' (to avoid suspicion) – it was actually a dirty great Pioneer subwoofer which fits really neatly on the back of the bed – it is good and punchy, and may get a vinyl makeover at some stage.

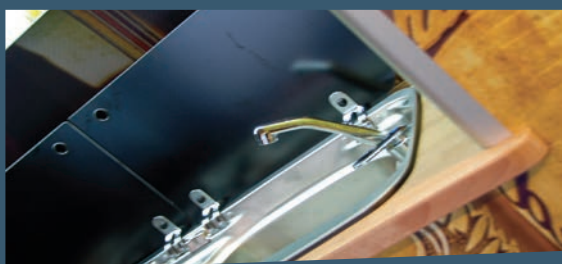
Similarly, when our little boy is old enough to use it, we'll ask DW to fit a Reimo poptop (intention is to get it as factory looking as possible on the outside, but spray the inner parts electric lime green – it's all about the contrast!).

Using vinyl has set the van apart – the main image is a hostel somewhere in Maui, with all these vintage windsurf boards making a fence around the place – I wanted something a bit different, and I couldn't be more pleased with it. The ceiling has a stormy sky, and a pile of ammo boxes made it onto the back. Again, thinking ahead, the furniture underneath should stay protected from the damage it will inevitably sustain, a hard floor for easy cleaning and good simple designs should make this as indestructible as they come. Got to keep to that 10 year plan.

So plenty done, plenty to do, and so many shows and adventures to come - that's what keeps it interesting. I couldn't be more proud of my van, and have made some great new mates at DWHQ as well.

Chris Chambers

“ I wanted something different, and I couldn't be more pleased ”



stealth **DAVE**

**SOMETIMES YOU CAN ALMOST
HEAR JOHNNY'S BRAIN TICKING.**

**"REALLY? YOU'RE GOING TO COVER THE BLUE
07 PLATE OUTSIDE IN ASTROTURF?"**

**"YEAH! WELL, LET'S JUST DO THE BONNET
FIRST AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS."**



AND so it began, the absolute transformation from a tired carpenter's work T5 to our beloved team member – Stealth Dave, as he is affectionately known.

Johnny's enthusiasm was first met with a few raised eyebrows, it seemed a bit radical and a bit of a gamble on the poor van's life!

With the Astroturf left over from the floor in our show room and the help of a good friend who owns a flooring company, the bonnet was wrapped in the grass and looked brilliant. Leaving it for a few days to make sure it was properly stuck and wasn't going to come flying off, the



sound of Johnny's brain was only getting louder! The whole lot was going to be done, every bit of body work including all the door apertures. No trace of Indian Blue to be left! Genuine VW tinted glass windows were fitted to the mid section with an over glaze on the rear quarters.

It took twelve gallons of contact adhesive to secure the Astroturf to the van, and a good few days. The fumes in the workshop were fairly intense too! We were all amazed at the way the Astroturf still allowed you to see all the contours and lines of the van, and at how professional the fit looked!

Cookie the cartoonist came over with his paints and dangerously creative mind, and set to work on painting the barn door window panels. He had no idea what he was going to do on it so watching it develop throughout the day was great! He hand painted the grills, door mirror apertures, hinges and VW badges in wood effect, and then set about doing the same to the multi-spoke alloys all to be finished off with a couple of coats of lacquer. The side bars were purchased from Homebase in the fencing section!

At this point we're just less than a week away from our first show of the season; CamperJam. We were going to take Dave as a great surprise and addition to the stand. The whole thing was so eye catching and brilliantly amusing from the outside but we couldn't just stop there could we? Of course not! With time completely not on our side but always loving a challenge, the interior was converted to make Dave a full on camper, after all - that's what we do.

It had to be in keeping and the ideas were bouncing of the walls in the van workshop. After being lined and insulated and the electrics done, the scaffold plank floor went down and the boxed twin 12" sub was in and the head unit replaced. The units were made out of pallets from our Reimo deliveries, with proper storage space, cupboards and latches. Looking more and more like a garden shed. The fridge makes up the left hand corner of the unit and is a Valvoline can unit. The hob is housed in its own recess with a lid making up the worktop and the sink and





tap finished it off perfectly – a counter sunk galvanised bucket creating the sink, and a red children's watering can with some bigger holes drilled in the rose - mounted as the tap.

The actual bed conversion is a Reimo Bike & Surf bed. The 4 legs mounted on the floor create a platform and an extra pull out section over the folded down kombi seats making up a large bed area. We had some brown and green vinyl on order for the upholstery of the seat and bed, but with some more brain ticking, it was confirmed it needed to be blue and white deckchair fabric! The headlining was wrapped in our DW logo graphics and led strip lighting installed - Dave was born! One of our customers named their van Dave, Stealth Dave was a natural progression!

Off I went to CamperJam on Friday morning, and there was still a fair bit of work to do, including an MOT to make sure he was ready to arrive that night. I fielded questions all day of "Where's Johnny?" "Oh he's just finishing a project, you'll definitely know when he gets here!" Right on cue! As we were just losing the light they arrived to a crowd of dropped jaws and amazed faces – **PERFECT!**

The attention that weekend was truly incredible and well surpassed what we had imagined. Everyone loves to feel and touch the grass "Is it real?" "Do you need to mow him?" "How do you clean that?" The answer to the latter is, you don't! Which proved to be amusing when entering Dave in all the show and shine competitions at shows. Bypassing all the hours of intense cleaning and polishing to rock up, music on, mole on top and your done!

Stealth Dave went on that weekend to win one of the Best in T5 Class awards at CamperJam, and then at Dubs at the Castle. At Busfest he was swarmed with people all weekend and in the evening transformed into a dance floor! He creates such a buzz wherever he goes, and has led to some fantastic memories. Even just driving around and on the motorway, - people are hanging out of their cars with ipads and phones taking pictures, beeping horns and waving.



He has also been used as a camper in Padstow and Croyde last summer, managing to win Best In Show at Croydes Big Sunday festival by just being there without even entering!

Now one of the faces of DW, we wouldn't be without him, customers and friends love him and he is always referred to by name. Doing his duties this summer with three different Prom dates, and then back at shows, please let us know if and where you have spotted him!





I spend a lot of time looking for campsites for various things and especially for our camping weekends, and I still cant believe I had missed Little Meadow till now. We always need to get a fair few boxes ticked, somewhere that's firstly willing to take on that many people, will have dogs and is a great location, preferably by the sea, - not as easy as you may think. Little Meadow ticked all of these boxes and more. A campsite of just 50 pitches with the most incredible sea view set on a farm just above Watermouth castle.

So, with 40 odd pitches to fill (as some of the 50 were seasonal ones) could we do it? Do enough of our lovely customers want to spend the weekend with us?! We had 25 last year, could we nearly double our numbers? Well, it was a resounding 'Yes' and before I knew it I had 40 vans confirmed. The response was fantastic and the thought of seeing all those vans together in one place was great. The mix was as eclectic as ever too, ranging from some of our first ever customers and conversions right up to those who had collected their van only a week previously. It really is fantastic to see everybody together and helping each other. Swapping details on their stories, campsites, checking out awnings and all the paraphernalia that goes with it, what works and what they would



DW 16TH-18TH MAY 2014 CAMPING WEEKEND

This years DW Camping weekend took us to Little Meadow campsite in Watermouth, Devon. After the success of the last years two weekends at Warcombe Farm it was time for a change. Not only that it became clear that numbers were growing too. We set about finding somewhere that we could over run for the weekend! Somewhere that we could have exclusive use of and that was still on the coast in the North Devon area.

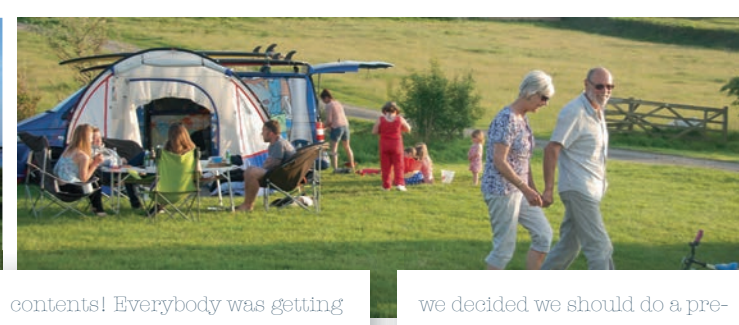


(if anything) do differently. A light relief from scouring the Internet and forums for other peoples ideas and comments. Booking for the middle of May you can never be entirely sure on the weather you might get. Well, we definitely had luck on our side with that one! We had the best weekend of the year so far. Wall to wall sunshine all weekend, with the temperature way up in the 20s, it was glorious and everybody went home with a healthy glow - some more than others!

Everybody started to arrive at the site on Friday morning, there were those who were travelling from as far as Grimsby right through to round the corner in Devon. A very relaxing and warm day, watching and helping everyone arrive, setting up and have a good catch up with the ones we haven't seen in a while. Due to the M5 being the M5 lots were stuck in traffic and were arriving up until 10pm. Johnny surprised a few when he passed on his motorbike, as he tapped on their window in the stand still traffic "You wanna get one of these!"

When everyone had arrived the friendly (and very generous) fireman amongst us had come armed with a huge pot of curry again, enough to feed the majority as well as a beer tent and its





contents! Everybody was getting to know each other, having a drink and some food while all the kids had magnetized towards each other were running round playing and exploring. That's what its all about.

Saturday was beautiful again and after a relatively slow start we all did our own thing. Lots went walking, cycling or off to Ifracombe and the beaches of Woolacombe, bumping into others along the way.

Back at the campsite the fantastic owner's daughter was organising a dog show! She was doing one the next weekend and had seen all the dogs we had, so

we decided we should do a pre-run! With categories such as: Dog I would most like to take home; Agility and Best in show, this was going to be brilliant - and it was!

At 5 we all assembled by the shop and facilities, the most incredible backdrop for a dog show too. The dogs are such characters from Ridgeback to Chihuahua and everything in between, including an entry of the non-canine variety!

It really did bring everybody together and was a great hours entertainment. After that the BBQs were lit and a few bottles opened, some slightly stronger and homemade than others! The





WHAT A GREAT WEEKEND

**Location, Scenery,
Good Company,
All In One.**

The views along the coast line were amazing, - what a find, Little Meadow was thanks to Katie and John.

We were all greeted by Katie who left Worcester at 6am so that she could meet everyone on arrival, and settle us all in before exploring this great campsite. This was my first weekend away with a bed in my vehicle, - I slept like a log and woke to the most amazing views. Everyone was so friendly and it was great to make new friends and meet up with people I'd met on our last venture out. Saturday was spent exploring the coast and harbour with lots of walking.

Sunday morning I found myself sat with coffee at 7am with the sun getting hotter by the second. Then I heard this spraying sound and then a scream. My dear friend Jon in the van next door to me had picked up what he thought was a can of deodorant and sprayed himself all over. YEP it was shaving cream. He looked like a snowman it was so funny I forgot to take a picture. Sorry Jon.

From the site you could just make out the coast of South Wales.

Overheard from one Welshman to another. "LOOK LOOK can you see the smoke rising calling you back home".

I left late Sunday morning after a great weekend.



LIVING THE DREAM

Thanks to all at Dirty Weekender for a great weekend.

Geoffrey Barham



kids were hula-hooping and running around without a care in the world - another perfect evening.

There was one or two disheveled looking camps on Sunday morning, some were up early enough to see it! Time flies when you're having fun - and it really really did. Packing was slow and unwilling as the thought of going home was not so appealing! After saying our goodbyes a few of us popped over to nearby Croyde bay for one last breath of sea air while others went their separate ways to start the journey home.

A huge thank you to everybody who came and who gives us their support, it's always an incredible weekend and lovely to see so many of you. I hope to see lots of faces new and old later on this year.

I can't recommend Little Meadow highly enough, Sian and Nick who own it were brilliant and so helpful, and the site is gorgeous. We will be back there in September and if you have a spare weekend do give it a go - you won't be disappointed.

Katie





*pamper glamp

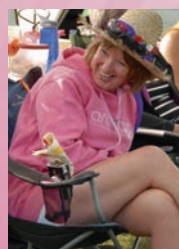
Ladies only!

14th June, Camp Blossom, Willenhall



PamperGlamp is a fundraising event for the Foort foundation and Macmillan, a one night festival of music, entertainment, beauty treatments and glamping.

Brilliant fun was had by all, as the DW ladies were let loose with the vans the bunting and fairy lights came out in abundance, we had disco balls, candlabras and vast amounts of food, Pimms and fizz!



Come and join us
next year ladies ...

meanwhile...





in pursuit of

the great white

... or how "Moby" acquired Dirty Weekender status



OK, a white, short wheelbase T5 Transporter is hardly whale-sized, but it certainly commands its share of space on our driveway. But it's a handsome beast we are delighted with.

For three years, on and off, we investigated the myth of an ideal camper. Over fifty websites, three national motorhome shows and three converters visited. Dirty Weekender was the last of these. Three hours of chatting with John and Katie and we knew we were finally on track!

It's true that our super Dirty Weekender camper is pretty much the vehicle we might have chosen three years ago, if only we had been confident in our decision making and had then been supported by a totally convincing converter. Still, better late than never. The following comments attempt to crystallise practical tips

based on our experience, assuming you want to act quicker than us!

TIP NUMBER ONE: find a converter you believe you will trust, get sound advice from and develop a good relationship with. There are so many converters around that good personal chemistry is a crucial differentiator. It became clear to us right away that DW people are real 'bus enthusiasts' who treat their clients as friends as well as customers. Their attention to quality of fit and finish was also obvious from a workshop tour. Moreover, they were the first people we met who seemed genuinely committed to create a camper specifically for us. Others (including some big names) seemed capable enough, but evidently wanted to steer us towards a camper straight from a brochure, allowing merely cosmetic customisation. Sometimes we felt uncomfortable even to ask about possible variations

and alternatives. At DW there isn't a brochure: it's what you want - unless it's seriously unwise, in which case John will quickly tell you why not!

A SECOND TIP is to be clear about and communicate your budget constraints early. Having failed to resist the lure of a brand new van sourced by DW to our exact specification, we found it prudent during the build to reflect carefully on our build priorities. John and Katie advised how we could keep control of the finances by deferring some features that we presently consider non-essential, but can have fitted later if we decide. They also offered opinions and options, drawing constructively on their own practical experiences.

A crucial step is to think critically about how you will use your van. Of course, Transporters are extremely versatile, great for everyday driving yet relatively compact, so we had to be reminded





“Johnny and Katie were really determined that we should choose the right van for our needs. What price can you put on patient, honest advice and high quality work? The Dirty Weekender team are simply the best”

that internal space is finite. Realism about our priorities and expectations had to kick in. We decided that Moby will be used mainly for excursions of a few days, occasional longer trips and visits to the DIY store, but probably not for extended overseas safaris. Initially we half-seriously considered a long wheelbase T5 but John advised that a short wheelbase would be a better all-rounder for us. Family adventures would require a roof bed and five belted seats, whilst to facilitate load carrying a Reimo sliding rear bench seat would open up the load space considerably. Given our analysis, we traded a narrower furniture unit for a wider bed, favouring the promise of a good night's sleep over haute cuisine on site! It also allows five to travel safely and very comfortably.

Further good advice was to consider optimising potential resale value.

No-one buys a van expecting to sell it immediately. But if/when resale time does come, it is good to know that the van's specification is likely to be more, not less attractive to prospective buyers. Thus, we chose a BlueMotion van for good fuel economy, Highline trim to include a raft of car-like kit, the tailgate option and a Webasto diesel heater for year-round functionality.

Visit Worcester as often as you can during the build. Living 30 miles away made it easy for us and we must have turned up more often than most, yet always made to feel welcome. Observing and commenting on the progress of your van is huge fun. Worcester is an interesting city too, well worth taking time to explore. A visit also allows you to explore detailed options or alternatives that were maybe not considered to begin

with, perhaps prompted by seeing another van alongside your own. We suspect part of the buzz for John is to respond to clients' challenges, adding to DW's repertoire in the process. When our van was finished Katie took over the process of getting it reclassified as a motor caravan by DVLA. A minor thing? Maybe, but a brief web surf shows it can be problematic. More to the point, DW is the only converter we met who volunteered upfront to sort this out.

To summarise, to have DW working on Moby has been a really good experience, thanks to John and Katie, and the rest of the team. Would we reprise the experience? Certainly. Do we want to stay in touch with John and Katie? Definitely. Have we convinced you to go ahead with your own van? We do hope so.

Martyn & Glenys Pitt





It had to be

ORANGE

and it *had* to be

clockwork

SIMON AND BEV came to us with a clear idea of creating something different but functional. They wanted their style and interests to be echoed through their van, and a look that stood out from the crowd.

With all the options and styling ideas out there its become increasingly difficult to achieve. After almost going back to basics and skipping the usual colour coding, suspension drop and alloy wheels they have definitely managed to do it.

Pepper pot steel wheels, powder coated White with All-Terrain tyres fitted, factory xenons and the orange paintwork really set it off. Inside is just as exciting with a Reimo Variotech seat/bed and CityVan furniture kit wrapped in orange.





WE had always imagined that we would one day own a campervan – an old VW bay style campervan. That was until we visited the Motorhome and Caravan show at the NEC in October 2013 and saw what could be done with a T5! Appealing to my lack of mechanical knowledge, a need for comfort, safety and a realistic motorway cruising speed, the seed was sown.

Deciding to go down the T5 route was the easy part, more difficult was finding a company we felt we could trust. Fruitless visits to main VW dealers, poor second hand stock and tarted up builders vans all conspired to make us buy a new van that we could make our own and would come without a hidden history. Plus, we had to have an orange one!

We contacted, with varying degrees of success, a few conversion companies before settling with DW. Speaking to Johnny and Katie was a breath of fresh air. They know what they are talking about, are always prepared to try something different - they don't just churn out standard conversions.

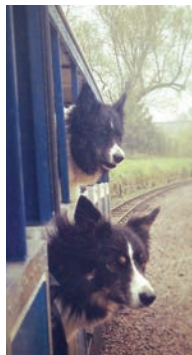
If you're reading this the chances are you've already spoken to Katie, Johnny or one of the Dirty Weekender Team. You've also probably spoken to one of their many satisfied customers who seem to lurk around the DW headquarters or their show stands ready to enthuse about the service they received!

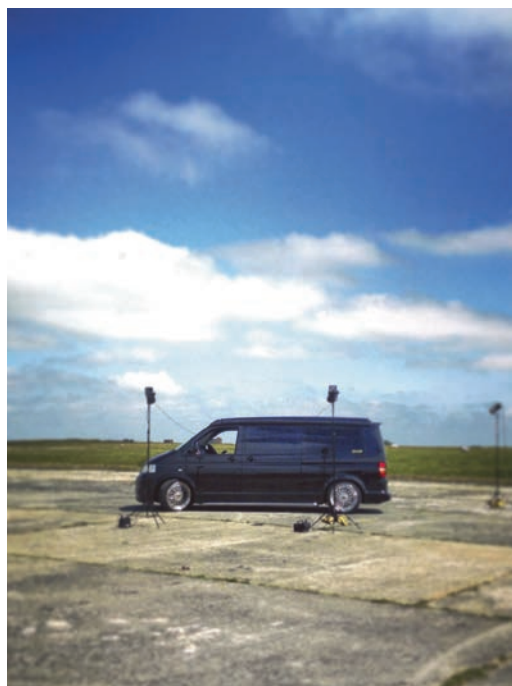
We're over the moon with our van. It's a reflection of our style and we would certainly have ended up with a compromise if we hadn't been guided by Johnny and Katie's enthusiasm for the project. Our first trip in the van was to the DW camping weekend in Devon. Over 40 DW vans were there which is the sort of brand loyalty most companies would kill for.

Now all we need to know is how to get an angry bee out of the van at two in the morning without losing all the heat out of the van and waking the entire campsite. We think it was the orange that attracted him!

Simon and Bev Joley







A TRIP TO CROATIA

We left Worcester for the tunnel on a Monday morning in early October. A relatively quiet time of year for us in the madness of DW, was allowing us 2 and a half weeks respite to go and practice what we preach!

After driving to Menorca a fair few years back and always preferring to drive not fly, we fully appreciated the diversity and independence of a holiday on the move and just how much you get to see. Being in a hotel for a week or so in the same place has never particularly appealed to us, favoring finding new places and things to do, random stopovers and just that little bit more adventure.

We wanted to drive to Croatia; a place that had been drawing us in for a while now. We also knew how set up it was for campers, with sites literally on the beaches and in forests and with all its islands to explore. This was about the extent of our planning! The contents of the van was slightly more planned, making sure we had all the necessities for travelling in Europe, cupboards stocked, Cadac, gas and more importantly our bikes on the back. We had

shorts and flip flops as well as wet weather gear, after all it was October and we had no idea what we would find the other end. What was surprising was that with everything we were taking, the van just soaked it up and we ended up with no loose luggage, making quick stops to just bed down for the night a lot easier.

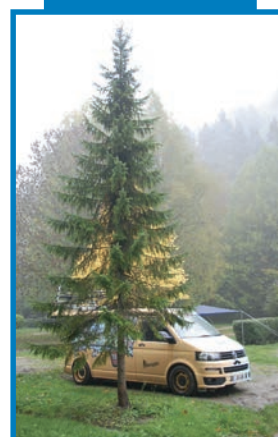
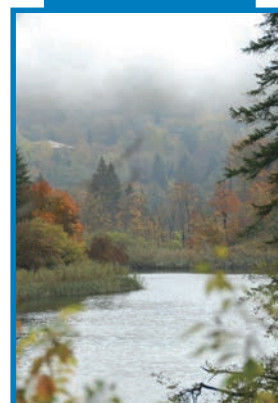
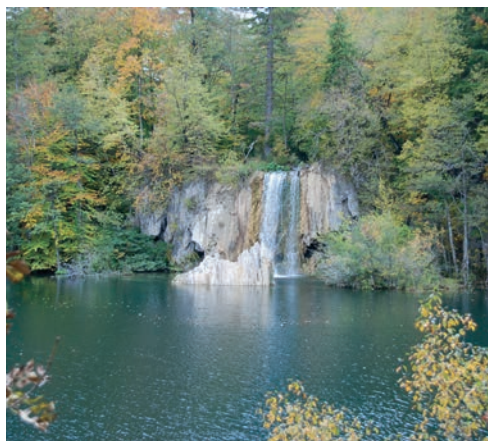
The time on the tunnel enabled us to decide where we would try and get to that evening, we were eager to get to Germany so settled on a small town just over the border from Strasbourg, Willstatt. The drive through France was easy enough and we arrived just after dark. The campsite we had found through our very handy sat nav was shut up for the night! After a few moments exploring we decided we just risk it, lift the barrier, drive on and see what happened in the morning! After some bread, cheese and a glass of vino we were now planning tomorrow's adventure. We realised that with a good solid days driving taking in Germany, Austria and Slovenia we could reach our next stop by early evening, Lake Bled, Slovenia. One of our customers had recommended we stop here if we went that way.

All was well the next morning as we packed up and sorted our fees for the night; no one seemed to mind we had let ourselves in! Heading straight through Germany and into Austria the landscape really does change, time permitting we would love to have stopped in Austria, next time eh? Having picked up our Austrian vignette for under 15 euros we made our way through on the motorways straight to Slovenia and a campsite right on the edge of the lake, covered in trees at the height of their autumn colours.

An early start and we were off to cycle round the lake and into Bled itself, it was raining but so incredibly beautiful. The lake has an island with a huge Baroque church that you can row to, we were content with two wheels and got back to the van to whip up a chilli on the Cadac. We stayed in Bled for another night and then made our way into Croatia.

We didn't need to cram in so many miles now so the 3 hours to our first stop, the island of Krk seemed minimal. We were seeing more of what we expected now, bright blue sea and pebble beaches with untidy but gorgeous, tamarisk campsites. The only issue being that everyone we turned up at had closed





the week before! We had realised we might be limited in October but not that much. We were bumping into people we had met earlier as we compared lists of all the sites we had been to, and went our separate ways. We eventually struck gold and travelled to the south of the island to a site on the deserted beach front that was part of a hotel complex, great view and great facilities. Cooking dinner, the wind and rain were howling but we were perfectly cosy with the heater on and roof down for fear of losing it! We decided we would see what the weather was doing in the morning and probably make a move back to the mainland and further down south.

Yep, it was still raining! Off on the bikes for a bit and then to use the hotel's wi-fi to do a bit of research and planning. One thing we did want to do was the Plitvice Lakes National park. There are a few national parks in Croatia all famous for the incredible waterfalls. We came to the conclusion that we may as well get wet going for a good stomp than wait for it to stop.

In retrospect the journey was amazing and hilarious in parts! The scenery was incredible as were the twisty roads, the climbs, and the food we stopped for in a shack on the way.

Our sat nav was our savior really for the time we were away and we trusted her implicitly. So when we were directed down a lane littered with derelict houses, cars and the odd stray dog out for a wander we did as she said. But after about 3km it didn't feel right. Should we turn back?, carry on? We did the latter and after dark and a very quiet van we found ourselves at the National park campsite. The last couple of hours had been a bit odd so we settled down for some normality and watched Yogi bear!

We walked 4 hours round the lakes the next day on one of the chosen trails and it was stunning. The vivid colours of the trees and the waterfalls were just spectacular. One of the many joys of having the van is having all your stuff for a quick change and the chance to make a cuppa before setting off.

We were now on our mission to find some sun. As we travelled south the temp gauge on the dash literally more than doubled in the time we were driving. Armed with our trusty Croatian tourist board camping guide we pulled over after a toll to decide what our next move was. As we looked to the right and the sun just starting to turn yellow we could see an inlet in the landscape and a fun looking coast road. We were going there!, and as we arrived in Vodice, drove straight onto a pitch with our front splitter practically overhanging the sea; we knew we had done the right thing! A balmy 24 degrees and the most beautiful sunset was welcome. The difference in a day and a few hundred miles was amazing. Just enough time to cycle to the supermarket down the promenade, get the barbie going and face-time friends back home.

The next day we did nothing, for those of you who know us - this happens scarcely! Swimming in the sea, eating, drinking, and exploring as far as we could go on the bikes was us for the next few days - heaven! Eager to get moving again we headed off down to Split to catch a ferry to Brac, one of the islands in central Dalmatia. The campsites in the south tend to stay open to the end of October, as the weather is generally better.

As we came off the ferry and headed over to Bol, on the far side of the island, the pace of life seemed to slow even more. Olive groves and vineyards lined the twisty turny roads up and back down to the sea.

Arriving at Kamp Kito, a tiny Autocamp in an olive grove just above the coastline, we were welcomed in by the owner and shown around. Two or three olive trees had been removed here and there to make the pitches. The site also had a small restaurant run by the family serving the best Croatian home cooking.

From here we explored the island on the bikes, finding remote beaches, little churches, cafes and cycling through the backstreets of the little towns. As idyllic as this all sounds; it was here that Croatia's political past was most evident, abandoned and derelict hotel complexes with





squatters, the walls covered in graffiti were a reminder of the recent war of independence it had endured.

Three days later and it was our last night, a night where we slept for only a couple of hours due to the most incredible thunderstorm we had ever witnessed. Being in the van with that going on directly above was amazing – if not a little scary! The thunder was deafening and the lightning lit up the van for the odd split second while the rain lashed down, I actually hid at one point!

We were intending on getting back to Split and then getting the ferry from there to Ancona, Italy and driving back that way. However the boat was full so we started to make our way back up the coast road that runs all the way back up never further than 200 yards from the sea – what a good plan that was. Avoiding the main roads you happen upon so much more, watching the landscape change, following the map to see what you can see in the distance and stopping off for breaks in places you would never have otherwise seen. Its definitely a biker's road, the opposite lane of traffic was full of Italians out for the weekend on Ducatis.

We cut back through Slovenia before heading off into Italy to make it to Lake Garda for that night. The campsite we found was very different, it was practically a village, hundreds of pitches backing on to the lake, supermarket, and restaurants. Making full use of our Cadac instead, we roasted a chicken and looked at the maps for tomorrow's adventure.

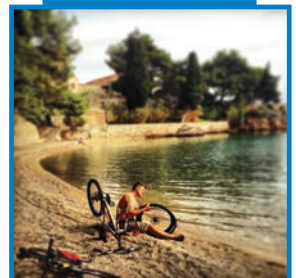
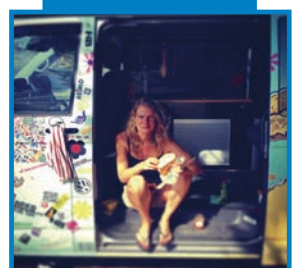
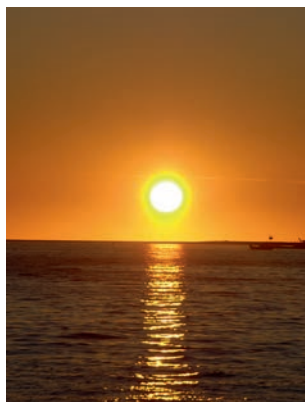
Heading towards the Alps we wanted to go through the Mont Blanc tunnel and pop out at Chamonix before heading back up through France. Just before, we stopped off in Courmayeur, Italy where we have skied before and had some lunch.

Back on the French motorways and busy looking for our last nights site it became apparent that the majority of campsites closed in October. Everything I googled or we arrived at was shut. Deciding that we didn't want to end our trip with a night in the French services we thought we would end with a night of luxury instead and booked into the five star, Chateau de Bagnols in Beaujolais. The porter was amused when he came to collect our luggage to find us rooting round the van to find some clean pants!

Bar a long haul home on the motorways and a hop across the tunnel, that concludes our trip. We had covered 3700 miles all of which were a pleasure in the van.

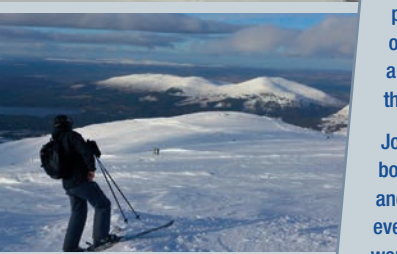
I started off needing to write a couple of hundred words on this but it was impossible! We enjoyed every moment and saw so much, we enjoyed using the van to its full potential and being relatively self sufficient and independent. The joy of arriving somewhere and not knowing where, or how long you were going to stay.

We would always wholeheartedly recommend Croatia as a fantastic trip and everywhere in between, but most of all its about getting out there, discovering new places and having a good old fashioned adventure, and we think our van is the perfect tool to do so!





let's go



Fancy going skiing or boarding to Scotland in the vans?", came the question from Mr Eames, ... "when?" said we, "February, half term" said John grinning ... "Absolutely!"

Packing of warm gear and equipment that winter sports attract was surprisingly easy with the amount of storage we have and good use of space. So, Chez and I plus Finn the dog were ready for the 400 mile journey up north - leaving Worcester late Thursday afternoon, we headed off to the CairnGorm ski area for our first ever skiing holiday on these shores.

After a night stop at Pitlochry, we only had a 90 minute drive before we were parked up at the ski resort, and by 10 o'clock we were taking the first lift up the famous button/pommel lift! In fact, every lift here is of the pommel or T.bar species, with a luxury of the funicular train, once they had dug it out!

John and his family have been boarding here for many seasons, and he and Sky showed us around every inch of the slopes, which were well groomed and had the

"ski anywhere you want to" sort of feel. All the staff in this resort are so friendly, and very passionate about what they have to offer ... where else can you ski back to a fish and chip van?!

To be able to ski back to your van at lunch time, make lunch, and pop the kettle on was a great bonus. Leaving the Eberspacher heater on low for Finn while we had fun on the slopes meant we had a nice warm van when we took regular breaks from the slopes. Aviemore was only a 20 minute drive back down the mountain, and the town had everything for outdoor adventures like biking, hiking, and snow sports, plus all the usual shops, bars, and fast food joints too.

We had booked a campsite in Aviemore, which was a great location. The facilities were spot on too, with the added bonus of an Italian restaurant, pizzeria, and a bar at the entrance to the site. The 'all you can eat buffet' was well sampled each night! So with the thermal silver screen on, the heater gently ticking over, and

a belly full of pasta and pizza, a warm cosy night was had by all.

With the slopes opening at 09.00, it was a quick check on the CairnGorm mountain Facebook page to see what the up-to-date conditions were like. If snow had fallen overnight, or high winds had caused drifting, then the snow gates at the bottom of the mountain would remain closed until the access roads and car parks had been totally cleared. We had snow chains ready - just in case, and John had winter tyres on - I would recommend to have at least one of these options plus a collapsible shovel just in case!

All in all, it was a great experience. Aviemore, Glenmore forest, and the CairnGorm Mountain area have so much to offer whatever your outdoor adventure interests are. We shall definitely go back, whether to hike, ski, or to simply just take in the fantastic views from the van on one the campsites in this area, Thanks to the Eames family for introducing us to the CairnGorms!

WARREN, CHERYL AND FINN
(THE POWDER HOUND!)





It all started as a dream

*Like a lot of people, we had often chatted about owning a campervan of some kind.
You know those kind of conversations that start "if only we had a van then we could"*

After many years of tent camping we took a break when the children decided it wasn't cool anymore, and our holidays turned into lovely breaks away in rented cottages.

About 18 months ago we realised that the youngest of our 5 children (twin girls now 17) wouldn't be coming on holiday with us for much longer. The dream started to wiggle its way into our head again. We have very good friends who live in our village who own an old split screen van and are die hard 'dubbers'. We have listened to them over the years, regaling stories of wonderful camping trips and cool days out. We had a holiday with them a few years ago down in Weymouth, when one day while we were all out in their van cruising through the town we were stared and waved at (but in a good way!) This was a strange feeling but quite fun and I guess this was when we realised that owning a VW van was something special.

After lots of conversations with friends about thinking of finally taking the plunge, they asked us if we would like to go to Busfest with them to have a look around. So back in September 2013 on a lovely sunny day we headed up the M5 with them in 'Bertie' their 1957 T2 Van with a view to look at a few second hand T5 vans and get a feel for what we could get for our money - and to have a great day out!

The show was huge! We were astonished at the array on offer and wandered around completely amazed at the choices of new and second hand vehicles on offer. We headed for the used van section. After spending some time looking around we quickly became despondent after realising that we would have to spend quite a lot of money to get a van that wouldn't necessarily be in the condition or layout that we wanted. The key to this being that VW's obviously hold their value! We were asked several times what it was we were actually looking for. We couldn't really answer this other than to say we would know when we saw it!

Anyway, the day was coming to an end and we started to head back to 'Bertie' for a brew and something to eat. Just before leaving the show our friends wanted to make a quick pit stop at a trader on the other side of the

show that we hadn't managed to get to look around. While they went off we wandered around aimlessly just killing time until they were done. Imagine our amazement when we were faced with a T5 van covered in grass with a wooden trim! This needed more investigation and we headed towards this vision of strangeness to have a proper look. The van took pride of place in the centre of an arrangement of T5 vans, most were new or nearly new. This display of T5 showmanship was incredible and we felt we had to chat to someone about them.

After a good nose around the 'grass one' our eyes were drawn to a beautiful toffee coloured T5 van gleaming in the late afternoon sun. We ended up chatting to the owners for about 45 minutes and we immediately fell in love (with the van - not the owners!). We discovered that the display was made up of delighted customers of a company called 'Dirty Weekender Adventure Vans' who had all brought their vans to support and promote this wonderful company. Well, if the name doesn't inspire you to check them out then nothing will!! We took their details with a view to looking them up sometime.

That sometime happened about 1 week later! We got home, checked out their website and chatted endlessly - we had found what we were looking for.



We booked an appointment with them and went up to meet Johnny and Katie. Well, what can I say Johnny : creative, mad, spontaneous. Katie : calm, composed, professional - they complement each other perfectly. The enthusiasm from them both is infectious and we were hooked!

We had a few visits, counted our pennies and decided to place an order. We headed to Worcester mid October and did it! It took several hours but we settled on a new T5 LWB, 140bhp with a six speed box, a Highline pack, and the signature DW Black furniture. After much deliberation, we settled on the gorgeous colour of Blackberry. We were not to be disappointed.

It was at this point that we decided to keep this extreme purchase a complete secret from our very nearest and dearest. Why? Well, we thought it would be a surprise to beat all surprises when we finally arrived home with the newest addition to our family. It proved to be easy in the beginning! But as the van arrived in the country back in late February it became more and more difficult not to let 'the cat out of the bag', especially when friends kept asking us when were we going to bite the bullet and get our camper ... little did they know! Finally, the conversion began and we had to come up with more and more inventive ways of excusing why we

kept disappearing on Saturdays or Wednesday evenings. Oh, the telling of white lies came to be quite a fun challenge!! We went to 'Ikea' one Wednesday and bought a few bits and bobs which we produced when we got home (although these items had actually been bought on a previous visit there and hidden in the boot of our car for a few days). We had 'trips to visit family' who conveniently live in Worcester and were actually the only ones in on our secret. We went on lots of 'walks', although it was remarked by our daughter on one occasion "what, dressed like that?" This observation was quickly quashed by a quick remark that our walking clothes and boots were already in the car from a previous walk. Phew, got away with it that time! The children also failed to notice the growing pile of purple coloured paraphernalia and camping equipment piled up in our porch that continued to grow over the few weeks in anticipation of the arrival of our new toy.

Anyway, the call eventually came that the van was ready. Utter excitement was cleverly hidden from those around us as we rejoiced in private at our impending new arrival. We really wanted the kids still living at home to come with us to collect it. Now was time to put

into action the plan we had hatched to get them to come with us. Each of the three of them was taken to one side and asked if they'd like to spend the afternoon with me. Some quality mother and child time! They weren't to tell each other as the others might feel jealous. Genius! One couldn't change a shift at work on short notice, but the youngest girls made their excuses at college and bunked off for the afternoon. They were both pretty surprised to see both my husband and I and their sister in the car - needless to say completely baffled by what was going on. We told them it was a magical mystery tour, to buckle up and wait and see. We arrived at Dirty Weekender on a pretence that my husband wanted to have a quick look at this company who did van conversions. Two very bored girls reluctantly got out to have a look round. They were amazed at the vans that were outside on display and totally blown away by the blackberry van situated in prime position in the showroom, pop top up, coloured lights on, the paintwork sparkling under the showroom lights. They were in it like a shot, having a poke around uttering those immortal words "wow, if you had something like this then we'd definitely come camping with you!"





Johnny and Katie played their roles to perfection, pretending they didn't know us and we had some small talk about prices, etc. We couldn't contain our excitement for any longer and we announced that it was actually ours and Johnny handed over the keys. There was a chorus of "yeah, right" from the girls and it took a few minutes of explanation and laughter for them to realise it really was ours. High praise indeed to then have that teenager speak "it's sick" as acknowledgement that it was 'really good'. We then became really cool parents!!

After some bubbly, beers for the lads in the workshop and a tin of homemade brownies as a thank you to the whole

team, it was time to make our way home and let the rest of our family and friends know about our surprise.

We've had the van for only a couple of weeks now and it has proved a huge hit with family and friends alike. Lots of people quite shocked at the way we managed to keep it a secret for so long, and I'm not quite so sure if we'll ever be completely trusted again!

Our journeys out in it have been amazing ... lots of interest in our beautiful Blackberry mystery machine (as the kids have nicknamed it). Complete strangers have approached us on campsites, car parks and even just in the street to ask all sorts of

questions. We've thoroughly enjoyed our very short time with our van so far and look forward to many years of glamping to come. Thank you so much to Johnny and Katie and the whole team at Dirty Weekender for making our dream come true.

Sam and Alan Redford





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Vacances Romaines

OUR story started back in 2004, we were fed up spending 2 week holidays in Costa Del somewhere, looking at the same beaches and eating the same food. So we decided to buy a great big motorhome, obviously. Proud of our new purchase we drove to the south of France, and being a keen racing cyclist, I took my racing bike (in the garage of our motorhome). This was it for us; why spend a holiday doing anything else!!

As time went on our mammoth motorhome spent more time parked up at home than it did on the road. It was great for long holidays, but just too big and clumsy for a night out at the weekend ... so after a lot of discussion, we decided to down size to something we could use all of the time. What better than the iconic V DUB? After reading all the mags

and looking at dozens of web sites, we had an idea of how it should look, but couldn't find what we were looking for. A trip to our local VW commercial showroom and seeing a California just made it worse!!! Surely there must be something out there?? We decided to go to the Malvern show and the same thing there, lots of vans, some nice some not so nice, but nothing that jumped out. We were on our way home when suddenly my wife spotted a mad looking thing covered in grass, we had to go and see. After deciding that was a bit extreme even for us, we looked inside a really cool blue van with striped furniture! The owner was really friendly and couldn't speak more highly about the builder; we just had to talk to him. While we waited, a guy was telling us how he fits out these

vans, (turned out to be Ian) he sounded so enthusiastic. We knew there and then that we had found the people to create our new dream. We then met Johnny who showed us round his latest creation, a crazy wrapped and sticker bombed conversion with a cool interior and a huge picture of a pint of Guinness on the underside of the roof bed!! Bonkers, we just had to get one of these. They offered something totally personalised and different to anything we had seen before. That was our introduction to Dirty Weekender Adventure Vans, (even the name conjured up all the fun we were going to have with this van).

After going over to Worcester to meet Johnny and Katie and discussing what we had in mind, Johnny, full of enthusiasm, suggested some really cool options and ideas, some that had not even been done





before. We decided on our donor van, a long wheel base T5 DSG in the new Blackberry colour. He even got us the van, it was all so easy. We just had to wait for it to be delivered!!

In the meantime we changed some of our original ideas and finally it arrived at their showroom. Wow, what a great colour (we hadn't seen the colour when we ordered it so it was a bit of fingers crossed).

The build started and Johnny took great pride in sending us photos of our new baby with holes in the sides and no roof, scary when you've never seen it before!! As the build progressed we kept being updated with photos and text messages, it was all too much. Every new photo was met with "wow, look at this" around our house.

The final day came when it was ready for collection. We were so excited (like a couple of kids at Christmas). We had high expectations of what it was going to look like. When we saw it for the first

time, it was so beautiful, it surpassed our expectations. Their attention to detail is fantastic.

The whole process from start to finish has been a real pleasure, never before when buying a new vehicle have we felt this. Our first real trip out in it came in time for the Dirty Weekender away weekend in Devon. What a great event that was, the van performed brilliantly, the venue was perfect, the people were so friendly, the beer was cold and the sun shone. It doesn't get any better than this ...

Downsizing is definitely the way to go for us, like I keep telling my wife, "it's not how big it is, it's how you use it" for once, she agrees...

We would both like to thank everybody at Dirty Weekender Adventure Vans for realising our dream.



Nicki and Caron Head



a quick word from Johnny

"Calling all Motorsport fans"!!

One of my other passions is Motorsport, mainly motorbikes, sidecars and road racing. Having done the Isle of Man TT and competed in the F2 British Sidecar championships and other road races, I'm still with some of the events. I know a few of you have already been interested in going to some of the events so here's a look at what's going on and what we are going to be organising in the next twelve months.

THE INTERNATIONAL SIDECAR BONANZA 26-28TH SEPTEMBER 2014 MALLORY PARK



The International Sidecar Bonanza, a 2 day event to be held over the 26th/27th/28th September that promises to be the biggest event of its type. Stars from UK and Europe will be on track with F1, F2 and Classic machinery.

For this event I have secured a camping space in the paddock for us to park up the vans and stay for the weekend, ensuring you are as close to all the action as you can be, meet all the racers and have a great look round.

There is limited camping space in the paddock so let us know as soon as you can if your interested. Email info@dirty-weekender.com or text John 07791 935148 to get your space sorted!



THE ISLE OF MAN TT 2015 GET TO THE ROAD RACING CAPITAL OF THE WORLD!! 1ST WEEK OF JUNE 2015



We are getting a group together to go over to the Isle of Man to watch the incredible IOMTT, taking the vans over and camping up in a site alongside the mountain course.

THERE WILL BE:

- **CAMPING**
- **TOURS OF THE ISLAND**
- **GUIDED LAPS OF THE LEGENDARY TT CIRCUIT**
- **VANTAGE POINT INFORMATION FOR WATCHING THE RACING**

Whether you have been before or if its something to tick off your bucket list, a real must do for anyone!

For more information and to register your interest email katie@dirty-weekender.com.



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KATIE



DEBBIE



SARAH



ANDREW



SCOTT



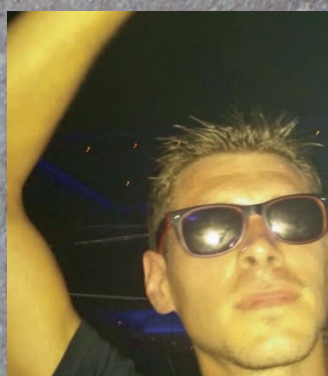
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