

The latest *status symbol*



Combining the existing Symbol lounge with the kitchen and washroom of the defunct Stanway creates one nifty two-berth camper, reckons Peter...

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The Auto-Sleeper Symbol has been around since the last millennium in various forms and continues to be a key part of the firm's entirely Peugeot-based van conversion range today. Throughout, it has offered a classic British front lounge with a single forward-facing seat and a long side settee, while the choice of a double bed or twin singles has been another attraction.

Our test vehicle came in Golden White – one of four exterior colours available. With the company's usual graphics and the Boxer in window van form (having tinted athermic glass, rather than the more typical plastic double glazing), it could only be an Auto-Sleeper!

Typical of a campervan hailing from the Cotswold factory, the Symbol Plus also comes very well specified – as long as you bear in mind that the £2,500 Premium Pack is an essential fitting. Obvious features are the alloy wheels, metallic paint, electric step for the sliding door (with automatic retraction) and awning. Study the 'van longer and you'll also find the 25-litre underslung gas tank, ESP, cab air-conditioning, Al-Ko Air Top rear suspension, external gas point, solar panel, and new DAB radio with sat-nav. The last item was missing on this pre-production model, as were the front foglamps it should also have had, and the leather steering wheel seen here is no longer available.

We found the rear barn doors allowed access to the boiler and for toilet servicing but it's a shame that there's no storage here – it would have been the ideal place to incorporate some outdoor chairs.

This model also comes with a Whale water filler, which requires a special hose for filling the fresh water tank; this can sometimes limit your water-filling options.

While the design of the Peugeot cab is starting to show its age, there's no doubt that the Boxer – in Euro 6b form – now has superior power units to its sister van



from Fiat, too.

The latest 2-litre BlueHDi engine here is also spec'd up to 160bhp (rather than the usual 130 horses) so, not only is it smoother and more refined than most rival Fiat-based campers, but it is also quicker.

You will have to order a Ducato base if you want your Symbol Plus with the semi-automatic gearbox as this is only available on the Fiat, with all Boxers having manual gearboxes only.

Lovely lounging

It's easy to see why the Symbol has been so popular for so long when you sit on the side settee on a warm, sunny day with the sliding door wide open.

While we test so many settees that seem to be designed to suit only the tallest folk, here the sofa is not too high, while armrests and scatter cushions offer added comfort. The single forward-facing seat is also well-proportioned, with a headrest and raked back. It comes with a three-point belt but is best viewed as an occasional travel seat, we would say.

The cab seats come into play on site, too. You might miss having two armrests on each chair but, although you sit higher here, your feet aren't left dangling. There's a neat little island leg coffee table, too, which is often much more convenient to use than the

Auto-Sleeper Symbol Plus

Base vehicle Peugeot Boxer long-wheel-base window van

Drive Front-wheel drive

Engine 2.0-litre Euro 6b

Power 160bhp

Gearbox 6-speed manual

Number of travel seats 3

Berths 2

Leisure battery capacity 90Ah

Payload 525kg

Length x width x height 5.99m x 2.26m x 2.64m

Standard equipment Three-burner hob with oven/grill, fitted microwave, 96-litre fridge with auto energy selection, 69-litre underfloor fresh water tank, 40-litre underfloor waste water tank, 25-litre underfloor gas tank. Beds: double measuring 1.86m x 1.62m (6ft 1in x 5ft 3½in) or two singles measuring 1.89m x 0.71m (6ft 2½in x 2ft 4in) and

1.81m x 0.65m (5ft 11in x 2ft 1½in). Truma Combi 6E gas/electric blown-air heating and water. 90Ah leisure battery

Optional equipment Premium Pack: DAB radio/sat-nav, alloys, Air Top suspension, air-con, awning, reversing camera, cruise control, solar panel (£2,500), Winter Pack: heated tanks, cab blinds, heater upgrade, wheelarch insulation (£295), bike rack (£395). Fiat 130bhp




Comfort-Matic (£2,000), Fiat 150bhp Comfort-Matic (£4,000)

Warranty Base vehicle and conversion, three years

Price from £53,700

Price as tested £56,890

CONTACTS

 auto-sleepers.com
 AutoSleepersLTD
 ASGMotorhomes



Pros

- Great little washroom
- Spacious L-shaped kitchen
- Beds are easy to make up
- Sofa backrests are not too high

Cons

- No storage behind barn doors
- Windows are quite dark



There's a neat little island leg coffee table, too, which is often much more convenient to use than the full-sized dining table

full-sized dining table. The small table (and its leg) stores in the wardrobe, while the larger unit clips into place on the overcab shelf. It's a free-standing table that's sensibly sized for the Symbol Plus' two residents but it can sometimes obstruct the aisle. It works best if you sit side by side, meaning that only one person can get to the galley for those forgotten condiments.

Some may find that the Peugeot privacy glass makes for a darker interior; to compensate, there's plenty of artificial (LED) lighting, as well as a wind-up Heki sunroof over the lounge. And the opening sections of glass are where you need them (in the lounge) and ideal if you do carry a rear passenger. The Limewash furniture shown here also creates a brighter feel than the alternative Verada Oak.

Better still are the Art Deco-style reading lights over the settee, as these can be repositioned to your liking anywhere along their mounting rail, just by twisting them off and back on. Pleated blinds are fitted throughout, including the cab, and lined curtains are provided for the offside lounge window to add a more homely touch – very Auto-Sleeper!

Time to turn in

Another bonus – and one you'd probably expect, bearing in mind the standard Symbol's long history – is the ease of making up the twin single beds. On the offside you simply need to have the driver's seat facing front and pushed forward as far as it'll go. An extra cushion then slots in at the end of the settee to make a reasonably generous berth

with no joins (except under your pillow).

The nearside seat makes the second bed in seconds. Just release a catch and the base and backrest slide forward and flatten. Again, there's an infill cushion required but we found that both could be stored conveniently behind the single seat's backrest and, while this bed is the shorter and narrower of the two, it is just as flat.

Here you have to sleep with your head at the cab end, as your tootsies go under a rather odd-looking 'floating' cupboard that supports the travel seat's backrest. With 310mm between furniture and mattress there's no shortage of room for your feet.

The Symbol Plus also offers a double bed. A slatted base pulls out from the settee and on top go the long backrest and two more infill cushions. Therein lies the rub.