



Living room

Nick Harding lounges around in a luxurious, popular and slightly re-worked Auto-Sleeper



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Eschewing current Europe-led trends for things like fixed beds (they do take up a lot of living space) and garage storage areas, there's something defiantly 'British' about the Auto-Sleeper Bourton, a two-berther featuring a decent-sized lounge. After all, we do love a good amount of living space in the UK. Perhaps it's due to the unpredictable nature of the weather, but we end up spending a fair amount of time in our vehicles, which means we also need interiors that are that little bit more hard-wearing.

The Bourton, launched in 2011, has been slightly re-worked for 2018. On the basis that you don't necessarily need to change a winning formula, there are just a few, vital upgrades to report on.

BUILD QUALITY

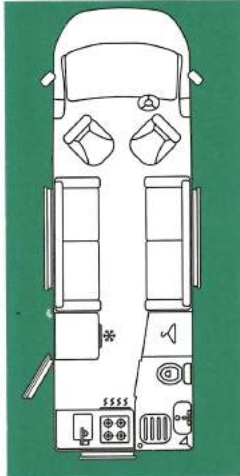
The combination of Mercedes base vehicle with Auto-Sleepers' experience bodes well for this motorhome. The bodywork is GRP-clad and fully-bonded, with aluminium lower skirts. The graphics are updated, of course, with a teal colour introduced.

The back end has seen the most work: it's a one-piece GRP panel with very modern lighting, plus lower-level fixings for a bike rack (which can make it so much easier to load and unload your two-wheelers).

There's a high-level spoiler, too, which should reduce some of the turbulence to which all coachbuilts are prone.

Fresh and waste water tanks are rather small, at 62 and 53 litres respectively. Another niggle is related to the exhaust pipe – it seems to protrude too much and is rather close to the ground – but Auto-Sleepers says it's in line with Type Approval regulations.

The Premium Pack is a whopping £4,000 extra but, such is its popularity, Auto-Sleepers



Clockwise from left: compact but innovative washroom; fresh graphics; front lounge is the star attraction



| TECHNICAL RATINGS | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| 85% | 79% | 80% | 82% |
| BUILD QUALITY | DRIVING | DAYTIME | NIGHT-TIME |
| 75% | 74% | 74% | 78% |
| KITCHEN | WASHROOM | LIGHTING | VERDICT |
| £ | 🚗 | 📦 | 📏 |
| Price/as tested £66,495/ £70,495 OTR | Engine 2.2-litre turbo-diesel Euro VI | MRO 2,983kg (58.72cwt) | Overall length 21ft 2in (6.45m) |
| Caravan and Motorhome Club Insurance Please see quote provided in the 'Did you know?' roundel on this page* | Power 163bhp (120kW) @ 3,800rpm | MTPLM 3,500kg (68.89cwt) | Overall width 7ft 5in (2.26m) |
| | Torque 265lb ft (359Nm) @ 1,400-2,400rpm | User payload 517kg (10.18cwt) | Overall height 9ft 5in (2.87m) |
| | Transmission Seven-speed automatic (as tested, Premium Pack), RWD | Fuel/tank/econ Diesel/70+18 litres AdBlue/28-34mpg | Max internal height 6ft 5in (1.96m) |

Figures from manufacturer's literature.

*Quote is for the model as tested worth £70,495 OTR. Based on 55-year-old male living in Sheffield S13, who has no accidents, claims or convictions and keeps vehicle on drive, 3,000 miles per year, excess of £350 with 5 years NCD unprotected. Subject to underwriting. The Club's Motorhome Insurance is arranged for the Club by Devitt Insurance Services Limited, Insurance Brokers. Caravan and Motorhome Club is a trading name of The Caravan Club Limited. The Caravan Club Limited and Devitt Insurance Services Limited are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

is yet to build a vehicle without it. For the Bourton, it gives you seven-speed automatic transmission as well as alloy wheels, cab air conditioning, cruise control, Thule awning, colour reversing camera and an 80W solar panel.

The other key addition is Truma habitation air conditioning. Auto-Sleepers calls it a "default option", saying it plans to fit it to all its Mercedes base vehicles unless the customer specifies 'no' (in which case you'll save £1,000). There's also a choice of three Media Packs – starting from £995.

DRIVING

One of the biggest selling points for the Mercedes is the automatic transmission. It's exceptionally smooth and doubtless helps contribute to overall economy (which, according to customer feedback from Auto-Sleeper Owners Club members, can reach the mid-30s in terms of mpg).

The Mercedes Sprinter's ride is on the soft side – some might argue it makes it all the more regal – and this isn't a vehicle to be hurried along.

Considering its premium positioning, I've always found the Mercedes cab somewhat austere. There's no doubting the solid feel to it all, though, and there's a decent amount of equipment – upmarket stereo, steering wheel controls, etc.

It's worth noting that it's all on a driving licence-friendly 3,500kg chassis.

DAYTIME

This is a classic two-berth, end-kitchen layout, albeit just a bit bigger than the norm – and that front lounge really does dominate. Large side windows, a sunroof and a decent-sized rooflight keep things bright during the day, while concertina blinds keep the (all-LED) lighting in at night.

The dark wood finish to the furniture has been retained, but the interior still feels different – perhaps on account of the new,

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flowery 'Casa Mila Mocha' upholstery. (There is the no-cost option of ordering striped upholsteries, also new, that will be used in Auto-Sleepers' van conversions this season.)

The walls and ceiling are now an easy-clean GRP (gone are the stretches of 'tape', where panels joined).

A point of criticism? The wardrobe is a generous enough size, but it's also home to the main, free-standing table as well as a tabletop and leg for use between the cab seats. If you have a full complement of clothing in here, things can start to get a bit tricky.

NIGHT-TIME

In these days of permanent beds it's good to see there's still choice for those who would prefer to forego such an option in favour of optimising daytime living space.



Clockwise from left: good use of space in the kitchen; microwave is set at a sensible height; decent equipment levels in the Mercedes cab



At night you can opt to sleep on two lengthways single beds (each measuring a spacious 6ft 4in x 2ft 5in) or a relatively massive 6ft 11in x 6ft 4in double, easily made by pulling together the two settee base frames. With either scenario, turning over the cushions is a small extra chore, but worth it for a more comfortable sleep – and there's plenty of support from the reflex foam that Auto-Sleepers always uses. You'll wake each morning refreshed.

KITCHEN

A layout like this never allows for the biggest of kitchens, but there are few qualms about the inventory here.

Across the back, Auto-Sleepers has shoehorned in a full-scale Thetford Caprice cooker, with dual-fuel hob (three gas rings, one electric hot plate) and separate oven and grill. A stainless steel sink is adjacent, with space to its right to put a drainer.

There's an extractor unit over the hob, while the cooking facilities continue the other side of the habitation door with a Daewoo microwave oven set at a sensible height. The Dometic fridge is also here, and the

only disappointment (for some, maybe) will be its modest 96-litre total capacity. That said, there's some flexibility in that the freezer compartment can be removed altogether if you just want a chiller cabinet.

There are also two worktop extensions to this unit – a flip-up section on the side and a slide-out above the fridge.

You'll be well-served for storage, with four mini drawers and two lockers in the kitchen itself, plus two overhead lockers – would at least one benefit from a shelf? – and a bit of open shelving. Crockery and bottle storage is reserved for the locker over the microwave. Other handy features include two mains sockets and a wall-mounted kitchen roll holder.

WASHROOM

There are clever things going on in what initially seems a rather compact washroom. Swing out the hinged-bulkhead washbasin and it joins with a folding panel to create a shower area; push it back and there's sufficient space to use Thetford's swivel-bowl toilet.

It's surprising to see no window here, as this room doesn't lack for other fittings, offering

various holders and hooks, locker storage and even a retractable clothes dryer.

LIGHTING

There are plenty of lights: four reading lamps in the lounge; three ceiling-mounted units; high-level units each side of the overcab section; a downlighter over the door to welcome you home; and more. There's no dimmer function, though, but you can vary the illumination options to suit.

VERDICT

Auto-Sleepers plus Mercedes means luxury, for two in this case, especially those who like a large lounge. It isn't cheap, but you'll find lots here, right down to the four sherry glasses.



With thanks to

Vehicle supplied for testing by: **Auto-Sleepers**, Orchard Works, Willersey, near Broadway, Worcestershire WR12 7QF. Contact: auto-sleepers.com, 01386 853338.