

The Rolling Home presents

THE CULTURE OF
VANLIFE

 | LANNOO

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Introduction

**THE ROLLING
HOME STORY**

A Girl, a Boy & a Van

by Calum Creasey and Lauren Smith

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I have a lot of conversations about camper vans. It is true that they fill my day in many ways. Vehicles that usually consist of a bed, a place to cook or prepare food and a spot to sit comfortably out of the rain. I see a converted van drive past me on the street and sometimes name the make and model. I pass a van similar to ours here in Cornwall and can't help but wave. Parked on clifftops, by beaches or in supermarket car parks. We all come across camper vans in our daily lives – the types of vehicles that have been adapted for human beings to live in. Altered so that we can feel comfort far from home. Sometimes built to be our only home. These are the vehicles that fill my conversations and this book.

Our van is a 1996 Volkswagen Transporter and it has a lot to answer for. In many ways it has dictated the passage of our life to this point. I am certain that this was not its purpose when it rolled out of the factory in Germany, a short-wheelbase, relatively underpowered panel van. A large steel box with a four-cylinder diesel engine. Its first trip was to the UK when it was registered by an engineering firm. Following 14 years of hard graft, our van got its first real break. In 2010 I purchased it to replace my earlier, self-built Nissan Vanette. In the act of adding simple pine furniture, carpeted walls, a gas burner and a porthole window, we created what we now call 'the Rolling Home'. Like most of the self-converted camper vans we see, ours was not initially designed to be lived in. Yet we changed that and in doing so changed our lives for the better. It is a modest story and one that has played out for many people across Europe and the world. We take these often old and beat-up vehicles and turn them into something else – catalysts for happiness.



HOME
SWEET

ROLLING

HOME



The van in question might be huge and have seats for all the family, or it might be small with only space for two. A blow-up mattress and a camping stove might suffice. Trips that may be dictated by the span of the weekend, or else that ferry ticket may be for a one-way voyage. What all of our van stories share is in essence the act of searching and often finding that which is elusive in our lives. Since we have owned our van, we too have searched.

As teenagers we built it. As young adults we packed it for trips outside our parents' houses. As a couple, our van became the vessel that housed our love of life and of each other. Open the sliding door and that love would pour out. Onto beaches and clifftops. It would wrap around us and our friends and mingle with bonfire smoke and laughter. You can see it in the photos and on the faces of all of us. Etched in happiness. When it was time to move on, those feelings would fly with us back to the van and fill all of the gaps between ourselves and the vehicle.

When we returned and tried other ways of living, renting a chocolate-box English cottage not far from where we grew up, trying out office jobs and careers we may have been destined for, nothing ever felt as real as that van. It always represented something that we could so easily reach out to and embrace. Like the empty suitcase at the back of the wardrobe, only far more alluring. When you are faced with bills and rent, it still sits there. Even driving it as a daily vehicle can be a torturous affair, always feeling the pull towards the sea or the ferry port.

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Until again you find yourself fully seduced. With the turn of a key, normal life gives way to nervousness, fear, trepidation and, ultimately, happiness. We wanted all of those things to come in torrents, we wanted them to surround us and envelop our very being, we wanted to feel truly alive. When all that you own surrounds you in a small camper van, this happens without you even knowing.

This is the story of 'the Rolling Home', of how a simple vehicle and a simple idea can hold so much power. Since those early trips we have spent a great deal of time trying to get back to how it felt. What we learned as young adults – lessons of simplicity and the importance of travel, translated into a life that we felt we had built for ourselves. To this day I feel indebted to that vehicle. Protective even, so that when it breaks down I feel quite emotional. It is no longer our full-time home: it now feels like an old friend. One that has shared life's ups and downs with us, but is always willing to head off into the unknown, no questions asked.

So the tale goes that we travelled tens of thousands of miles throughout Europe on many trips between 2010 and 2017. In 2016 we self-published a photographic book that was supported by wonderful people through crowdfunding. Since then 'the Rolling Home'

has become a byword for the vanlife movement on social media, giving us an incredible opportunity to launch further creative projects and spread the word on just how life-changing owning a camper van can be. In the years that followed the crowdfunding campaign, we bounced from our home town to a friend's farm then back to Europe, and eventually set up home by the sea in Cornwall, UK. Now I spread my time between a small workshop, where we build camper vans, and compiling a magazine celebrating alternative living, the *Rolling Home Journal*.

Sure, travelling in a van sometimes means no showers for a few days, oily hands and serious dents in your bank account, but you'll have smiles on your faces none the less. Owning a camper van may be one of the best ways to hold on to a romantic outlook on this sometimes unromantic life. We can count ourselves as part of an international movement that has come to be known as vanlife. A shared passion for camper vans, a huge online community, a gathering of like-minded people. Vanlife is all of these things and more. I think culture is created when people from different places discover that they share ideas. Their dreams are somewhat aligned and their lifestyles are similar in many ways. In this book we explore the culture of vanlife through some of the ideas and people that make it so wonderful.











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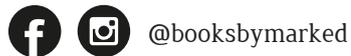


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THE ROLLING HOME

Man, woman or child. Spend time in a vehicle, any vehicle, travelling around this beautiful planet. Meeting the people, connect to the earth, making memories. Escape if you want to escape, find yourself if that's what you need to do. Leave work on a Friday and drive to the coast, drink wine, listen to music, fall asleep to the rain on the roof. Wake up alone and be excited at the prospect, or lie next to the one you love. Maybe the kids, who are sleeping up in the hightop roof, will wake you up too early. Maybe the promise of waves had your alarm ringing at 5am. No matter who you are - spend time in a camper van and, in doing so, embrace life to the fullest.

This book is dedicated to all of our friends and families who have supported our adventures over the years. A special thank you to everyone who has supported the Rolling Home by buying our previous book, copies of the journal and our products. This book was made possible by the contributions of stories, interviews, photos and illustrations made by so many incredible individuals, each with their own unique stories to tell.

To learn more about the Rolling Home and the *Rolling Home Journal* visit www.stokedeversince.com - www.therollinghome.uk