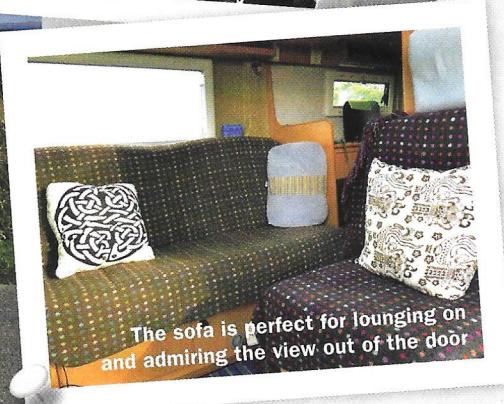




Owner report

Carol Kubicki... upsizes from a Volkswagen campervan but stays with the same converter

2015 Devon Tempest



We have never been trendsetters and, while the fashion in the motorhome community has been to downsize, we have contrarily upsized both times we have changed our campervan. Our current home on wheels is a blue Devon Tempest; our third 'van and the second from Devon Conversions and we have been together for three years.

We loved our previous Devon, the Sundowner, and knew that the high-top Volkswagen was going to be difficult to beat in terms of driving fun and looking cool but, after seven years and 80,000 miles, we felt ready to try something with more space and the

privacy of a washroom.

Our campervan is our only vehicle and, when buying the Sundowner, four travel seats had been essential, but our son and daughter-in-law no longer needed a parent-taxi, opening up layout options. We looked widely but kept coming back to Devon Conversions for a number of reasons.

Firstly, one of the pleasures of owning a campervan is finding a converter who has anticipated your needs and created clever designs that make excellent use of the limited space. Secondly, Devon offers good value for money and I liked the idea of a conversion on a Renault: high-

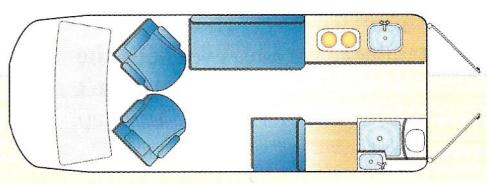
quality vans with a touch of French *je ne sais quoi*.

A couple of other things nudged us towards Devon: it is willing to customise its conversions to customers' own specifications and we trusted our local dealer, Todds, which is near Preston.

And yet we were still in two minds when we visited Todds and explored the 'van selection, after all our VW was reliable and familiar. It was the excellent trade-in it offered that tipped us over the edge and a new Devon Tempest was ordered.

The six-month long wait for our ▶

Price from: £32,000 **Berths: 2** **Travel seats: 3**
Base vehicle: Renault Master MWB
Length: 5.40m **Gross weight: 3,500kg**





new campervan felt like protracted agony, only relieved by occasional photographs from Devon once our Renault had arrived and it had started on the build. I counted the days until it would be ready.

START OF THE STORM

Collection was on a cold February day, but I was in high spirits. Todds gives a thorough familiarisation to buyers and we welcomed this as the Tempest had a few new gadgets.

We hadn't owned a Truma Combi boiler before (and we didn't pay enough attention so couldn't figure the heating out on our first night) and the bed mechanisms were different.

Payment completed, we climbed in to cautiously drive away (it had just six miles on the clock) and immediately spotted a warning light.

The mechanics at the nearby garage diagnosed a clogged-up particulate filter and reset it but, by the time we were on the M61, the light had returned. The RAC were chirpy when we rang. "That is the lowest mileage we have ever had," the operator quipped and our 'van wasn't even on the system. I wanted to weep.

Our first evening with the 'van wasn't spent playing with our new toy;

instead, we stood shivering for an hour on the motorway hard shoulder, rush hour traffic flying by. We both winced while the RAC mechanic floored the accelerator to burn off the particulates and Anthony muttered into his hands about running a new engine in. Such is the sensitivity of modern vans that those six miles of pottering around a factory and showroom had clearly been enough to clog up the particulate filter. Since then, the engine has given us no further problems.

CHASING THE WIND

There is no denying that, at first, the Renault Master seemed bulky after the nippy VW T5 and the additional weight makes it slower to respond, even with the extra bhp. The drive is a tad harder than the VW but we find it a comfortable ride.

We opted for the Renault Master Eco with stop-start technology, giving us 36mpg on a good run. Initially, we were on tenterhooks when the engine stopped at junctions but it starts promptly and now we wouldn't be without it. The other new gadget – the reversing sensors – also now feel essential.

Why we bought it

It offered a sub-5.5 metre 'van with a washroom, for the Devon Conversions' quality and value for money and because it was a Renault

What we love

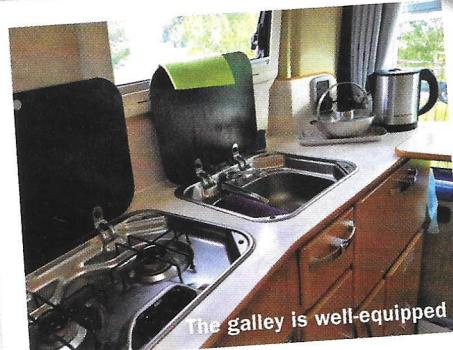
The big sliding door with a facing sofa, the window behind the sink that lets light in and steam out and not having to swivel the front seats to make the beds

How we would change it

A lightweight folding table that can be used inside and out, plus drawers rather than cupboards in the kitchen area

When we buy our next 'van

We won't be upsizing next time, 5.4 metres is long enough for us

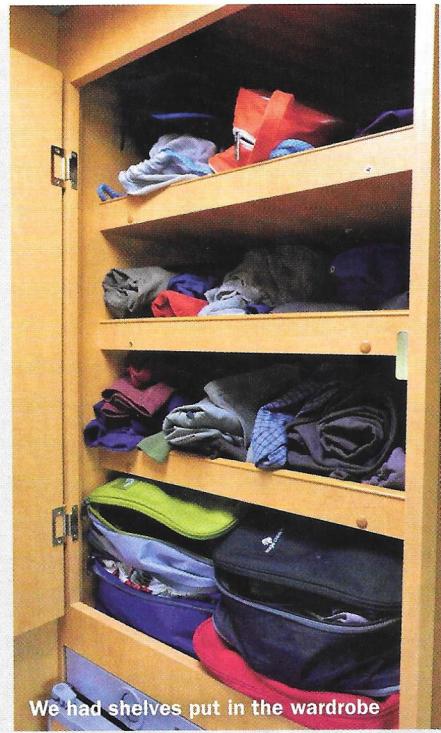
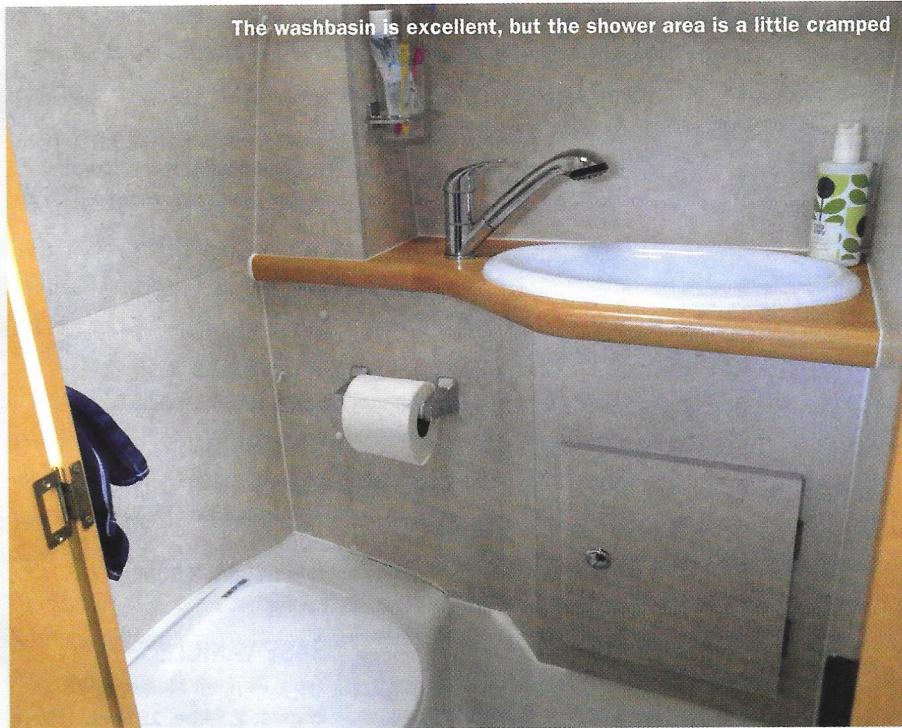


The Renault cab is fairly basic with a plastic finish that is more white van than luxury car but we have air-conditioning and plenty of useful pockets, trays and a glovebox for maps, packets of mints and tissues.

LET THE SUN SHINE

Although the 'van felt enormous to us, it is only a 5.4m medium wheelbase camper. You can't shoehorn a massive washroom into this space and yet the Tempest washroom is above average. I am nervous around folding sinks and a big tick for the Tempest is the oval-shaped sink set in a worktop. The loo is fine and we have used the shower but it is cramped.

The Renault has a sliding door that is full height and we love all the light and fresh air that this lets in. Sitting on the sofa with the sun streaming in ➤



and a view of open countryside or the sea is hard to beat.

During the daytime we either sit side-by-side on the sofa or, if we want to lounge with our feet up, one of us will hog the sofa and the other will have the front-facing passenger seat with their feet sharing the sofa. Having a side and back door works well for us, particularly in summer when the weather is fine and we are luxuriating in outdoor living; then we leave the beds made up and come and go through the back door.

The Tempest comes with what I would politely call a sturdy table. It has two folding legs and is heavy but this makes it stable and we use it inside and out and it is big enough for four when we are entertaining. Inside, the erected table blocks the sliding door but it stows neatly behind the washroom when we aren't using it.

THE FORECAST IS BRIGHT

Devon Conversions always provides excellent lighting and it surpasses itself in the Tempest.

We have four corner LED spot lights for reading in the living area and what we call the 'big lights', flush ceiling lights that are bright enough to find an elusive night-time insect

or something we have dropped. We specified an additional LED strip light in the kitchen over the sink that is brilliant for cooking without having to light up the whole 'van.

Another great piece of kit on the Tempest is a fold-down worktop along the rear of the 'van, this gives more worktop space than in many large 'vans. Our camping cuisine is simple

"We felt ready to try something with more space and a washroom"

fare and the two rings and oven/grill give us plenty of options and we have two sockets in the kitchen for electric gadgets (plus two in the living room).

CALM AT NIGHT

At night we take just a few minutes making up the two single beds, rather than the double.

This set-up leaves us space to move around in the 'van in the evening and the early riser (me) can get up, make

a brew and read without disturbing Anthony's slumbers.

While the sofa easily transforms into a sofa, reaching the catches to pull out the bed sections of the rear passenger seat is a tad more complicated. Devon Conversions provided two additional cushions for the foot of the beds and these were cleverly stored in two cut-outs behind the back of the sofa.

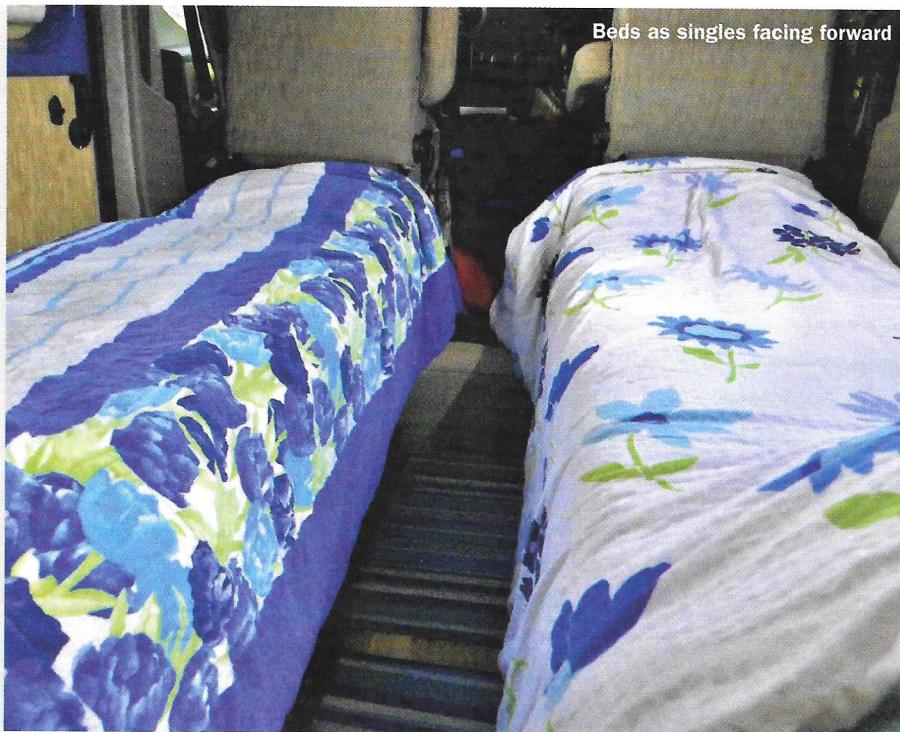
We found that we didn't need these as the two plump cushions Devon also provided work equally well, thus freeing up useful storage space for teabags at the start of a European trip and bottles of wine on the return.

HIDING FROM THE STORM

This brings me nicely onto storage. Before buying we spent some time exploring a Tempest at the Devon Conversions factory in the northeast, thinking through how we would live in the 'van.

We don't travel with a TV and, at first, struggled to see how we would use the shallow TV cupboard that sits above the rear passenger seat. Then I had a brainwave and found that a bottle of wine fitted perfectly in to the recessed base of the 'TV' cupboard.

Devon left us enough height for ➤



Beds as singles facing forward

wine bottles and fitted a couple of additional shelves. This cupboard, now referred to as the 'wine cellar', carries up to half-a-dozen bottles of red, along with glasses, jars of olives and herbs and spices, which means we are always prepared for some impromptu entertaining!

How we have used the storage has changed over the years and we now think we have got it just about right. The Tempest has a large practical storage space that stretches under the fridge and the rear passenger seat. We have now partitioned this into two, keeping the duvets under the seat and boxes for books, spares and medicines under the fridge. Our camping chairs and electric cable go above the cab.

The storage under the sofa seems cavernous and all manner of things get put there with easy access for levelling blocks and Crocs and emergency gear for jump-starting, towing and punctures (all Devon 'vans come with a spare wheel).

Below the kitchen worktop there is a large cupboard, which we fill with crockery, pans and tea and coffee

pots. The three smaller cupboards under the sink are used for food.

All our clothes and shoes fit in the shelved wardrobe. We have the luxury of six eye-level wall cupboards and these hold everything from books to pegs and binoculars to gaffer tape.

STORM CHASERS

We use our Devon Tempest all year round, from summer in the Mediterranean to winter in Scotland. We are always warm and cosy with the heating on, although it isn't the best-insulated 'van on the market.

The underslung water tank is not insulated and we don't use this when the temperatures reach freezing, instead we carry an on-board water container.

We are sorry Devon Conversions no longer makes the Tempest; but we are happy to have a rare Renault campervan and are pleased Devon has kept the great layout of the Tempest in the Devon Colorado. I never say never, but I am fairly certain we won't be upsizing any further. **mmm**

WANTED

Want to earn £250 for writing about your motorhome? Send up to 1,700 words • Info for 'Why we bought it', 'What we love',

'How we would change it', 'When we buy our next 'van' and details for our facts and figures panel • Ten or more photos, including one of yourself.



Rachel Stothert, **MMM**, Warners Group Publications, West Street, Bourne, Lincolnshire PE10 9PH

FACTS AND FIGURES



PRICE

Price new today: £43,210 (for a Fiat-based Devon Colorado)

Price of similar aged 'van today: £32,000



BASICS

Berths: 2

Travel seats: 3

Length of ownership: 3 years

Annual mileage: 9,000 miles



DIMENSIONS

Length: 5.40m (17ft 8 1/2in)

Width: 2.20m (7ft 2 1/2in)

Height: 2.60m (8ft 6in)

Gross vehicle weight: 3,500kg

Payload: 720kg



BASE VEHICLE

Type: Renault Master MWB

Engine: 2.3-litre, 135bhp

Fuel economy: 34mpg



Lounge singles: 1.87m x 0.54m (6ft 2in x 1ft 9in) and 1.85m x 0.61m (6ft 1in x 2ft)

Or lounge double: 1.78m x 1.85m (5ft 10in x 6ft 1in)



RUNNING COSTS

Base vehicle service cost: £200

Insurance: £691 (includes 12 months' European breakdown)

Habitation service: £90

Road tax: £235

OPTIONS

Accessories chosen on purchase:

Renault designer pack (air-con and alloy wheels), tracker, awning, bike rack, refillable 11kg Gaslow cylinder

WHAT WENT WRONG

A screw came loose on the rear passenger seat and became trapped, we had taken it apart, found the screw and replaced it. After two-and-a-half-years the ceiling lining glue failed in the living area and had to be reattached

FURTHER READING

We reviewed the Devon Tempest in February 2012. Get a digital copy of this magazine at pocketmags.com/mmm-magazine/february-2012