Nugget turns 40 with a retro road trip down memory lane

Sint-Agatha-Berchem, 17 April 2026 – Nugget turns 40 this year: from retro roots to the latest high-tech models, explore the evolution of Ford's iconic camper that means home is where you park it.

"*Being mobile every day and travelling whenever you want — that's the concept of the new Westfalia Nugget*"

That's what the brochure said when the Nugget launched 40 years ago, and it's still true today. Our popular camper van is still going strong as a little home from home for holidaymakers, full-time vanlifers, weekend getaways and quick escapes into nature.

Ford will be celebrating Nugget and its fans throughout the year. For now, let's have a look at the greatest hits so far of this characterful camper.

1986: Day One of a 40-Year Holiday

The first Nugget is launched. Converted by camper specialists Westfalia in Germany, the original van used the spacious, good-to-drive Ford Transit as a base and added an interior combining home comforts on the road with five seats and plenty of storage. In an era where road trips tended to mean a huge, boxy motorhome that otherwise sat on the driveway for 50 weeks a year, the Nugget's mix of compact camping and everyday practicality meant it appealed to heart and head.

The front seats spun to face the rear bench in a cosy living area, and at night the bench flattened into a downstairs bed, with another double bed up in the pop-top or fixed high top roof. A kitchen unit with sink, fridge and gas stove ran along the rear so you could cook inside or open the tailgate and use it as a shelter or shade while enjoying the great outdoors.

We've come a long way from the original — back then you got a cigarette lighter and a giant gearstick between the seats for the manual gearbox. Today we have a touchscreen and electrified hybrid power — but Nugget's core spirit remains. The blueprint of a comfy camper that could sleep four people while also being compact and practical enough for a family vehicle made Nugget a favourite for 40 years.

Transit's robust mechanicals have provided the basis for decades of adventures. Several early Nuggets are still satisfying their owners' wanderlust, even with hundreds of thousands of holiday kilometres behind them. Today, these campers are rightly seen as classics and can command strong money from fans looking for nostalgic getaways.

2000: Setting a New Standard

Fourteen years and two minor updates on from first launching, an all-new Nugget based on Ford's Transit for the new millennium hit the road.

The exterior styling was brought bang up to date while the all-new engineering underneath helped improve comfort, efficiency and safety on long road trips.

However, it was this Nugget's ingenious interior that went on to define the model. Westfalia kept the mid-mounted bench but moved the kitchen from the rear to the middle, creating a clever two-room layout in a van you could still drive and park easily.

Seating everyone more closely meant they could have a conversation while driving and that parents could keep a closer eye on children in the back seats. Once parked up, the new floorplan handily separated the kitchen and downstairs bed, so someone could prepare breakfast while another enjoyed an undisturbed lie-in.

This innovative and effective layout has since become a Nugget hallmark. Even today, every version of the Nugget keeps this L-shaped design at the heart of the living space.

2013: Ticking Off More Destinations

Another major change for Transit meant another new Nugget model. Ford introduced the all-new Transit Custom to deliver more comfort and equipment, a stylish new cabin and a more car-like driving experience — all plus points for the hard-working businesses who bought it as a van, and perfect for Nugget customers spending days on the road.

The Transit Custom Nugget generated so much interest that we decided to expand its horizons. Having previously only been sold in Germany, our camper was now available directly through Ford dealerships in multiple countries with a full warranty, making buying and maintaining one as easy as buying any other Ford.

2019: Changing Up the Camper Concept

How do you respond to customers' appetite for more than a Nugget? You make a bigger one. Together with Westfalia, we built the 2019 Big Nugget Concept to explore potential features for future camper models.

The van wowed the crowds at the 2019 Caravan Salon in Duesseldorf, Germany — the leading show of its kind in the world — and proved that there's no substitute for talking to fans about their travels and sharing our ideas when you're developing next-generation products.

The Big Nugget took full advantage of the extra space available in the larger Transit. New features included a fully separate bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin, as well as a rear-mounted double bed that ran the full width of the van. The 13 m^2 of living space included a side-mounted kitchen with 70-litre fridge — more than enough to chill a few bottles of the local good stuff for a refreshing drink while watching the sunset.

2021: Home On (And Off) The Road

We were already seeing adventure sports and van life becoming more and more popular, but the post-pandemic reopening massively accelerated both trends.

Enter the adventurous Nugget Active and rugged Nugget Trail models. These new models offered exterior cladding for scuff protection, trick mechanicals for increased grip on the beach or in muddy festival car parks, and even optional heating for the rear bench.

Imagine navigating an autumnal forest road in your new Nugget Trail, spending the day mountain biking or trail running and arriving back at the van knowing there's an outdoor shower to hose down your kit, a heated bed to lie on and a kitchen for hot drinks and dinner. Wonderful.

2023: Introducing The Newest Nugget

The current fifth generation of Nugget launched in 2023, keeping the same much-loved layout but introducing all-wheel drive and plug-in hybrid powertrain options for the first time.

This model is also a quantum leap forward for comfort and kit; totally new suspension, a more car-like driving position, 5G connectivity [1] and a fully digital cockpit makes the newest Nugget a relaxing way to eat up the miles as well as enjoy your destination.

By now, Team Nugget included the enormous fanbase that our camper had earned itself and who shared the love through forums, social media and even a Nugget podcast. To help give back to them, we took the first vehicle available in Europe to the Black Forest and invited Tiemo Etzold from Nugget Freunde for an exclusive look at the highlights.

Embed All-New Ford Transit Custom Nugget | Walkaround

2025: A Different Kind of Getaway Vehicle

A Nugget might not be the obvious choice for a company car, especially when your office is actually a Ford Mustang GT3 racing car.

However, when Ford racing driver Ben Barker isn't jetting around the world representing the Blue Oval on track, he heads for the wild in his Nugget to decompress from demanding race weekends.

Ben even used his Nugget to take a slice of home to the track when he stayed in it at the 24 Hours of Le Mans endurance race.

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2026: Updating a Black-and-White Past

This retro-styled commemorative edition is inspired by the design of the original 1986 Nugget. The limited-edition anniversary model features a black-and-white colour scheme on the exterior stripes, interior units and yacht-style wooden floor, complemented with exclusive badging inside and out.

This special edition celebrates four decades of breakfasts in the wild, nights under the stars and the simple joy of waking up somewhere new every day. Here's to another 40 years of freewheeling spirit and dreaming of hitting the road.

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