

Inside our...

Dethleffs 16842 Comfort

The Windwoods
love the Dethleffs
big windows



NAME John, Gill, Alex and Ellie Windwood

OCCUPATION Sales manager and homemaker

HOME TOWN Walsall, West Midlands

The good

Comfortable and relaxing to drive, very well equipped for an older van

The bad

Somewhat dated front-end styling and limited bonnet access

Our dream extra is...

A cruise control facility in the motorhome for more relaxing driving on those long motorways would be a real bonus.

About Us

It has always interested the Windwood family that these features are written by couples, often heading for retirement. Following a family discussion, we decided that it might be interesting to put forward the family's points of view concerning our beloved van, hence the addition of all our names as authors of the article.

Our Dethleffs is the third motor caravan we have owned. We began (as many people do) with a Volkswagen camper, and soon progressed to a coachbuilt as the children increased in size. We then bought a Volkswagen T4-based Karmann Gipsy, which was our first left-hand drive vehicle, but following a rather cramped family holiday in France, it was obvious we needed more space. Having spotted the Dethleffs, we looked at the layout and decided it was the one for us.

After the rather asthmatic performance of our non-Turbo T4, I was certain that I needed a more

powerful base vehicle. The Fiat 2.5 TDI chassis is vastly superior in terms of power, torque and comfort, and seems ideally suited to the weight of the van.

I must say that one of my initial concerns was the width of the van, being an A-class. Having driven it, however, I would say that it is much easier to drive than our previous coachbuilt due to superb cab vision and seating height. Width is a doddle to estimate because if the nose will go through, so will the rest of the van. It is a lot longer than I was used to, but this is not a problem following the fitment of a reversing camera.

I know that some would hesitate to buy a left-hand drive vehicle, but I have to say that it is much easier than people think – any blind spots are eliminated with the placement of a couple of extra driving and blind spot mirrors. It is also worth remembering that left-hand drive vehicles are usually much cheaper to buy, and often have no insurance penalty.

A surprise inside

The van has an ideal layout for us, featuring three good-sized (and very comfortable) double beds. There is a fixed rear bed with a great deal of storage underneath, the typical pull-down bed over the cab, and an easy-to-make double on the Pullman dinette.

Re-upholstering and replacement of the tired foams have improved comfort and it is nice to have a van where all three beds can be in use, and there is no problem with access to the loo! Lounging might not be as comfortable as a van with settees, but as the passenger seat swivels to join the dinette seating, we have no problems fitting us all in. The rear bed also comes in handy for a lie down, or for the kids to sit and read or play games on.

Dining is equally easy, as the dinette and table extend to give three seats either side. The kitchen opposite is reasonably well equipped with a three-burner hob and a large fridge. We don't really miss an oven or grill, and the lack of these fitments gives a lot more storage space in the large cupboards and drawers. There is also a very good worktop area for

Dethleffs I6842

MODEL YEAR	1996
PURCHASE PRICE	£20,000 in 2006
VALUE TODAY	£17,500
PLACE OF PURCHASE	Bought privately
BASE VEHICLE	Fiat Ducato 2.5 TDI Maxi chassis (left-hand drive)
BERTHS	6
MTPLM	3500kg
PAYLOAD	700kg
GAS	2 x 6kg Propane
BATTERY	2 x 85Ah
FRESH WATER	150 litres
WASTE WATER	150 litres
FUEL ECONOMY	30mpg
INSURANCE	Adrian Flux – £300. Both aged 40, stored on drive.



John slogs away...



... as Ellie tucks in



Gill, Alex and Ellie at the side dinette where the table extends for extra space

food preparation without having to resort to the dining table.

We are lucky in having a double-sized washroom in the rear corner with a basin and separate shower. The shower has a curtain as well as full-screen doors to shut off the rest of the bathroom while showering. The tap on the sink can also be used as an external shower, as it pulls out on a hose and passes through the bathroom window – very handy for clean up after the beach! The toilet is a Thetford-bench cassette type.

Overall, we have all been very impressed with the build quality of our Dethleffs. There is a high standard to the fixtures and fittings and it wears well considering that when we bought the vehicle, it had clearly led quite a hard life with the previous owners.

It is very well equipped with halogen lighting (eight spotlights alone) and daytime lighting has been improved by the fitment of a Heki 2 roof light over the dinette. I am also currently removing the other standard roof lights and replacing them with the mini-Heki type – an easy and worthwhile improvement.

Most of the other jobs I have done on the van have been purely to do with its age, such as resealing the cab area, replacing the water pump and taps, and generally tidying up fraying edges

on the cabinetwork. As is common on most older vans, I have also spent a while correcting the previous owner's DIY mistakes!

Fun for everyone

The children love the van because even on a wet day, there are different areas within the living accommodation where they can get some privacy. On our last holiday in Cornwall, Ellie was lying on the bed reading while Alex was in the cab playing with his games console. Meanwhile, my wife and I were stretched out on the dinette, enjoying a thoroughly well-earned cup of tea after all the fixing we'd done to the motorhome.

We all appreciate the vast amount of cupboard space, and the locker under the fixed bed swallows vast amounts of chairs, tables, cricket sets, kites and all the other essentials of outdoor living that can really get in the way sometimes.

In stark contrast to most newer vans, there is a good compliment of large windows, equipped with fly screens, blinds, and a stable-type entry door with two separate locks. There is also a driver's cab door, and very unusually, both side cab windows have winding mechanisms rather than sliders, making them much more practical.

I have a few jobs that need to be done as time and various holidays allow. We have recently bought a wooden dashboard kit, which will integrate the dashboard into the living accommodation.

Later on in the year, we will need to get a new carpet set made in order to replace the tatty removable set this van has. Then there are the rest of the roof lights to replace. It's a neverending process but one that we love. It's part of the lifestyle. □



Three-burner hob comes in useful



Separate areas give Dad privacy

Our advice to you

If you are thinking of buying a Dethleffs I6842 Comfort...

We would recommend always getting the most powerful engine that you can afford in a van of this size. Also, it's better not to fear the left-hand drive option, as you will soon overcome the blind spots and you won't have to pay any more insurance in many cases.

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