

Home comforts

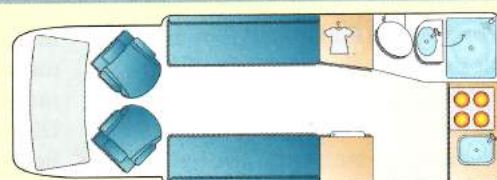
Named after the Cotswold village of Bourton-on-the-Water, this classic two-berth has Mercedes power



Will Hawkins

AUTO-SLEEPER BOURTON

Price from: £70,995
Berths: 2 **Travel seats:** 2
Base vehicle: Mercedes Sprinter
Length: 6.48m
Gross weight: 3,500kg





The classic side settee lounge comes with armrests and scatter cushions

The first thing you notice about the Auto-Sleeper Bourton is the Mercedes badge. Where Fiat grille logos are regularly replaced by motorhome manufacturer motifs, the famous star is proudly retained.

The Bourton is based on the new Sprinter chassis but does the Mercedes badge do what it implies? Do you get a high-quality, German-made road machine, which is great to drive, comfortable and as reliable as a cuckoo clock?

Well, I can't vouch for the reliability, because I only had the Bourton for a few days, but it was a dream to drive. The 2.1-litre, Euro 6d, 163bhp engine delivered all the power and performance I had hoped for when I got into the cab. Driving it off from Marquis Leisure in Northampton, the Bourton pulled away from junctions with ease and authority. The optional seven-speed fully automatic (torque

converter) gearbox is smooth and has none of the jerkiness you get with some semi-automatic gearboxes.

Unusually for a Sprinter, this is also a 3,500kg motorhome – the only one in Auto-Sleepers' Mercedes line-up. Payload is 562kg – reasonable for a two-berth, two-travel-seat 'van with no garage. This is a rear-wheel drive vehicle, too, not the lower-chassis front-drive model now available from Mercedes (and used by Hymer).

Driving past lorries and feeling the effect of crosswinds in a motorhome (especially a tall rear-wheel drive one) can be disconcerting but you get none of the skewing in the Bourton due to the Crosswind Assist, which instils confidence when cruising along motorways at speed. Driving over the moors between Sheffield and the Peak District the road is exposed and the Bourton handled the crosswinds. I barely noticed any movement.

WHAT AN EXPERIENCE

Just as smooth is the Mercedes MBUX (Mercedes-Benz User Experience) display in the centre of the dash. The seven-inch touchscreen (part of the Premium Pack, costing £4,000, along with the automatic gearbox and much more) is responsive and easy to use. It's simple to set up the built-in sat-nav and a doddle to connect your smartphone via Bluetooth. It gives the cab an up-to-date feel, too, and will be familiar to anyone with a current Mercedes-Benz passenger car.

When parked up on the Camping and Caravanning Club site in Hayfield, the MBUX came into its own when I watched a video.

The output from the speakers in the cab and two in living space gave something close to surround sound while watching the film.

On the steering wheel you manage the cruise control, volume, channel



The MBUX screen is the focal point of the latest Sprinter cab



Above the fridge is a microwave oven and wine glasses rack



The rear galley comes with a removable draining board, while cooker has a mains hotplate

SECOND OPINION

"Could 2020 be the year of the Mercedes? There's a lot more choice of 'vans coming on the much-improved new Sprinter"

PETER VAUGHAN ROAD TEST EDITOR

and mode. Stick the 'van into reverse and the screen located where you would normally have the rear view mirror comes to life, giving a clear view behind. Combined with the keyless start and compatibility with car apps like Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, all these features make the Bourton a user-friendly driving experience that few other base vehicles yet match.

Despite all this modern design, the cab lacks the cup holders you find in most motorhomes, but there are two cubbyholes below the MBUX for your phone, etc.

The cab seats are comfortable and adjustable with armrests. Swivel them to the rear to line up with the sofas and you have a super-comfy lounging position for reading. During the day, light floods in from the overcab skylight, either side of which are open lockers with low lips, which I didn't

find that useful, so we'd suggest adding some retainer straps to allow more to be stored there.

SOFA SO GOOD

The light grey and pale brown fabrics continue from the cab into the living space with the addition of a light wood with chrome strips and handles. The windows on either side have the usual integrated blinds, with the addition of curtains should you prefer them.

The sofas on each side differ in length (offside 1.84m, nearside 1.94m) but they're both big enough to use as single beds.

If you want to make up a double bed, you pull out the frame under each sofa to meet in the middle. You will need to invert the squab cushions to avoid having a big ridge in the middle, though.

Having spent a couple of nights

in the Bourton, I found the beds were very comfortable, although I did find that the sofas would benefit from better retainers to hold all the cushions in place when driving.

STORE MORE

Under the nearside sofa is a big locker with external access. You'd probably store your outside furniture in here, although the external door is not wide, so you'd need to load items 'feet-first' into the space. But if you want lots of storage consider a fixed bed or garage model instead.

Under the opposite sofa is the electrical system (with an access panel to the fuses and controls). Storage in this area is therefore limited but there are a lot of alternatives. For example, for storing clothes and equipment, there are three overhead lockers above the settees on each side. >

LIKED



- Handy reading lights on rails
- Mercedes Sprinter is a joy to drive

DISLIKED



- Cutlery drawer did not fully open with habitation door closed (this is being changed on future models)
- Sofa retainers inadequate when travelling

WANTED

- Built-in TV bracket/locker
- Larger capacity water tanks



Worktop, worktop and more worktop thanks to these slide-out panels

These cupboards are either split horizontally with a fixed shelf, or unsplit to accommodate bulkier items.

A neat feature is the reading lights, which are on rails under the overhead lockers. You can adjust their position to suit exactly where you want the light to allow you to get into the most comfortable position.

Other interior lighting is good, too, with uplighters, as well as a central ceiling lamp.

Meanwhile, natural light comes from the large central skylight with wind-up mechanism for ventilation.

The wardrobe sits opposite the fridge and has a long mirror on its door, plus a good hanging height and width, so you can hang several coats, jackets, trousers or short dresses. Below, there's a deep drawer, perfect for shoes.

Under the drawer is the gas/230V Combi boiler, which is as expected,

although what's more unusual is the Truma Aventa habitation air-con unit in the roof – a £1,000 option.

Behind the passenger seat there's a slot for a coffee table. This comes into its own when you spot the 12V socket and TV point under the lockers above it. Lie back on the sofas and you can watch TV in comfort.

If you want to watch telly from the cab seats don't worry; there is a 'media point' in the sideboard unit, which contains the fridge, microwave and glass holders.

Here, you will find a USB socket, a 12V and two three-pin outlets, a satellite cable point and a digital aerial socket.

Of course, whether you use your television on the coffee table near the cab or on the surface by the microwave, you will have to stow it before you drive away unless you add a bracket.

DOOR V DRAWER

The sideboard contains an automatic energy selection, 85-litre Dometic fridge, and a Russell Hobbs microwave. The fridge could be considered compact by today's standards but is ample for two.

Above the microwave there's a crockery cupboard with space for mugs, plus two bottle clasps on the right to keep your wine upright when you're driving.

Below, there's an open cocktail cupboard containing wine glasses and space for other kitchen items and gadgets. To the right is a switch for the main lights in the living space and above the fridge is a flat surface with a handy pull-out kitchen worktop.

The main galley unit has a three-burner hob and one electric hotplate, with separate grill and oven. Below, there's a small cupboard for pots and pans. Then, to the right, is a column of



The across-the-rear galley is very well equipped and has plenty of storage

four drawers for utensils.

To the right of the stainless-steel sink is space for the draining board, which can be stowed when you need the worktop, perhaps for a coffee machine as there's a 230V socket above. To cap it all, the extractor fan with downlights will help reduce cooking fumes from invading your living space, especially if it's too cold to open the rear window.

By the door, we found we could only fully open the cutlery drawer when the habitation door is open. Auto-Sleepers tells us this will be changed, with a cutlery holder sliding out from behind a hinged flap so that it will clear the door handle.

Above the door, the control panel is one of the best I've used. The touchscreen is easy to use and clearly shows the data you need – for instance, how much fresh water is left in the 62-litre tank, or how much

capacity is left in the 53-litre waste tank. If you use your motorhome's on-board facilities, rather than campsite facilities, a lot then you'll be checking those stats regularly as those tanks are not the largest.

SWEET AND DRY

The Bourton's washroom is a reasonably sizeable space. Above the swivel loo, there's a cabinet with double doors. You can hang your hand towel on the ring on the wall to the left and check your image in the long mirror next to it.

The basin is part of the swing-out wall for the shower, which contains a split mirror cabinet, too. The wall rotates with the aid of a gas strut to open up the shower space and, on the opposite side, there's a small screen to complete the cubicle. It's a roomy space with a non-slip mat, although

there was a plasticky feel to some of the fittings. A great additional touch is the built-in Brabantia extendable clothes line – drying wet clothes can be a pain in motorhomes, but not in the Bourton.

REACH FOR THE STAR

Coats dried, you can step outside through the habitation door, grabbing the handle on your right, which sits over a cubbyhole in which you might want to place your umbrellas or cleaning kit. A bin is fitted on the inside of the door.

The floor of the Bourton is high (this is because of the rear-wheel drive Mercedes chassis), which means you have to use two steps to reach terra firma.

The first step is internal, the second is electric (and automatically retracts when you switch on the ignition). >



The basin and cabinet swing through 90 degrees to create a shower cubicle



The drawer under wardrobe sits over the heater to warm your clothes

THE VERDICT

The Auto-Sleeper Bourton will please British buyers wanting a classic two-berth layout with the smooth drive and cachet of the three-pointed star. It's a well-appointed motorhome that's easy to live with but there's a premium of over £8k compared with an equivalent current Fiat Comfort-Matic-based Auto-Sleeper Broadway. For many, that will be a price worth paying.

Without the steadies down there is little bounce in the suspension when you step out or in.

Outside, between the front and the rear axles is the external access to the locker under the nearside bed.

Below and forward of that there is a very handy skirt locker, which is perfect for stowing muddy boots and shoes.

If you need shade or shelter, wind out the Thule canopy awning. And you can set up your barbecue on the other side using the external gas point.

Towards the driver's door is the water filler point and the 25-litre LPG filler point.

There are no gas cylinders to mess about with here as a fitted underfloor

tank saves space and is much more practical as it puts an end to heaving those heavy gas cylinders about.

Finally, at the end of the day, you'll need to fit the insulated thermal screen on the windscreen. With a bit of practice, this becomes a simple and quick process. **www**

MOTORHOME SUPPLIED BY

Auto-Sleepers Ltd

01386 853338

auto-sleepers.com

INSURANCE

0800 975 1307

shieldtotalinsurance.co.uk

Find quote details on Secondhand Choice



FACTS AND FIGURES

PRICE
From: £70,995
As tested: £76,290

BASICS
Berths: 2

Travel seats: 2

Warranty: Three years base vehicle and conversion, six years water ingress

Type approval: European Whole Vehicle

DIMENSIONS
Length: 6.48m (21ft 3in)

Width: 2.26m (7ft 5in)

Height: 2.86m (9ft 4½in)

Gross vehicle weight: 3,500kg

Payload: 562kg

BASE VEHICLE
Type: Mercedes Sprinter chassis-cab

Engine: 2.1-litre, Euro 6d, 163bhp, rear-wheel drive, seven-speed automatic gearbox

KITCHEN
Cooker: Thetford three-burner hob and electric hotplate, separate grill and oven. Russell Hobbs microwave
Fridge: Dometic 85-litre with automatic energy selection

BEDS
Singles: Offside 1.84m x 0.74m (6ft 0½in x 2ft 5in), nearside 1.94m x 0.74m (6ft 4½in x 2ft 5in)
Alternative double: 2.10m x 1.94m max (6ft 10½in x 6ft 4½in)

ESSENTIALS
Fresh water: 62 litres (underfloor)
Waste water: 53 litres (underfloor)
Space/water heating: Truma Combi gas/230V blown-air
Leisure battery: 100Ah
Gas: 25-litre underfloor LPG tank

OPTIONS
Fitted new: Premium Pack - automatic gearbox, MBUX system with 7in screen and sat-nav, reversing camera, 80W solar panel, Thule awning, alloy wheels, cruise control, cab air conditioning (£4,000), Winter Pack (£295), roof-mounted Truma habitation air-con (£1,000)

THE ALTERNATIVES
Auto-Sleeper Broadway EK TB £60,200
LP (Peugeot) £60,200
Auto-Trail Tracker EKS (Fiat) £57,747

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