VW Caddy Camper – another way of doing it

We have always been camping – with our tent, especially in Norway or Sweden. But now we are older, so we decided to look a little around to see how we could have a kind of camper, preferably the size of a normal family car. There were two obvious models, both of which have several descriptions of possible ways of doing it on the net – and a few, fairly expensive, readymade plug-in models: Berlingo and Caddy.

We bought a VW Caddy, the short model, and built something which is cheap and – in our humble opinions – quite smart. We have found much inspiration from other people's ways of doing it – so if you can find inspiration in our ways of solving those problems, please use all you can! Our expenses were less than €300, and there are lots of screws and bolts left over!

A table saw is a very good thing to have – I borrowed one. For the rest you need regular conventional tools – and a few hours!

The basic setup is like this:

The camper can be built up with back seats in the car or with the back seats removed, which gives much more room for luggage. The main part is the same.

Main part behind the back seats:

A bottom plate, 113 x 90 cm, (and most other parts) made of 12 mm plywood. Rear of the plate follows the form of the car.

Side boxes: left: 41 * 91 * 34.7 cm (outside) with a kitchen drawer, see p. 2.

Right: 38.5 * 91 * 34.7 cm which fits a common foldable plastic box. The height is total with bottom and top plates, and must fit the height of the laid down back seats + the height of the front end bed base, which is in our version 2.7 cm.

Both sections are closed with a piece of plywood plate in the front end to stabilize the construction, and to have a solid support for the front end of the bed.

The vertical pieces are fastened to a lath with wooden screws, and the lath to the bottom piece with carriage bolts. This means that everything is fairly easy to take apart if you need to reduce the volume for winter storage.

Top plates are 18 mm glulam, which gives a smooth and gentle surface. It is split into smaller pieces which can be removed separately to improve access to whatever is stored under it.

In case of a car accident, to keep the main part in place there are two safety locks in the back, and also one in the front end, fixing the box to the eyes in the bottom of the luggage room with carabiners.

Kitchen drawer

The kitchen drawer is built much the same way, so much narrower than the left side box that there is no friction. It moves on 3 furniture rollers on each side. It also has a roller on the top near the end to support the drawer when it is out. While I had the table saw I also made a cutlery drawer that fits under the kitchen drawer.

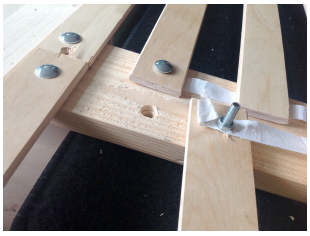
There is a stop block below and a carriage screw through the bottom to prevent the drawer from getting too far out – easily removable when taking it apart. It can open up to 55 cm.

As you can see I made a shelf for our Trangia camping stove, which burns gas, which is easy to control. We use gas of the much cheaper type which is made for weed burners. It is available everywhere! Since the gas container has to stand up there is a hole for it in the shelf.

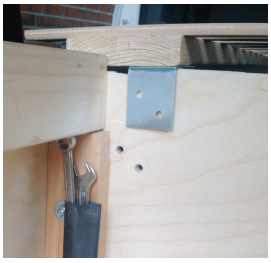
To prevent noise and damage when driving there is a lock to keep the drawer in place.

Bed – front end

The front end is made out of a bed base bought in Jysk/Dänisches Bettenlager. For our purpose – since we are not very tall – we decided that the total length of the bed would be 178 cm, allowing the front seats to be in driving position. If you need a longer bed, you will have to push the seats forward, and if you also lets the back of the seat lean forward you may get 200 cm! The smallest Jysk bed base was enough for us – buy two if you want a longer bed.



The slats rest on three 20 mm wooden boards. The first and last are fastened with bolts. The rest of them are kept together by the ribbon with which it came, and for every 3 slats a bolt fits into a hole in the board, making it easy to remove. In the middle of the 3 boards I put a hinge so it can be folded for storage. An angle bracket keeps the right and left board in place. Here you see where I keep the necessary tools to put the pieces together or take them apart.



With the back seats in the car the front end simply rests on them.

Otherwise it rests on a support built of plywood plates and laths.

To protect the car and to make construction easier I made a bottom piece of plywood.

At the front there is a plywood piece which gives support for three laths, which let the bed base rest easily. The outer laths are fastened to the back part of the bed with angle brackets and two bolts each – the only thing for which you need tools! The holes for the screws are seen just besidesthe tools on the picture above.

The middle lath is fastened to an alternative piece of board with bolts – and with a piece of wood between the board and the lath to give the correct hight.

At the front end, the laths and the supporting plywood pieces have a slot and a cut that fit each other, and no tools necessary!

Some pictures – more may follow after our first trip!

We have some nice air mattresses, 180 x 60 cm. They fit quite well into the setup, and we are planning to use them.

With the top pieces in the middle removed you can sit on one side (if you are not too tall). You could even boil water or cook something inside the car, if the weather doesn't cooperate.

We wish whoever may find inspiration here good luck.

Feed back will be appreciated. Find a link to my mail at my site.