

A home on

Ever since we got together, Tim and I had always dreamed of owning a campervan. We've bought VW Beetles in the past and have always had a love for the old VW camper.

Whenever we come back from an event or holiday where we've chatted about owning a camper, Tim has trawled through the internet looking at vans and me being the practical one, I've always come up with reasons as to why it's not the right time. I suppose if I'm honest, the fear of not being able to manage is what's held me back the most. That and not being able to have the freedom of my powered wheelchair wherever we go.

Unfortunately, over this past year we've had a lot of serious health problems affecting immediate family members and as we've waded through all the heartbreak, it's made us have a 'life's too short' reality check. After a lovely UK summer, Tim started his annual quest to find suitable campers online. This time when he showed me one I simply said, "Let's just do it!" Within a couple of weeks we found something we liked and nervously went through with the purchase of 'Tickle', our 80's type 25, VW camper.

Timing is everything

In true Clacy style, we did everything at the wrong time. We bought the van in September at the end of the summer and didn't wait for something 100% suitable. We were too impatient and eager after taking nearly 14 years to actually do it, to wait until something better came along. And I'm not going to lie to you, our first trip was not as romantic as we'd dreamed. I booked a campsite in Cheddar, somewhere not too far to travel for our first expedition. Stupidly, we were heading south on the bank holiday weekend with two small kids and a van full of kit we'd never used before.

That weekend it seemed everything was sent to try us. We broke down on the M5 and this added an extra hour and a half to our already delayed journey because of the heavy traffic. When we arrived at the campsite it was the kids'



wheels

teatime and with no clear agenda, Tim decided putting the awning up was most important, whilst I was plonked on the grass in my manual chair unable to help him or the kids. Our age-old romantic dream of owning a camper seemed dashed.

Determined to give this a good go, we managed a couple of day trips in the van, but with a toddler who wants to be carried continuously and me unable to push long distances in my manual chair, the trips have proved challenging. My final solution was to find a lightweight, compact, foldable, powered wheelchair, that would cope with different terrains and give me the freedom I crave to be independent with my mobility. This would also enable me to take on more of the physical tasks and help manage the kids.

My quest was actually much harder than it sounds but I have found something that I hope is perfect. I've recently purchased an Invacare Esprit Action 4NG, a foldable power chair that has interchangeable manual wheels, thus eradicating the need for us to transport two wheelchairs everywhere. The motor

for the power chair is in the quick release wheels and a lithium battery attaches into a sling under the seat canvas. All these little details help make the chair more compact and portable. It's being delivered soon, so I've yet to test it out, but fingers crossed it will make our campervan trips a lot less stressful all round.

Aside from all the troubles we've had, I love the freedom of camping and I have no qualms about roughing it. The kids adore the van and all the excitement of the adventure. As the kids get older the adventures should get easier, there will be less kit to transport and they'll be able (and hopefully willing!), to pitch in a bit more.

So onwards with planning our adventures in 2015! We already have a festival lined up and a friend's rural wedding to go to (with our own portable accommodation!). With tea on tap, what more could you ask for?

Emily Clacy C6

For more information about the Invacare Esprit Action 4NG visit www.bettermobility.co.uk