



Broadway is next stage in evolution

More than just a sequel to the Sigma? **Rob Ganley** tests the new Auto-Sleeper

The Broadway, launched at the end of last summer for the 2009 model season, surely signifies the phasing-out of the much-loved Sigma in Auto-Sleepers' coachbuilt line up. It shares the same bodyshell and internal layout, but benefits from a substantial graphic and interior design overhaul.

I collected the 'van from Marquis Motorhomes' flagship branch in Northampton, where I can honestly say I've never received a better or more thorough handover of a test vehicle.

EXTERIOR

★★★★☆

The gold-coloured horizontal stripes are a bold graphic departure from the outgoing Sigma, and do a good job of modernising the 'van's external appearance. There's

a skirt locker on the offside, a neatly recessed awning on the nearside, and a gas locker that unusually stores three 6kg propane cylinders. Even the rear panel is good looking, thanks to high level brake lights and attractive light clusters in its bumper.

Rear corner steadies support the 1.88m overhang on site, and cab and habitation doors are locked remotely with the push of a key fob, which also activates the awning light. There's also a clever little valve in the nearside skirt so you can monitor the spare tyre's pressure.

ON THE ROAD

★★★★☆

Our test 'van came with the 130bhp version of the 2.2-litre HDi engine, which hikes the price up by nearly £800, but it's a welcome bit of muscle that makes this compact



coachbuilt better able to tackle all the trials the open road will throw at it. I spent some 1300 miles on Spain's *autopistas* in it, and other than a few 'cheeps' and 'chirrup's, the habitation quarters were broadly well-behaved. I was also pleased to see that all the lounge cushions attach to the walls securely with press studs.

I always enjoy driving Boxers and having the radio controls on the steering wheel, for finger-tip channel changes on long hauls. Cruise control would have been a welcome addition, but this (£164.50) and passenger airbag (£212) are optional extras. Cab aircon would have added a further £823 to the window price.

LOUNGING AND DINING

★★★★☆

Amarti wood furniture throughout is darker and classier than that in the Sigma,

and I rather like the chrome detailing on the overhead lockers. The wrap-around rear lounge is comfortable thanks to arm rests and scatter cushions, and is well illuminated by three generously-sized windows, a Heki rooflight, and an abundance of directional and fixed lighting. There is LED lighting hidden above the overhead lockers, too. A pair of ceiling-mounted speakers do the 'surround-sound' job.

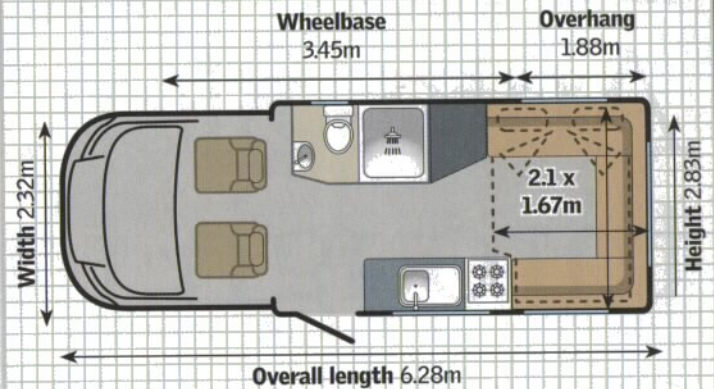
Best of all, though, are the drop down storage units (from the underside of the overhead lockers). Reach beneath and behind the lockers to release a catch, which lowers the spring-loaded shelf on runners: a simple but effective mechanism. There's one each for a flatscreen TV, a drinks cabinet that houses four crystal wine glasses and two wine bottle slots, and a bookshelf.

AUTO-SLEEPER

Broadway EL low profile

£43,084 OTR

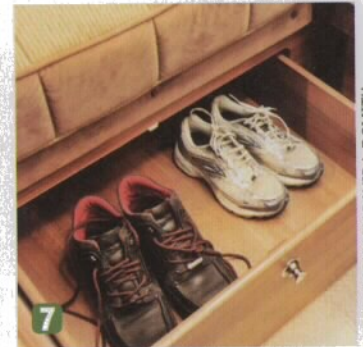
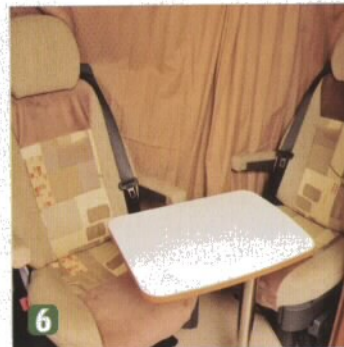
Base Peugeot Boxer MWB **Sleeping Berths** Two **Engine** 2.2-litre HDi 130bhp **Torque** 236 lb/ft @ 2000rpm **Power** 130bhp @ 3600rpm **Fuel** 90 litres **MTPLM** 3500kg **Max payload** 500kg **Gas bottles** Three x 6kg **Battery** 110Ah **Fresh water** 78 litres **Waste water** 53 litres



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4 The wraparound rear lounge has clever drop-down shelves **2** The kitchen benefits from two work surface extensions **3** One massive double bed is the only sleeping option **4** The swingwall shower is a good space saver **5** It's easy to raise the shelves again for travel **6** An occasional table up front **7** The drawer under the rear bench



PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID L F SMITH

A freestanding table has its own storage space in the wardrobe, which five diners can eat from in the rear lounge. There's a second, smaller table, too, which mounts onto a single leg and fits behind the two swivelling cab seats. This is probably better used as an occasional table for one, and makes for a good coffee cup resting place, or somewhere to spread a newspaper.

KITCHEN

★★★★☆
 Another strong selling point is the kitchen, which has everything a chef might need for cooking a feast, including three gas burners and a mains hotplate, plus full oven and grill. The sink and drainer have a glass lid, and there's a neat kitchen roll holder, and waste bin in the door. You can expand food preparation space thanks to the slide-out surface

over the fridge, or the smaller hinged flap that extends across the entry doorway. An optional microwave oven (£75) slots in overhead, and there's the full complement of Auto-Sleeper crockery in its trademark moulded tray.

WASHROOM

★★★★☆
 I'm a big fan of the swingwall washroom and was pleased to see this was carried over from the Sigma, too: simply swing the wall with the washbasin unit to the left, and complete the enclosed shower by joining the plastic partition to meet it. The cubicle it creates is plenty big enough for a vigorous scrub, and it has twin plug holes for better draining on uneven pitches.

The chrome detailing in the washroom, including toilet roll holder, towel ring and coat hooks is impressive.

I also liked the neat, pull-out washing line that allows wet clothes to drip dry. Two ceiling lights, a roof vent and a decent mirror completes the set, although the toiletries locker might be a squeeze on an extended tour for a couple.

SLEEPING

★★★★☆
 Concertina blinds and curtains do the job of making the interior feel cosy at bed time. The sofas aren't long enough to do the job as single beds, so a transverse double is the only option here. The slatted bases slide together, and the two backrests help to fill out the sleeping surface, making a 1.67 x 2.1m double bed.

STORAGE

★★★☆☆
 One of the Broadway's shortcomings is the lack of externally accessed storage

space. The single locker is only big enough for smaller camping items and won't swallow chairs or tables. Bedding can stash underneath the offside seat via a locker front to the seat box, or in the massive overcab locker, and there's a slide-out drawer under the rear seat bench.

VERDICT

★★★★☆
 If this had been a brand new model launch, we would be raving about this well-built two berth 'van. It's a tad short on storage, sure, but the attention to detail is excellent. As it is, it's an evolution of the Sigma – certainly not a revolution – and is unlikely to turn the head of anyone not already swayed by the former model. That said, we were always fans of the Sigma, so why throw out the baby with the bath water?