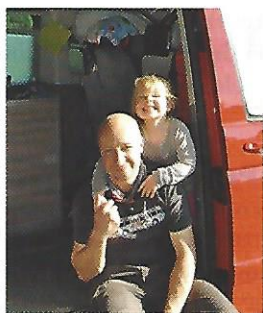


Day Van for every day



Ben Field...

The Day Van can carry up to eight people and have as much – or as little – camping equipment as buyers choose

AUTO CAMPERS DAY VAN

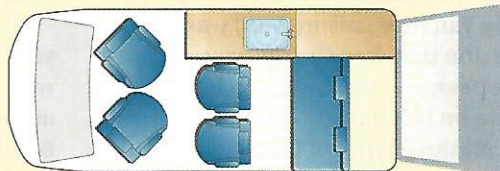
Price from: £31,345

Berths: 2-4 **Travel seats:** 2-8

Base vehicle: Ford Tourneo Custom SWB

Length: 4.97m

Gross weight: 3,000kg





Looking almost like a conventional camper here, but most of what you see is removable

Auto Campers' modular, removable-furniture Leisure Van won our 2015 Campervan of the Year award. But, strangely, Auto Campers has just renamed the Leisure Van the Day Van. Don't ask – you only need to know that the name is the only significant change to the camper that won over our panel of hard-to-impress expert judges.

Auto Campers offers its Day Van in Lo-Line (1.97m overall fixed roof height, no internal standing room), Hi-Line (2.44m fixed roof, limited standing room) and Pop-Top forms (with rear-hinged Reimo lifting roof and optional roof bed). The Pop-Top Day Van (née Leisure Van) was the version that won the Campervan of the Year, and that's the version we have on test here.

All three types of Day Van start out as eight-seaters. Buyers can

then specify from a list of optional furniture to kit out the camper. Furniture modules and seats can be fitted and removed to suit, giving the Day Van 200-plus possible interior permutations.

HEY, GOOD-LOOKING

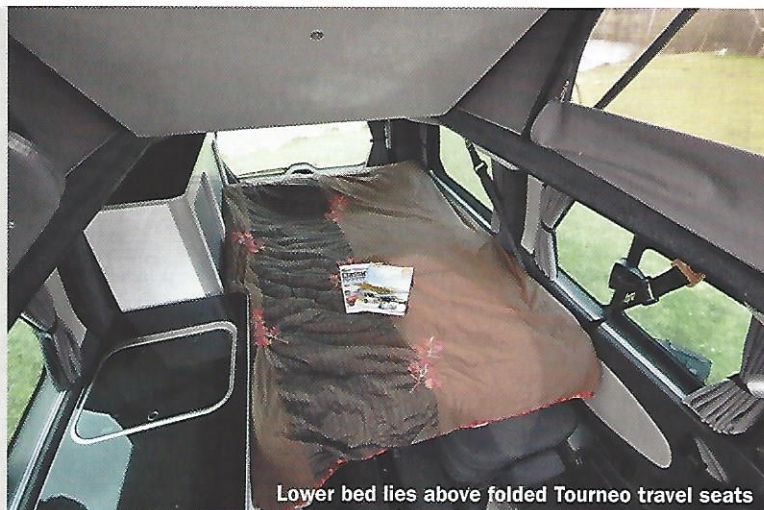
The Tourneo Custom (the people-carrier version of the Transit Custom) is one of the best-looking base vehicles for a campervan conversion out there. It's the handsome brother to the new 'big' Transit that looks like a whale shark bearing down on a school of unfortunate fish.

The Tourneo shape is a couple of years old now, but it still looks fresh with its blend of sharp lines, wrap-around headlights and pleasingly-bulbous wheelarches. It's fresher than the just-announced T6 from VW.

The Lo-Line and Hi-Line versions of the Day Van barely look like campers at all from the outside, such is the subtlety of the Auto Campers conversion, with discreet badging and just a single hook-up socket to give the game away. The Pop-Top is a little more obvious, but only because it's clear to the keen-eyed that there is a lifting roof element from the black line of the sealing rubber that circumnavigates the roof. Even so, the Reimo roof blends brilliantly with the roofline when folded.

POWER TO PLEASE?

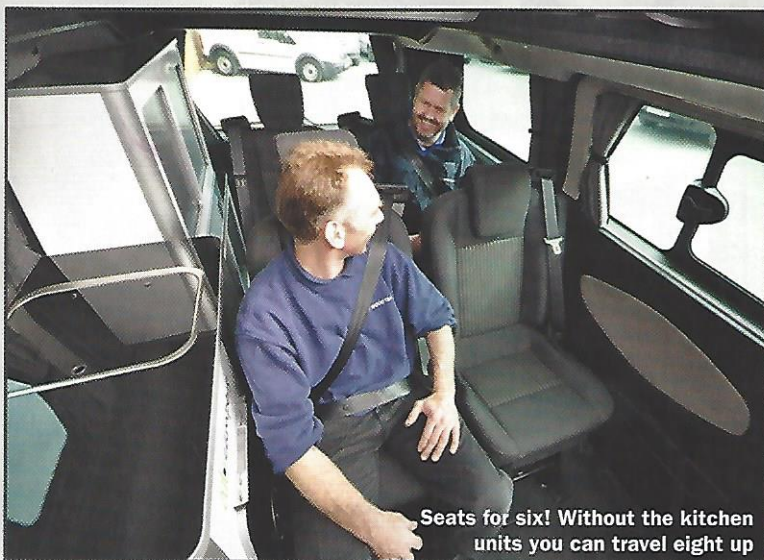
Auto Campers offers the full range of Ford's 2.2-litre Duratorq TDCi engine power outputs – from 99bhp to 153bhp – in the Day Van. The 123bhp engine fitted to the test vehicle adds £1,000 to the price of the standard



Lower bed lies above folded Tourneo travel seats



As good as it gets, Tourneo Custom is oh-so-car-like in the cab



Seats for six! Without the kitchen units you can travel eight up



One water carrier for fresh, one for waste, and room to store a loo, too

99bhp Pop-Top. Another £1,000 will give you 153bhp.

The flexibility of the interior layout, with seats and furniture modules capable of being added, moved or removed to suit, brings another benefit. It can save weight.

After photographing the Day Van as a six-seater, Auto Campers' Steve Wood and I unlatched the rear bench from the floor and removed it from the 'van. Unlatching was simple and quick, but lifting the bench out took both of us – it weighs close to 100kg.

With no need of the bench seat for camping, I tested the Day Van as a four-seater (along with a selection of the modular furniture, which I'll describe later).

Like most modern diesels, the engine is quiet and vibration-free from tickover to the upper reaches of the rev range. The same

123bhp (258lb/ft torque) engine in a conventional Tourneo/Transit Custom (with fixed furniture) camper can feel underpowered, a fact not helped by the Ford's long gearing. In the lightly loaded test vehicle, the engine didn't struggle at all, with the Tourneo as lively and responsive as a small MPV. But, if you bring the family and start using the 640kg payload, paying another £1,000 for the 153bhp engine (with 283lb/ft torque) would be a better idea.

Ford quotes identical figures for fuel consumption across the range of engine outputs, but in the real world it will be easier to keep MPG figures up with the higher output engine because you'll generally be running at lower revs and sticking to higher gears.

The Tourneo's cab and driving position are more car-like than any other small van on the market. If

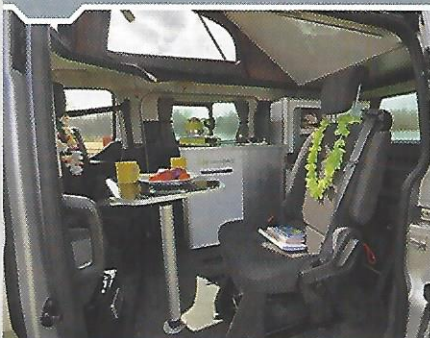
you stepped out of a brand-new Mondeo and into a Tourneo, only the elevated ride height would give it away. It's as easy to drive as car, too – with predictable front-wheel drive handling, light steering, slim A-pillars and masses of glass for an unbeatable view of the road.

RAISE THE ROOF

The front-lifting Reimo roof in the Day Van is a triumph of simplicity. Undo the two straps and a light push is enough to send the roof skywards on a pair of strong hydraulic struts.

With the roof bed board sent upwards, too, interior height goes instantly from 1.4m to an impressive 2.3m. Three panels in the roof fabric unzip to let in loads of additional daylight and create a feeling of greater interior space. ➤

LIKED



- Flexible layout
- Inside/outside kitchen

DISLIKED



- Slots left in floor after furniture removed
- Kitchen module is expensive

WANTED

- Less cumbersome bed slats
- A more straightforward brochure

Cooking al fresco is possible via second sliding door. Fridge access here, too



A pair of spotlights on flexible stalks are revealed when the roof goes up. These can act as reading lights for the swivelling cab seats or for those up in the roof bed.

Bringing the roof back down takes a good heave to overcome the hydraulic struts initially. But, gravity lends a hand from there on down and it's just a case of gathering in the folds of the fabric so they don't get caught up in the mechanism before securing the roof with the straps.

DESIGN YOUR OWN CAMPERVAN

The standard Day Van comes with eight seats. To fit the furniture modules some of the seats need to be unlatched and removed. Auto Campers will buy back seats that aren't required for your chosen layout

(£120 per seat), or you can keep them for refitting when you're not camping.

In the test layout, two single seats and a double bench were retained. With these seats fitted on the nearside of the vehicle, there's room down the offside for a kitchen module (see next section for full details) and two stacking modules (£800 each) with shelves and tambour doors running in line with the kitchen at the back of the 'van. With this layout in camping mode, the rear two-seat bench is best removed and the remaining two single rear seats can then be positioned one behind the other on the nearside, creating clear access to the kitchen and storage.

There are no must-haves dictated by Auto Campers, buyers decide what they want to take – or leave – depending on needs and/or budget, and additional/different units can

be added later on. These include a full-height rear utility unit with open shelves, optional bed layouts and upper lockers for the Hi-Line models.

By taking – or leaving – seats and modules, there are more than 200 variations on the layout available. Auto Campers shows a number of these in its comprehensive – some might say overwhelming – brochure. But the company does at least concede that most buyers will decide on a couple of layouts that work for them, and switch between the two. Would-be buyers should go and see the Day Van in the metal, and talk to Auto Campers' Steve Wood, who knows all there is to know on the subject of Day Van conversion options.

My only criticism of the Day Van's flexible layout is that moving – or removing – seats and modules leaves large, dirt-collecting, toe-trapping



Plenty of storage in the offside units. With seats taken out, the Day Van becomes just a van!

slots in the floor (part of the original Ford Tourneo design). Auto Campers is working on some covering strips for these, but development is still at the prototype stage at the time of writing.

COOKING INSIDE, OUTSIDE

I have always been a big fan of the original Auto Campers' Day Van, based on the previous generation full-sized Transit. Not only did it have super-tough polypropylene furniture (*each to their own, Ed*), it also had a kitchen that could be used inside or out through the offside sliding door.

With two sliding doors, the Tourneo was an obvious choice for a return of this feature. Alright, the outdoor element is effectively a pop-up shelf (a £100 option) that a portable, single-burner hob sits on, but the ability to use this – and access

the drawer-style fridge – from outside just makes the Day Van even more versatile. And even more perfect for indoor/outdoor living in summer. Of course, you could always add a drive-away awning on the offside for when the climate is not so kind.

The kitchen module is a simple offering with a sink and a 94cm by 48cm worktop (with the sink lid down). There's an extra slice of worktop measuring 30cm by 35cm on a slide-out drawer on the end of the worktop. The single-burner hob stores in the drawer and there's storage for a few cups between the two removable 12-litre bottles (for fresh and waste water) in the tambour-door cupboard. A small, portable loo fits in the base of the same cupboard.

Storage isn't this kitchen's strongest point, but if you opt for one – or both – of the stacking modules which fit

right next to the kitchen, you will have all the food and utensil storage you could require.

Another version of the kitchen is also now available, with a fixed hob. This unit uses a pair of 40-litre water tanks under the floor that can be connected and disconnected, allowing users to take the galley module in and out as required.

A larger gas bottle goes in a steel box inside the tambour cupboard, but with the water tanks out of the way, kitchen storage is improved.

The kitchen module we tested here costs £1,700, while the new fixed hob variant with underfloor water tanks is priced at £2,700.

MORE CHOICES AT BEDTIME

There are two options for beds 'downstairs' in the Day Van: a ►



longitudinal bed made up of a slatted 'primary bed base' (£800) and a bed extension cushion with a solid base (£200) which works if you want to fit the stacking storage modules. Leave the stacking storage out, and pay an additional £150 for an infill cushion and you can make up a transverse bed at the rear of the 'van (though this won't be long enough for adults).

In the test vehicle, the longitudinal bed was fitted. Once the cumbersome aluminium bed slats have been laid out to create the primary bed base, the bed extension cushion is suspended on a pair of ceiling straps. Although the bed is comfortable, the slats are a bit of a pain to fit and remove, and the strap support solution looks slightly untidy.

Upstairs, things are much simpler. The roof bed base (£500) pulls down into position, just as you'd expect in a pop-top campervan, and there's a full two-metre bed length up there, though the mattress width is a little less generous. Throw a sheet, pillows and a duvet up top and it's good night Day Van.

A couple could even opt for the roof bed alone, leaving a permanent, and huge, lounge downstairs. Or you could have a small transverse lower bed for the kids, leaving the seats in situ.

LOADING CAPACITY

Talking of huge, the potential load space in the back of the Day Van is virtually unheard of in campervan circles. Take out the rear seats but keep the rear stacking modules and the kitchen in place and you're left with a space 1.14m wide by 1.40m high by 2.45m long. Take the stacking modules and kitchen out, and the width increases to 1.40m. As with so many aspects of the Day Van, load space can be varied to your needs. **MMM**

THE **MMM** VERDICT

The Day Van is a brilliant new take on the campervan concept from Auto Campers. Only in the self-build market can buyers specify the interior of their vehicle to this extent. But where the self-build market has many pitfalls for the inexperienced or over ambitious, the Day Van offers a well-engineered, and thoroughly tested, set of combinations on a well-proven base vehicle



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FACTS AND FIGURES



PRICE

From: £31,345

As tested: £40,105



BASICS

Berths: 2-4

Travel seats: 2-8 (inc driver)

Warranty: Base vehicle three years/100,000 miles, conversion equipment one year

Type approval: Not required for the conversion



DIMENSIONS

Length: 4.97m (16ft 4in)

Width: 2.08m (6ft 10in)

Height: 2.10m (6ft 11in)

Gross vehicle weight: 3,000kg

Payload: 640kg (in camper mode with four seats and furniture)



BASE VEHICLE

Type: Ford Tourneo Custom

Engine: 2.2-litre TDCi, 123bhp,

Euro V, front-wheel drive, six-speed manual gearbox



KITCHEN

Cooker: Single-burner hob

Fridge: Waeco 50-litre, drawer-type, compressor fridge



BEDS

Lower double: 1.89m x 1.27m (6ft 2in x 4ft 2in)

Roof bed: 2.00m x 1.17m (6ft 7in x 3ft 10in)



ESSENTIALS

Fresh water: 12 litres (onboard)

Waste water: 12 litres (onboard)

Space heating: Webasto Airtop diesel-fired blown-air

Water heating: None fitted

Gas: 220g (butane cartridge)

OPTIONS

Fitted to test vehicle: 123bhp engine (£1,000), swivel driver's seat (£400), alloy wheels (£600), seat buyback x 2 (less £240), kitchen (£1,700), exterior table (£100), rear lower module (£800), rear top module (£800), roof bed (£500), bed base (£800), bed extension (£200), loo (£100), Webasto heating (£1,000), hook-up (£400), colour-coded bumpers, mirrors, mouldings (£600)

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