



# VILLA SPORT

ON 2.5-LITRE VOLKSWAGEN

*Pauline White enjoys this sprightly version of a popular model built in 1993 by Richard Holdsworth.*

I went to Davan Caravans in Wester-super-Mare expecting to borrow a Romahome for the day. That motorcaravan had been sold, so I was offered the Villa Sport instead, on the condition that I would indeed return it. This statement wasn't because they didn't trust me: Davan have been kind enough to allow me to borrow a 'van in the past. Peter Swingler, the sales executive, thought I might not want to return it after having driven it. I have to admit there seemed to be a lot of power under that bonnet and it felt really good to drive. If first impressions were anything to go by, then Peter was quite right - I might not want to return it.

This Villa was a 'high spec' motorcaravan. It came with power-assisted

steering, cruise control, alloy wheels, alarm protection, awning, bike rack and a host of other optional extras. It looked immaculate and I searched for ages for any fault with the external appearance but I couldn't find one. The body looked slick with its sloping front and low lines. The two-tone blue-striped graphics and the Villa Sport name gave it just the right touch of class.

### The conversion

This was a conventional Volkswagen conversion, with kitchen facilities and wardrobe along the offside and a forward-facing seat filling the remaining width of the 'van towards the rear. Behind the seat was a large storage space.

The model tested had an elevating roof with solid sides. The first job before attempting to raise the roof was to undo the four external roof clips. According to the instruction, it was then only a matter of pushing up on the centre of the roof and after a rise of six or so inches the gas struts would take up the hard work. I did find this first push a little bit difficult. Once the roof was up, there was a long bolt which eased and locked the rear panel into place and a small bolt which locked the front one. With the roof up and locked, the bunk board could be slid to the rear of the 'van to give over six feet of headroom in the working area. The reverse operation aided by a couple of handles lowered it back into place.

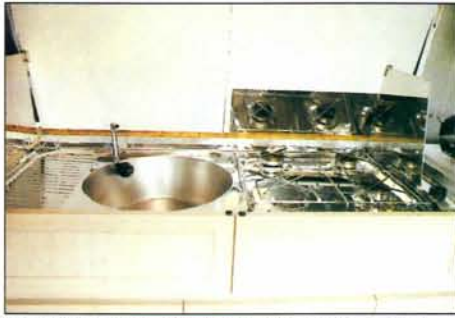


A push on the centre of the roof and the gas struts take up the hard work.



The clever design of the long bolt ensures the roof panel is eased and locked into place.

# VILLA SPORT



Separate work tops hide the one-piece stainless steel sink and hob which looked as new.



The deep chest refrigerator will hold enough food for the average couple.



The drawers hold cutlery and crockery. The larger cupboard is designed to take a small chemical toilet.



Two can eat in comfort at this table, which is quite firm on its centre pedestal.



The cab seat provides a comfortable place to lounge even when the bed is in place.

Inside, a thorough inspection revealed no major problems. The only trace of damage was a small piece of edging missing at the rear of the kitchen unit and the smallest of chips on the front. Once the carpet had been cleaned, this 'van would look as new. With blue external graphics, it was no surprise to find a blue theme inside. The upholstery was predominantly blue with blue unlined curtains at the windows. The colour of the furnishings was well balanced with the light ash of the woodwork. All the corners were rounded and the heat-resistant work surfaces, a beige/brown in colour, complemented the decor perfectly.

The kitchen seemed well thought out. The sink and cooking facilities were a one-piece unit in stainless steel, but the work surface was divided so that only one or the other needed to be uncovered as necessary. From front to rear there was a small drainer next to a large sink with a single tap. Water was pumped with a foot switch leaving hands free at all times. A three-burner Spinflo hob with grill below adjoined the sink. The switches for the cooker were to the right of the side panel that held the work surface up. This was a good safety feature. The stainless steel was still sparkling. Next to the hob was a chest refrigerator which seemed large enough to cater for most camping needs. It would run on the vehicle battery whilst on the move, or by mains electricity or gas when static. Below the sink was a large cutlery drawer and below the grill a drawer with dedicated storage for the crockery, in this case a three-person melamine set. Below the cutlery drawer was a cupboard designed to hold a Fiamma 500 toilet, and next to that a small cupboard for the pots and pans and some extra provisions. The whole unit showed very little sign of any wear and tear.

Two people could sit and eat in comfort. The table top rested on a centre pedestal and it remained quite stable in use. The



The curtains are extremely generous and create a cosy atmosphere for sleeping.



The wardrobe in the rear offside corner provides reasonable hanging space for two people.

pedestal base allowed the table to be turned to enable a bit of manoeuvrability when in use. The table top stored behind the driver's seat and even though it didn't move at all during some rigorous testing, I would still have preferred it to have some restraining clips. The cab passenger seat did swivel but it wasn't close enough to the table to be of use at meal times. An optional cab seat table is available through dealers.

## Sleeping arrangements

Making up the bed proved easy: simply lift the seat base and pull the whole unit towards the front of the 'van. That is literally all you need to do. The resulting bed was

comfortable although a trifle narrow at a touch under 1065mm (3ft 6in). By sliding the base forward in the roof space a second bed could be made. This was not intended for adults because it was only 1525mm (5ft) long and the mattress only 40mm (1 1/2in) thick. There was no ladder or safety net and very little space to climb up to it.

## Storage

Food would have to be stored in the kitchen unit previously described. The wardrobe in the rear offside corner gave reasonable hanging space for two people. A small cupboard in the rear roof would take folded items and underwear. The seat base



There is room in the seat base for bedding. Tools can go in the small compartment on the right.



No ladder is provided to reach the roof rack which will hold up to 10kg in weight.



The Zig units show the battery condition and the water level. The spotlight is good for night-time reading.



Lift the tailgate to reveal loads more storage space and the gas bottle locker.



The large inset step is plastic-lined and the rubber mats keep the carpet clean.



provided a partitioned storage area for bedding, accessed from the top. That left a large area behind the rear seat. This was just like the boot of a hatchback car. A parcel shelf ensured privacy and proved perfect when out shopping. A small roof rack would hold up to 10kg in weight but everything would have to be removed before raising the roof.

### General comfort

The side windows were opening and single-glazed. A flyscreen had been positioned externally to protect the opening sections. The windows in the roof area were fixed double-glazed units. There was a roof vent, protected by a flyscreen but no night blind. Lighting seemed just about adequate bearing in mind that this was only a small motorcaravan. On each side of the 'van was an 8 watt fluorescent tube, plus a spotlight for the inner occupant of the rear seat and a courtesy light by the sliding door. This side door glided easily and a large step protected with rubber allowed easy access.

A Propex blown air system provided heating on colder days, the outlets being just behind the driver's seat. The 'van was wired for 240 volts and a mains socket was provided to the right of the Zig units above the fridge. There seemed to be very little forgotten in this Villa.

### The cab

The carpet had been extended into the cab, but the previous owner had left some rubber mats. The inset steps, lined with plastic, would be easy to keep clean. The front seats had been upholstered to match the rest of the 'van and each had a pair of armrests. I was very impressed with the overall quality and finish of this cab. The instrumentation was extremely clear and concise. The digital clock was easily visible even when I was driving. Cab storage was good. A lockable compartment was provided in front of the

passenger and there was a small open compartment on either side of the steering column. A large pocket on each door would take all those road maps and guide books. A Clarion CRH35 radio, removable for added security, was fitted. There were four speakers, one in each door and two in the rear tailgate. Passage to the rear of the 'van was hampered by the central gear lever mounted on the floor. The handbrake was tucked nicely in to the left of the driver and didn't get in the way.



One of the best cab layouts that I've ever seen. It has all the essential information clearly visible.



A 2.5-litre, 5-cylinder, fuel-injected petrol engine provides more than enough power.

The spare wheel is located towards the rear end of the 'van.

### Driving the Villa

Only the fact that I was seated quite high in the cab told me I was not driving a car. The suspension of the Volkswagen did allow more body roll than in the Talbot Express or Fiat Ducato, but there was little or no effect from passing lorries. Top marks for handling. The 2.5-litre, 5-cylinder petrol injection engine was more than adequate for this motorcaravan. Its response was smooth and quick. Chalky had to keep reminding me to slow down to keep within the speed limits whilst we were on the motorway. Need I say more? Driving more sedately wasn't a problem either. I crept around the town without excessive gear changing and at slow speeds the power-assisted steering made cornering and parking easy.

We don't have many height barriers in our town, but the Villa would easily go under many and it only needed one parking space, such was its versatility. Wherever I went, driving was simplicity itself. Gear change was easy and the clutch worked well, as did the brakes. The door mirrors and the rear window provided excellent all-round vision. The rear window also had a washer and wiper as standard. I did try out the heater, but I really needed cold air on the day of the test and I got it.

My passenger didn't complain of any discomfort during the test drive, although he did comment on that body roll previously mentioned. Both front seats were protected with lap and diagonal seat belts and head restraints but rear passengers weren't quite so lucky. Seats that are dual purpose are never quite as comfortable as those which have been purpose-designed. The rear seat was fitted with lap restraints but did not have

the benefit of head rests. However, it was constructed with a metal frame which had been crash-tested.

### And more?

A second battery, chargeable through the Zig unit was housed under a black cover to the right of the engine compartment. A 54-litre fresh water underfloor tank was fitted. Dedicated storage for two small gas bottles, held in place with straps, was in a compartment below the wardrobe. Gas isolators were in the wardrobe as was the storage for the table leg.

### In conclusion

For two people this motorcaravan could be absolutely great. I think it is a younger person's motorcaravan, but Chalky says why should they have all the fun? It could be used as the sole means of transport because it feels just like a car to drive and is small enough to cope with shopping trips in large cities or small towns. The strength needed to raise the roof those first few inches may deter the single woman. The tailgate with the bicycle rack might also be too heavy for some people. All those extra options fitted will have eaten up some of the weight allowance, but there should be enough left for two people. A trip to your local weighbridge should confirm this. A comprehensive instruction manual, plus instruction leaflets on how to use those fitted extras are provided.

The condition of this motorcaravan with its high level of specification and extras made it very good value. Only the registration and number of miles on the clock suggested that it was more than two years

old. I did return the 'van to Davan because I do want them to lend me some more in the future. Peter was waiting for me. Was it a look of relief on his face? I think he might like to have owned this one himself!

My thanks to Davan Caravans Ltd., St Georges, Weston-super-Mare, BS22 0XF (tel: 01934 510606) for the loan of the test vehicle.

### Facts and figures:

**Model tested:** Holdsworth Villa Sport with elevating roof on a swb Volkswagen T4 chassis

**Mechanical spec:** 2.5-litre, 5-cylinder fuel-injected engine with catalytic converter, a 5-speed gearbox and front-wheel drive. Uses unleaded petrol.

**Overall length:** 4.65m (15ft 3in) excluding nudge bar and bike rack

**Overall width:** 2.16m (7ft 1in)

**Overall height:** 2.21m (7ft 3in) roof down, 2.69m (8ft 10in) roof up

**Sleeping:** One double 1.85m x 1.04m (6ft 1in x 3ft 5in), upper bunk 1.52m x 1.12m (5ft 0in x 3ft 8in)

**Seating:** Bench seat 1.04m (3ft 5in) wide

**Cooking:** Spinflo 3-burner hob with grill below  
**Refrigerator:** Camping Gaz CTL 175 top loading

**Fresh water:** 54-litre (12-gal) external underfloor tank

**Water heater:** Not fitted

**Space heater:** Propex blown air system

**Gas bottle storage:** Space for 2 x 2.72kg Camping Gaz bottles

**Added extras:** Nudge bar (is removable), Fiamma F35 Florida awning, Fiamma bike rack, cruise control, tow bar and electrics.

**First registered:** April 1993

**Recorded mileage:** 31 613 miles

**Previous owners:** Two

**Price as tested:** £17 640



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