

# On the *plus* side

Can't decide whether to have a fixed bed over a large garage, or a rear lounge with a huge dog bed? Well, have it all with a Fairford Plus...

WORDS & PHOTOS Peter Vaughan

The Fairford has been in Auto-Sleepers' campervan line-up since 2016 as a four-berth offering with a very British floorplan featuring front and rear lounges in the extra-long (6.36m) Peugeot Boxer.

The forward two-thirds of this new Fairford Plus look like the standard-issue Fairford (although, actually, the entire kitchen has moved forward by about 1.50m along the nearside to create a wider rear bed).

But, at the back, the lounge has gone, replaced by a fairly high-level transverse fixed bed. Or a huge garage. Or an occasional seating area. Or a giant dog bed. Let me explain...

You're, perhaps, most likely to see the Fairford Plus in fixed bed mode. In this set-up there's a transverse double, much as you'd expect to see in many imported van conversions, except that it's mounted quite high at around 0.91m (3ft) off the floor. Access has been addressed by providing a portable double step, which can also be used outside to ease entry through the rear doors, too.

The bed itself has decent dimensions of 1.88m by 1.37m (narrowing to 1.22m on the offside), although the useful magazine pockets at the foot of the bed steal a couple of centimetres of spaces by your feet. The mattress had to be kept as thin as possible due to the ingenious way that it folds when not required for sleeping. It's only about 75mm (3in) thick, so Premier Furnishings developed a triple-layer sandwich to improve comfort.

Of course, there's generous storage under





## Auto-Sleeper Fairford Plus

**Base vehicle** Peugeot Boxer extra-long window van

**Drive** Front-wheel drive

**Engine** 2-litre diesel (Euro 6d)

**Power** 165bhp

**Economy** 35mpg (estimated)

**Gearbox** 6-speed manual

**Number of travel seats** 4

**Berths** 4

**Leisure battery capacity** 2 x 100Ah

**Payload** 389kg

**Length x width x height** 6.36m x 2.26m x 2.64m

**Standard equipment** Thetford Triplex three-burner hob and combined oven/grill, microwave, three-way Thetford 81-litre fridge, 69-litre underfloor fresh water tank, 40-litre underfloor waste

water tank, Whale 6kW gas water heater and eight-litre boiler, 230V blown-air heating, 25-litre underslung LPG tank, two 100Ah leisure batteries

**Optional equipment** Premium Pack: alloys, cab air-con, cruise control, awning, reversing camera, DAB radio/sat-nav, solar panel, Al-Ko Air Top suspension (£2,500), Dometic habitation air-con (£1,000), Mecatronic satellite dish

(£995), Winter Pack (£295)

**Warranty** Three years on base vehicle and conversion

**Price from** £60,200

**Price as tested** £64,990

### CONTACTS

[auto-sleepers.com](http://auto-sleepers.com)

AutoSleepersLTD

ASGMotorhomes

### Pros

- Wide rear garage/boot area
- Great for dog owners
- Lots of kitchen worktop

### Cons

- Tap position relative to washbasin
- Extra cushions for the front double bed take up storage space



the bed and, if you need more, then it's a simple job to fold away the mattress and its metal frame (supported by two steel crossbars that stand upright adjacent to the washroom when not in use). Here, the Fairford Plus differs not only in eschewing the usual wooden slatted bed base, but also in the way the mattress folds and stores on each side.

### Through the back door

The garage area is also wider than in many rivals (a fact that was a key part of the design) as the usual cabinets at either side are slimmer and do not have to include gas or water storage. The 69-litre fresh water tank (along with the modest 40-litre waste) is underneath the 'van, where you'll also find the 25-litre built-in LPG tank and the Whale

space heater.

Moving the services outside creates a generous garage space that's 1.38m square with the full interior height of the vehicle (1.88m), and still with some useful locker space at the sides for mains lead, hose, etc, and even extra bedding. The Whale eight-litre boiler is also housed here, on the offside, and there's a fitting for an external hot and cold shower, too.

Having such a big area to play with opens up all sorts of possible uses, not just the obvious bikes and sports gear. Auto-Sleepers has trialled mobility scooters here (it'll take two) and, via Premier Furnishings, it can even offer a dog bed tailored to fit the area with a pair of seatbelt clasps to attach harnesses (in addition to the usual tie-downs for other gear). With a fan in the roof, too,

the Fairford Plus seems especially well suited to our four-legged friends.

If your needs are more for a workspace, then you'll be impressed by the next neat feature – a second roll-out awning (in addition to the usual one over the sliding door) above the Peugeot's rear barn doors. Developed especially by Thule at the behest of Auto-Sleepers, this will allow you a bit of shade or weather protection while you labour in the garage, back doors open. And, maybe, after all that hard work (or dog walking), you want to put your feet up. The bed frames unfurl again but this time using built-in legs, rather than the crossbars, for support. In a little over a minute, and with the dogs/bikes/sports gear outside, the Fairford Plus transforms again to offer a useful rear lounge.



## Put your feet up

The Fairford Plus still has its sister model's forward seating area, too, and, unlike nearly every continental camper in this class, it's a pullman dinette rather than a half-dinette. That means forward and rearward-facing benches (each a generous width for one but a tight squeeze for two), two three-point seatbelts on the front-facing one, and a swivel base for just the passenger seat.

My favourite place to sit in the 'van was on the rear-facing seat, scatter cushion for a backrest, turned to face the open sliding side door, using the bench as a comfy sofa. Almost as appealing is the rotated cab chair where your feet don't dangle as there's enough of the raised floor section on which to rest them.

The table has also been changed here to

a fixed type with solid central support. There was certainly no wobble as I tapped these words on my keyboard and you could comfortably get three adults around the table by extending the rear-facing seat into bed mode.

There's a telly point above the end of the galley and this test 'van also had the Media Pack with Mecatronic 65cm automatic satellite dish but no TV screen. Reading is well catered for by the lights on a rail, which can be repositioned at will and, when the doors are closed, you'll find you switch on more of the lights (there are plenty) more of the time due to the dark-tinted glazing used on all windows behind the cab.

Another benefit of the new table is that it lowers simply, using a foot-operated lever, at bed-making time. In fact, turning the dinette

into a 1.77m by 0.90m single bed for a child or small adult is remarkably easy.

The Fairford Plus, however, is one of the few full four-berths in its class (achieved without a canvas-sided pop-top that is best for summer use only) and creating a double bed up front takes a bit more time and effort – and four more cushions. The system has been refined since the first Fairford debuted, but there is still the question of keeping all the extra cushions on board – they fill both the overcab shelf and what would otherwise be a really useful space under the rear-facing bench so if you don't need the fourth berth, leave them at home.

## Space, man

Too often, fixed bed campervans have a very small galley squeezed in next to the

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sliding door and offer the cook just a two-burner hob on which to compose dinner. The Fairford Plus, however, has a lot more space, and more options.

There are generous areas of worktop both between the sink and cooker and forward of the hob, where the kitchen does the usual thing of blocking part of the entrance (but not obstructing access). The cooker is a Thetford Triplex with three gas rings and a combined oven and grill, while above the sink is a new motorhome-specific microwave (now without a plate). There's also an 81-litre fridge. A cutlery drawer is concealed within the cupboard under the sink, where we also found the removable draining board. Up top are plate racks and a set of crystal wine glasses, as well as an extractor hood.

If you're wondering if Auto-Sleepers has omitted a wardrobe, no, that's under the forward end of the galley. It has doors to the front and side to aid finding the right garment and it's tall enough for trousers or jackets, perhaps.

Storage is mostly generous in the Fairford Plus, but less so in the washroom. There's a towel ring, a loo roll holder and toothbrush mug, but no cupboard or cabinet. Space to use all the facilities is more generous than in some campervans and you can shower without getting all tangled in a curtain, but the sliding basin, which looks like a clever idea to create more room for showering, needs a bit more development. As it is, the showerhead (which doubles as the tap) tends to spray over the soap dish (not into the basin) and sometimes splashes your loo roll at the same time.

On the outside it's classic Auto-Sleepers in some ways – with Peugeot factory-fit athermic glass side and rear windows, alloy wheels and a choice of metallic colours



**Verdict**

Probably the most innovative new model from Auto-Sleepers for some years, the Fairford Plus takes a different approach to the popular rear bed layout and could prove especially popular with dog lovers. Its kitchen and its versatility are major strengths but it works better as a two/three-berth than for four, due to the number of extra cushions needed for the front double bed.

– but the new graphics look a lot more contemporary and the roof rails (here with optional canoe rack) go with the Fairford Plus' multipurpose vibe. The test vehicle was powered by the familiar 2-litre 160bhp Euro 6b unit but production models will get the new 2.2-litre Euro 6d motor with five extra horsepower and, more tellingly, 20Nm more torque.

