

The wheels on *the blue bus...*

Carol and Anthony's home on wheels provides an insider's view on what life is really like for a campervan...

Hello *Campervan* readers! This is Carol and Anthony's Devon Tempest, fondly called the Blue Bus. I am a friendly 'van with Renault's French flair and a conversion born in the northeast. I think the world of my owners and only occasionally have to give them a nudge to take care of me. Although I am happy camping anywhere, from wild camps in lonely Scottish glens to a luxury site, I particularly love trips when I meet up with my own campervan friends.

I was therefore chuffed to bits when I found out we were meeting up with some of my pals in Wharfedale,

ABOVE The River Wharfe at Linton Falls near Grassington

BELOW A beautiful and determined hen in search of food; More cake anyone?

a favourite Yorkshire valley, arriving from the glens of Scotland on our way back to base in Salford. It was a glorious sunny morning and I broke up the journey in the pretty village of Clapham. Carol and Anthony soon filled me with the smell of fresh coffee and sat in my big sliding door, the sun warming my interior nicely. I know they love just being with me and enjoying my home-from-home feeling. While I continued to rest, they both headed off for a walk in the Yorkshire countryside to the lovely village of Austwick, along tracks lined with dry stone walls that are not wide enough for a Renault Master.

All cylinders were firing as I turned onto the Wharfedale road and I didn't bat a headlight negotiating the narrow arch near Bolton Abbey. I knew we were heading for Howgill Lodge campsite and that I would soon be looking over its gorgeous view. The glow of a Wharfedale sunset would show off my curves and hide the layer of Scottish dust!

A relaxed, well-run site, Howgill Lodge is an exceptional place.





Carol Kubicki
Travel writer

2015 Renault Master MWB

Conversion type Devon Tempest, by Devon Conversions 
devonconversions.co.uk

Owned since 2015 (from new)

Engine 2.3-litre diesel

Power 130bhp

Gearbox 6-speed manual

Fuel economy 33 – 37mpg

Berths 2

Insurance cost £700 (Safeguard)

WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT IT

This is our third blue campervan and our second Devon conversion. We call it the Blue Bus. At 5.5m long, I still think it is enormous and, with a washroom, also luxurious



Getting eight people and a dog organised for a day out walking takes longer than getting as many 'vans on the road!'

The terracing gives pretty much everyone a view and I was perfectly pitched so that my sliding door caught the sunshine. Carol and Anthony sat outside chopping vegetables for an evening meal, drinking beer and looking chilled. Rushing over for titbits, the free-range hens potted around my wheels.

Then there were three

Eventually, my old friend, a blue VW, arrived on the next pitch. With a pop-top and a smart navy finish, darker than my sunny Mediterranean blue, it is a well-travelled 'van and we enjoy meeting up at least once a year. We shared secret campervan tales while our owners ate outside doing the same. Later, as it became cooler, they came inside to enjoy my comfy interior and I could listen in better to their gossip and laughter.

I opened my headlights to sunshine the next morning and stretched out as my hob and oven were called upon

ABOVE The Blue Bus is joined by a blue VW; Follow the leader through the fields

to create a breakfast fit for a camper. While the four humans relaxed over their feast, I was keeping my sensors alert for the familiar purr of a Mercedes Sprinter on the bumpy track up to Howgill Lodge...

Sprogget pulled in on the terrace below, with Mark, Paul, and Murphy the greyhound, just as breakfast was finished. With two other tenting friends, the group was complete, but getting eight people and a dog organised for a day out walking takes longer than getting as many 'vans on the road! It was almost lunchtime before they set off and I was properly able to catch up with Sprogget and hear all about his trip to Ireland.

From conversations I overheard later, I pieced together the group's day. They'd walked to Parcevall Hall Gardens, enjoying lunch sitting outdoors at the tea room before exploring the abundant gardens. From here, they climbed up a beautiful craggy dale to the moors where they were thrilled to see a hare racing across their path while lapwing called overhead. They stopped in one of Appletreewick's pubs and Carol had a pint of her favourite Old Peculier.

Rejoining the campervans, the humans arranged picnic benches outside the VW and talked over nibbles and drinks before eating a shared meal, the hens on the lookout for scraps. As the sun set on the warm evening

Best
trip

In 2009, we took a year out from work and travelled around southern Europe in our VW campervan we owned then. We met so many wonderful people, visited so many beautiful places and had a lifetime's worth of fabulous experiences.



HOWGILL LODGE CAMPING AND CARAVAN PARK Barden, Skipton, North Yorkshire BD23 6DJ howgill-lodge.co.uk

WHARFEDALE CARAVAN CLUB SITE Long Ashes, Threshfield, Skipton, North Yorkshire BD23 5PN caravanclub.co.uk

I was a contented Blue Bus.

The next morning, I waved off the blue VW as it chugged up the slope but was pleased that Sprogget was staying to keep me company.

The river Wharfe winds its way below Howgill Lodge and the walking is fantastic, whichever way you go. Leaving us campervans on the peaceful campsite, the humans headed south along the river to Bolton Abbey.

Carol affectionately whispered some highlights in my grille when they returned. I gather she'd seen a goosander with a cute duckling near the impressive narrow chasm on the Wharfe called The Strid and eaten some favourite Yorkshire Dales ice cream.

My Devon family

I said a fond goodbye to Sprogget the next morning and, knowing that the cupboards were bare after so much eating, took us shopping in nearby Skipton. It was market day, something my owners always enjoy, and they had a stroll around this bustling town and along the canal, busy with boats coming and going.

A thundery shower had Carol and Anthony rushing back to me for shelter and I drove further along Wharfedale to the Club site near the charming village of Grassington.

We were joining my relatives; two other Devon Conversions campervans. Born in the same County Durham factory as me, although neither has my Renault 'je ne sais quoi', they are family. A golden Aztec on an Italian Fiat is driven by Brian, with Jenny, a friendly border terrier. The silver Sapphire is a king-size campervan on a German

Mercedes that makes me feel just a little inadequate. This is the campervan home of Sophy and Nigel and their dog, Pippa, a gorgeous loof princess. The storm passed over, the sun came out and the humans sat outside the Aztec chatting and eating cake while we campervans shared information about the best roads and nicest diesel. Later, the wine was opened along with more food. Scores of rabbits potted happily around my wheels and a tawny owl hooting in the woods sent me to sleep.

The following morning, Carol and Anthony made full use of my comfortable interior for much of the morning, reading and listening to the radio, while I sat in the Yorkshire drizzle. Brian and Jenny called by while the Sapphire went off for a drive through the Dales scenery that is wonderful, whatever the weather. Even my sofas couldn't contain my owners all day and they went out for a walk. From the dripping cagoules in my cab, I gathered it wasn't a completely dry walk.

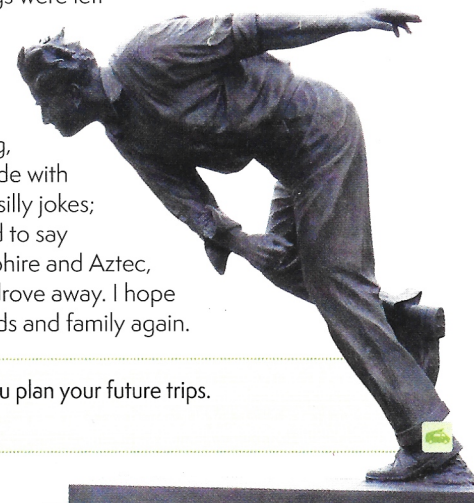
That evening, we three Devon siblings were left to play alone while the humans walked to The Old Hall Inn at Threshfield for a pub meal, where it seems a selection of their gins and beers were tasted.

I smiled indulgently the next morning, as the five campervan owners sat outside with coffee and cake (again), laughing over silly jokes; they looked so happy. Eventually, I had to say goodbye to my Devon family, the Sapphire and Aztec, and I had a lump in my exhaust as we drove away. I hope it won't be too long until I see my friends and family again.

ABOVE CLOCKWISE

The oldest part of Parcevall Hall is from the sixteenth century; The gardens at Parcevall Hall are full of colour; Three Devon campervans reunited

BELOW Fred Trueman, cricketer, bowling in full flow in Skipton



This trip took place before the coronavirus pandemic. We are publishing it for your enjoyment and to help you plan your future trips. Readers must follow the latest government advice before leaving their homes. gov.uk/coronavirus