

On the road: This is the second new Ford Custom conversion I've tested and I love the new base vehicle. My only negative comment after my previous test was that the vehicle felt a little top heavy around corners. Surprisingly, given the extra height on this hi-top, the Leisure Van felt much more planted. Overall, the driving position is comfortable over long distances and the van has an excellent turning circle.



Storage:
It's been a while since I've seen so much useful storage space in a campervan - if ever. Two of us were away for two nights and there were still a couple of empty cupboards on board. There's a large over-cab storage area along with four other eye-level cupboards around the roofline. The kitchenette has drawers and cupboards beneath it and opposite there are several more, including one designed to take a Dometic toilet to complete the on-board facilities. As well as all this, there are a couple of large storage bags on the rear doors that would be useful for camping chairs. Since the doors are hinged at the sides (rather than at the top like a standard boot lid) these would be easily accessible with the doors open.



Auto Campers Leisure Van

CANDY EVANS gets behind the wheel of Auto Campers' latest conversion based on a Ford Custom

AUTO CAMPERS is part of Roy Woods Transits, a company with many years' experience providing Ford-based conversions for a variety of uses, including for disabled users. The company is therefore used to listening to its users and providing practical units for everyday use, and this shows in its latest motorhome - the Leisure Van.

Although this isn't an expensive campervan, Auto Campers has achieved the price by having a lower specification rather than using poor quality components. As an example, the rear windows have Van-X curtains, which are both easy to use and very effective at keeping out the light on a summer morning.

The base vehicle is the Transit Custom Kombi, which is the working version of the new Ford Transit rather than the more car-like Torneo. This doesn't affect the drive or handling, but it means there's a practical plastic floor covering rather than carpet and you'll need to pay for creature comforts such as cruise control and Bluetooth connectivity. It's also extra for such things as an electric hook-up and Webasto diesel heating, if you need them.

On the campsite, all the seats are comfortable for relaxing and both cab seats swivel so everyone can use the main table in the centre of the van. Lighting is functional with LEDs throughout, including a large central ceiling light, a strip light for the kitchen area and a couple of reading lights at the rear.

I've always had a yearning for my own campervan to use predominantly as a day van. The five practical and comfortable travelling seats, vast amounts of storage space and flexibility of the Leisure Van ticks all the boxes for me, with the added bonus of being able to sleep inside if required.



Preparing food: A van like this isn't designed for cordon bleu cookery though it has everything you need to feed the occupants for an extended stay. There's a small - effectively silent - fridge, a couple of gas burners with convenient electric ignition and a small sink. The hi-top had enough room for me to stand by the cooker, though if you were a little taller you may need to use the small rooflight for extra head height. Either way, it's useful to have the rooflight for ventilation when you're cooking so you don't need to open the windows.



At night:
Making up the bed is easy, especially if you only have two seats in the back. We didn't fit the third rear seat, so there was space to stand while folding the backs of the rear seats forward, which sounds more complicated than it is, to give a flat surface for the large double bed. Unfold the work surface at the back of the van, put the table over the hob and sink for protection, position the cushions (stored above the rear cupboards) and the bed is made.

at a glance

- Price as tested** £36,010
- Prices start at** £30,270
- Base vehicle**
Ford Transit Custom Kombi
- Engine as tested**
2.2-litre turbo diesel, 123bhp, six-speed manual gearbox
- Emissions category** Euro 5
- Length x width x height**
4.97m x 2.29m x 2.44m
- Berths**
Five travel/two sleeping
- Mass in Running Order**
2,430kg
- Maximum Authorised Mass** 3,100kg
- C1 licence required** No
- Warranty** Three years
- Supplier** Roy Wood Transits
Tel 01189 790202
- Web**
www.auto-campers.co.uk



verdict

A supremely practical day van that's useful overnight too.