

Auto-Sleeper Winchcombe

If a big washroom and lots of living space count for more than a fixed bed, or a Mercedes chassis is a priority over compact size, then take a look at this British classic



Words Dave Hurrell

THE epitome of a British luxury two-berth, Auto-Sleepers' Winchcombe also comes married to an upmarket chassis: uniquely in its class, Mercedes' Sprinter provides motivation.

Perennial, popular and pretty much perfect for the British touring couple – the classic layout here places twin sofas up front, with divided kitchen behind and a bathroom that stretches full-width across the rear. Just be prepared to drive a big vehicle – the Winchcombe is well over 7m long.

The chassis provides rear-wheel drive and a comfortable, compliant ride that's great for

relaxed holiday cruising – if you've not owned a Merc before, try before you buy, as it's a very different animal to the Fiat/Peugeot.

Auto-Sleepers' motorhomes always come well equipped as standard and here that story starts with a 163-horsepower engine mated to a six-speed manual gearbox. In reality, though, just about every Auto-Sleeper Merc ever made has the optional, super-smooth, seven-speed, torque converter-based automatic transmission. With plenty of power on tap, the auto' makes the driving experience even more relaxed.

Swivelled cab seats provide a pair of comfy



armchairs, the sofas offer feet-up lounging for two. Dining is from a versatile free-standing table with room for four to eat.

Come bedtime, there's a choice of a transverse double or two lengthways singles. The double uses just the forward section of





WHO IS AUTO-SLEEPERS?

In 1961 the Trevelyan family created their own campervan conversion for a holiday, travelling to the south of France. Based on that holiday experience, a second, refined version was put together and it attracted the attention of Bristol-based dealer, Henlys. An order for five 'vans was the result and Auto-Sleepers was born. Based in the quintessentially English Cotswolds, Auto-Sleepers is a quintessentially English company, building van conversions and coachbuilds based on Peugeot, Fiat and Mercedes chassis. For the first chunk of its life, the firm concentrated on van conversions, while later introducing full-moulded GRP coachbuilds that are legendary for both design and the kind of quality that could see them outliving their owners.



Auto-Sleepers does not go in for entry-level 'vans, preferring to produce upmarket offerings that come extremely well equipped in standard form.

FACT FILE

BASE VEHICLE Mercedes Sprinter
PRICE FROM £68,495
BERTHS 2
TRAVEL SEATS 2
LENGTH 7.29m
WIDTH 2.35m
HEIGHT 2.78m
GROSS WEIGHT 3,880kg
PAYLOAD 642kg

BUY AN AUTO-SLEEPER FROM...

Marquis Motorhomes is part of the Auto-Sleeper stable and, with the biggest dealer network in the UK, there should be a branch not too far away. Of the 11 outlets, the most northerly is near Durham, the most southerly not far from Plymouth in Devon. Blackpool, Sheffield, Northampton and Ipswich are all covered, while south of London, Berkshire, Hampshire, Dorset and Sussex all have branches.



A further 20 independent dealers also cover the UK, from Perthshire Caravans in Scotland, to Simpsons in Great Yarmouth and 3A's Leisure in Wales, while three cover the south of England. The rest are dotted around Midlands and the north, while there are also five dealers selling Auto-Sleepers' products in Germany.



the sofa's bases, pulled together, so leaves handy seats, one each side, with the bed made. The singles are easy to make as neither intrudes into the cab.

Cooks should be well pleased with the kitchen as it offers all the kit and simple, but practical features, too. The full-sized cooker has a separate grill and oven plus one mains electric hotplate fitted to its four-pan hob, while across the aisle a digital microwave sits above a roomy fridge/freezer. Forward of this there's a very big slab of worktop that also serves as a handy surface for the lounge and, at bedtime, it makes a great

nightstand. Downsides? Very few, but the sink has no permanent drainer and the microwave is mounted a tad high up.

It's a given that kitchens and bathrooms sell homes and in the case of this motorhome it's the bathroom that's the star. The right-across-the-rear location provides loads of space – enough, in fact, to allow a large separate shower. And, with the wardrobe/chest of drawers in here and plenty of floorspace, it easily achieves dressing room status. Other features of note include a vessel-style washbasin and bench-type toilet with its larger-capacity waste tank.

All is not lost if you like everything about the Winchcombe, but need more berths, as a double-bed-equipped overcab is a no-cost option. However, the essential rear travel seats will set you back another £1,000 – the offside sofa then being replaced with a pullman dinette similar to that in the Broadway EK.

On the subject of extras, the £4,000 Premium Pack includes such goodies as a solar panel, awning, alloy wheels and cab air-conditioning. There's also a reversing camera, cruise control and sat-nav included, and, crucially, the automatic gearbox.