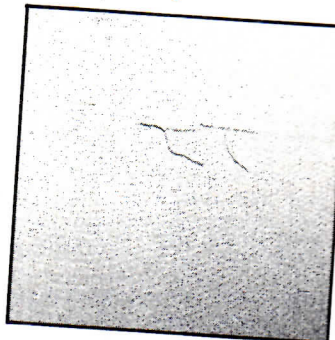


USED VAN REPORT



The company even listed a conversion for the disabled – the Autocruiser SL – which had a side lift as well as other modifications. You could also specify exterior colour and spoiler packs and an interior lux pack if you wanted that little bit extra.

When in production, the Autostrada was also available in elevating roof form. This particular Autostrada was a two-berth, with much of the high-top area being taken up by a roof locker of cavernous proportions. A sunroof had also been fitted near the front; other extras added were a dash tray and Solent had put a go-faster stripe along the sides of the



Tear on interior of sliding door was the main sign of wear

Diamond RV Autostrada

The converter is sadly no longer with us, but this model looks like it will last for some time yet



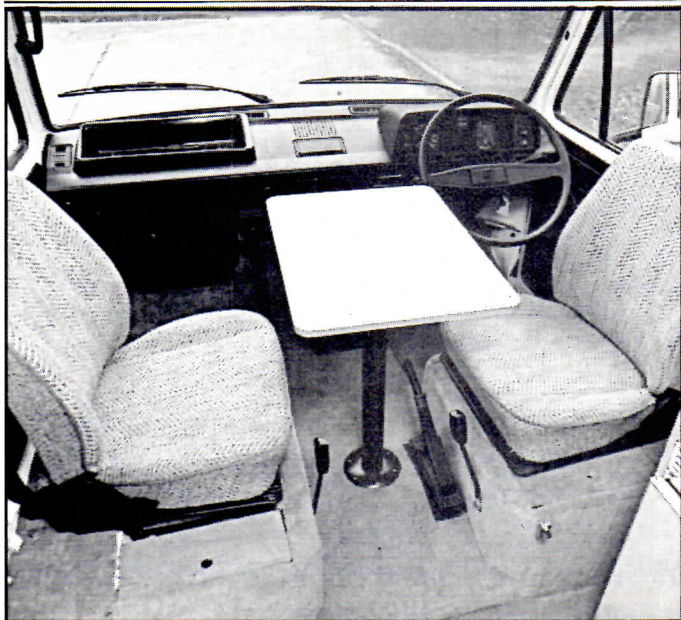
Sensibly divided cupboard space underneath sink and drainer

high-top which helped to break up the prevailing white and also emphasised the vehicle's clean lines.

Adding to the looks of the van were the white wheel trims; unfortunately the one on the rear nearside had parted company with its wheel and was in need of a replacement. This Autostrada was also waiting for a new exhaust, the old one having blown a hole.

Despite quite a search, we could find no sign of any rust on the VW and there were no places which had been 'touched up', so outside it was as good as new. Even the tyres looked virtually brand new. The only other exterior modification was a radio aerial on the front offside, although there was no indication of a radio having been fitted inside.

For the interior it was pretty much the same story, ie very little sign of wear, although there was a tear on the carpet lining of the sliding door. Floor carpeting extended through to the cab area where there was a bit of wear near the pedals. Overall though, we



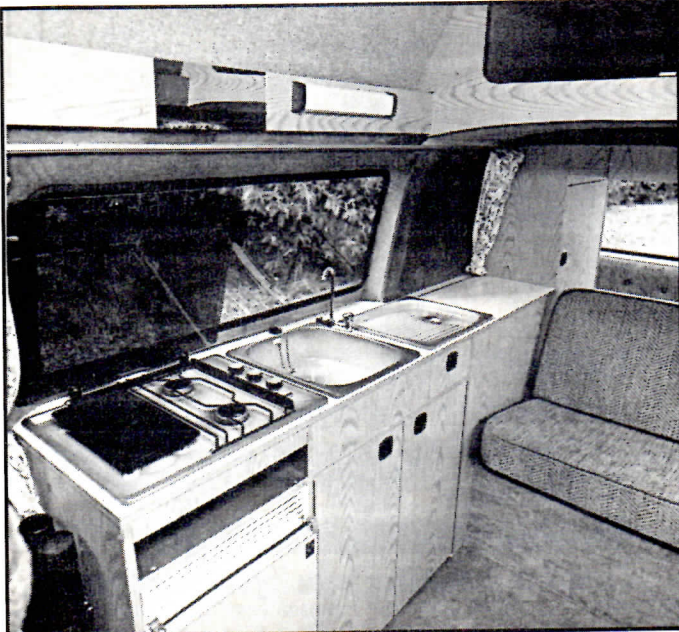
Swivelling seats and a small table integrate the cab into the living area

A good looking van is this, the Autostrada from a company which used to trade under the name of Diamond RV. Now, the company is no more but it is still possible to see some of their conversions on the roads. This one was just off the road down at Solent Motorcaravans in Warsash, near Southampton.

The model we looked at was the high-top VW Autostrada fitted with the optional 78bhp engine and, being A-registered, it was probably one of the first of the models to come on to the market when they were launched in 1984. £9595 will make you the new owner of this Autostrada with its recorded mileage of 13,145 and very little sign of wear on the inside or outside.

For the record, other van conversions by Diamond were the Autocruiser on a Volkswagen base and the more expensive Autobahn on a Mercedes chassis.

USED VAN REPORT



Kitchen fittings and furniture are situated conventionally along the offside

were impressed with the condition of the interior and we liked the colour scheme used here. The cab itself was standard VW apart from the addition of the swivelling seats and a tray for holding drinks above the glovebox. Like the rest of the van, it was very clean.

Upholstery was in a wool herringbone and the flower pattern of the curtains actually looked quite nice. The cab seats, although not

fitted with headrests, could be swivelled through 180° and a small table on a single pedestal could be positioned in between. When not in use, this table stores away behind the driver's seat.

Brown is the predominant colour of the fittings, the furniture being in a light wood finish, although some of the iron-on trim (thankfully converters are moving away from the use of such mate-



Materials and light wood finish and sunroof make the interior seem roomy

rials) was just starting to peel away in a couple of places. Even the table legs were in brown, unlike most pedestal legs which are usually chrome-plated. The interior walls and roof were in a brown hessian-type material which again was complementary to the overall scheme.

No surprises in the rest of the layout in the back of the van. The kitchen unit - consisting of a

fridge, cooker, enamelled sink and drainer (brown of course), a deep storage well with a hinged top and a compartmented cupboard which also holds the gas cylinders. The Optimus cooker was a two-burner hob complete with a hotplate and grill. Standing room here was a maximum 71½in.

Seating for two in the rear is on a forward facing bench which pulls out on a rock 'n roll hinge to form a

DIAMOND RV AUTOSTRADA

£9,995, as tested

CONVERTER (no longer trading)

Diamond RV, Unit 26, Youngs Industrial Estate, Stanbridge Road, Leighton Buzzard.

DEALER

Solent Motorcaravans, Warsash Road, Warsash, Southampton SO3 6HW.
☎ 04895 81353/4.

BODY

Type: high-top.

Berths: two.

Construction: Volkswagen Transporter with high-top.

Insulation: all internal walls carpet lined and cavity insulation in side walls.

Doors: two cab, rear hinged tailgate, nearside sliding.



INTERIOR

Toilet room: no.

Gas system: on-board provision for two 4.5kg cylinders in vented locker.

Electrical system: 12v only from van battery.

Lighting: two fluorescent strip lights, cab courtesy light, rear reading light.

Standard equipment includes: Electrolux refrigerator, enamelled sink and drainer, double burner and grill, sunroof, cold water electrically pumped to sink, 12gal fresh water tank.

BASE VEHICLE

Model: Volkswagen Transporter van.

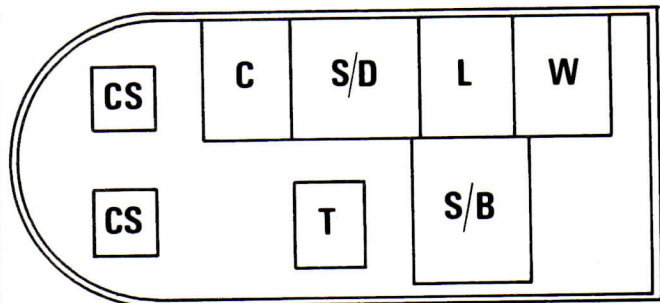
Engine: 1913cc, 4 cyl horizontally opposed, water cooled. Max power 78bhp at 4600rpm, max torque 104lb.ft at 2800rpm.

Transmission: four speed manual, rear wheel drive.

Steering: rack and pinion.

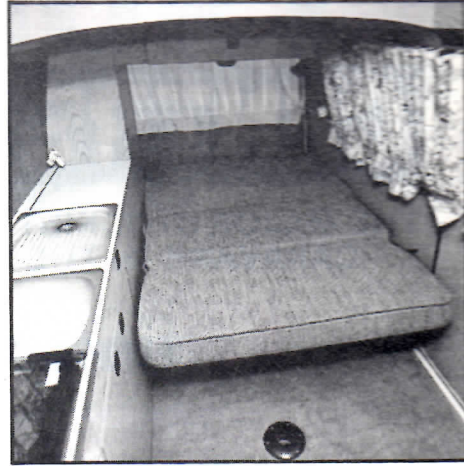
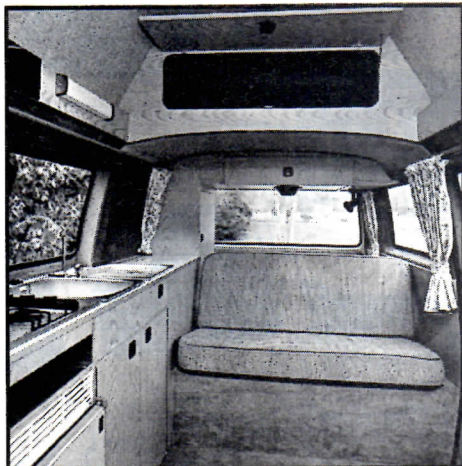
Suspension: front independent, coil springs with upper and lower wishbones, anti-roll bar, telescopic shock absorbers; rear independent trailing arms, coil springs, telescopic shock absorbers.

Supplier: VAG (UK) Ltd, Commercial Vehicle Division, Frankland Road, Blagrove, Swindon SN5 8YU. ☎ 0793 4023.



Key: CS cab seat, T table, S/B seat/bed, C cooker, S/D sink and drainer, L locker, W wardrobe.

USED VAN REPORT



Left, roof locker is huge, but we were concerned about that rear seat. Centre, plenty of storage space behind rear seat. Easy to make bed, right

double bed 71 x 45in in size. The bed takes up the rear three-quarters of the vehicle, leaving some convenient standing space between it and the front seats. Cushions are a generous 4½in thick but we felt they were rather on the soft side for sitting on, but if this is being used solely as a two-berth that should be no problem.

The seat folded and reclined easily enough, in fact too easily. When in the upright position there was nothing to prevent the whole seat unit from tipping backwards. Although this would not happen in normal use, we couldn't help feel-

ing that a sudden stop might have rather unhappy consequences, especially for taller passengers who are liable to knock their heads on the roof locker. We felt that it only needed a clip to solve this problem; Solent agreed that it could be dangerous and have agreed to fit a clip.

Storage space is under the rear seat and the front passenger's seat, and there is a wardrobe in the rear of the van. In the roof there was a small locker at the very rear. Forward of this was that huge locker already mentioned – ideal for slinging everything into as long as you don't lose any

small items at the very back where they will be out of reach of anyone with arms of normal length!

Whereas storage space is good, lighting is merely adequate. There's a single pilot-style reading lamp at the very rear of the van and therefore only useful if you're in bed; the cab has a courtesy light and there are two fluorescent strip lights in the living quarters.

A second table, larger than the one which goes between the two front seats, sits on another single pedestal in the mid-van area. Presumably this table would also be used for food preparation; there are no covers/worktops over the

sink and drainer as is often the case in this layout. Also there were no opening windows in the rear of the van – it really needed some kind of ventilation near the cooking area at least.

As we have said, it was the good looks of this van which first attracted us to it, and then we found it to be in a very impressive condition for its age. It has had one previous owner who traded it in for a coachbuilt. Apart from a couple of minor niggles, and that potentially dangerous rear seat, this attractive two-berth high-top looks like a good secondhand buy. □

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