

Best of both worlds

A converter with much experience of helping disabled customers has brought out a new model designed to be particularly disability friendly

Roy Wood Transits, based in Winnersh, near Wokingham in Berkshire, is probably best known for its Day Van, which was named Campervan of the Year at last year's Motorhome Awards. With eight seats that can be removed and refigured in any number of combinations, its super flexibility means, for example, that a wheelchair can be slotted in either through the side door or through the rear.

But, it's a new model – the MRV – that was launched this October that Managing Director, Steve Wood, thinks will be particularly useful for anyone wanting to go away in a motorhome with a disabled friend or relative. It combines the best attributes of the Day Van with some more permanent fixtures that have been included in the Leisure Van, launched shortly after the Day Van to cater for people who want a little bit more comfort and convenience.

Just like the Leisure Van, the MRV includes a two-burner hob as part of the furniture on the offside. There's also a sink fed by a 40-litre tank, which is underslung (unlike the Day Van), leaving large amounts of storage space accessible through tambour doors to the right, under a decent amount of worktop, with a power point.

A 50-litre low-level drawer fridge at the other end of the unit has a snap-up flap above it.

All of this should be easily accessible to anyone in a wheelchair because the MRV is fitted with an Innotrax alloy plank floor with three rear seats to create space for a wheelchair that can then be secured through an Unwin safety system.

Those who are able to rise a little way out of their chair should also be able to reach the overhead lockers that were installed both down the side and at the front on our test model. The MRV is also available as a low roof or a pop-top, but Steve Wood says disabled customers would probably be best

going for the high-top model. "You have a clearer floor space by having the lockers up in the roof," he says.

If a disabled passenger doesn't need to be in a wheelchair full time, there's plenty of space to stash it away in here, too, because in the MRV you can slide the seats forward to create extra storage space at the back, even when the slatted metal bed is made up here.

Like the Day Van and the Leisure Van, the toilet that can be included in the MRV is a Dometic 976 portable toilet; Steve says these are higher than the conventional cassette toilet, and so should be easier for a disabled person to use.

He is also very keen that, as the MRV is likely to be an individual rather than an institutional purchase, customers should be able to do without institutional décor, so, although the furniture in this van comes in white as standard, it is also available in a vivid orange or a bright green (for £300 extra).

And, while there are judiciously placed grab handles inside the 'van, you won't find them finished in the bright yellow that so many health and safety-obsessed institutions seem to require. Steve says disabled customers he has spoken to find these particularly intrusive.

As a final gesture to customers' individuality, the company can also fit straps on the barn doors at the back so that, with everyone already on board, they can be more easily closed by someone seated inside, without having to wait for a carer to help them.

PRICES

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|------------------------|--------------|
| Lo-Line MRV | from £29,500 |
| Pop-Top MRV | from £34,500 |
| Hi-Line MRV | from £31,500 |
| All prices include VAT | |



1 Ken Ridgway in the Day Van 2 The Day Van exterior
3 The new MRV being tested for wheelchair use 4 Leisure Van exterior
5 The Leisure Van's rear travel seats 6 The Day Van easily takes a wheelchair even with the modular furniture in place
7 The Leisure Van swallows a wheelchair with ease 8 The Leisurevan's boot 9 Ken Ridgway's Day Van 10 The Day Van's boot can take a folded wheelchair when the bed is made

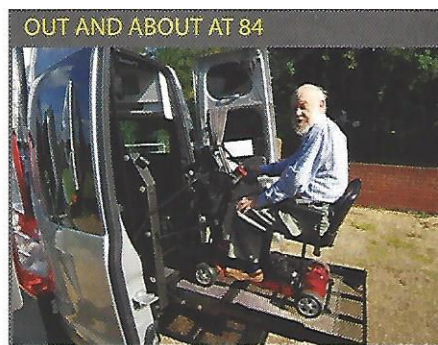




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OUT AND ABOUT AT 84

Ken Ridgway, from Arborfield near Wokingham in Berkshire, is already a committed fan of Auto Campers' Day Van.

The 84-year-old former chemical engineering professor used motorhomes in the past, having been the proud owner of two Bedford Bedouins and then a Kentucky Camp Estro 6 when his children were growing up. "We took them all the way to Skye where I had bought a ruin that took years to renovate," he says.

While there had been a bit of a pause in motorhoming since then, the advantages of it were brought back to him when he was diagnosed with claudication, a degenerative condition that makes it increasingly difficult for him to walk more than a few paces.

"I bought a mobility scooter, which comes to pieces, but each piece weighs about 20kg, and I couldn't possibly carry those into the boot of my Volvo estate, because I also have a bad back," he says.

So, Roy Wood Transits supplied him out with a Day Van complete with an electrically-powered lift (costing about £3,000) and straps that can hold his scooter firmly in place. As the vehicle is only being used as a day van, he dispensed with the kitchen unit (although he kept the foldaway table) but does appreciate having a toilet on board, too.

The new set-up, he says, gives him all the freedom he needs. The only downside is that, having spent the past 20 years using an automatic gearbox, because the Day Van is based on a Ford Transit, he's gone back to manual again. "But Steve [Wood] tells me a Ford automatic might be coming out next year, so I might look to do a part exchange then," he says.



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