



HELLO SAILER!

Rimor Sailer 645TC on LWB 2.7CDI Mercedes Sprinter 316

MMM is the first to test a prototype version of the Sailer 645TC, as developed by Southdowns Motorcaravans. Jonathan Lloyd pipes us aboard

Sailer is basically a Superbrig with a bit missing - intentionally, of course. Conspicuous by its absence is the bulbous overcab luton, as all Sailers are low profile coachbuilds. Rimor build the Sailer in Siena, which is near Florence in Italy, while Southdowns Motorcaravans are the official UK importer.



A look along the offside shows the caravan door, leisure battery access door and hook-up, with the garage door to the rear.

Back in 1978 when Luano Niccolau started Rimor Autocaravans, the set up was then typical of Italian motorhome manufacturers in that it was family owned and managed. Rimor are still family owned, but now find themselves swimming against the tide of increasing commercial globalisation caused by multi-national conglomerates. I, for one, applaud their single-mindedness.

Sailers are built on either Ford Transit or Mercedes-Benz chassis cabs. Those that are imported by Southdowns will all be on Mercs. Ford fans should opt for the Rimor Europeo range, also in Blighty courtesy of Southdowns. The UK Sailer family includes models that are either 7.20m (23ft 7in) long or 7.55m (24ft 9in) long. Ours, the 645, is one of the shorter (or should that be less long?) models.

Externally, the aluminium-clad sandwich body mates well with the sleek Sprinter. A double radius to the front of the overcab moulding and a strike angle which mirrors that of the windscreen, make it look streamlined and graceful. Stone white is the chosen colour for the majority of the residential coachwork. Champagne-coloured skirts, and a broad blue contrast band add interest. The fluted moulded lower cab door panels plus the front and rear bumpers have all been finished in the same champagne colour as the skirts, a colour co-ordination that successfully integrates the cab with the caravan. A couple of darker blue squiggles on the side and some matching lettering finish off the exterior nicely.

Unadorned silver-painted vented steel wheels don't look out of place, far better than tuppenny plastic wheel trims.

Immediately behind the driver's door is a generous amount of venting for the fridge/freezer. Further towards the rear, are the entrance door, water heater flue, access door to the leisure battery and charge management unit,

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hook-up, and the first of two garage doors.

The back panel looks uncluttered, principally, I guess, because there isn't a ladder (nor are there any rails on the roof). Production models from Southdowns will have both ladder and roof rails.

Moving rearwards from the nearside cab door, one finds the gas locker access door, fresh water filler, cassette toilet holding tank access door, and finally the second garage door. The garage is obviously the most significant aspect, so let's scrutinise that before getting on board.

Sailer's cargo hold

Many purchasers are giving serious thought to the convenient storage of their scooter, motorbike, mobility buggy, jet-ski, push-bikes or a combination of the above. The advantages and disadvantages of such a design are explained in the panel below. The Sailer's garage looked to be one of the better ones I've examined, and I would recommend it as being well up to the job.

Generous are its proportions, and it boasts access doors on either side. Also, a tough aluminium chequer-plate floor with sturdy tie-down eyes and vertical poles looks useful. Add an interior access door, a blown-air heating outlet, light and power - and bingo!

My only concern was one of security. I would have liked tougher locks on the exterior doors (and some sort of door check mechanism). After all, get past these locks and the lithe could easily gain access to the interior of the van, as well as to the contents of the garage.



Rear garage has a full-sized door on both sides and a tough aluminium chequer-plate floor. It also enjoys power, light and heat.



General view forward shows L-shaped settee on left, and kitchen on right.



Looking to the rear - the permanent high-level rear transverse double bed is behind the privacy curtain. Below is the interior access door to the garage.

dinette is replaced with an L-shaped settee and an island leg table. This will become an option for 2003 models.

Forward of the entrance is the two-door domestic-sized fridge/freezer with space for televisual apparatus on top, and immediately rearwards of the door is the rest of the kitchen. Nearside amidships is home to the washroom with separate walk-in shower, opposite which is the wardrobe. Finally, bringing up the rear, is the permanent high-level transverse double bed.

Rimor were clever to squeeze this amount of accommodation into this size of 'van, and Southdowns' modifications have given the forward area more of an open feeling.

Like many others, I find the pattern and colouring of motorcaravan soft furnishing fabrics either immediately appeals or gets the thumbs down. Very few are just OK or bearable. I think it's to do with living in such close proximity to whatever is chosen. The Sailer's modern geometrically patterned blue and cream fabric appealed immediately.

Removable whipped-edge cut-pile blue carpets are over a speckled pattern vinyl floor covering in the residential part, and over a rubber mat in the cab. Lightweight white voile curtains hint at the Sailer's Continental origins. The matching removable cab seat covers are practical. The nearside one has the Rimor legend embroidered on it (in left-hookers the

Rear garages - the advantages and disadvantages

Pros:

- Your motorbike or whatever will keep clean as it won't be subjected to road spray, and corrosive salt in winter.
- Out of sight - out of mind. Definitely true, bikes hung on racks are a big temptation to the 'earwigs'.
- Storing heavy bikes in a garage is better than hanging them on the back because they will be closer to the rear axle. This means that there will be less of a lever on the suspension, and, as a result, less effect on roadholding.
- The driver is definitely staying within the law. It's a 'grey' area but my interpretation is that, as many coachbuilds already have the maximum rear overhang, adding more 'outback' may well cause the driver to fall foul of 'Construction and Use' legislation.
- It is easier to rig up alternator charging to mobility/electric scooter/cycle batteries.
- When it is raining and we don't want a soaking, addicts like me can go in there and smoke an industrial-strength cigar, without polluting the air in the lounge.
- When at home the bikes can stay in the motorcaravan's garage, whereas most of us using racks remove the bikes, which then 'clog up' the domestic garage.
- Garages do not compromise the looks of a 'van. Especially important with something that looks as streamlined as this Sailer.

Cons:

- Pushing a heavy scooter up a ramp is far harder than you might think. For many owners, a small electrically powered winch controlled remotely will avoid a coronary accident, a spell in intensive care, and the subsequent loss of motorcaravanning time.
- Garages take up a lot of space, and tend to foreshorten the interior, making it appear more crowded. This might be too big a compromise if you only use your bike on (say) one big holiday per year.
- Currently, the most common design involves placing a high-level transverse double bed over the top of the garage. This has all the advantages of a permanent bed - no joins in the mattress, right grade of foam for sleeping, and no nightly chore of converting seats and getting the bedding out. But (and it's quite a big but) they are usually very high, are difficult to get into and out of, and trap one partner against the wall. I find it incredibly difficult to climb over my partner and make a safe descent to ground level in order to pay a nocturnal visit to the loo. Apparently, I look and sound like a performing seal during these manoeuvres. (But hey, not everyone can do animal impressions!) Other more physically fit owners (and testers) find no such difficulties.

As with any motorcaravan layout, make your own mind up. Don't rush into buying something just because it is currently popular!

Also - take into account the carrying capacity of a garage (in this case 200kg) in relation to what you want to carry in it. You will need to ensure that rear axle and maximum vehicle weights will not be exceeded.

Welcome aboard

No gangplanks required here. Indeed the double-tread moulded internal step divides the ascent into three easily managed movements. A sturdy grab handle and the master light switch are both conveniently placed. The entrance is on our offside, immediately opposite the Pullman dinette. Or rather it isn't. 'Our' 645TC was the prototype for a new layout, in which the



Cab roof is cut away with a trio of angled lockers placed around the edges.

logo would be on the driver's seat - as the designer probably intended). Attractive honey oak radiused Tecnoform cabinetwork, with positive catches on the locker and cupboard doors, appears throughout the 'van.

Sailer's salon

Whilst considering 'our' lounge (which will be an option) let's see how it worked out in practice. Very well is the short answer. A longer answer would contain a reference to the usefulness of including both (extremely comfortable) ISRI cab seats in the equation, and would probably include pointing out that the island leg table is of adjustable height.

In order to rotate the driver's seat, the handbrake needs to be released and it can't be re-applied with the seat facing the table. Make sure that the vehicle is left in gear and (preferably) that the wheels are properly chocked. Perhaps a tad 'belt and braces', but Murphy's Law dictates that the 'over-beered' (thank you Morse for that one) will only knock it out of gear when you have parked on a slight slope and didn't bother chocking it!

During the day the settee provided a super environment in which to relax, dine, or read. The light just flooded through the Heki panoramic rooflight. However, at night it was apparent that the artificial lighting over the table area needed to be upgraded.



Prototype L-shaped settee worked well. Pedestal table is adjustable for height and rotation, but lacks dedicated storage. It would be possible for three to eat at the table, but no more.

My memory isn't as reliable as I would wish it to be, but I'm pretty sure that earlier Rimors had a standard-sized powered rooflight above the table with a moulded light unit around the outside. Current models are equipped with the much bigger Heki, around which the lighting moulding will no longer fit. Result - inward-facing diners are left a little in the shade! Even as I write, a new moulding is being made to solve the problem. It's not really a major problem (one can add additional lighting), though it does illustrate the maxim that all progress is two steps forward and one back.

This prototype model's additional cushions (to make the L-shaped lounge) were upholstered in the same fabric as the original ones, but, unlike the originals, were not buttoned or piped. I'm an enthusiastic amateur upholsterer (who is 'into' horsehair in a big way but that's another story!) so the difference kept catching my eye. We are assured that production models will have everything matching, and also trimmed cab seat boxes.

Whilst sat inside with the outside temperature dropping as low as minus seventeen degrees Celsius (yes, I chose to camp in what turned out to be the coldest part of the country that week) I was impressed with the effectiveness of the insulation and the efficiency of the blown-air heating system. Not so impressive was the howling draught coming through a gap at the bottom of the high-tech all-singing all-dancing fridge/freezer. My low-

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Underseat space is mostly full of fresh water tank (thankfully in view of on-test temperatures) and externally accessed gas locker.



Southdowns' Sailers arrive complete with this natty coffee table. It locates in the headrest mounting holes.

tech solution was to roll up some kitchen paper and stuff it in the gap. Hardly elegant, but very effective. Minus 17 degrees is on the parky side of freezing, so it is worth emphasising just how comfy and warm the interior was.

Presumably the reason that the Sailer coped so well with the cold is that Rimors are designed for Italian consumers, many of whom like to take their motorcaravan on skiing holidays in the winter. Splendid news for us softies!

The top of the fridge seemed like the natural place on which to put a television, and one is encouraged to do so by Rimor, as they have included power points (of various voltages) and a terrestrial/satellite aerial socket. Not boxing in the space above the fridge really made this area more open.

This was my first meeting with the new Status 530 aerial. It can be adjusted for height, polarity, and direction. Regular readers may be aware that my partner and I are not great fans of the 'idiot's lantern', preferring audio entertainment instead. Southdowns, however, were kind enough to put a remote control colour TV in the 'van. So, in the interests of research, I sat and indulged in a spot of goggle-boxing. The picture quality obtained via this new generation of directional aerial was nothing short of astonishing, and that on a site renowned for its poor TV reception. Despite the brilliant picture quality, I resisted succumbing to the cultural wasteland that is daytime TV, even when the weather was spectacularly inclement.

There is even a smart magazine holder to keep your copies of MMM in, and a clever coffee table that replaces a cab seat headrest. What was mildly inconvenient was the lack of effective lighting in the central aisle. It made adjusting the space heater controls very difficult at night

Sailer's galley

This is a tip-top galley, a result, one assumes, of close collaboration between Rimor and Southdowns. Continental motorcaravan kitchens tend to be, well, Continental. Not so those in anglicised Sailers purchased from Southdowns as they are all upgraded to include electronic ignition for all cooking equipment, a gas oven/grill, 135-litre AES fridge (for an explanation of AES - see panel below), and a hinged worktop extension flap. Result - a very practical Brit-friendly galley. Particularly appreciated were the large cutlery drawer, oodles of general storage, plenty of worktop, a large sink bowl, and three 230V outlets.

The contemporary and curvaceous Smev hob is growing on me, though I am still of the opinion that it would be better to have full-width pan rests



The Brit-friendly kitchen, with worktop extended across doorway. The blown-air heater outlet on the end panel counteracts the draught from the gas dropout vent in the footwell.

to reduce the potential for accidents. My partner and I are also changing our minds about the necessity of having a draining surface. Now we are quite happy to have the extra worktop, and use a tea tray when required.

The monogrammed chopping board (posh eh?) was very useful, but it must be stored in a cupboard when on the road, as it could become a dangerous missile during an emergency stop.

Anything else? Oh yes, the lighting (both natural and artificial) is good here, and there is an extractor fan. The pegboard, with its rack and kitchen paper dispenser, can't have cost more than a couple of dozen Euros, but it was worth a million to me!

On this prototype, the boiler (water heater) control clashed with the folded worktop extension. We are promised that the control will be repositioned on future imports.

All in all, the Rimor has a great area for culinary creating.

Dometic details - a rundown on AES refrigeration

- RM6505 is a two-door design. It's basically a large refrigerator with a freezer on top. It will operate on 230V or 12V electricity, or LPG. Internal temperature is thermostatically controlled.
- Unlike traditional three-way absorption fridges, the cooling unit itself decides which energy source it is going to use (by prioritising). This system is called AES, which stands for Automatic Energy Selection.
- Default setting is 230V. One just hooks-up, turns on and selects the desired temperature setting.
- If there is no 230V available, the fridge will automatically turn to 12V.
- If there is no 230V or 12V available the fridge will then select gas supply to the burner and try to ignite it.
- However, there is a considerable time delay (around 15 minutes) between when 12V is turned off and gas ignition is attempted (to allow for safe vehicle refuelling during journeys). *Note that standard best practice is to turn off gas cylinders when travelling.* Ed
- Finally, a new range of (larger) removable exterior vents has been produced to make in-service inspection and maintenance possible without having to remove the fridge/freezer from the surrounding cabinetwork.



Forward of the entrance door is the range-topping fridge/freezer. See magazine rack and flyscreen inner door. TV is not included.



Sailer's hammocks

Not really hammocks - most would judge these beds to be a more comfortable alternative to the traditional sailor's berth. The transverse rear permanent bed is of good size and the one-piece mattress was of appropriate resilience without being over firm. Halogen reading lights were effective and would allow one partner to read in bed without disturbing the

slumbers of the other. The two shelves were ideal for putting specs, books and the early morning cuppa on. The supplied remote control was used to turn the radio/CD player on and off from bed - if not decadent, then certainly indulgent.

As has already been stated, the standard 645TC comes equipped with a Pullman dinette and this converts into an additional double bed. Our test 'van had an L-shaped lounge, so there was already a pretty instantaneous adult berth available. A folding seat box extension is being developed to provide a very wide adult single or a narrow(ish) double for children/youths/racing snakes.

Sluicing down

A decade ago, when Italian motorcaravans first appeared in the UK, one of their principal attractions was that they usually provided luxuriously appointed and relatively spacious shower rooms in motorcaravans of fairly modest dimensions. Nowadays the competition has caught up to a large extent, having learnt from the likes of Rimor.

That said, the Sailer's washroom was well proportioned and luxuriously equipped. However, there was the strange case of the missing toilet roll holder. Previously I have encountered Italian motorcaravans with two such devices, one on the wall, and one behind a low-level moulded cupboard door, so perhaps Rimor are trying to redress the balance? Everything else was present though, and was easy to use.

Separate walk-in shower cubicles, especially when equipped with glazed doors, are much more civilised to use than struggling with a clingy curtain and then having to mop up. I do prefer shower trays to have two drain holes as opposed to the Sailer's central one. (Single drains tend not to evacuate all of the water if the 'van is a degree off level.)

Sailer's showerhead is mounted on a riser rail, and the monobloc tap enabled one to turn off the flow without having to alter the selected temperature. The Truma water heater is of the storage type and has a



In common with most garage models, the rear bed is a long way up. Two steps are provided, though.



Rear bed has reading lights for each partner and two useful shelves, as well as a powered rooflight extractor fan/ventilator. Travel alarm clock is mine!

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Amidships shower room has a good-sized sink, swivel bowl loo and...

capacity of 10 litres, more than enough for a really long shower.

We've always found the common practice among Continental manufacturers of using clear glazing in the washroom window a bit off-putting, and I guess it must be even more so for those glancing in!

Sophisticated Sailer

Sometimes sophistication is defined as an idea that has been developed into a complex form. A manifestation of this would be the excellent 'electricravery' distribution and management unit featuring MCBs that reset themselves automatically after a fault. Similarly, the management read-out panel has all the latest state-of-the-art digital displays, and can be added to if desired. There are fourteen icons, seven are already used, the others are pre-wired and are available for (say) the later fitting of a solar panel or an exterior temperature probe.

In contrast, sometimes sophistication can be summed up by the phrase



The supplied CD/radio can be operated without having to get out of bed by using the remote control. Really useful for turning off the radio last thing at night. Sailer comes with just two keys.



...a separate walk-in shower with glazed doors. Plenty of shelves for the shower gel and shampoo.

'less is more'. Admirably illustrated by the fact that there was just the one key for everything Rimor and one for everything Merc.

Sailing

On the road, the Sailer was as well-mannered as your maiden aunt at the vicarage tea party. For the benefit of new readers, I should say that the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter is a rear-wheel drive vehicle with a wide choice of payloads, engines and the option of manual, Sprintshift, or conventional automatic transmission using a torque converter. The Mercedes name could be seen as 'aspirational', though the Sprinter does have the disadvantage of a much narrower track than its main rivals (sometimes resulting in a feeling of instability if over bodied).

Sprinter's driving environment has been constantly tweaked and improved since its arrival in 1996. Most notable has been the migration of the gear lever from floor to fascia.

The ISRI seats are fully adjustable and should be able to accommodate most of us, even if (like me) you have a less than Adonis-like profile. Controls, both major and minor, fell neatly to hand. The steering transmitted enough feel at speed, but remained commendably light during parking.

One of the advantages of a low profile over a conventional luton is that they not only slip through the air easier, they also do it with less noise!

Early model Sprinters did roll a bit on corners (though not worryingly so). Today, improvements to the suspension have ensured that the latest incarnations can be cornered with confident enthusiasm (if you really must).

The ride of the test vehicle was further improved by the fitting of air bag spring assisters, inflated to 2.76 bar (40 psi) for this test. This is an extra-cost option fitted by Southdowns. They strongly recommend fitting air assistance to all motorhomes with a rear garage

Sprinter brakes have always been bang on the money, and continue to be so, giving confident fade-free retardation. ABS is available as an extra-cost option as part of a 'Safety Pack'. Merc's disc all round set up doesn't actually do away totally with brake drums. The handbrake (actually the hand-operated parking brake to give it the proper moniker) operates on a separate set of rear drums.

Sailer 645 arrived complete with Merc's range-topping OM612 DELA engine. With a displacement of 2686cc over five cylinders, two overhead camshafts, and common-rail diesel injection technology, it ought to be strong competition for any other engine in its class. Add in a variable nozzle



Latest incarnation of the Sprinter cab places everything neatly at hand. As usual, I've failed miserably to use things as the manufacturer intended. Slide-out tray below (red) pen in holder has a mobile phone in the ashtray and a Dictaphone in the cup/can holder!



Rear passengers have a grand view out through the adjacent window. Centre section of settee has been removed to create legroom.

turbocharger to give more oomph on demand (with appreciably less turbo lag), and an intercooler to cool and squash the air (making it breathe more efficiently), and the result should be a winner. It was!

It wasn't just the good acceleration (30-50mph in 7.2 seconds) and mountain goat hill-climbing ability that was impressive, but also the smooth and unfussy way in which the power was delivered throughout the rev range. It doesn't (yet) develop optimum power across the revs, but occasions when the engine was noticeably flat (off boost?) were so few as to be not really worth mentioning. This is the best power unit for your Rimor Sailer motorcaravan, which is why Southdowns specify it as standard.

Efficient high-pressure common-rail injection should be good news at

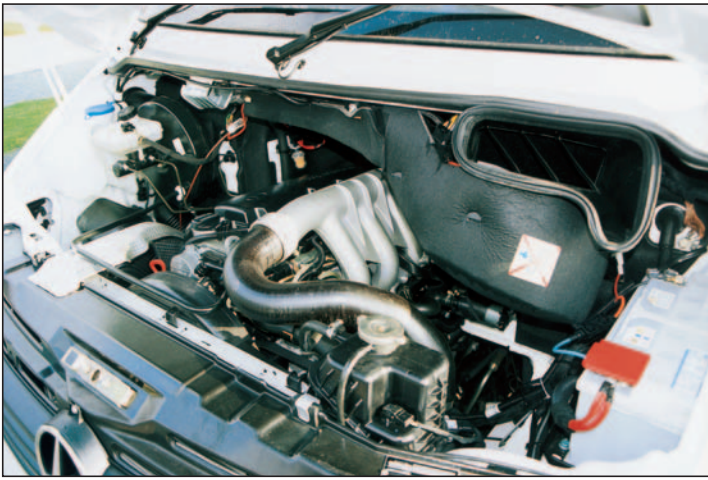
the fuel pumps. Although during my 'ownership' this example returned an unremarkable 23mpg. This was probably due to the newness of the engine, the awful traffic conditions (including monumentally long hold-ups) during the test week, and the requirement for some high-speed motorway cruising. It certainly isn't the fault of the overall drive gearing as the engine was only spinning at a comfortable 2150rpm at 60mph in fifth gear.

Dashboard instruments are grouped in a new-shape nacelle. Dial read-outs are white-on-black during the day, and orange-on-black at night. The exterior mirrors were rock steady and their distance from the door can be adjusted by rotating the arms. Unlike most of the competition, Mercedes does not include a separate wide-angle lens.

By removing a part of the inward-facing settee, the short leg of the



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Sophisticated five-cylinder common-rail direct-injection turbocharged and intercooled power.



Worm's eye view shows inaccessible spare wheel cradle, air bag suspension assisters, and part of the galvanised subframe that runs full length and width between the Merc's chassis rails and the floor decking.

lounge seating converts into two face-forward rear passenger seats with head restraints and three-point inertia-reel belts. Rear passengers had a grand view out of the adjacent sliding window, which could have been opened on the move. In use, the belts were found to snag on the cushions and didn't retract as quickly as they should. Although not required by law, best practice now suggests the inclusion of a strengthened frame to the backrest, and anti-submarine braces to the squab. It would be good if Rimor fitted these.

Dry dock

A likely breakdown is a puncture courtesy of our ever-worsening road surfaces. The spare wheel remains in its original underbody cradle immediately behind the rear axle. It proved to be a devil to lower and remove, and would have been a particularly challenging operation if a rear tyre had been punctured. My advice to Sailer owners is to remove it now and store it in the garage. It will also make checking its pressure easier!

For all the engine's complexity, standard DIY tasks (such as filter changes) all looked to be quite easy to carry out.

Sailer's keel

Most traditionally-built coachbuilt motorcaravans have the floor decking fixed straight onto the original chassis, with perhaps a couple of main rail

extensions. Rimor has for many years opted to put a galvanised box-section subframe between the decking and base vehicle chassis. Why? The claim is that this considerably strengthens structural rigidity, spreads the down-forces (load) more evenly, reduces body movement when on the road (and therefore the likelihood of seams opening and leaking), and provides a stronger body to chassis mounting than is usually the case.

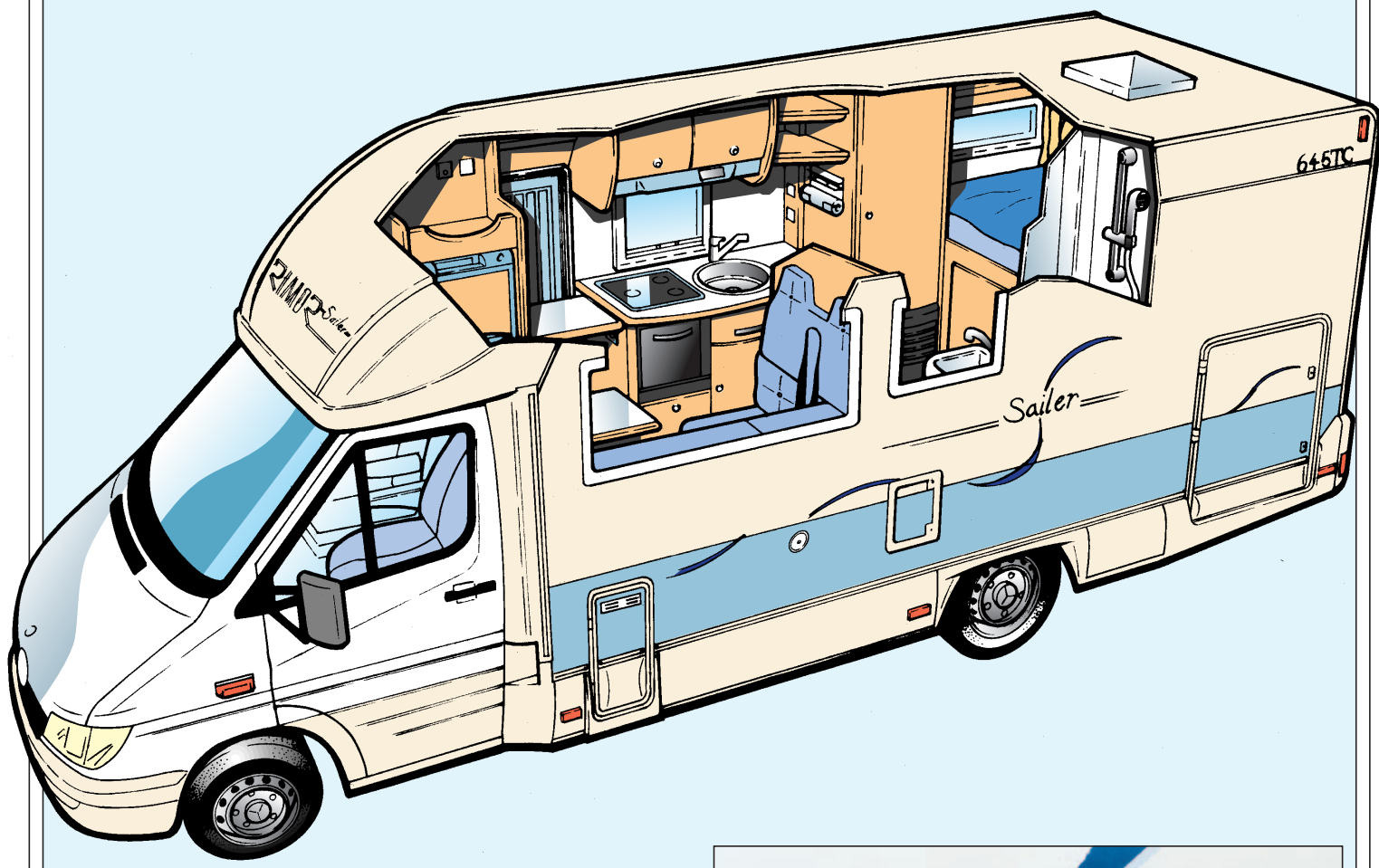
Common sense dictates that this is a sensible practice, though it would be difficult for me to provide objective supportive evidence. It should be noted that such a system does usually mean more of a difference in floor height between the cab and caravan.

Calm waters

For piece of mind, Rimor offers a one-year comprehensive warranty with five-year warranty against damp ingress. The importer feels that Rimor's spares support service is very good, with the majority of spares available by return.

Mercedes provides a two-year warranty and this currently includes membership of a breakdown/rescue service that can accommodate the longest of motorcaravans. (Note: At the time of writing, some doubt had been cast on the start date of the warranty period on non-UK sourced Mercedes motorcaravans - buyers need to check the detail with Southdowns.)





Everything shipshape?

I think so, captain. The test 'van, though a prototype, was very well presented, and performed with reliability. The directors of Southdowns are keen and active family motorcaravanners, and this shows in their attitude to the customer. There were a couple of minor points that would benefit from further development, but overall this smart Sailer was a joy to use and deserves promotion to officer rank!

Everybody loves a Sailer

Any Rimor imported through Southdowns can be equipped with automatic transmission, and most (but not all) can also be supplied with a wide door for disabled use, so it is possible for everybody to love a Sailer!

To conclude, I thought this was a grand 'van on a super base vehicle. It was easy to live in and very appealing to the eye.



<p>I liked: Garage Low profile shape, both the idea and Rimor's execution of it Champagne-coloured skirts and bumpers Performance Five-cylinder smoothness Availability of a wide door for disabled use Efficient insulation, effective heating Internal steps Master light switch near door</p>	<p>Plenty of 230V and 12V outlets Galvanised subframe</p> <p>I would have liked: Reinforced rear passenger seats More secure locks on garage door 230V option for space heating and water heating (now available at extra cost)</p> <p>I disliked: Gloomy central aisle Position of spare wheel No fire extinguisher, fire blanket or smoke alarm</p>
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SPECIFICATION

The vehicle

Base vehicle & engine type: Mercedes-Benz 316CDI long wheelbase chassis cab. Five-cylinder, 2.7-litre direct-injection common-rail diesel engine with turbocharger, intercooler, and exhaust gas catalytic converter, mounted longitudinally

Output: 115kW (156bhp) @ 3800rpm

Max torque: 330Nm (243lb ft) at 1600-2400rpm

Compression ratio: 18:1

Gearbox & drive: Five-speed all synchromesh gearbox driving the rear wheels. Fascia-mounted gear lever

Brakes: Servo-assisted dual-circuit hydraulic operation, discs all round (ventilated at front), floating callipers. Hand-operated parking brake operates on separate rear drums

Steering: Power-assisted rack and pinion, 3.33 turns lock to lock. 385mm soft-feel steering wheel with two-button centre boss horn push

Suspension: Front - fully independent McPherson struts with transverse leaf springs, shock absorbers and anti-roll stabiliser.

Rear - parabolic leaf springs, shock absorbers, and anti-roll stabiliser

Tyres fitted: Continental Vanco 225/70 R15C

Spare wheel position: In underfloor cradle immediately behind the rear axle

Fuel tank capacity/type of fuel: 75 litres, diesel

Instruments: Speedometer, odometer, trip, tachometer, fuel tank level, engine coolant temperature, digital clock

Warning lamps: In instrument nacelle: ignition on/low engine battery charge, low engine oil level, parking brake applied, worn brake pads/low brake fluid level, water in diesel filter (X2), engine diagnostics warning, engine control unit malfunction, engine pre-heaters operating, low engine coolant level, rear fog lamp on, headlamp main beam selected. In switches: hazard flashers, air recirculation option, cab air-conditioning

Windscreen wiper controls: Stalk on right-hand side of steering column. Down for intermittent wipe, up for slow/fast wipe. Push button on end for three wipes + electric screenwash

Immobiliser/alarm: Mercedes key code engine immobiliser, no alarm

Other features: Electrically adjustable exterior mirrors, electrically operated cab windows. Remote control Panasonic radio/CD player. Cab air-conditioning. Extra cost air bag suspension assisters

Performance & economy

Achieved 30- 50 mph acceleration time: 7.2seconds (3rd gear)

Fuel consumption during test: 12.4 litres per 100km (22.8 mpg)

The caravan

Body type & construction: Aluminium clad sandwich construction walls, with GRP moulded low profile luton and rear top panel, ABS skirts

Insulation: Walls 30mm polystyrene, roof 31mm polystyrene, floor 44mm polystyrene

Conversion badged as compliant with EN1646: No

Warranty: Rimor one-year plus five-year damp ingress. Mercedes two years (see text)

Number of keys required: Two (one Merc, one Rimor)

Windows & doors: Seitz tinted acrylic double-glazed windows, all top-hung except lounge, which is a slider. One-piece entrance door with moulded internal double step and burstproof lock

Additional ventilation: Heki 2 panoramic rooflight in lounge. Fiamma thermostatically controlled multi-speed reversible fan over rear bed. Single-speed reversible fan in shower room

Blinds/curtains: Cassette blinds and flyscreens on all caravan windows. Lounge and big window in bedroom also have voile curtains. Cab windows have insulated internal screens and curtains.

Rear sleeping compartment privacy curtain

230V AC system: Hook-up, Rosi consumer unit with Siemens RCB. Distribution system includes auto-reset MCBs. Mains battery charging via 'smart charger'. Six unswitched 13A outlets, spur to fridge/freezer

12V DC system: Leisure battery. Alternator charging. Fuseless charge management and distribution system with auto-reset MCBs, three unswitched polarity-specific outlets

Capacity of caravan battery: 100 amp hr

Lighting: One 16W fluorescent in lounge, two 10W halogen downlighters over kitchen. Central luminaire in bedroom with two 10W filament bulbs. Two 10W halogen reading lamps over bed headboard. Two 10W halogen downlighters in washroom

Cooking facilities: Stainless steel Smev three-burner (two express burners plus one simmerstat burner) recessed hob with electronic ignition, flame-failure devices and drainer. Smev gas-operated thermostatically-controlled electronic ignition oven/grill with flame-failure devices

Extractor fan/cooker hood: Single-speed extractor fan

Refrigerator: Dometic RM6505 three-way AES two-door fridge/freezer. Total capacity 135 litres

Sink & drainer: Stainless steel round bowl sink. No draining surface. Chrome monobloc mixer tap

Water system: Pumped hot and cold water to kitchen sink, washroom basin and shower

Hot water: Storage system. Gas-fired electronic ignition Truma BS10 boiler. Thermostatically controlled to either 50 or 70 degrees C. Capacity 10 litres

Fresh water tank: Located inboard, under passenger seat.

Capacity 100 litres

Fresh water level gauge: Digital percentage read-out on management panel

Waste water tanks: Two - both located underfloor, 66 + 40 litres

Waste water level gauge: None

Space heating: Truma Trumatic S3002 electronic ignition gas-fired thermostatically controlled space heater. Output 3.4kW. Truma Trumavent blown-air distribution system

Gas locker: Located forward nearside. Exterior access door, sealed from the interior, vented to the exterior, plus dropout vent and cylinder restraints

Shower compartment: Located amidships. Washroom has moulded sink, monobloc mixer tap, moulded cupboards, large mirror, towel rail, coat hooks, opening clear-glazed windows, opening rooflight with extraction/ventilation fan. Thetford swivel-bowl electric-flush cassette loo. Separate walk-in shower room has monobloc mixer tap, showerhead, riser rail, moulded shelves and hinged glazed doors

Seating: L-shaped settee with removable section to create two forward-facing travel seats, two swivel cab seats

Table(s)/storage: One pedestal table, no dedicated storage

Berths: Three (or two adults and two children)

Rear restraints: Two three-point inertia-reel belts

Wardrobe: Located offside, just forward of rear bed

Flooring: Removable three-piece whipped-edge cut pile carpet over vinyl floor covering in caravan and rubber mats in cab

Additional features: Extra cost Status 530 adjustable TV/radio aerial and amplifier

Dimensions (* denotes figure supplied by manufacturer or converter)

Overall length: 7.20m (23ft 7.5in)*

Overall width (excl mirrors): 2.27m (7ft 5in)

Overall width (incl mirrors): 2.71m (8ft 10.5in)

Overall height: 2.90m (9ft 6in)*

Length of wheelbase: 4.03m (13ft 2.5in)*

Length of rear overhang: 2.10m (6ft 11in) 52 per cent of wheelbase

Turning circle (kerb to kerb): 13.3m (43ft 7.5in)*

Driver's max leg length: 1.06m (3ft 6in)

Step-up height to caravan: 340mm then 180mm then 180mm (1ft 1.5in then 7in then 7in)

Door aperture: 1855mm x 480mm (6ft 1in x 1ft 7in)

Interior length from dash: 5.76m (18ft 11in)

Interior length behind cab: 4.93m (16ft 2in)

Interior width at waist height: 2.09m (6ft 10in)

Interior height: 1.92m (6ft 3.5in)

Work surface height: 885mm (2ft 11in)

Table dimensions: 830mm x 480mm (2ft 9in x 1ft 7in)

Bed dimensions:

(1) Rear permanent bed

mattress length: 2.07m (6ft 9.5in)

mattress width: 1.33m (4ft 4.5in)

mattress depth: 100mm (4in)

available headroom: 770mm (2ft 6in) min

height of mattress above floor: 1.14m (3ft 9in)

(2) Lounge

mattress length: 1.85m (6ft 1in)

mattress width: 920mm (3ft 0in)

mattress depth: 125mm (5in)

Shower compartment: 1.39m x 1.20m (4ft 7in x 2ft 10.5in)

Wardrobe: 1400mm H x 660mm W x 500mm D

(4ft 7in H x 2ft 2in W x 1ft 8in D)

Gas locker capacity: 2 x 13kg

Gas locker door aperture: 600mm H x 345mm W

(1ft 11.5in H x 1ft 1.5in W)

Rear garage: 2090mm L x 1435mm W x 1235mm H

(6ft 10in L x 4ft 8.5in W x 4ft 0.5in H)

Rear garage door aperture: 1170mm H x 850mm W

(3ft 10in H x 2ft 9.5in W)

Rear garage loading height: 520mm (1ft 8.5in)

Rear garage max weight loading: 200kg*

Max authorised weight: 3500kg*

Unladen mass: 2550kg*

Load capacity: 950kg*

Price (all prices include VAT)

Standard model: £36 801 (ex works)

As tested: £37 666 (ex works) - see options below

On the road charges: £1647 including delivery, gas bottles, hook-up lead, RFL and first registration fee

Optional extras (*denotes item fitted to test vehicle)

Base vehicle options: Sprintshift (£940), Sprintshift - including ABS, ABR and driver's airbag (£2585), passenger's airbag (£605), air bag suspension assistance (approx £600)*

Caravan options: Status 530 aerial and amplifier (£265)*, wide door (£2115), 230V water heater (£161 plus fitting), 230V space heating (£140 plus fitting)

Rimor Sailer 645TC kindly supplied for evaluation by: Southdowns Motorcaravans Ltd, Nyton Road, Aldingbourne, Chichester, West Sussex PO20 6UA (tel: 01243 544251).
Web sites: Southdowns: www.SouthdownsMotorcaravans.co.uk;
Rimor: www.rimor.it.

