



Caddy-on Camping

As owners of a VW Caddy, Andrew and Rona couldn't wait to take the new Morzine out for a spin...

WORDS & PHOTOS Andrew & Rona Bromley

We do love a nice Volkswagen, and the smaller the better! Indeed, we own a VW Caddy Life, short-wheelbase MPV, and as an all-round, quick, comfortable conveyance for five adults and all their luggage, we reckon it's hard to beat. So when we were offered the chance to test the Caddy-based Morzine, we jumped at it!

Bradford-based Volksleisure is a Reimo-approved award-winning converter, with its VW T6 Zermatt having won the award for best campervan under £40,000 (albeit by £5!) in the Caravan and Motorhome Club 2019 Motorhome Design Awards.

The Morzine is its latest offering, which is named after a famous French ski resort – unfortunately we're ignorant non-skiers, so to us this sounded more like a travel-sickness pill! The Morzine is built on a Caddy Maxi Life (the longer-wheelbase MPV), which has five travel seats and darkened side windows with slide-open inserts, similar to those in the VW T6.

This example had the standard 2-litre turbo-diesel engine in 102PS tune, with its manual five-speed gearbox, but a seven-speed DSG automatic is available for an extra £2,000. You can also specify the 148bhp engine but nowadays that comes

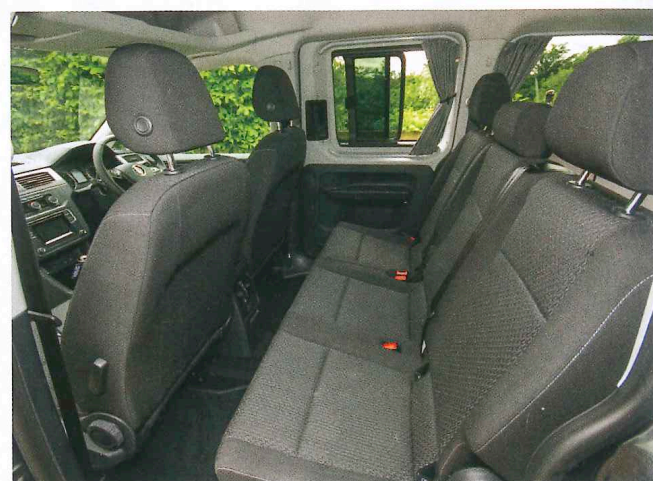
only with automatic, and at an extra cost of £4,500, as well.

Our own Caddy Life has the 1.4 TSI petrol engine (now discontinued from the range), so you can imagine we were keen to see how the two version – long wheelbase and short, diesel versus petrol – compared.

Homeward bound

The drive back to our home in Cumbria, up the A1(M), over the high Pennines on the A66 against the usual strong westerly wind, and along smaller rural lanes, was an ideal familiarisation course.

We've never driven a campervan that



Volkswagen Morzine

Base vehicle VW Caddy Maxi Life

Drive Front-wheel drive

Engine 2-litre TDi

Power 102bhp

Economy 48mpg (trip computer)

Gearbox 5-speed manual

Number of travel seats 5

Berths 3 (adults)

Leisure battery capacity 80Ah

Payload 250kg

Length x width x height 4.87m x 1.79m (excluding mirrors) x 1.96 (roof lowered)

Base vehicle Air-con, cruise-control, DAB+ radio/MP3/CD/Bluetooth, multiple airbags, heated windscreen, crash prevention, traction control system, parking sensors, Thatcham Cat 1 immobiliser and alarm, 16in alloy wheels, full-sized spare wheel, roof, bumpers and mirrors in colour-coded metallic paint

Conversion 18-litre portable compressor fridge, 13-litre fresh and waste water carriers, 80Ah leisure battery, one 12V and one mains socket plus two USB ports, single-burner gas canister hob, mains hook-up, LED lighting, roof bed, cab internal screens. Single bed: 1.95m x 0.72m (6ft 5in x 2ft 4.5in), or double bed: 1.95m x 1.11m (6ft 5in x 3ft 8in)

Optional equipment Dometic Porta Potti (£125); rear storage box

(£400); DSG gearbox (£2,000); 148bhp engine and DSG gearbox (£4,500)

Warranty Base vehicle and conversion, 3 years

Price from £38,995

Price as tested £38,995

CONTACTS

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handles better, where you can forget this is a house-on-wheels, not a car, and in which the trip computer sometimes shows over 50mpg! However, acceleration from the 102PS engine is distinctly leisurely (even sluggish), until 2,000rpm is reached (around 65mph in top); only then does the engine come alive.

The Morzine's base vehicle is pretty well equipped, with stop/start, cruise control, cab air-con, rear parking sensors, 16in alloy wheels, a DAB radio with CD player and Bluetooth connectivity, and heated windscreen – which we find a boon in winter on our Caddy. Both front seats are fully

adjustable, as is the leather-bound, multi-function steering wheel, and anyone familiar with the manufacturer's restrained style will feel at home in this classy cab.

It's like a Golf with slightly raised seating but, unlike the latest Golfs, has a proper handbrake, rather than a new-fangled electronic switch!

Reimo's front-hinged rising roof is colour-coded in metallic paint (standard in the competitive £38,995 price) to match bodywork and bumpers – here, Indium Grey. It's also worth noting that Volksleisure can convert your own Caddy to Morzine standard spec for £16,000.

As an everyday car, the Morzine will carry five passengers in considerable comfort, with lots of leg and headroom, and there's plenty of room behind the back seats for luggage. There's a single seat at the offside and, although this wasn't included in the test camper's package, if you fold it forwards a small Porta-Potti can be carried here.

Alternatively, any or all of the rear seats can be removed entirely, with a £400 large storage box option replacing the rear double seat – the format is entirely flexible, to suit each day's activities. With the rear seats folded forwards, a full-sized bike can be carried, too.

We've never driven a campervan that handles better, where you can forget this is a house-on-wheels, not a car

Raising the roof

The Reimo roof is secured by three fabric straps passing through grip-buckles; two at the rear and one at the front. When released, the roof pushes upwards from the rear, but we disliked this arrangement as these straps had to be removed from their buckles to allow the roof to open fully; let's just say it's tricky to re-thread them through the narrow buckles when you're crouched in the back of the 'van, lid down and arms above your head! However, we understand Reimo is currently working on an alternative design for the Morzine.

Once up, the roof has the usual two half-moon, mesh ventilation panels, one per side, plus a rear plastic window, and an upper bed with a thin foam mattress that could carry a couple of children or one adult. When not in use, it's raised up against the roof to allow more headroom.

Access to the interior is generally through the tailgate. Once inside, with the roof up and top bed raised there's loads of headroom. You can also access the back of the camper quite easily through the offside rear door, with the seat folded forward (assuming there's no potti there).

Normally, when parked up, you'll have the double bench seat folded forward and flat, then a board-backed foam cushion with a folding cushioned metal backrest that can be placed on top, facing the rear and providing seating for two. Two further, inward-facing seats are strapped up to the nearside for travel, folding down when on





Pros

- Easy to drive and park
- Complete flexibility between camping and car mode
- Long beds
- Good-quality fittings

Cons

- Rising roof straps are fiddly
- Tabletop slightly obstructs the stove



site. They're comfortable but, as there's insufficient headroom for tall people to lean back below the cut-out roofline, using sleeping bags behind as cushions to shove you forwards helps. As the cab seats don't swivel, these – and the footwells – are handy for storage when parked up. The Morzine doesn't have cab curtains; instead, internal screens are supplied. The side and tailgate windows have blackout curtains, as well as dark privacy glass; the floor is covered by robust VW rubber matting; walls are carpeted, and upholstery throughout is dark grey (VW's Kutamo, with extra cushions matching the shade, if not the pattern). There's an extra radio speaker behind the nearside seats; and standard lighting comes from small LED units (three on the nearside, just one on the offside), which will be

dimnable in production models. We felt more illumination was needed, especially for reading, but fortunately, this is negotiable with Volksleisure, who will be pleased to meet your individual requirements.

Camp kitchen

The offside kitchen unit, in brilliant glossy white with a dark grey work surface, has, unsurprisingly, fairly diminutive facilities, yet they're reasonably ergonomic. There's a good-sized work surface, increased with a lift-up flap at the front (drop the single rear seat first), and an inset round, stainless-steel bowl with a cold water tap (no hot water in this 'van – that comes from your kettle alongside, where there's a mains and 12V socket and two USB ports).

Talking of mains – where's the hook-up?

No holes in the 'van sides or bumper... we eventually found it under the bonnet, near the AdBlue filler, tidily tucked away!

A portable, single-burner gas stove with its own cartridge lives in a drawer under the surface, on a pull-out shelf, suitably positioned so you can heat your baked beans whilst sat on any of the seats. The table, meanwhile, clips to a rail at the front of the kitchen unit, and could be very useful as an extra preparation surface for said baked beans – save that the tabletop slightly overhangs the stove. You could also stand the stove on the table, but we found that a mite high when seated. The tabletop can also sit on any of the (flattened) rear seats as an extra, portable, worktop/tray.

To complete the culinary facilities, a large drawer pulls out to reveal a top-loading,



18-litre compressor fridge, conveniently accessed from inside or outside the 'van.

Lights out

At bedtime, lift each of the rear side seats and release hinged boards from underneath; swing them up to rest securely on press-out knobs on the front of the kitchen unit cupboards (these knobs show clothes hanger motifs – some clever lateral thinking by the designer here!).

There's a backrest cushion for the side seats that now fills the gap; add some jiggery-pokery with the seat board and cushion atop the rear-facing seats, and you end up with a cosy bed for two very close friends (1.11m/3ft 8in wide), which is amply long enough for longshanks like us.

If there's just one on board, the side seats quickly make a good single bed, 71.5cm/2ft

4in wide, and the 80-cm wide roof bed is also long, and would be fine for one adult or two children.

Pack it all in

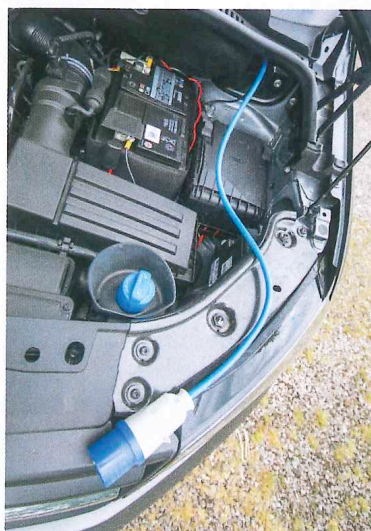
The Morzine's 250kg payload is ample for a campervan of these dinky proportions; however, it's perhaps something to be aware of if using the Caddy in its day job as a load-lugger because, with seats folded, there's plenty of room in the back for carrying big heavy items – a washing machine, perhaps! In camper mode, there's room for storage boxes/bags below the side seats in their lowered position, and a small cubby at floor level on the nearside, in front of the wheelarch.

In the kitchen unit, there's a deep drawer under the sink, and another, smaller, under the slide-out cooker shelf (both drawers

have soft-close action). There's also a big cupboard with a drop-down front above the fridge (the lip makes a useful extra work-surface), and a bit more room in the rear cupboard at floor level, which contains the 80Ah gel leisure battery and fuseboard.

Another large cupboard, forming part of the kitchen unit, looks promising but reveals two portable 13-litre water carriers – one for fresh-water and the other for waste. Overall, it's a very flexible camper that's ideal for solo campers, couples and small families alike.

The only thing to bear in mind with any camper of this size is how much rearrangement of beds/seats/luggage must be done from outside, which may be awkward in poor weather. So it's helpful that the large tailgate provides at least some protection from the elements when raised. We also think it would be sensible to have a rail fitted and carry a driveaway awning to provide that extra bit of space when camping, too.



Verdict

The Reimo badge promises practicality, ingenious design, and robust construction, and this Volksleisure conversion delivers all that. The Morzine converts very easily from car to camper, so it's a true multi-purpose vehicle. Each owner will soon work out best utilisation of space for their own particular hobby or purpose, and the beauty of this campervan is that it can be driven and parked anywhere. Thumbs up!