



# TRANSIT 60

## Wonderful Facts

To celebrate 60 years of the Ford Transit, we've scoured the archives to come up with 60 Transit facts – the weird, the wonderful, the amazing – they're all here...





## 1 The Transit name

When Ford introduced its all-new European van, it could have been launched as the "V-Series". Instead, a last-minute decision saw it adopt the Transit name, which had first appeared on the German FK van in 1960 when that model became known as the Taunus Transit.

## 2 Project Redcap

The development work for the 1965 Transit was started under the code name of "Project Redcap", with an engineering team that included Sir Alex Trotman, who would go on to become Ford Motor Company's worldwide chairman and chief executive officer.



## 3 High speed testing

During development, high-speed durability testing was actually carried out on U.K. public roads. In the last few months of the test programme, the local police became quite used to witnessing high speed night time testing by Ford engineers and often stopped the drivers to find out how things were going.



## 4 It all started here

August 9, 1965, Langley the first ever Ford Transit came down the line at the company's Langley commercial vehicle plant in Berkshire, England on August 9, 1965.

## 5 A new Transit – for £542

At the U.K. launch in October 1965, the cheapest Transit – a short-wheelbase, petrol-engined van with a 610 kg payload – cost £542. The most expensive Transit listed at that time was a 15 seat Custom bus, which cost £997, plus £159 purchase tax.



## 6 How many people can you fit into a Transit?

48! 48 students from Barking College near London set a record by squeezing themselves into a Transit minibus in 1965.



## 7 Lots of space for trunks

How do you transport two baby elephants? London's Regents Park Zoo found the answer in the shape of their new 1965 Transit.

## 8 A favourite choice for pop stars

The Transit quickly found favour with the pop music industry. Transit's durability made it the roadies favourite as it moved up-and-coming pop groups around Europe between gigs, often through the night.



## 9 Transit packs a punch

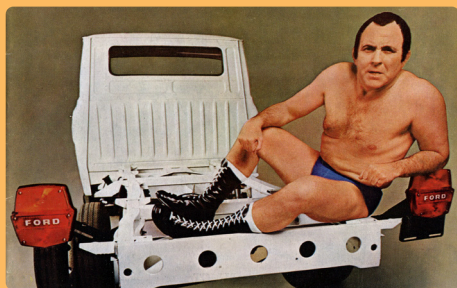
U.K. boxing legend Sir Henry Cooper also worked in his family's green grocer business during the 1960s, and is pictured here together with their Ford Transit pickup.



## 10 The Transit that thinks it's a train

Transit versatility even extended to carrying out maintenance work on Swiss railways. A local engineer identified that the distance between its front wheels would allow the Transit to be easily converted to run on the tracks; when its work was finished, it could then drive back to base along the road.





## 11 Wrestling with all kinds of loads

This 1969 advertisement saw U.K. wrestling star Mick McManus highlighting the versatility of the Transit chassis cab for businesses that require specialised body designs.

## 12 The perfect rickshaw?

Enterprising rickshaw operators in Hong Kong purchased 200 new Transits in 1970. The Transit was declared to be ideally suited to the crowded, narrow streets of the world's most densely populated island.



## 13 Record breakers

To demonstrate the durability of its new diesel engine, two Ford Transits drove flat-out for a week non-stop at the high-speed Monza race circuit in 1972, breaking three world endurance records, including 10,000 miles (16,000 km) at an average speed of 73.684 mph (118.583 km/h).



## 14 The amazing Transit Supervan Mk1

The first Transit Supervan made its debut at Brands Hatch on Easter Monday, 1971. This hot property was based on a Ford GT40 sports racing car and powered by a 5.0-litre V8 engine. It could achieve a top speed of 149 mph (240 km/h).

## 15 Britain's most wanted van

London's Metropolitan Police cast aspersions on Transit's good name in 1972 by calling it "Britain's most wanted van." A Scotland Yard spokesman pointed out: "Ford Transits are used in 95 per cent of bank raids. With the performance of a car, and space for 1.75 tonnes of loot, the Transit is proving to be the perfect getaway vehicle..."



## 16 Big numbers

In 1976, the one millionth Ford Transit came off the production line.



## 17 Overland to Australia

Hughes Overland Tours pulls up at a bus-stop looking for more passengers at the start of a 10-week 10,000 mile (16,000km) Transit bus tour from England to Australia in 1973.

## 18 Lipsmackin' Transit

Sporting a 1.5-metre diameter drinks can on its back, this promotional Transit was built in 1977.



## 19 Van of the future

A six-wheeled Transit concept vehicle with gullwing doors was commissioned by Ford in 1979 as a vision for vans of the future.



## 20 Taking the rough with the smooth

For businesses that needed to get off the beaten track, Ford introduced a rugged 4x4 Transit with extra ground clearance in 1982. The model proved popular with utility companies and other users who valued its performance on all surfaces.





## 21 Sent to work down the mine

Some vans have a really tough time. These Transits spent their entire working life down a salt mine in Cheshire, England, transporting people and explosives through miles of tunnels. What's more, to reach the mine workings, each Transit had to be cut in two to fit in the lift shaft, before being welded back together underground.

## 22 Transit takes to the water

In 1985, Ford apprentices from Dunton, U.K., built a floating Transit to take part in the annual raft race at Southend, Essex.



## 23 Super-fast Transit Supervan MkII

In 1985, 14 years after the debut of the original, Ford introduced Supervan II. This was based on another Ford ex-Le Mans car, the C100, and powered by a DFY Cosworth V8 engine. It clocked 174 mph (280 km/h) at the Silverstone race circuit, U.K.



## 24 Flying Transit

This Transit took to the air to become the world's first van to leap over 15 cars. Stuntman Steve Matthews undertook the challenge in 1985 to raise money for cancer research.



## 25 Heading off for a quick break

Transit has always been a great towing vehicle, but this one went that extra bit further. With Supervan II doing the pulling, this combination broke the world caravan towing record in 1985 at an impressive 170mph.



## 26 Beware back seat drivers

This colourful promotional Transit circled London's newly completed M25 orbital motorway for seven days and seven nights in 1986.



## 27 Buried in snow for six months

In October 1985, Seville resident Juan Garcia was caught by a freak snowstorm 3,000 metres up a mountain pass. He abandoned his Transit Kombi, which was subsequently buried under five metres of snow. He returned six months later in the spring, and was amazed to find that the Transit's bodywork was only slightly damaged. He was even more amazed when the Transit started first time, allowing him to drive safely home.



## 28 A big noise in the Transit world

Widely held to be the noisiest Transit in the world, this custom van features a total of 65 amplifiers and 61 subwoofers, which combine to deliver a chest-thumping 155 decibels of sound.



## 29 Even faster deliveries with Transit Supervan III

The outrageous Transit Supervan story reached its third chapter in 1995 as the high-performance delivery machine gained a new-look bodyshell, along with one of Ford's latest 650 PS 3.5-litre grand prix-racing engines. This vehicle survives, albeit now with a Cosworth 2.9-litre 24-valve engine, in the Ford Heritage Collection.



## 30 On a slippery slope

The 2006 Transit ensured that customers were even more spoilt for choice, being the first van ever to offer front-wheel drive, rear-wheel drive or a sophisticated new intelligent all-wheel drive (AWD) system – ideal for icy winter conditions or tacking off-road tracks.



## 31 When I'm cleaning windows

A 2006 advertising campaign saw Ford's favourite van halfway up a skyscraper, while the driver cleaned the windows from the comfort of his Transit cab.



## 34 Transit meets 'The Queen of the Ring'

The late German racing driver Sabine Schmitz caught the public's imagination when she drove a Transit around the infamous Nürburgring circuit, Germany, in just over 10 minutes on BBC's Top Gear TV programme in 2005. Two years later, this picture shows her behind the wheel of the new Transit SportVan.



## 37 The best-selling Custom

Despite being considered by many as the 'new' Transit, the Transit Custom has now been on sale since 2012, 13 years of being the best-selling van time and time again in the UK, and popular across many European territories.



## 39 Born in the USA

In 2014, the Transit went on sale in North America for the very first time, replacing Ford's popular E-Series model. Transits for that market are produced in an assembly plant in Kansas City, U.S.

## 32 Stretch your legs in a Transit XXL

In 2006 Ford created the ultimate people mover in the shape of this one-off stretched limousine called the Transit XXL. Sitting at 7.4 metres long the XXL had four sliding side doors, plus seven leather-trimmed Captain's chairs with lots of legroom and a personal video screen for each of the passengers.



## 35 Transit goes Jumbo

The strongest, most powerful Transit at the time featured a 3.2-litre 200 PS diesel engine and could haul over 2 tonnes of cargo – no wonder they called it the Jumbo.



## 38 The trophy cabinet

By 2020, the Transit Custom had won over 25 industry awards, including International Van of the Year in 2013.



## 33 A grand day out for charity

This inflatable Transit joined favourite film characters Wallace and Gromit to help raise money for a children's charity at the 2006 London marathon.



## 36 Driven to extremes

Transits get some pretty tough treatment, but none worse than what Ford itself dishes out during development. The latest Transit was driven the equivalent of 11 million kilometres – or 275 round-the-world trips – and tackled extreme conditions in four continents, everywhere from arctic Finland to Death Valley in California



## 40 Transit millionaire

Transit operator Radek Němec from Pilsen in Czech Republic arrived at his local Ford dealer with an unusual complaint. The distance recorder in the instrument cluster of his 2008 diesel Transit had stopped working when the digits reached 999,999 km. A second-hand cluster provided a simple solution, allowing the Transit to continue its daily trips to Germany and Netherlands.



## 41 Golden celebration

Celebrating 50 years of loyal service to businesses around the world, this convoy of four golden Transits toured the U.K. in the months leading up to the official Transit anniversary on August 9 2015.



## 44 Super Downforce

The aerodynamic design of the SuperVan 4.2 means that at a speed of 150mph, two tonnes of downforce is created.



## 47 Is it a van? Is it a boat? No, it's a Hovervan!

The Transit can cope with all manner of road conditions, but what happens when you're faced with floods, or an unavoidable river crossing? The BBC Top Gear team took a standard Transit van and added two extra engines with a combined output of 600hp, and a skirt. Able to quickly transform from a road vehicle to a hovercraft, it was able to skim over water, but, as with many Top Gear escapades, not without the occasional incident.



## 50 Across the desert

7,500 miles across the North African desert? (Almost) not a problem for this Transit, competing in a particularly tough rally.

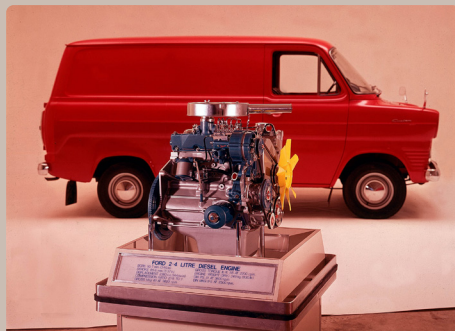


## 42 Transit as a birthing partner

Many have started life in the back of a Transit ambulance, but, perhaps not so many in the footwell, but this is where little Alfie Kerr first saw the light of day. His parents, Daniel and Jess, were on their way to the Furness General Hospital in Barrow, Cumbria. They didn't quite make it in time.

## 45 The modestly powered Transit

The diesel engine fitted to the first Ford Transit had a power output of just 43.6PS. The lowest power output available in today's diesel Transit Custom van is rated at 136PS.



## 48 By royal appointment – almost

Whilst living on Anglesey, royal couple William and Kate used a white Transit van in order to remain incognito (photo is not the actual van).



## 43 The SuperVan 4.2 tackles the Pikes Peak

Inspired by the Ford E-Transit Custom, the SuperVan 4.2, with its 1,400 horsepower produced by three electric motors took to the Pikes Peak International Hillclimb in Colorado in 2023.



## 46 The most powerful production Transit yet – and it's electric

The MS-RT Ford E-Transit Custom has an electric motor with a power output equivalent to 285PS (281HP). That's over six and a half times more power than that 43.6PS (43hp) diesel engine fitted to the first Ford Transit in 1965.



## 49 Van chasing

The Transit has been used in many feature films, but not often in a car chase. Michael Caine is pictured here in-between takes on set for the Fourth Protocol in 1987.







## 52 Transit – a game changer

If you've ever played the Forza Horizon 4 video game, you'll know that one of the vehicles available to drive is the Transit Mk 1. The games producers took up to 1,000 photos of a van from Fords own heritage fleet to come up with a detailed virtual replica of the van, right down to the detail of the Transit's door hinge bolts.



## 51 The Transit helping us all in a time of crisis

In 2020, the year that Transit was due to mark its 55th birthday, any celebrations were curtailed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. So, in the UK Ford Pro's own 131 strong fleet of Transit demonstrator and press vans was re-deployed to 40 different organisations including ten NHS ambulance service trusts to assist with their work.



## 53 Drifting away

Drifting is usually associated with high-powered saloons or sports cars, but the team at Transit Center Motorsport didn't want the van to be left out of the fun, so came up with the V8 Drift Bus. It could reportedly accelerate to 100km from a standing start in 4.5 seconds.



## 54 Up, up and away

A replica of the flying car that starred in the movie 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' was built on a Ford Transit chassis.



## 55 The Transit tug

In Denmark, the port authority at Aarhus has a novel use for its E-Transit van. Fitted with two additional electric motors, the vehicle assists in the 3,300 mooring operations a year by winching cargo ships into place when docking.



## 57 The hottest Transit ever?

The Ford Pro Special Vehicles team gets some very strange requests, and to transform a Transit van into a mobile sauna has to be one of the most unusual. But, using the power from the E-Transit's battery, the project came to fruition with a wooden interior and even a timber effect wrap to the outside of the van.



## 58 Cannes in a van

In 2013, a Ford Transit Custom van was converted into a mobile cinema and used to screen independent films at the Cannes Film Festival. The rear doors of the van opened to reveal a screen allowing those that were unable to gain access to formal screenings to view some of the more niche movie offerings.

## 56 The gamers Transit

In 2021, Fords esports team, Team Fordzilla, converted a Transit into a gaming van with Xbox consoles, and adapted it for wheelchair access to be used when visiting children's hospices.



## 59 Concept Camper

The Transit Custom is a popular van to transform into a camper, but this concept vehicle from German tuning company Loder1899 with its lift kit, crash bars, 18" wheels and huge tyres might just appeal.

## 60 A Monster Transit

In 2005, a UK Ford dealer converted a Transit into a full-size monster truck. The van was fitted with axles from a US military personnel carrier, and the automatic transmission from a London bus. It weighed in at 6.5 tonnes.