

Well-appointed lounge



The Mercedes-based M-Star is great to drive

Nick Harding reports on an exceptionally well equipped addition to the Auto-Sleepers van conversion line-up

This month we take a look at Auto-Sleepers' biggest, most luxurious van conversion – the M-Star. There's no messing about with factory-fitted options here, as every one coming out of the Auto-Sleeper factory has the same specification. Which is very high. Prices start at a correspondingly extravagant £125,250 – the only choice you have to make is whether you'd rather drop the leather upholstery and go for fabrics or not.

BUILD QUALITY

A marriage between Mercedes-Benz and Auto-Sleepers will sound ideal to some. The target audience is likely couples who want the more solid qualities of a van (compared to coachbuilt bodywork), but also expect all the typical motorhome facilities, especially in terms of a full-scale washroom with shower and toilet.

This test example was in Iridium Silver, (three other blue and grey paintwork colours are available) with alloy wheels, wind-out awning with strip light, slide-out step at the sliding door and more as standard. Auto-Sleepers adds external gas, mains electric and TV aerial sockets, plus a gas tank.

Like the Willersey-based manufacturer's other, Peugeot Boxer-based, van conversions, the non-opening side and rear windows (including the washroom's) are single-pane, UV filtering, tinted glass, complete with concertina blinds (and lined curtains for the lounge sides). For ventilation, there are two large opening rooflights

DRIVING

There's a sturdy, reassuring feel to the way the Mercedes drives, with automatic transmission making it all the more relaxing; it's also quiet.

The M-Star doesn't even feel particularly big once you're out on the open road. Just note that the 161bhp engine here is set to be succeeded by a greener, two-litre, 170bhp variant with front-wheel drive. A roll call of safety features such as Crosswind, Lane Keeping and Hill-Start Assist contribute to the driving experience.

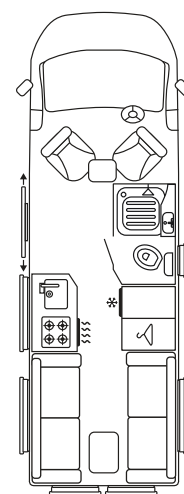
The cab is particularly well appointed. The central MBUX infotainment system with 7in touchscreen will include sat-nav on full production models. You also get a camera for reversing as well as a rear view when driving.

You'll need C1 status on your driving licence, because the M-Star's maximum weight is 3,880kg.

DAYTIME

If you're used to a Fiat- or Peugeot-based van conversion, you'll notice the interior of the Mercedes is that bit narrower, and there's more tumblehome (the upper curve of the bodywork), although Auto-Sleepers overcomes the effect of this with a concave shape to the high-level lockers.

You might recognise the floorplan from one of Auto-Sleepers' favourite models of recent years – the Boxer-based Warwick XL. It features twin settees facing each other at the rear which, in turn, can be made into single beds or a double. In daytime mode, there's a single point to take a pedestal leg and tabletop, the latter being rather small, even for two folk.



RATINGS

| | |
|-----|---------------|
| 72% | BUILD QUALITY |
| 80% | DRIVING |
| 74% | DAYTIME |
| 77% | NIGHT-TIME |
| 80% | KITCHEN |
| 74% | WASHROOM |
| 82% | DETAILS |
| 77% | OVERALL |

TECHNICAL



| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Price (as tested) | £125,250 OTR |
| Engine | 2.1-litre Euro 6 |
| Power | 161bhp (120kW) @3,000-4,200rpm |
| Torque | 295lb ft (400Nm) @1,400-2,800rpm |
| Transmission | Nine-speed automatic, RWD |
| MRO | 3,425kg |
| MTPLM | 3,880kg |
| User payload | 455kg |
| Overall length | 23ft 4in (7.10m) |
| Overall width | 6ft 8in (2.02m) |
| Overall height | 8ft 7in (2.62m) |
| Max internal height | 6ft 1in (1.86m) |
| Fuel/tank/econ | Diesel/17.2gals (78 litres)/26-30mpg |

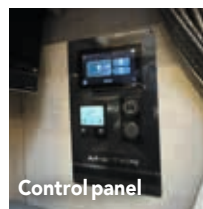
Figures from manufacturer's literature



Two singles or a good-sized double



Swivel seats



Control panel



Washroom split into two areas

The settees feature reflex foam, which holds its firmness well over time. There are also four scatter cushions and four bolsters. Swivel the cab seats and you can set up another pedestal leg table between the two – just. All the table fittings stow in the wardrobe for safe travel. The heating and hot water is an Alde 'wet' system, plus, there's roof-mounted air conditioning for the living quarters.

NIGHT-TIME

The two single beds each measure 1.86m (6ft 1in) x 0.68m (2ft 3in); the double being some 1.64m (5ft 5in) wide, made by sliding the settee bases together. If you stay with the leather upholstery, you'll probably want to flip the settee bases when it comes to bed making. There's also the opportunity to watch television (a 16.5in Avtex model complete with sound bar) from bed.

KITCHEN

You'll go a long way to find any motorhome kitchen with as much worktop space as the M-Star's. There are sizeable flip-up extensions either side of the cooker and sink arrangement.

There's a Thetford cooker with separate oven and grill and a hob that includes an electric hotplate and a cast-iron grid. Other fittings include an extractor unit with lights and a black acrylic splash panel. Storage provision includes two overhead lockers and two adjacent to the cooker, the lower of which also has a small, slide-out cutlery tray.

Directly across the corridor from the kitchen is a Dometic compressor fridge with a 157-litre capacity. The double-hinged door provides two-way access and you can remove the freezer box if you wish. Over this sits a flatbed microwave oven, also from Dometic, at a convenient height.

WASHROOM

This is a washroom of two parts, with a swivel-bowl toilet on one side and a step down via folding doors

into the shower cubicle – where there's also a fixed handbasin. The mixer tap, shower fittings, mug holder, toilet roll holder and toilet brush are all in stylish black. There is a small, high-level locker for storage, a single plughole in the shower tray and a rooflight for ventilation.

DETAILS

The level of kit provided is stupendous. There are three double USB portals in the lounge, as well as mains sockets over the kitchen and behind the cab passenger seat. Lighting includes four bullet-style reading lamps on rails, ambient strips over the lockers and – where the cab meets the rest of the living zone – four ceiling downlighters (there are a further two over the sliding door). The only surprise is the lack of a dimming function.

Elsewhere, there are heated cab seats, a pre-installed Tracker tracking system (you just need to pay the subscription), 5G-ready on-board Wi-Fi, a 120W solar panel, 100Ah lithium leisure battery and a 30-litre gas tank. Water tank capacities are 70 litres fresh and 77 litres waste.

There were a few niggles on the test vehicle – press studs were difficult to engage on the settee backrests, some glued-on furniture trim was working loose and a locker catchplate was faulty – but this was admittedly a well-used, pre-production model.

VERDICT

At £125,000, it's certainly not cheap – but it's spacious for two, pleasant to drive and exceptionally well equipped.

i You can insure this motorhome with the Club for **£995.16** per year*. Please see camc.com/ insurance or call 0345 504 0334 for further details.

*Quote (correct as of 1 March 2024) is for the model tested worth £125,250 OTR with a working tracker fitted. Based on a 57-year-old male living in Kent, with a maximum no claims bonus (unprotected) coming from a vehicle of similar value/experience, who has no accidents, claims or convictions and keeps the vehicle on a drive, driving 3,000 miles a year, with a £600 damage, fire and theft excess. 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.



Thetford cooker

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