

DEFENDER TDCi 130 CAMPER

■ **NAK heritage**-style grille conceals a bigger intercooler, feeding the tuned TDCi engine, which produces 188bhp and 460Nm of torque. NAK 5mm-thick steel winch bumper houses a Bear winch with plasma rope. The front end also features swivelling shackle eyes and a heavy-duty aluminium steering guard. LED headlights from JW Speaker 'turn night into day', says Peter.



4x4 Equipment
www.nakatenaga.de



■ **The NAK**-modified Front Runner roof rack makes good use of space above the cab, with additional supports extending down to the window 'hinge'.

■ **The LED** light bar from Supervision gives incredible illumination for off-road night driving: 83 single-watt LEDs produce the equivalent of 500 watts halogen. The eight outer LEDs feature a diffuser to improve side vision.

Avery MOBILE HOME

PHOTOS: TOM CRITCHELL

This German-built, demountable-bodied camper is a thing of great beauty and just as great off-road capability. Fraser Barsby went to see it and came back wanting one

Some things in this world seem implausible to me. Leaf-cutter ants carrying unfeasible loads; a Boeing 747 taking off and Katie Price's chest. All these things shouldn't work but somehow manage to pull it off.

Well, the same can be said about this Defender TDCi 130 camper. To look at it, you'd think its ability to drive off-road would be limited. But here I am, watching it clamber up one of the steepest slopes in the challenging off-road site at Nuremberg, Germany.

Some modified Defenders look amazing from a distance, only to reveal themselves as imposters when it comes down to actual off-road ability. This is the exact opposite. Get close to this incredibly capable machine and you'll see exactly what is it that enables it to get up and down some of the roughest terrain in its path.

Many of the extensive modifications on the 130 have been developed and manufactured by Nakatanenga 4x4 (NAK), the company run by this special vehicle's owner, Peter Hochsieder. This includes the demountable camper body, which is the company's latest project. Peter had been frustrated by other manufacturers not being able to offer him the type of camper body he was looking for; and, after finding them unwilling to make the changes he wanted, he simply decided to build his own.

With a highly modified vehicle such as this, it takes a lot of modification to maintain the standard Land Rover's off-road ability, never mind improve on it: the core aim for this particular build was to create a vehicle that would perform with or without the demountable camper body.

Let's take a look around this 130 double-cab Hi-Cap to see what makes it defy nature.

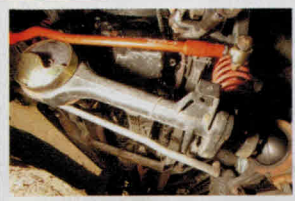
■ **The 3mm** aluminium chequerplate with polyurethane, non-slip coating gives surefooted access to the roof rack, even in the wet.

To avoid the larger 80mm air intake protruding out the side of the 130, Peter has switched the heater intake for the engine air intake so it can be top-mounted. The heater vent is now scooped to give better flow – not a problem for right-hand-drive cars; but on left-hand drive, the heater box is in the way.

The dash-mounted manifold exhaust gas temperature reader can show readings of up to 900°. Keep it that hot for too long and the turbo will pop.

■ **The portal**, heavy-duty track rod is bent to keep it out of harm's way and allow for excessive articulation. Track rod ends are specified from a 15-tonne lorry. The castor-corrected swivel balls are sourced from the same supplier used by Land Rover, but without the mounting holes drilled.

NAK then drills these in-house with 3° and 6° correction (left- and right-specific). This eliminates the need for castor-corrected radius arms with the three-inch lift. The NAK return-to-centre (RTC) steering damper helps keep the steering on track.



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■ **Stainless steel** door hinge bolts with the original torque heads are custom-made by NAK: no more rusty bolts in your shiny TDCi. These are so good, they even sell them to Land Rover dealers in Germany to fit to new Defenders.



■ **NAK heavy-duty side steps** help protect the 65-litre underbody fuel tank. The textured grip strip in the top edge is also an excellent addition for the rear passengers. Without this, rock sliders can be lethal when covered in mud. If you don't have this on yours, fit some skateboard deck tape – it's like adhesive sandpaper designed for the outdoors.

■ **The 7 x 16 Hutchinson beadlock Rock Monster three-piece wheels** are easy to service on the trail with basic tools. Tyres are Goodyear Wrangler DuraTrac 285/75s, chosen for great on- and off-road grip. Overland trips often involve a lot of tarmac, so a full-on mud tyre would be no good. Imagine what this 130 could do with mud tyres, though!

■ **The standard heavy-duty Trailmaster springs** have air assist on the rear. This involves fitting a very tough balloon inside the rear spring, which helps reduce the rate the springs compress.



A true air suspension system, as found on the current Discovery 4 and Range Rover, is due to be fitted soon. Shocks all round are Koni Raid, which are again heavy-duty. They're considered one of the very best in the world for heavy expedition vehicles. The shocks' diameter is 50 per cent bigger than standard and look well up to the job.

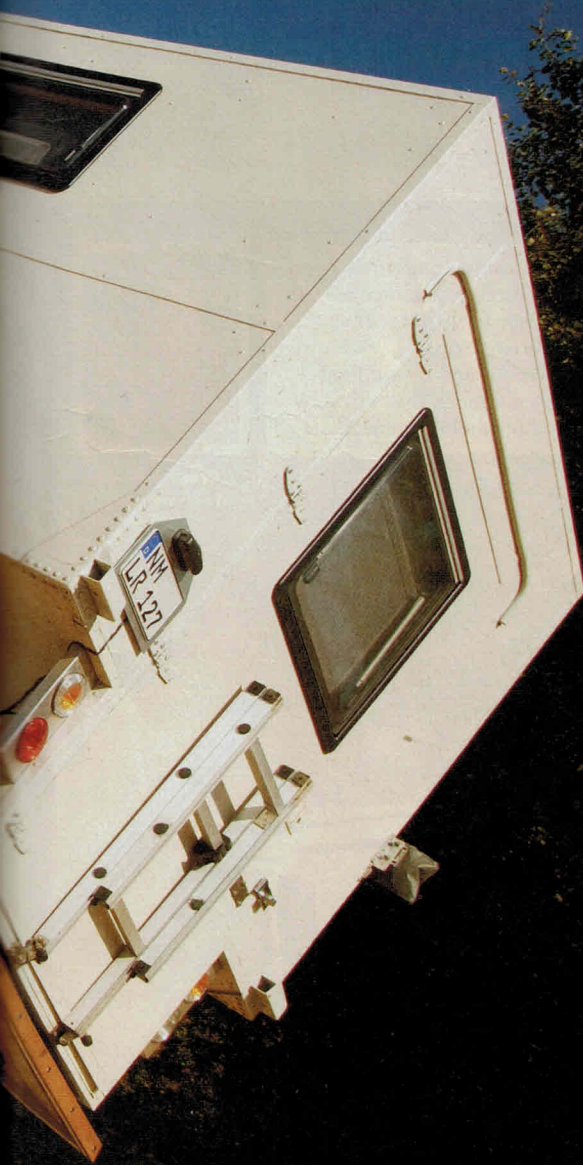
■ **The NAK stainless steel fuel tank** holds 110 litres and replaces the standard 80-litre tank. The steel tank is also more resilient than the original plastic type and doesn't need additional protection. Combined with the side tank, there's a total of 175 litres on board.



■ **Detroit TruTrac diff lockers** front and rear work permanently and are torque-sensitive, automatically sending up to 80 per cent of the power to the wheels that have grip. They were chosen after years of testing by Peter on rally raids; he's convinced they're the best solution for an overlanding vehicle. They certainly did a great job of getting us to every summit throughout our day in the quarry.



On-board storage takes its inspiration from the world of the mobile disco



The camper body is demountable, which means you can fit telescopic support legs and drive out from under it. It's simply attached by four ratchet straps at the rear and in the load bed and can be lifted and lowered using a winding mechanism. It takes about half an hour to remove.

One of the great advantages of a system such as this is its versatility. Like a camper trailer, it enables you to make the most of your vehicle when you're not circumnavigating the globe, and you have a very capable Land Rover for both overlanding *and* everyday use.

All of the NAK camper bodies are bespoke and made to customers' own requirements. But one very important design remains the same – the width. Peter feels that, to be effective as an expedition vehicle, the width of the vehicle has to be unaffected.

Importantly, the body itself doesn't extend beyond the wheelarches of the 130, which makes the whole vehicle capable of negotiating much narrower trails than would normally be

possible without the risk of causing expensive damage to the bodywork.

There is a compromise, however, in that you can't sleep widthways. To get a good night's sleep you need to extend the base of the bed and re-arrange the mattress. It makes a lot of sense, because the width you end up with is far greater than in any roof tent I've come across – and you still benefit from living space below.

Peter uses cabinets and drawer systems originally designed to transport sound equipment – the sort of stuff you see being carted in by the mobile disco DJ at a wedding. It's very rugged, lightweight and easy to configure into different shapes.

Additional equipment is left up to the individual but in this one we simply find a fridge and a cooker. The door on this particular camper is also wider than normal to allow mountain bikes to be stored inside.

Unfurnished, these camper bodies start at a steep-sounding £17,500 but the finish is great and is well capable of withstanding rigorous terrain.



Even with the bed set up, there's still some living space below

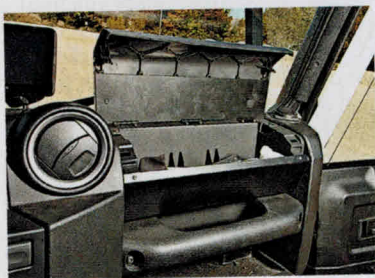
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The innovations don't stop on the outside of this 130. Peter deliberately chose the basic-spec vehicle, known as the 'E' spec in the rest of Europe, with the aim of doing some serious upgrades of his own. After driving it around the site I was deeply envious of the Scheel-Mann seats, which are incredibly comfortable. They are an expensive addition but if you're doing a serious amount of miles they will pay for themselves ten times over.

The standard fitting mounts make it quite a job to get access to the battery box under the seat of a Defender. NAK makes a bracket to enable the seats to be tilted and allow access simply by pulling a release pin.

The steering wheel is just as lavish, re-trimmed in buffalo hide to match the door straps that replace the plastic handles. These are useful if you fit seats with wider side supports that tend to hit the plastic handles, making the doors hard to close.

NAK's glovebox conversion makes good use of the dead space normally found on the passenger side.



More useful mods: glovebox (left) is a great use of space that otherwise just sits there doing nothing. And door straps (right) replace plastic handles that can get in the way of some seats



Above: what a way to cross continents. Terrific seats and hide-trimmed steering wheel add a touch of class

Right: secure cubby box is accessed by hidden lock. It's a useful size, too



If I have to be honest, this is not a vehicle I've ever considered for an overland trip. I've tried a lot of different configurations, a few with a certain degree of success.

What I've learned the hard way over the years is that preparing a vehicle for a trip invariably makes it fit only for that purpose. You either strip everything out when you return, or you have a second vehicle for everyday use and leave the Land Rover parked up until you can afford to escape again.

All of a sudden, a concept like this makes a whole lot of sense. For the same reason I've just built the expedition trailer, a camper body frees up your Land Rover for everything else you can throw at it.

And, after driving it, I'd even go as far as to say this is a better solution. I don't enjoy towing a trailer – does anybody?

When you get behind the wheel of this 130, it's just so capable that you forget how much vehicle you're moving along. There's no sense of exaggerated body roll – certainly

no more than you get from a substantial roof tent/roof rack combination that's so often used for overlanding.

Throughout the day, the 130 proved itself more capable than many 4x4s I've encountered, with

just the right amount of power, grip and articulation to convince me that this is the way forward for any serious overland trip.

Keep it simple and keep it light, and there's not much that will stop this incredibly mobile home. **LRO**



Pete Hochsieder: if you want a good job doing...

