

**FIRST
DRIVE**

VW Caddy Kombi



FANCY PAYING NEARLY £12,000 FOR A converted van? It sounds incongruous, we must admit, but there are special circumstances that may make this Polo-based maid-of-all-work the ideal compromise.

The need to convey a family member in a wheelchair can be accommodated by a special conversion featured in the brochure and approved by VW; this involves a lowered floor with ramp access, with the aid of an electric winch, if required. Two smaller rear seats remain alongside the occupied wheelchair.

On the other hand, maybe you're looking for a commodious high-roof van during the day, but want it to double as a respectable domestic holdall at other times, thereby avoiding two vehicles. If so, this Kombi will prove surprisingly adequate, even enjoyable transport.

We expected it to be spacious, but what surprised us was its wieldiness; the moderately weighted steering has good feel and endows the Caddy with cornering ability that's both directionally assured and grippy. The ride is

firm but it doesn't jolt, aided by supportive seats, with a particularly pleasant, car-like driving position.

Our test car's direct-injection, non-turbocharged diesel engine was no slouch in fourth gear pulling (30-70mph in about 25sec), but revving it through the gears improves the time by only five seconds or so. It's not as refined or as smooth as the Citroën Berlingo diesel, either on the ear or on the posterior, but it does feel more of a go-er around the bends. And when it comes to fuel economy, the Caddy Kombi's direct injection will give it a 5-7mpg advantage – we achieved 52mpg in typical mixed use.

VERDICT

If you're seriously considering a dual-purpose holdall of this sort, we think at present that this VW and the Citroën Berlingo are both more than viable, but with the shared disadvantage of only two side-opening doors. Both offer handsome rear accommodation for people and a vast amount of luggage, once you're aboard.

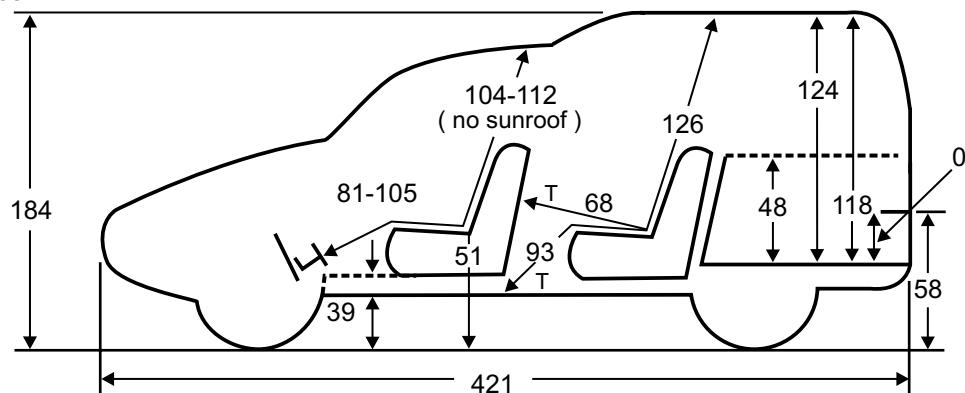


Includes information for disabled people and those with special needs

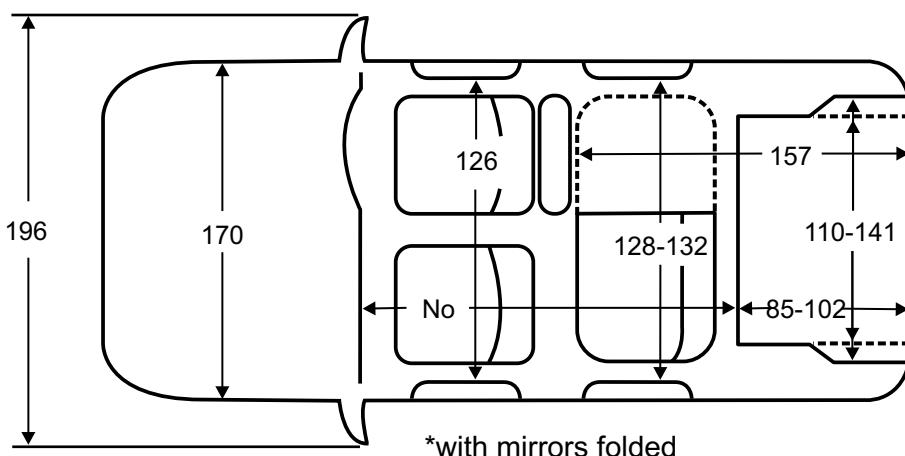
FACTS AND FIGURES

Body style	high-roof van conversion	
ENGINES	transverse four in line	
size and type	1.6 petrol, SOHC with multi-point injection	1.9 diesel SOHC, with direct injection - naturally aspirated
power (bhp/rpm)	75/4800	64/4200
torque (lb ft/rpm)	100/2800+	94/2400
TRANSMISSION	five-speed manual, front-wheel drive	
mph per 1000rpm	18.2	in top gear 20.6
Suspension	MacPherson damper struts front; dead axle with half-elliptic springs rear	
Steering	rack and pinion with hydraulic power assistance	
Wheels	5½J steel with 175/65R14 tyres	
Brakes	discs front, drums rear with vacuum servo; ABS and traction control optional extras	

Centimetres



T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants



LIKES AND GRIPES

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|---|--|
| Comfortable back seat and tilt-opening windows | ... but hard to get in and out |
| 60/40-divided rear doors with wipe/wash and heating | ... but their asymmetric-width favours left-hand drive |
| Central locking option embraces rear doors | ... but electric window switches placed low down |
| Door mirrors fold and give good view | ... but they have to protrude quite a lot |