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+ BISCHOFF**



Clou inside

'ERWIN HYMER GROUP' representatives attend grand opening of new motorhome dealer showroom

Representatives of both HYMER and CARADO in the form of their respective export managers visited the 'Travelworld Motorhomes' dealership for the grand opening of their newly refurbished showroom and service centre. In a ceremony that saw Andrea Kibler, HYMER Export Manager, and Neil Dries, CARADO Export Manager, cut the ribbon to the entrance of the new showroom and announce this as one of the best motorhome showrooms in Europe!

With the ability to display up to 50 motorhomes in an environment not dissimilar to one of the major indoor exhibitions and with their displays being exclusive to the ERWIN HYMER GROUP products, the Travelworld showroom is something to behold, especially as the company decided to paint the entire 40,000sq/ft floor in stunning light grey! "We wanted that real wow factor when you first walk through the door and we wanted both our service centre and showroom to have that clinical feeling, like



a McLaren Formula 1 pit garage! We are very pleased with the outcome and our investment in the Service Centre includes three brand new 2-post ramp systems capable of lifting the largest of European motorhomes, benefitting both efficiencies and the working environment," said Ross Edwards, Travelworld Managing Director.

Travelworld have also completed work on

a bespoke dealer management software system which integrates all departments of the company and allows for both customers and vehicles to have unique history files. Another benefit and one that Travelworld believe may be unique in the industry is a paperless service centre where technicians have been supplied iPads and work orders are sent and processed electronically.

Meet the Travelworld team



B-Class Dynamic Line

The revolutionary new lightweight model from Hymer



Everything else
is imitation

Dates for the diary

- **The National Motorhome Show** 15 – 17 April 2016
East of England Showground, Peterborough PE2 6XE
- **The Southern Motorcaravan Show** 20 – 22 May 2016
Newbury Showground, Chieveley, Berkshire RG18 9QZ
- **The Midland Motorhome Sale** 24 – 26 June 2016
Staffordshire County Showground, Weston Road, Stafford ST18 0BD
- **Travelworld Summer Open Weekend** TO BE CONFIRMED
Travelworld Motorhomes, Halesfield 14, Telford, Shropshire TF7 4QR
- **Hymer B-Class Dynamic Line Launch Event** 8 – 10 July 2016
- **The Western Motorhome Show** 12 – 14 August 2016
Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire WR13 6NW
- **Dusseldorf Caravan Salon** 27 August – 4 September 2016
Dusseldorf
- **The Motorhome Show Season Finale** 25 – 27 September 2016
The Lincolnshire Showground, Lincoln LN2 2NA
- **Model Year Open Weekend** 29 – 30 October 2016
- **Travelworld Autumn Open Weekend** TO BE CONFIRMED
Travelworld Motorhomes, Halesfield 14, Telford, Shropshire TF7 4QR
- **Niesmann + Bischoff Factory Open Weekend** 5 – 6 November 2016
Niesmann+Bischoff GmbH, Clou-Straße 1 / 56751 Polsch, Germany
- **The Motorhome and Caravan Show** 11 – 16 October 2017
NEC Birmingham B40 1NT

Midland's motorhome dealer makes large investment in facility and bespoke IT system



Shropshire based motorhome dealer Travelworld Motorhomes have completed a large investment into both their premises and infrastructure with the primary goal of improving their customers experience and staff working environment.

Much of the investment is centred on improvements within the service centre facility, which also include painting the entire 40,000sq/ft building floor within both the showroom and service centre. The service centre has benefitted from three high quality 2-post hydraulic ramps with the ability of lifting the heaviest European motorhomes and will serve both chassis and habitation work, plus an exclusive ramp for the fitting of Goldschmitt chassis accessory products that Travelworld represents solely in the UK and has grown to become an extensive part of the sales within the service centre.

There has also been large investment in software with Travelworld completing the finishing touches to their totally bespoke dealer management system which includes an industry first 'paperless' process for both the sales department and service centre with every member of staff being issued with tablets meaning sales orders, parts orders and work orders are processed electronically.

Ross Edwards, Travelworld's Managing Director,

explains, "We are extremely excited with these improvements and it illustrates our total commitment to improving our customer services and customer experience as well as having a more efficient and professional working environment.

"In regards to our dealer management system we couldn't find any software available in the industry that was specific to the motorhome industry or good enough for the size of our business, that wasn't created for the car industry. It gives us and our customers so many advantages and it was definitely worth the effort."

Ross Edwards alluded to the complexities involved in developing your own software system and explained that it involved blood, sweat and tears. "We worked incredibly closely with the developers and it definitely paid off however you need patience and determination as, with any software, it takes quite some time to iron out all of the bugs. We have been using the CRM side of the package in the business for over 12 months now and going live in the service centre means we have a totally integrated specialist motorhome dealer package.

"We are also giving very serious consideration to take this system to market and offer it to other motorhome and caravan dealers, even on the Continent there are very few credible systems on the shelf."



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New models launched in Stuttgart

Hymer leads the way with new models at the CMT show, including single bed and Mercedes models in the Van range

Following the launch of the Hymer Van 314, which won Compact Motorhome of the Year in the National Motorhome Awards 2016, Hymer has unveiled the Van 374, Van S 500 and Van S 520 models at the CMT Holiday Exhibition in Stuttgart.

The Hymer Van 374 is based on the Fiat Ducato with Al-Ko rear chassis, like the 314, but is longer at 5.99m. It has the same equipment specification, but offers

two rear single beds in place of the 314's transverse double (see layout diagram, above right). Each bed has a wardrobe underneath. There's also a garage at the back. Forward of the beds, the 374 is identical to the 314 model.

The 374's washroom features a cassette toilet and shower, while the kitchen unit has a two-burner gas hob and a compressor fridge (65 litres as standard, 85 litres optional). The lounge has a half-

dinette with two forward-facing travel seats and the two cab seats rotate to face them. The gross

weight is 3,500kg, providing a 920kg payload (a 3,850kg chassis is also available). With the 2.3-litre 130bhp Euro V engine and right-hand drive, prices start from £46,470.

The new Hymer Van S models are based on the Mercedes Sprinter 313 CDI and feature 2.2-litre 129bhp Euro VI engines (with 163bhp and 190bhp options). Standard equipment includes Crosswind and Hill Start Assist, ABS, ASR, EBV and ESP, electrically adjustable, heated wing mirrors, PUAL body construction with framed windows and a GRP lightweight floor with insulation. The kitchen has a two-burner hob and sink above a large drawer.

The Van S models have similar

layouts to their Fiat-based cousins, but are slightly longer. The Van S 500 (main photo above and exterior view right) is 5.65m long and has a transverse double bed at the rear, over a garage with a 350kg load capacity. There is access to the garage on both sides of the motorhome. Gross weight is 3,500kg but there's an option for a 4,200kg chassis with an increased garage load capability of 450kg. On the road pricing starts at £47,260. The Hymer Van S 520 (from £49,640) has twin single beds over a garage and is 6.36m long.

While the twin single drop-down beds over the cab have been seen before, it's the huge C-shaped rear



"Hymer originally invented the Hymer Van back in 2005 [on Ford Transit]. We now had the feeling that the demand for super-compact motorhomes was on the rise again – vehicles which include everything but are even better when it comes to weight, compact dimensions and agility – and, therefore, offer a perfect combination of quality and flexible use. And the sales figures prove us right – that's why we now launch a second layout in the Hymer Van range, the Hymer Van 374, plus two layouts on Mercedes chassis, the Van S 500 and the Van S 520. First models of the Van S range will be available in the UK from summer 2016."

Bernhard Kibler,
Managing Director, Hymer





lounge that's worthy of attention (see photo top right). The seating curves almost all the way around the central table and windows on all sides make it panoramic.

It faces onto a 32-inch, full HD, wall-mounted TV with built-in DVD player. There's an Oyster Vision III satellite system fitted as standard.

The kitchen features an L-shaped work surface with three-burner gas hob. The washing facilities are split between a toilet and washbasin area with a fixed radiator and a separate shower. UK prices have not been announced yet but expect a starting price (before options) in the region of £90k.

The SL Editions feature a cab with black grille and chrome profiles, while inside there's mother of pearl on the wall cabinet doors in the living area and on the drawer-front panels of the kitchen. There's a large illuminated mirror at the entrance door, soft-touch effect upholstery and the interior handles come in chrome and satin. The kitchen surface of the Kreos 4009 SL comes in a darker tone material that feels silky to the touch, compared to the lighter, resin material present in the 7009 SL.

The laminate material in the 4009 SL is scratch and fingerprint-proof, easy to clean and is also used on the table.

HYMER ML-I -OFF-ROAD VERSION NOW AVAILABLE

The Hymer ML-I has followed in the footsteps of the hugely successful ML-T 4X4, and is the first fully integrated motorhome in the industry under 3.5 tonnes and available with Mercedes-Benz four-wheel drive system.

Whether rough terrain, poor-quality road surfaces or winter weather – thanks to the new drive concept, extreme conditions are no longer an obstacle for the Hymer ML-I. The upgradable four-wheel drive system has managed to successfully combine the safety of a premium motorhome with the freedom of a four-wheel drive vehicle.

Hymer have also now announced that it will continue to expand its '4X4' off-road offerings into the Hymercar van conversion range with the new Mercedes-Benz 'Grand Canyon S'.



Travelworld Approved Touring Caravan & Motorhome Servicing Centre

The Approved Workshop Scheme is a joint enterprise between the NCC (National Caravan Council), The Caravan Club and The Camping and Caravanning Club. It is the benchmark for motorhome and touring caravan servicing in the United Kingdom.

You know it is important to look after your tourer or motorhome, but when you have work done you need to be sure your vehicle has been serviced by trained and experienced professionals. The solution is to use Travelworld which has been a fully Approved Workshop since 2011.

In order to be accepted onto the Approved Workshop scheme, the Travelworld workshop must pass an annual inspection which is performed by a team of independent assessors and we have to comply with the Scheme's rigorous standards. So with Travelworld you'll know that the right things are done, by the right people and to the highest standard.

Travelworld is a founding member of the NCC-backed Apprentice programme, which is a new initiative launched in 2014; previously there was not an industry standard qualification but with this new programme the industry set a benchmark standard. We committed to two apprentices in 2014 who each attend EMTEC Nottingham college for a week every three months over a three year period. Once their apprenticeship is complete, they will be fully qualified and fully certified caravan and motorhome technicians.

Working closely with the NCC via the Approved Workshop Scheme, Travelworld regularly hosts onsite technical training sessions for caravan and motorhome technicians. It commits to technicians receiving regular quality training and certification through industry leading bodies such as STGW (formerly AcOp) and CiTo, so you know your vehicle is in the hands of professionals at Travelworld.



Hymer launches all-new

Hymer, the German premium motorhome manufacturer, has launched the latest version of its iconic B-Class.

This is Hymer's best-selling range. Since the first B-Class model was launched 35 years ago, some 58,000 motorhomers have bought one.

Confusingly for us, it is actually an A-class coachbuilt. But, what isn't confusing is that this new B-Class has taken two years to develop and features new technologies and designs that make it worth the wait.

One of the key benchmarks for Hymer was to ensure all models are under 3.5 tonnes so they can all be driven on standard licences and still have ample – and, in some

cases, huge – payloads and still retain the luxuries that define a top-end A-class.

But it wasn't just weight that the designers focused on. The new B-Class is instantly recognisable as the latest, and most advanced, Hymer. Particularly distinctive is the new front with its full-LED headlights, which were designed in conjunction with automotive giant, Hella.

Other front end changes include a modified radiator grille (Euro VI engines need more air) and a larger windscreen.

Initially, there are two models available, which range in length from sub-6m to sub-7m. Two more models will be launched within weeks. All sit on the Euro VI Fiat

Ducato on an Al-Ko low-frame chassis with independent wheel suspension.

The highlight of the initial two-model range for British buyers is an all-new end kitchen layout (pictured below and left), which is not available in any other Hymer. This 5.99m-long B444 DL (DynamicLine) has a huge, L-shaped kitchen that will make even the most demanding chef happy.

While the front lounge has few surprises, the drop-down bed does as it is available as twin singles. This innovative touch means you can have a large double as normal or use two pull-out extensions to create twin longitudinal singles that allow

undisturbed sleep, even if your partner needs a night-time visit to the loo or gets up to make a brew.

Unsurprisingly, while the twin-single drop-down bed is an option, almost without exception, all British dealers have ordered 444s with this.

The 444 has a huge payload – 630kg, or almost a tonne on the heavier 3.85-tonne optional chassis – and an equally huge garage with an impressive payload of 350kg, which can be upgraded to 450kg.

British prices have yet to be confirmed, but it starts at just shy of €77,000 in Europe.

The other model is the four-berth B588 DL – a 6.99m-long and 2.22m-wide A-class available in



B-Class

3.5 or 4.5-tonne chassis (pictured below).

This has twin fixed single beds at the rear above the garage, which can be converted into a large double bed, and a drop-down above-cab double, which is also available with the twin-single set-up.

This slightly heavier model still has an impressive 510kg payload on the 3.5-tonne chassis and has an even larger garage, which can carry up to 450kg and can be accessed from massive exterior doors on either side as well as from the inside.

Again, UK prices have not yet been confirmed but European prices for the 588 start at just shy of €83,000.

Hymer has, of course, included all those comfort and technology touches that make living with an A-class so enjoyable. For example, all models include a new multimedia system that automatically activates relevant loudspeakers so one person can watch TV in the living area while another listens to music in the bedroom.

All models also come with a rear view camera that acts as a third mirror via a central dash screen and an additional reversing camera but, as an optional extra, you can have a service camera that allows the

driver to see, via the dash screen, when the waste service pipe is positioned over a drain.

At the flick of a button, waste water can then be emptied down

the drain. It's a neat touch and, while the camera is optional, the waste water drain switch is standard.





Carry on Capron

The longest motorhome production line in Europe? We visit the home of German Carado and Sunlight brands in Saxony

CAPRON might sound a bit too much like an incomplete cockerel, and one of its motorhome marques may share its name with the world's first packaged and branded soap, but this hasn't stopped a decade-long success story culminating in production of up to 5,500 vehicles a year and an impressive 10.2% market share in Europe's largest motorhome market.

So, who or what is Capron? It stands for CARavan PROduction Neustadt, the last word indicating the factory's home town in the former East Germany (or DDR), close to the Czech border.

It's here that a new joint venture was formed by Hymer and Dethleffs (both part of the giant Erwin Hymer Group) in 2005. Both wanted an entry-level

product and so Sunlight was born for Dethleffs and Carado for Hymer. The two brands offer the same range of vehicles – currently 10 low-profiles (five with drop-down bed options) and three overcabs. The only differences between the two line-ups are in external graphics, interior fabrics and furniture colouring (Sunlights have lighter wood). Even prices and options are the same.

But, it's been a story of steady growth for the two fledgling marques from Saxony. Over a decade ago this was a farm machinery factory employing 6,000 staff – in the days when everyone in the Eastern Bloc had a job. It reopened as a motorhome manufacturer with just 60 employees – all schooled by Dethleffs at Isny (280 miles to the southeast).

Now, though, Capron has 310 staff and is the largest employer in town, in an area that suffers from high unemployment and from which many headed west after reunification.

It is this aspect of being key to the local economy – as well as having a surprisingly relaxed production line pace – that allows Capron to produce vehicles of exceptional build quality, our German hosts opine. And it's no hollow PR-speak, more than one UK dealer on the tour told us that Sunlight motorhomes arrive blemish-free and go to satisfied customers who rarely return for snagging issues.

It's clear, too, that this factory isn't just big – a 230,000m² site with 25,000m² production halls –



The Highlights of Our Tour

- **Takt 1:** Chassis arrives (there are 500 Fiat cabs on site) and the seats come out, the rear chassis extension goes on and the leisure battery is fitted.
- **Takt 10:** From here on the vehicles are slowly and continuously pulled down the line by a chain. Staff move too, to different jobs on different 'takts', avoiding problems with boredom or illness.
- **Takt 12:** We note that there are no stores here. Everything arrives 'just in time'. There are maybe a couple of dozen fridges awaiting installation – this is all they have until the next delivery. Looking at similar numbers of Combi heaters, we are told that they are all the more powerful Combi 6, irrespective of the size of 'van they are going in.
- **Takt 16:** Water tanks are fitted – and filled. Having water in the system ensures there are no leaks.
- **Takt 20:** Side walls are added, arriving on the line on a crane that suspends them from the ceiling. Incidentally, the walls are made here but floors come in from Dethleffs.
- **Takt 22:** The vehicle drives onto a turntable and is rotated 90 degrees for the last 200m of the line. A little later drop-down bed systems are lowered in by crane (see photo). The metal frames for the beds are made on site by a third-party supplier.
- **Takt 28:** The roof goes on, complete with rooflights and even satellite TV dishes pre-fitted. There's still the feeling here, at every stage, that no-one is rushing, everyone has time to complete their job properly. Heck, there's even a massage room that employees can use twice a week! But we note that the structure of the motorhome bodies still uses wood in the frame – our

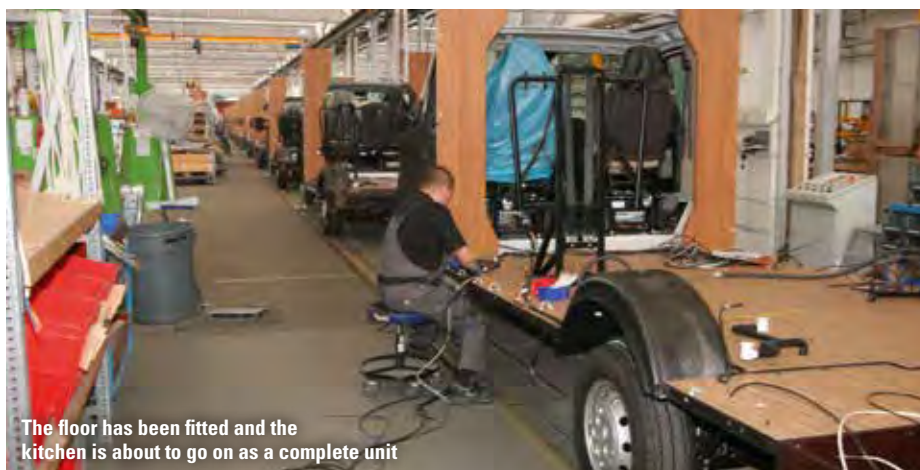


guide assures us that there are advantages to retaining wood and no problems at all "if you build them correctly".

- **Takt 31:** Rear bumper and windows go on, followed by the habitation door at the next takt. Now they look like motorhomes.
- **Takt 33:** Up the vehicles go on a ramp, for the last of the fitting underneath. When you see the crane, ramps, hoists, turntable etc here, you realise just how much investment it takes to build more coachbuilt motorhomes in this sort of volume.
- **Takt 35:** Gas and electric appliances are tested, then at Takt 37 it's bike racks and TVs.
- **Takt 38:** All the furniture is hoovered out and wiped clean. If you've ever seen new motorhomes with cupboards full of sawdust, you'll be impressed by this!
- **Takt 40:** The final quality check. From here 70% of production goes off to dealers throughout Europe, while the remaining 30% first visit another hall for corrective work, however minor.

but is amongst the most modern in Europe (the age of the actual building notwithstanding). It builds between 23 and 29 vehicles every day on a 450m-long production line in 40 stages – called takts – each taking 17-18 minutes (see above).

In many ways, of course, the systems are just like at most other motorhome makers, except that here a new motorhome is created in just a day-and-a-half and production volumes are increasing, so a second line is starting in April. In a decade, an empty factory has started a new life to build a fifth of Erwin Hymer Group motorhomes. And they've launched a particularly appealing 10 Years Edition of Sunlight's most popular models to celebrate.



The floor has been fitted and the kitchen is about to go on as a complete unit

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ROOF OR WALL MOUNTED



WALL MOUNTED AWNINGS

**BEST
SELLER**



PerfectWall PW 3500

- Electric - 12 volt motor with minimal energy consumption
- **No support legs**
- Integrated wind sensor
- Lengths 2.57 m up to 5 m



PerfectWall PW 1750

- Front rail with integrated manual front roller blind
- Aluminium end caps.
- Patented easy lock on support legs
- Optional 12 volt motor
- Lengths 3 m up to 4 m



PerfectWall PW 1500

- Classic wall awning
- Aluminium end caps.
- Patented easy lock on support legs
- Optional 12 volt motor
- Lengths 1.5 m up to 6 m



ROOF MOUNTED AWNINGS



PerfectRoof PR 4500

- Electric -12 volt motor with minimal energy consumption
- **No support legs**
- Integrated wind sensor
- Lengths 2.6 m up to 5 m



PerfectRoof PR 2500

- Light, compact
- Aluminium end caps
- Patented easy lock on support legs
- Optional 12 volt motor
- Lengths 3.5 m up to 6 m



AWNING FEATURES



Aluminium end caps



LED light - optional



Fully integrated 12v motor - optional



Patented heavy duty arm joint



Telescopic crank



Patented Easy Lock

AWNING FABRIC COLOURS

To find out the available colours and patterns, please refer to each awning model.



Grey Waves Blue Waves White Sand Horizon Grey Horizon Blue

**3 year
warranty**
when fitted by
TravelWorld

HOUSING COLOURS

To find out the available colours, please refer to each awning model.



White Silver Anthracite Champagne Opale

For further details please visit: www.dometic.co.uk

Dometic

A very early Hymermobil lines up alongside the ML-T and new ML-I outside the Erwin Hymer Museum



40 years on... a Mercedes

Hymer puts the emphasis on low weight and class-leading safety with its new ML-I range, which marks four decades of Mercedes-based A-class production

THE very first A-class Hymermobil – back in 1974 – was based on a Mercedes. It set the trend for today's top-end motorhomes with the cab completely integrated into the living area and the unique frontal look of an A-class.

In the '90s, the relationship blossomed further with the launch of the S-Class, based on the first-generation Sprinter chassis, while StarLine models continue to wear the famous three-pointed star to this day.

Now, following on from last year's launch of the low-profile ML-T, comes a sister model in A-class form. The new ML-I makes its debut at the Stuttgart show this month and will appear in the UK soon after.

One of the first examples will also be featuring on long-term test in our magazine.

Two models, the ML-I 560 and 580, feature a transverse rear double and fixed single beds respectively, each in a manageable length of 6.99m.

Crucially, though, both can be ordered on 3.5-tonne chassis (although upgrades to 3,880kg and 4,200kg are available).

As Bernhard Kibler, Head of Hymer Motorhomes, said: "We have achieved a balancing act by building a fully integrated [A-class] motorhome on a Mercedes Sprinter base with rear-wheel drive in the 3.5-tonne category."

Engines offer 129, 163 or 190bhp and the seven-speed torque-converter automatic transmission is an option, but it is the ML-I's safety kit that marks it out as something special.

As well as adaptive ESP and Safety Sports Suspension, the new Hymer comes with Crosswind Assist to counteract the effects of gusting – and possibly dangerous – side winds without the driver intervening.

The ML-I also features Hymer's strong and well-winterised PUAL construction, plus heated and insulated water tanks.

In the cab, Aguti height/tilt-adjustable captain's chairs are fitted, while beds get multi-zone cold foam mattresses. A multimedia pack is an option, as is a 'UK kitchen' with full domestic-style slot-in cooker.

The ML-I also arrives just as Pilote and Rapido have dropped their Mercedes-based models for the 2015 season, leaving it ready to clean up in the A-class sector.





£48,320

FOR

- Huge payload
- Dinky and delightful
- Hymer quality in a tiny package
- Do you really need anything bigger?



Keep the tap running while you wash



Internal access to the garage

Hymer Van 314 S



PITY you can't copyright certain names – like Van. Hymer introduced us to the concept back in 2005. A decade later, it's back and things have changed. The 314 SL, first of a new range (with a 6m single bed layout and Mercedes versions coming), is now based on a Fiat Ducato cab with Al-Ko chassis (the originals were Ford-based).

Short? This is positively stubby, making the others here suddenly seem excessive. The 314 is only 5.45m long. It's also just 2.22m wide. And it's light, too, barely touching the 2.5-tonne mark (with a correspondingly massive payload). Yet it

features exactly the same PUAL bodywork construction as all of its bigger stablemates – it was introduced in 1978, decades before other manufacturers started getting on to the timber-free bandwagon.

At over half-a-metre shorter than the others here (including the van conversions), it will, of course, be a lot easier to park. Possibly more critical is the wheels really are at each corner, which suggests the 314 will be easier and more rewarding to pilot than the other coachbuilds. As a Hymer product, you can also expect it to be free of the kinds of rattles that blight so many

motorhomes, even today. Note, also, the Fiat base comes with LED daytime running lights, Traction Plus and Hill Holder and more, as per all current Hymer products.

In typical German style, that £42k starting price might be a bit of an eye-catcher but it needs plenty of adding to if you want to bring the specification up to at least a level of acceptability. Hence, fitted here is a whole list of extras (as detailed in the panel opposite), the main one being the ComfortLine Pack that covers cab air-conditioning, cruise control, painted front bumper, window with flyscreen and blind to the habitation door,

L – when 6m is just too long



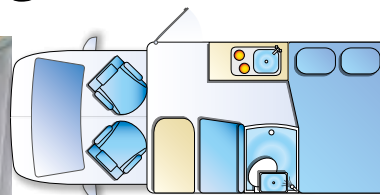
There's also the option of a lower bed than shown here



Kitchen is small but then so is the Hymer Van



Lounge/diner is much better than in van-based rivals



FACT FILE

BASED ON Fiat Ducato Al-Ko

PRICES FROM £42,250

PRICE AS TESTED £48,320

EXTRAS FITTED ComfortLine Pack (£2,640), TV bracket (£170), 16in wheels (£140), carpet (£300), underfloor storage (£420), second bedroom window (£220), cab blinds (£320), duckboard (£110), third bed (£220), Cosy Pack (£150), Combi 6EH (£420), stereo upgrade (£220), Light Pack (£370), rear garage hatch (£370)

TYPE APPROVAL European Whole Vehicle

DIMENSIONS 5.45m L, 2.22m W, 2.77m H

BERTHS 2 (optional 3)

TRAVEL SEATS 4

BED SIZES Rear 2.00m x 1.45m/1.30m

MAXIMUM WEIGHT 3,500kg

PAYLOAD 1,005kg

ENGINE 2.3-litre, 130bhp

ALSO AVAILABLE

There's nothing else like the Hymer Van and already the range is being extended to include the 374 (six metres long, single beds at the rear, but otherwise identical to the 314). Mercedes-based Van S 500 and Van S 520 are coming, too. There are also sub-6m models in the HymerCar van conversion range.

Which motorhome says ★★★★★

The Hymer Van is back – and it's smaller than ever! OK, it's a little bit cosy, but you have to bear in mind that its 5.45m length is some half-a-metre less than all the others here.

overcab sunroof, larger (85-litre) compressor fridge, second 95Ah leisure battery and 18-amp charger upgrade, etc. You've guessed, it's nigh on essential, even if it does bump up the price by a chunky £2,640.

Crucially, ComfortLine also includes the third and fourth travel seats, with three-point belts.

OK, it's all a bit of a squeeze here, but that's relative – compared to a (same length) medium-wheelbase van conversion (the Van's more natural rival), it's roomier and, of course, far better insulated.

It's the washroom that is another a highlight,

too. Other designers really should take note of what can be achieved in such a small space, albeit there was one feature we didn't like: the basin literally doesn't hold water... instead, it simply acts as a conduit straight to the waste tank, which means you need to keep the tap running for the duration of your ablutions.

The 314 sleeps two, although there is the option of a 1.40m by 0.72m bed in the lounge. The standard transverse double is set over a garage which, on this example, has the bonus of three-way access – indeed, four if you include internally via the wardrobe. A lower bed version

is also available, with correspondingly reduced garage space.

We threw this one in as a bit of a wild card, thinking: if you want to go as short as 6m, why not take another step and have a 5.45m coachbuilt? This is certainly one to sway you away from a van conversion, or at least make you think again. The shortest vehicle here, but far from the least appealing – it's the Compact Motorhome of the Year 2016, after all. Like all imports this season, it's benefiting from the strength of the pound against the euro. Hymer's build qualities haven't been compromised, either.

Showroom



Service Centre



The best holiday planners are German engineers.

Clever ideas as standard: With HYMER Nova, you can enjoy the same comforts on the road as at home. Thanks to a centrally installed technical equipment unit and track system, the innovative raum⁺system offers you genuine benefits in extra freedom of movement and comfort. Look forward to 100% free and perfectly accessible storage spaces, damage-proof installation, a generous outside flap under the beds, 1.98m headroom, the tried and tested PUAL body shell for stability and absolutely reliable winter-proofing, the double glazed PU-framed windows with inner frame and much more. Further information is available from your HYMER dealer or at www.hymer.com



HYMER

Who is...Hymer

Hymer is synonymous with quality motorhomes. But, what is it about this manufacturer that makes it such a powerful and popular motorhome brand?

HYMER has a heritage that stretches back to the start of European leisure vehicle manufacturing. If you have even just a passing interest in this hobby's development, visit the Erwin Hymer Museum in Bad Waldsee, Germany. Don't be fooled, the museum isn't all about Hymer, it's about the fascinating birth and development of leisure vehicles – caravans and motorhomes – across Europe. But, of course, what it also reveals is just how integral Hymer was – and still is – in European leisure vehicle production.

Hymer has built its name based on some great foundations, including a focus on safety and build quality. These have been important to the company since the days of Erwin Hymer and continue to be, as Bernhard Kibler, Hymer's Managing Director, explained: "We focus on high quality, comfort and safety, light weight and customer service," he says. "These are very important for us. The weakness of our brand is that all these issues make it longer to develop new motorhomes."

But, as Andrea Kibler, Hymer's Sales Manager for the UK, points out, while it takes longer to launch new models, when it does it assures customers that they have been well tested and are ready for market. "It means that all our vehicles are perfectly tested so that when they come onto the market we don't test them on our customers," she says. "One of the main strengths of Hymer is that we listen to our customers."

Despite Hymer's recent history in the UK, when difficulties with its import agent meant it had to reorganise its dealer network, it is fair to say when it did re-establish itself here, it brought with it a fantastic range and a steely determination to recapture its lost market share.

As Andrea explained, "We have been out of the market for a couple of years, but now we are slowly coming back, getting back on track and getting a good position again."

This means adding at least another two dealers to its network to bring its outlets here to 10, spread throughout the country – it is currently looking for dealers in the northwest and the south midlands.

Of course, as with other European manufacturers, Hymer is attracted to the UK because we are one of the few European countries showing

sustained demand for new motorhomes. And, with the exchange rate in the European manufacturers' favour, they know their motorhomes are currently attractive when priced in sterling. "It was one of the few markets that grew last year, up to 8,700 motorhomes, so of course it's of interest to us," says Andrea.

Last year, Hymer sold some 300 models in the UK. Its target for 2016 is 350 – a target it smashed before the start of the year. The only thing stopping it selling more models is that it can't build any more as the factory in Bad Waldsee is already at full capacity and all 2016 models across Europe have already been sold.

Hymer knows that being held back by production issues means it's missing sales. "We're trying to increase production but that takes time," says Andrea, explaining that discussions with the workers' union are progressing. "The hope is that in February we can increase production and that should mean we have more models to sell – hopefully we can build 50 to 100 more 2016 models to sell, but that is all over Europe."

Currently, Hymer has 20 orders from the UK that are listed to be 2016 models but could well end up being 2017 ones. "If we can squeeze some 2016 models in, then we will speak to the customers and ask if they want them or if they'd prefer 2017 models."

FOR BRITISH BUYERS

It's not surprising then that Hymer is gearing more of its motorhomes to suit British tastes. "A lot of the problems we had in the past were related to the importer ... we found we didn't have direct contact with the dealers or the customers," explains Andrea. "Now we come to shows, and we listen to the customers in the UK and the dealers and this gives us a better understanding of the market and how it reacts to our products."

As a result, Hymer is creating more UK specific motorhomes. "We are developing new models and new layouts especially for the UK, which match exactly the needs of the UK customers," she confirms, although she also points out that these will not be available until the new 2017 season models are launched.

However, as Hymer's MD points out, it is getting easier to create these 'UK-specific' models as tastes across Europe converge. "We also



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feel in the UK that the design trends are moving closer together with Europe," he says.

The other advantage continental manufacturers have when exporting to the UK is the exchange rate, which has been in their favour for the past few years. Hymer has sat on the fence in relation to this and has opted to both drop prices – marginally – and add extra equipment at no cost to the buyer. "We have done both, otherwise it would be a problem for the customers who have already bought one last year or those who have one on order," explains Andrea. "So, we took the decision to add more equipment together with our dealers."

But, what happens when the exchange rate changes against the continental imports? "We hope that by then we will have special layouts and everything else ready for the UK so we can convince the customers that a Hymer is still worth buying even if it is a little more expensive ... but, hopefully, the exchange rate will not change too quickly!"

2017 MODELS

With all its 2016 models sold, attention is turning to 2017. There will be a couple of mid-season launches but, as with all manufacturers, 2017 means the arrival of Euro VI engines. "We will be bringing in Euro VI as soon as we get the chassis from Fiat – we suppose June or July," confirms Andrea. "We do not know yet whether they will be changing the cab, but all of our 2017 models will be Euro VI."

Fiat is, as ever, keeping what it is doing with Euro VI close to its chest, but rumours suggest Fiat may opt for a different – and lighter – technology than its rivals.



Andrea Kibler, Hymer's UK Sales Manager, Bernhard Kibler, Head of Hymer's Motorhome Division

All will be revealed towards the end of the summer, as will Hymer's new range of 2017 models, which will include an all-new S-Class.

"This [the S-Class] has been off the market for three years while we have been developing this new one together with group customers," explains Andrea. Ten Hymer customers were selected a couple of years ago to work with us on designing this new model.

"So, they have helped design this new S-Class together with our technicians," she explains. "It has been a customer-led project."

The new S-Class range will be based on a Mercedes chassis and will come with new layouts. "We were always known for our S-Class, so this will be the top end of the Hymer."

A MERCEDES CAMPERVAN

Hymer confirmed to MMM that it's dropped Volkswagen as one of its base vehicle suppliers. This means no more VW Cape Town campervans. In fact, all HymerCars – the marque for Hymer campervans – are now based on Fiats. The reason, explains Andrea, was simple: "Compared to the VW California, we were too expensive...it had nothing to do with the VW emissions scandal; this decision was taken far before then."

But, while it's dropped VW, Hymer is expected to use Mercedes, which already supplies it with motorhome base vehicles, to supply it with vans for conversion into campervans. While details are still embargoed, we expect this new Mercedes HymerCar to be launched before the summer.

The lighter, smaller award winner

Hymer, as with all manufacturers, is looking at how to add more equipment to its motorhomes without adding more weight. "We need to get lighter, shorter, smaller," says Andrea. "But, with as much equipment as possible."

And, of course, it is a lightweight and very, very compact Hymer that won the 2016 Compact Motorhome of the Year award. The Hymer Van 314 is a unique coachbuilt that's a similar length to an estate car at just 5.45m

and, at 3.5 tonnes, comes with a massive 1,000kg payload.



"It is unique; you get everything you need in a motorhome that is just 5.45m long – you can park it anywhere and you can use it as a second car, it is so agile," says Andrea. "You can use it in cities as it is so easy to park. And it still has a pretty huge garage with an optional third door from the rear so you can through-load, which is good for things like skis or long items. This is a van conversion as a motorhome so you get better insulation and all the benefits of a coachbuilt but in the size of a panel van."

But, sometimes, especially when a customer orders lots of accessories on top of a model that already has a limited payload, it can lead to motorhomes with low or even zero payload. Hymer tries to ensure this doesn't happen. "When a customer orders a vehicle, we have all the weights of the options and of the chassis in our price lists, so the customer and dealer will know straight away what the vehicle will weigh before ordering," explains Andrea. "If we see that a vehicle doesn't have any payload left, our system will alert us and report that back to the dealer." It's then the dealer's job to discuss with the customer what they want to do. "If there is a problem with the weight then we can try to uprate it, probably with a Goldschmitt system. But, we would advise them to go back to their dealer to resolve the problem."

Hymer

ML-I 620

We loved the ML-I 580 last year, but is the longer 620 an even better proposition?

AT A GLANCE • PRICE FROM £67,110 • BERTHS 4 • TRAVEL SEATS 4

ON the face of it, just over £67,000 for a Mercedes-based Hymer A-class looks rather good value for money. Spend another ten grand (seriously) to bring it up to what most folk will consider an acceptable specification and, well, yes, it's still an attractive proposition.

Slotting in at the top of the five-model ML-I range, the single bed 620 – along with the island bed 630 alternative – is the longest and heaviest of the batch. In fact, it's worth comparing with the sub-7m 580 variant that was our long-term test vehicle last year (and much-loved it was, too). Could this go one better? It's already been highly commended in its class in the 2016 National Motorhome Awards.

There's certainly plenty of praise on the base vehicle front. Hymer orders its latest Sprinters with Crosswind Assist – so, at speeds over 80km/h (50mph) there's even automatic braking if sensors are triggered. Also standard are a host of acronyms: HAS (hill-start assist), ABS (anti-lock braking system) with EBD (electronic brakeforce distribution) and BAS (brake assist system) and Adaptive ESP (controlling the vehicle in the event of a skid) –

safety credentials that, alone, put it in a different league to other motorhome chassis.

Also on this example is the super-smooth 7G-Tronic automatic transmission option, along with the more powerful 163bhp engine – both upgrades have *What Motorhome's* full seal of approval. Standard is the 129bhp engine but – at this level – the £700 premium that takes you up to the 316 CDI chassis and 163bhp engine seems a snip. You might even be tempted to go further still with the 190bhp V6 diesel.

It's a rather standard Hymer look on the outside – with all-white bodywork (apart from the graphics), snub front end, coach-style mirrors, flush-fitting windows, mudflaps all round and – at the front – the Hymer name and Mercedes logo competing with each other for which gets the higher billing.

It's a pretty bluff back end, too, with high-level bike rack fittings and a cut-out in the lower skirting (presumably for a towbar fitting). Large doors each side make access to a generous garage space particularly easy. Also in here are the gas locker, some shelving, a heater outlet, and, in this example, a couple of additional mains

Words & pictures
Nick Harding





Two-way access, 121cm door height



Three-pointed star means everything



Compact lounge is very comfortable



Kitchen really only lacks worktop

FOR

- Blend of Merc and Hymer quality
- Choice of comfortable beds
- Base vehicle safety features
- Residual values
- Extensive choice of options
- Slimline width





Single beds promise supreme comfort. Pity you can't sit upright in them for breakfast in bed



Toilet room is well appointed

sockets. It's an impressive 350kg load limit in here, although it can be upgraded to 450kg.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the vehicle, the cab boasts firm Aguti Ergoflex captain's style swivel seats with top-quality upholstery. There are pleated blinds for the windscreen and side windows – no rattles, guaranteed! – and, just to remind you this is an import, the only door is on the passenger's side, with electric window, while a sliding window suffices on the driver's side.

A series of blank switches on the dashboard only serves to show you that there are plenty of Mercedes options to be had, should you wish. It's the Comfort Package option that adds the cab air-conditioning, cruise control, flyscreen for the habitation door – and, again, there's no denying they're all pretty much essential.

The 620's lounge is cosy rather than capacious, and that's with the L-shaped seating option that most folk will probably want. As a travel seat, the rear bench has a sculpted backrest, which adds to the comfort.

The dining table is on a fixed pedestal but it swings though 360 degrees as well as having fore, aft and height adjustment. Its size, though, makes it most suited to two folk for full meals. But it doesn't dominate as some larger tables do.

Overhead, the drop-down bed (Hymer can take due credit for pioneering this design in Europe, some 40 years back) and its generous width is a direct result of



Separate shower cubicle is just about large enough

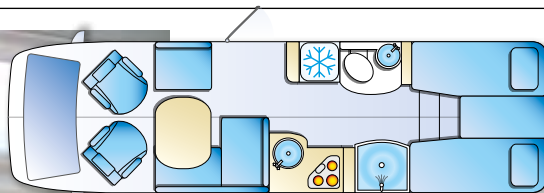
that upright front end mentioned earlier. The flat roof above is another positive, meaning the same headroom for both sleepers.

Hymer's hallmark wind-up sunroof is over the lounge. Underfoot, the floor is flat from the cab all the way through to the washroom facilities. En route, you'll find a slightly L-shaped kitchen with three-ring hob as standard, a circular sink served by a metal lever tap and space enough for the (optional) Thetford Duplex oven/grill (the sort of domestic-style cooker usually reserved for big British 'vans).

What the kitchen does lack is worktop, unless you count the loose cover for the sink, which also has a chopping board to its underside. The upside is a really good amount of storage – all with a gloss-white finish that should be easy to wipe clean.

Tambour doors are great space-savers for both the toilet room (offside) and shower cubicle (nearside). Both have a smooth interior finish, so water splashes simply run off. The rest of the shower is plastic-lined. There's a riser bar for the showerhead and corner shelving for shampoo bottles and more. But standing room is slightly limited, at 1.88m, once you've removed the (optional) wooden duckboard.

Reassuringly expensive? A cliché, maybe, but it's most apt when it comes to a Hymer A-class. Especially one as good as this.



FACT FILE

PRICE FROM £67,110

PRICE AS TESTED £76,816

EXTRAS FITTED 163bhp engine upgrade (£700), automatic transmission (£1,960), Comfort Pack (£2,640), export fee (£66), Comfort L-shaped rear seating (£370), Samara carpets (£300), shower duckboard (£110), ambient lighting (£370), pre-wiring kit (£220), additional cushions (£300), 16in alloy wheels (£750), oven (£510), foglights (£220), Truma Combi 6EH upgrade (£400), roof rack and ladder (£490), additional mains sockets (£300)

TYPE APPROVAL European Whole Vehicle

BERTHS 4

TRAVEL SEATS (INC DRIVER) 4

DIMENSIONS 7.80m L, 2.22m W, 2.90m H

INTERIOR HEIGHT 1.98m

MAXIMUM WEIGHT 4,200kg

PAYLOAD From 930kg (excluding options)

BEDS Overcab 1.88m x 1.50m, singles 1.97m x 0.80m and 2.00m x 0.80m

FRESH WATER 120 litres (inboard, heated)

WASTE WATER 100 litres (inboard, heated)

GAS 2 x 6kg

LEISURE BATTERY 95Ah

MAINS SOCKETS 6

BASE VEHICLE

MERCEDES SPRINTER 316 CDI

ENGINE 2.1-litre, Euro VI, 163bhp, rear-wheel drive, seven-speed automatic (as tested)

COOKING/HEATING

COOKING Three-burner hob, combined oven/grill

FRIDGE Thetford Smart-Tower, 142 litres, automatic energy selection

HEATING/BOILER Truma Combi 6E gas/mains blown-air (as tested)

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HYMERCAR

Going for Goldschmitt



Take one of the most impressive A-class motorhomes on the market, load it with options and add Goldschmitt full air suspension. A recipe for perfection?

AT A GLANCE • PRICE FROM £94,849 • BERTHS 4 • TRAVEL SEATS 4

OK, let's get the difficult bit over with first, for there most definitely is an elephant in the room here: the cost of the many optional extras. The sub-£100k starting price above might sound relatively affordable in the world of big tag-axle A-classes. But the reality is that the motorhome before you here is almost 60% more expensive, at £150k. That's what happens when you enter the rarefied world of the Liner class.

Of course, not all the extras seen here are essential. Or expensive. You might think that a heated windscreen is a relative snip at £521, or an external gas point for your barbecue is pennies at £155. And you could easily decide to go without alloy wheels (£1,840), the full Champagne metallic

bodywork (£4,309), or the Lamborghini orange highlights on the skirts and driving mirrors (£420).

Not that all the extra cost is avoidable. You'll certainly want the 3-litre engine (£3,469), Alde heating (£2,076), additional garage door (£408), waste water drain hose (£152) and the second leisure battery (£231) – our test 'van had three habitation batteries in total! And the carpets (£600), electric awning (£2,004), cream leather with matching cushions (£2,504), 70A charger and 1,600W inverter (£1,933), and remote central locking for the habitation and garage doors (£662) all count as 'nice to have'.

Then there are the inevitable packs – Chassis (automatic air-con, cruise control and comfort front

springs – £1,840), Comfort (lounge skylight, cab blinds, Froli bed springs and Tec-Tower with oven – £1,672), Liner (heated, electric and colour-coded cab mirrors, electric windscreen roller blind, double-glazed cab windows, SKA cab seats, microfibre ceiling trim, one-handle opening windows – £2,513), Clou Line (various external cosmetic touches, such as chromed light surrounds – £1,412) and Multi-media (radio with four high-end speakers, subwoofer, roof aerial, sat-nav, DAB+, Bluetooth, reversing camera, 22in LED TV, Oyster satellite system – £4,782).

And that's before we get to perhaps the most interesting feature of all – the Goldschmitt ADC full air suspension – at £8,220 (including three-year warranty).



Words & pictures
Peter Vaughan



Buttoned 'Cloud' cream leather trim is just one of many, many options

COMPLETELY 'SCHMITTEN

Next to the driver, on a curly lead, is a touchscreen display not dissimilar to a smartphone. But while the latest iPhone leaves me disinterested (it's just a phone!), this bit of kit controls some very exciting additions to your motorhoming life. Firstly, the prodding of a red icon portraying a leaning motorhome will automatically level the vehicle on site. This is done by inflating or deflating the suspension's airbags, so it cannot cope with the same sort of angles as Goldschmitt's jack system (which can lift a wheel clean off the road), but on a typical campsite pitch it will suffice to keep you flat.

If your chosen campsite is of the rally field variety, you can select another icon and raise the

vehicle by an extra 100mm for more ground clearance on your way to your pitch, while Goldschmitt's air suspension also allows you to lower the vehicle slightly on site (great for loading the garage) or for blasting down the *autobahn*.

But, before you even leave home, perhaps its most important – and most novel – feature is indicated by an icon depicting an axle. Press this and, in a few seconds, the vehicle is weighed and the display will give you front and rear axle weights. With a full fresh water tank but lightly laden for a weekend away, it gave me figures of 2,280kg for the front axle and 1,666kg for the rears. That's close to the limit up front (time to put some weight in the garage to even things up, or consider an upgrade,

which is just a paper exercise), but leaving a tonne-and-a-half of payload overall on this 5,500kg chassis (a new option: 5 tonnes remains standard).

WEIGHT A MINUTE

So what's it like to drive a motorhome that's 8.76m long, has three axles and has a mass in running order that's double the weight of a BMW 7 Series? Well, to experienced motorhomers, there's a lot that's familiar, because the underpinnings are Fiat Ducato. Here, though, we have the ultimate 3-litre power unit, the Comfort-Matic gearbox and an Al-Ko chassis – as well as the Goldschmitt air suspension.

The cab environment has the usual Fiat fascia, but here it's embedded in the much larger surroundings



Even with an extended kitchen, the lounge is still OK for a family of four



WHERE CAN I BUY AN ARTO?

Travelworld in Telford is the sole UK representative for Niesmann + Bischoff, which it sells in a large indoor showroom that has been recently redecorated. At the time of collecting this test vehicle, the company had seven other new N+B models in stock, so you can see a variety of layouts, spec and décor. Travelworld's on-site workshop has also just been upgraded to include three servicing ramps and the company has two brand-new Fiat courtesy cars.



Goldschmitt is also exclusive to Travelworld in the UK. Not only does this Hymer group company offer full air suspension systems (which can be retro-fitted) but also levelling jacks, alloy wheels and replacement front springs for Fiat-based motorhomes (to cure the nose-down stance and improve handling).

of an A-class and Niesmann has done an exceptional job of marrying its design with the Ducato's. In fact, the fit and finish, as well as the feel, of the Arto elements is vastly superior to the original base vehicle plastics. Before you even set off, this seems like a wholly different beast, with its panoramic windscreen, bus-type twin-lens mirrors and SKA captain's chairs. Forward visibility is superb. When you need to go backwards, a camera pops out from under the N+B 'Polch Lily' badge as soon as you select reverse (very James Bond!). The image on the Zenec unit (also providing radio and sat-nav) could not be clearer.

The SKA seats have a massive variety of adjustment. I particularly liked the variable squab length and the fact that you can sit lower than in the original Fiat cab. If there's a criticism, it's that they're a little flat, probably better suited to a broader frame than mine. Handbrake access isn't great, either.

What I couldn't fault was the refinement at cruising speeds. Not only is there very little noise from the habitation area, but engine noise is also much better suppressed than in most motorhomes. It's amazing how much more relaxing it is to drive in a quieter vehicle.

And this is a relaxing motorhome to pilot. The 3-litre

engine provides adequate acceleration and easy 70mph cruising (though, in most countries, the UK included, the law will prescribe a lower maximum for vehicles of this weight), and the Comfort-Matic gearbox (though it can be caught napping when you want it to change down and give you max oomph) leaves the driver to concentrate on pointing this big bus in the right direction. But the single most impressive aspect is the after-market one. The Goldschmitt suspension completely transforms the ride and handling. There's minimal lean, as we've come to expect of the Fiat/Al-Ko combination, but here there is none of the harshness, either. The ride quality is more Merc-like, more supple, without losing the Ducato's famed surefootedness and driver appeal. A vehicle this big has no right to drive this well!

WORK OF ARTO

Niesmann's new exterior design arrived in 2013, first on Arto, then a year later on Flair. Its success has been such that in three years the company's output – all top-flight A-classes, remember – has risen from 340 to 530 units per season. And that is still nowhere near meeting demand as the company jealously guards its



The headboard panels have real grass in them



A handy shoe locker



You can easily sit up in this bed



The nearside external drawer

reputation for quality.

Despite that envious position, there has been some further development of the range. The 88 F arrived in 2015, bringing with it a longer-than-usual kitchen. However, with the 88 E single bed model proving to be a best-seller right across Europe, it is no surprise that this 88 EK should follow for 2016, combining twin beds with the bigger (35cm longer) galley.

The external design, however, remains uniquely Niesmann + Bischoff. It is modern, automotive and I can't think of another A-class that would attract so much attention on the road. Other A-class motorhomes look conservative, or dated, in comparison, but the beauty is in the build too. The whole roof is safe to walk on, there's no wood in the construction, the skirts are aluminium, the cab side windows are double-glazed, the 290mm double floor houses both water tanks and all three leisure batteries, roof channels duct rain water away to prevent marking of the side panels, and the design of the front panel prevents pooling of water on the roof. If you like bling, you'll love the LED light that runs the full length of the awning – you won't return to the wrong 'van at night!

What you don't get is lots of external hatches into the

double floor – you'll have to go to the next range up, Flair, for that – but there is a drawer on the nearside that would be perfect for a mains lead, water hose and the like. And the garage is huge! The full width of the motorhome, with no intrusions, it measures 1.20m wide at floor level and has 1.25m headroom, as well as high and low-level tie-downs. Its flooring looks heavy-duty and practical but the second loading door is (disappointingly) not full sized.

WORLD OF LEATHER

The lounge pays the price for the EK layout's larger kitchen but, for a couple on extended tour (the most likely scenario) or even a family of four (as tested), it is still more than generous. The design holds no surprises: it's an L-settee on the nearside and a double inward-facing settee opposite, but the execution is first-class. And very bespoke.

There are four choices of base and cab seat cushions – leather or textile, either in cream or dark grey – then an extensive range of backrest cushions (12 options in terms of fabric, two cushion styles – buttoned Cloud or more contemporary Kiss). With cream locker doors or wood to choose, too, it's no wonder that N+B talks

QUALITY COUNTS ★★★★★

It's rare for a test vehicle to arrive at *What Motorhome* without a single blemish or fault but we really could find nothing to criticise here. Perhaps that's only to be expected on a vehicle costing roughly the same as two Kon-tikis, but Niesmann + Bischoff's experience (dating back to the original Clou in 1981 and the first Liner model two years later) really does show through. The furniture all feels built to last, the bodywork seems as well-made as it is stylish and details like the sturdy toilet door hinges and GRP shower tray shout quality. The whole vehicle feels solid and rattle-free on the road, too.

FOR

- Bold external styling
- Huge range of options and personalisation
- Generous garage, good payload
- Superb sleeping comfort
- Domestic-quality bathroom
- Build quality
- Fabulous leather upholstery





The huge garage is 1.20m wide and 1.25m high



Goldschmitt control looks like an iPhone, but it's more useful!



The kitchen gets additional worktop in this new layout, as well as generous drawers

WHAT'S NEW?

The Arto range went into the 2016 season with relatively minor changes and three new floorplans, including the 88 EK seen here (88 signifies the longest Arto body). Also new were the 72 L (rear transverse bed, large lounge, 7.23m) and the 79 F (rear island bed, 7.92m).

Other changes mostly concern optional features, such as the Cloud buttoned backrests, dimmable remote-controlled awning lights, a lower bed for island bed layouts, a slimmer satellite dish, mineral worktops in the kitchen and bathroom, a waste hose with storage tube, 120-litre marine toilet and 5.5-tonne chassis upgrade.

THANKS TO

Stanford Hall, near Lutterworth, Leicestershire, where we photographed the Arto. The hall and gardens are open to the public at certain times of year and there is a 123-pitch campsite adjacent – see stanfordhallcaravanpark.co.uk. The site is close to the M1/M6 junction has pitches that can accommodate the largest of RVs.

about over 500 possibilities. At least you won't see another 'van just like yours. And you can even order a second set of backrest cushions, maybe for summer/winter or for when you get bored.

The Temptation Cloud leather here is as beautifully stitched as you'd expect at the price and the hide extends to the seat bases (but not right to the floor where it might get kicked). The seat bases also hide a generous amount of storage, with the offside settee easily accessible by the doorway – perfect for shoes and boots, though there's also a shoe rack for two more pairs opposite. That's at the base of a wall which houses the control panels (hidden behind a flap, so as not to disturb at night) and the Caratec TV at an ideal viewing height (when we eventually figured out how to retune it and set up the satellite system). The green shale panelling here (and around the washbasin) is another (£412) option.

For dining, the permanent table seems ideally sized for two people and it slides/twists in every possible direction. When more people need to be catered for, simply pull the two halves of the tabletop apart and a centre leaf pops up in the middle to create a family-sized dining table. Then, after dinner, the cab chairs

spin right round so you can put your feet up on the adjacent settees. The head restraints for rear passengers are also removable (and the seatbelt tower retracts) to ensure no visual separation between lounge and kitchen – even the vital splashguard is glass.

EXTRA, EXTRA

The extra worktop in this galley is most welcome and the Corian-style mineral surface (a new option at £1,076) befits a vehicle of this class. The integral drainer, the locking handle for the whole suite of generous drawers, the quality of finish, the plentiful storage, the N+B logo on the tap, the twin waste bins – all speak of careful design and build. Only the Dometic three-burner hob looks a bit ordinary in these surroundings.

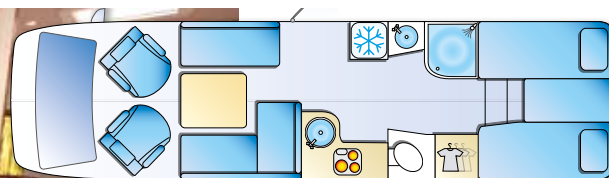
Opposite, the oft-seen Tec-Tower offers 190 litres of cooled and frozen capacity and not only is it an automatic energy selection model, but an HPC high-performance version, too. Above it sits an oven (no grill) at a lofty 1.53m above the floor. Importer, Travelworld, offers an alternative with more UK-appeal: a smaller fridge with consequently lower oven above, and a microwave above that.



The washroom is better than you might expect in many a hotel...



...but the Jabsco toilet is too noisy to flush at night



FACT FILE

PRICE FROM £94,849

PRICE AS TESTED £151,097

EXTRAS FITTED Chassis Pack (£1,840), right-hand drive (£2,000), 3-litre engine (£3,469), alloys (£1,840), Liner Pack (£2,513), Comfort Pack (£1,672), Champagne bodywork (£4,309), Clou Line Pack (£1,412), Alde heating (£2,076), LED lights (£1,418), 5.5m electric awning (£2,004), leather upholstery and cushions (£2,504), Multi-media Package (£4,782), Combi 70A charger with 1,600W inverter (£1,933), Goldschmitt full ADC air suspension (£8,220), plus many more!

TYPE APPROVAL European Whole Vehicle

BERTHS 4

TRAVEL SEATS (INC DRIVER) 4

DIMENSIONS 8.76m L, 2.32m W, 3.00m H (excluding satellite dish)

INTERIOR HEIGHT Lounge/kitchen 1.96m, bathroom 1.90m

MAXIMUM WEIGHT 5,000kg standard model, 5,500kg as tested

PAYLOAD 850kg (standard model)

BEDS Rear singles 1.99m x 0.77m, drop-down bed 1.87m x 1.30m

FRESH WATER 200 litres (inboard, in double floor)

WASTE WATER 150 litres (inboard, in double floor), plus optional 120-litre toilet tank on test vehicle

GAS 2 x 11kg

LEISURE BATTERY 3 x 90Ah (as tested)

MAINS SOCKETS 5

BASE VEHICLE

FIAT DUCATO AL-KO TAG-AXLE

ENGINE 3-litre, 177bhp, Euro V+, front-wheel drive, six-speed Comfort-Matic robotised gearbox

MPG ON TEST 21.7

COOKING/HEATING

COOKING Dometic three-burner hob, oven in Tec-Tower

FRIDGE Dometic 190-litre HPC fridge/freezer with automatic energy selection

HEATING Alde radiator system, gas/mains, with programmable digital controls

BOILER Alde gas/mains

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What motorhome says ★★★★★

Stunning looking, beautifully built and fabulous to use, with so many options that your vehicle will be very bespoke, the latest Arto remains at the top of its exalted class.

THEY CALL IT "WELLNESS"

If there's one aspect of this layout that is simply superb, it's the so-called 'wellness' bathroom. Open the toilet door round across the aisle, close the sliding door to the bedroom, and you have a complete room measuring 2.16m by 1.34m and incorporating shower, toilet, wardrobe and washbasin. It's better than many a hotel.

The shower is perhaps the star feature, not just for its spaciousness, but for the domestic-style water pressure too. The Corian-style washbasin is almost equally impressive, while mirrors, cupboards, heated towel rail, etc, are all exactly as you'd wish.

Another new option seen here is the Jabsco marine toilet with 120-litre tank (£899). It empties easily via a hose (fresh, waste and toilet drains are all sited together for convenience), but you will need to get to a suitable drive-over sewage point, which not every campsite will have. It does, however, mean that you can be away from site facilities for much longer and it further increases the feeling of being in an apartment, not a motorhome – even if its flush is too noisy to use at night. And in such a spacious en suite it's a pity the toilet area is so tight for space and that it lacks a roof vent here (an opening window is provided).

AND SO TO BED

Beyond the en suite, two steps lead up to long and luxurious mattresses sitting on Froli springs to ensure a perfect night's sleep. The illuminated panels in the headboard (matching the one in the toilet door) have real grass inlaid in them for striking effect (yes, really!) and little details like the pockets for books, specs, etc, complete a very comfortable bedroom. There's even another pair of (rather shallow) wardrobes under the foot of each bed. There's lots of lockers, too, but these will prevent you sitting up in bed.

You can sit up in the front bed (the usual A-class drop-down), which is equally comfortable, but we couldn't lock the bed in its raised position once duvet and pillows had been added. Maybe the electric bed option would solve this.

It's quite reassuring, in a way, though, that Niesmann hasn't got everything 100% perfect, because so much of this vehicle is so impressive. As it should be at the price. From the one-handle locking on the windows to the general fit and finish, from the striking styling to the superb shower, this is truly motorhoming in real luxury. My wife described as "like living in a playboy's apartment" – I wouldn't disagree.

HYMER Nova 'S'

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- Full Pebble leather (option)
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- Velvet Ash cabinetry



Simply schmitten!



Travelworld is the sole UK agent for Goldschmitt accessories, including all manner of suspension upgrades and levelling systems

GOLDSCHMITT is a highly regarded and well-known name on the German motorhome scene but it is less than a year since its products officially went on sale here, exclusively via Travelworld of Telford. But, as an Erwin Hymer Group company supplying replacement front springs for most new Hymer branded 'vans, the firm already has a foothold here, and its aftermarket offerings are not just for the German group's vehicles – almost any motorhome can benefit.

The possibilities with Goldschmitt are shown by Travelworld's Hymer StarLine demo vehicle (for sale at the time of writing at a discounted price of £115,995 – down from £127,714), kitted out with both rear air suspension and a levelling system for use on site.

Together, they add around £12k to the price of this flagship A-class, but don't switch off yet at the

price – Goldschmitt has some much more affordable offerings in its catalogue, too.

First, though, let's look at the levelling system, which lifts the whole vehicle on four stout, steel legs, automatically making it completely horizontal inside in the process.

It really does work at the push of a switch mounted just inside the door, although you can also buy a more sophisticated version that is controlled from your iPad!

Whichever controller you go for, it has more uses than just ensuring you don't roll out of bed on a sloping pitch.

First, you'll notice that as you climb the double steps into this Hymer there is no wobble at all – no longer will the motorhome rock (and wake your partner) if you get up to go to the loo in the night. Then, if you get a puncture you can raise just the front or rear axle to change a wheel – no

jack, and no manual effort, required! Or you can tip the 'van to one side to ensure the tanks are fully drained, or to ensure the rain runs off when parked up at home.

Such systems start at about £6,000 – depending on the chassis – and Travelworld has already sold a dozen. And it is, apparently, the only levelling system certified by the German authorities as it cannot come down on you if you are under the vehicle while it is raised on its jacks, thanks to a one-way valve.

More interested in on-road handling? Then perhaps Goldschmitt's air suspension will be for you. On the Mercedes chassis of the StarLine only rear air suspension is possible but full front and rear air suspension is offered on other base vehicles. Again, the benefits are more than just the obvious, as the rear of this Hymer can be raised or lowered (quite dramatically if you look at the



Goldschmitt jacks can lift the front wheels clear of the ground for tyre changing



Simple control panel by the habitation door operates the jacks, including automatic levelling. An iPad version is available



Another control panel – this time to raise or lower the rear air suspension



The StarLine's air suspension on its lowest and highest settings – you don't have to be called Sherlock to spot the difference!

photos above) – up to ensure incident-free loading onto a ferry, for example, or down to ease loading into the garage.

Once again, it's all easy to operate via a simple control panel (this time mounted alongside the driver, though every installation is bespoke to customer's wishes).

Out on the road, though, the big Sprinter is transformed. Combined with the delightfully smooth V6 190bhp Euro VI engine and Mercedes' latest seven-speed automatic gearbox, this 7.97-metre motorhome seems to shrink around you. Nothing this big or this tall should go around a roundabout (and Telford has more 'islands' than you would believe) with such authority.

If you want your Merc to feel utterly reassuring, the £6,150 price tag is money well spent (similar systems but including the front axle, too, on Fiat

range from £7,515 on the standard chassis to £8,565 on the Al-Ko tag-axle).

More reasonably priced are replacement front springs (available for Fiat Ducatos from 1994 onwards, Ford Transits up to 2013, Renault Master Mk 2 and 3 and VW T5), at £899 fitted. They will raise the front of your motorhome by around 5-7cm, curing the nose-down stance of many models on sale today (most Hymer already have these springs as standard).

At the other end of the scale is the new ADC system, expected to retail for just under £9k. Not only will this new system offer full air suspension with self-levelling but it can weigh the vehicle and check both your axle weights and the vehicle's total laden weight at the push of a button. If you've just stocked up with umpteen cases of Dom Perignon that might just let you know whether

you need to empty the water tank – or leave the kids behind! ADC will also lower the vehicle by 10mm above 20mph, for reduced wind resistance and enhanced stability.

Goldschmitt even offers an off-road package, called OmniRoad, for T5 owners. And it can offer upgraded gross vehicle weights (for more payload) on many vehicles, too. Then there are stylish, motorhome-specific and weight-correct alloy wheels. Something, in fact, for almost anyone wanting to upspec the chassis side of their motorhome.

CONTACT

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