



The history of the VW Camper van goes back to the end of the 2nd world war, when the British found themselves running the VW factory in Wolfsburg, Germany.

To ferry parts across the massive VW factory, stripped down Beetles were turned into "transporters". Ben Pon, a Dutch VW importer, thought this was a great idea and in 1947 sketched his idea of a Beetle based van. Two years later it was launched at the Geneva Motor Show as the modern equivalent to the horse and cart.

The first VW camper van was born from this concept. This idea started life as a 170 cubic ft box, built over a four wheeled chassis. It was extremely simple and in the next 5 years VW would turn out 90 different body combinations - these included ice-cream vans, delivery vans, mobile milking machines, bread vans, milk floats, police wagons, fire engines, ambulances, pick ups and - of course - the camper van.

When the VW camper was released in the USA in the mid 1950's it sold in droves, with over 150,000 sold by 1963.



The split window model, or "splitty", was the first VW camper released. Today it is often considered the most desirable model and a mint splitty can fetch anything up to £25,000.

In 1967 the Split was replaced by the Bay. Quite different to its predecessor, many felt that it had lost some of the character of the previous model. However, many refinements were added and its top speed was increased to 80 mph.

The bay window made the VW a success and by 1975 the Hanover factory had turned out 4 Million of these vehicles. Not bad for a van that started life as a box on wheels.

VW believed in the Bus Camper with such conviction that they offered a Gold watch to any driver who managed to get their bay campers over 100,000 miles. This turned out to be a bad idea, as over 160,000 watches were given to drivers due to its continual reliability!

In 1979 production ceased and the T25 replaced it, although even now the Bay is still manufactured in South America.

The T25 and subsequent T4 and T5 continued to bring the VW camper into the modern age. Whilst these later models may not (yet) have quite the iconic status of the Splitty and Bay, they remain massively successful, selling in huge numbers and still enjoying the same loyal following.





