

Buyers Guide to: Volkswagen Type 25

Useful Info

Also Known As

T3, Caravelle, Vanagon, Microbus, Wedge

Manufactured

1979 to 2002

Fuel Types

Petrol, Diesel

Engine Sizes

1600cc, 1700cc, 1900cc, 2000cc, 2100cc, 3200cc

Engine Types

Water-cooled, Air-Cooled

Drive Configurations

RWD, 4WD

Camper Conversion Type examples

Westfalia, Devon, Doormobile, Viking

Volkswagen Owners Club of Great Britain

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Background

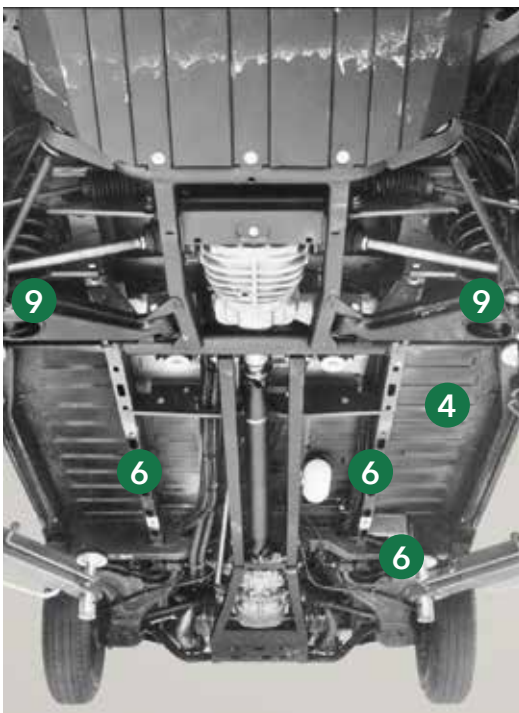
By 1980, the legendary van had become the Volkswagen T3 (also known as the T25). Larger, and squarer in design, it had lost the cool-factor associated with its predecessors but would still prove popular. It started out with air-cooled four-cylinder engines in 1.6- and 2.0-litre capacities, with a water-cooled diesel unit offered from February 1981. By October of that year, water-cooled flat-fours were offered in 60bhp and 78bhp forms, with air-cooled production ending the following year. Once again, it could be bought in various forms including vans and pick-ups and 1985 saw various mechanical and cosmetic developments to keep things fresh. A four-wheel drive 'Synchro' model, built by Steyr in Austria, provided go-anywhere ability. German production ended in 1992, but examples were produced in South Africa for a further decade.

The Show Car

It was way back in Series 3 of *Wheeler Dealers* when I had the chance to transform a tatty T25 van into something much better. Externally, it was pretty scruffy and the sliding door was broken although it was an easy fix. And a side window was put in to brighten up the interior as there were plans for that later. First though, the exterior was treated to a first for the show which was a vinyl wrap. The blue 'bubble-effect' design looked great, although proved pretty time-consuming to apply. Mechanically, replacing the glow plugs solved the starting problems and a full service was all that was needed, but ours did get lowered suspension as well for a cooler look. Inside, it needed to be useable as a camper so plywood panelling, a rock-and-roll bed, some storage and appliances, and fake grass carpeting transformed it.

Corrosion Hotspots

1. Outer front panel behind the bumper
2. Front screen surround
3. Door bottoms and front steps
4. Floorpan
5. Inner and outer sills
6. Chassis legs including outriggers
7. Side window surrounds
8. Rear quarter panels and wheel arches
9. Rear swing arm mounts and spring seats
10. Rear valance and bottom of the tailgate



The CheckList

- The panels for rust around the edges, and pay particular attention to seams and panel joints as they harbour rot which can spread into the structure
- Around the edges of the windscreen and side windows, if fitted. Rust bubbles can be tricky to repair, and serious rot could have eaten away the metalwork beneath the rubbers with expensive consequences
- The condition of the fuel tank as it's susceptible to corrosion
- Around the battery for signs of leaks and corrosion. It's under the front seat on most models, while diesels have the battery in the engine compartment
- That sliding doors work properly, and aren't suffering from worn runners. Broken door handles aren't uncommon
- Air-cooled engines for signs of overheating, and for oil leaks from the pushrod tubes and around the bellhousing. Fixing the latter will require gearbox removal. And ensure the oil pressure warning light extinguishes promptly
- Diesel engines for starting problems. Glow plugs can fail, so ensure the warning light illuminates and extinguishes correctly
- The cooling system on the water-cooled petrol and diesel engines. Proper anti-freeze levels are crucial in preventing corrosion and head-gasket failure, and ensure that there are no leaks from the radiator or pipework
- For excessive black smoke from diesel units, which likely points to worn injectors
- The gearbox for signs of worn synchromesh. T25's came with four or five-speed units, and they can prove a weak point. The long gear lever can become bent, too, although it's not difficult to sort. And the torquey oil-burners can be hard on the clutch, so make sure it's not slipping
- The operation of the four-wheel drive system on Synchro models. It's fundamentally reliable, but repairs can get pricey so be wary if all's not well
- That the suspension is in good shape. Worn tie-rod and upper wishbone bushes are a common issue, and lead to sloppy handling. Rear suspension arm bearings can wear, and the mountings can suffer from corrosion so examine them carefully
- For excessive play in the steering. It should feel reasonably accurate, and if it doesn't it's most likely to be wear in joints or bushes
- That camper conversions have been carried out properly, and that things aren't looking shabby inside. A complete re-fit will get pricey, so budget accordingly. And check beneath carpets and mats for signs of water ingress and corrosion in the floor