



Captain Cook

WHICH
motorcaravan facts



FACT FILE

Make/model: Westfalia James Cook

Base vehicle: Mercedes Sprinter 312D with 2.9-litre turbo-diesel engine

First registered: July 2000

Mileage recorded: 15,700km (9,700 miles approx)

Price: £29,995

Which Motorcaravan test date: n/a

Warranty: 12 months

Manufacturer: Westfalia, Germany

Dealer: Deepcar Motorhomes International,
10a Vaughton Hill, Deepcar,
Sheffield S36 2SW. Tel: 0114 2SS 2660 ;

Owners club: None

Peter Vaughan charts previously uncharted territory, in the shape of a rather special Mercedes high top

Deepcar Motorhomes have established a strong reputation for importing used motorcaravans from Europe, firstly with Hymer and latterly also Westfalia. And whilst initial demand for Westfalia conversions centred on the traditional VW campers for which the German company is world renowned, Deepcar have now turned their attention to the flagship James Cook.

Based on the medium wheelbase Mercedes Sprinter, in this case a pre-facelift 2.9-litre turbo-diesel 312D first registered just over a year ago, the James Cook is certainly distinctive. That massive, pointy nosed, high top looks over the top, but the raised floor in the rear and the full-sized upper berth dictate the lofty overall height of 3.08m. The tall stance will do the Westfalia no favours in terms of crosswind stability, though. The old 2.9TD engine provides adequate performance, but the new Sprinter CDI is improved in many ways, not least the cab fittings and the gearshift. Nevertheless, some will be satisfied just to have the three-pointed star on the front, while others will take solice from the £ 7,000 saving against new price.

It is inside that the James Cook stands out as something truly out of the ordinary. The decor is automotive rather than homely, but the quality of the moulded trim panels and the general level of finish is outstanding. On the road nothing, but nothing, rattles, not even the window blinds.



The galley has plenty of worktop but British buyers may long for an oven and grill. Top-loading fridge is a rare feature

Bathroom looks clinical, but it has cassette loo, shower and handbasin that you need

The specification is impressive, too, with electric cab windows and mirrors, twin airbags, remote central locking, radio/cassette with four speakers, and high-backed captain's chairs. A roof-mounted console in the cab contains the control panel, with switches for the fridge and diesel-fired space heating. The temperature of the compressor fridge can be adjusted from here, right down to minus 20 degrees.

Those travelling in the back are not forgotten, either, as the high-backed rear seat has three lap and diagonal seatbelts and a substantial steel frame beneath. Rear passengers also have their own heater ducting.

On site the front seats swivel and you can use the tiny flip-up coffee table and wall-mounted cupholders, or alternatively extricate the sturdy full-sized table from its own overcab locker.

In the rear galley area there is masses of locker space and plenty of worktop, too. Cooking will be done on a two-burner hob (there's no grill or oven) and fresh food stores in a top-loading fridge. It's the attention to detail that is remarkable, though. An umbrella clips into position just inside the sliding door and a waste bin, twin tea towel rails, and a lockable safe are all fitted. Meanwhile, all the furniture has an incredible built-to-last feel about it.

Beyond the kitchen area, across the rear, is the bathroom. The decor here might be considered a little stark, but there's a cassette loo, deep corner basin, towel rail, shower (using the washbasin's faucet) and even a clothes drying rack.

Open the rear doors and you will find no access to the living quarters, but the stowage area under the raised bathroom floor will be ideal for all your outdoor gear. The gas locker is also reached this way, and the wardrobe can be accessed, too.

Perhaps the piece de resistance, however, is the roof bed. It's a two-second job to unfold it and its 6ft 5in by 4ft 10in dimensions will be hard to beat. Headroom is more than adequate, and you get opening windows and an upmarket tilt/slide sunroof for ventilation, but just one angle poise lamp to read by. The rear seat folds to make a second double bed that is equally flat and only a little smaller, without using the cab seats.



James Cook can, unusually, cater for three rear passengers - all with lap and diagonal restraints



Roof bed needs a ladder, but once up there it is almost to A-class standards of comfort



Mark one Sprinter cab didn't look brilliant when new, now it is totally overshadowed by its replacement



Swivel the front high-backed chairs to create a lounge area for four around the sturdy, wall-mounted table

WHICH motorcaravan VERDICT

Beautifully built, superbly equipped and in as-new condition. The James Cook is a great motorhome for two or a family of four. It is leagues ahead of most of the popular coachbuilts available for this money in so many ways, but you will have to get used to left-hand drive.