



### PLUS POINTS

Large camper lounge, high specification, exceptional long wheelbase stability, long stroke diesel flexibility, good build quality

### MINUS POINTS

Limited storage capacity, small bed, fussy blinds



Like its namesake, the Topaz is unusual, and rare among motorcaravans for its long-wheelbase chassis. On test in Norfolk for the September 1996 issue of *Which Motorcaravan* the all-weather, slow pitch ride soaked up the bumps and kept to the straight and narrow beautifully despite of the north-easter blowing gale over the marshes. Chunky 205 section tyres were another feature to keep the wheels in contact with the road, and oversteering was the icing on the cake.

The Volkswagen's long stroke, 2.4-litre diesel motor gave us not only the benefits of sustained power economy, but also the reliability and flexibility from Volkswagen. Auto-Sleepers and Volkswagen together had worked to reduce engine noise to no more than a purr and the exhaust note

to a burble.

I commented on the quality of reassurance from the cab design, the excellent supportive seat design, and always smooth gearchange — all qualities to keep the driver unfussed, whether along narrow lanes or on A-roads. Our 0-60mph acceleration time of 28.6 seconds was modest, but fuel consumption sparkled at 33mpg.

By comparison with some of the small coachbuilt Topaz is not cheap, but for looks this handsome beast is out in front, with Auto-Sleepers' sleekly shaped roof and crisp graphics blending well to VW's svelte body lines. The interior furnishings and fabrics were every bit as professional again, with cool blues and greys predominating, to which a light grain cabinet work supplied the contrast.

Swivelling the cab seats

transformed them to reclining armchairs; the long settee on the offside was a pleasant fixture, with a fixed, forward-facing chair close to the sliding door, complete with three point seat belt for just the one passenger.

Why was this one of the best Auto-Sleeper camper galleys? Because, in only 17.5% of the total usable interior length, it managed to contain a large fridge, grill with hob, and the typically practical stainless steel double sink arrangement. Water heating by gas-fired boiler and the blown air

Make: Auto-Sleeper

Model: Topaz

Type: High-top

Payload: 527kg

### BASE VEHICLE

Make: Volkswagen

Type: Transporter Kombi, long-wheelbase

Power unit: 2.4-litre, five-cylinder normally aspirated diesel producing 78bhp @ 3,700rpm

### CONVERSION

Basic construction: Window van with added GRP roof, glass wool insulation

Fresh water capacity: 68 litres (15 gallons)

Waste water capacity: 34 litres (7.5 gallons)

Gas storage capacity: Two x 4.5kg cylinders

Water heating: Carver Cascade gas fired boiler

Space heating: Propex blown air

Refrigerator: Electrolux 2.1cu.ft auto ignition

Cooking facilities: Spinflo two-burner hob and grill

Toilet: Thetford Cassette

Electrical equipment: Mains connection via RCD to charging

space heating were standard items.

This was an ingenious and complete bathroom, although we were not enthusiastic about a folding handbasin that flexed in use, and stowage for the toiletries had its limitations. There is room to shower and use the toilet, and full marks for the handy wardrobe in which we stored a sleeping bag and pillow.

### The Which Motorcaravan verdict:

Compact, total spec' living style with impeccable road manners make Topaz ideal to combine pottering with long legged cruising. The usual Auto-Sleepers quality.

unit, mains socket and fridge. Monitor control panel.

Lighting: Three x fluorescent fittings, three spotlights, one mains electrical fitting

Standard equipment also includes: Crockery for four, three-point belt to rear seat, fire extinguisher, thermal lined curtains, two tables

Windows: Cassette blinds and flyscreens to acrylic double-glazed windows in living quarters

Upholstery: Grev/blue, abstract pattern velour

Overall length: 5.06m (16ft 7 1/2in)

Overall width: 1.93m (6ft 4 1/2in)

Overall height: 2.54m (8ft 4in)

Maximum internal height: 1.89m (6ft 3in)

Bed size: 1.80m x 1.52m (5ft 11in x 5ft 0in)

Test dates: September 1996 (*Which Motorcaravan*)

Price as tested: £27,081 ex-works

Typical price now: £26,645 ex-works

### MANUFACTURER

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