

Mercedes is bringing LHD Marco Polos to the UK for the first time



MERCEDES-BENZ Marco Polo and Marco Polo Activity

It has taken five generations, but one of the Continent's top campers is coming here. **Axel Catton** has a look

⊕**Price** £50,000 OTR (approx) ⊕**Sleeps** 4 ⊕**Belts** 4 ⊕**Base vehicle** Mercedes-Benz V-Class
 ⊕**Engine** 2.2-litre turbodiesel, 190bhp ⊕**L/W/H** 5.14/1.93/1.98m (16'7"/6'4"/6'5") ⊕**MTPLM** 2440kg
 ⊕**Payload** 610kg ⊕**Water** (fresh/waste) 38/40 litres ⊕**Leisure battery** 80Ah ⊕**Gas** 1 x 2.75kg

Ah, those pesky steering wheels. If it weren't for our insistence on driving on the left (and mounting our steering wheels on the right), a lot more Continental vans would be available to us in the UK. A case in point: the newest iteration of one of the motorhome world's best-kept secrets: the Mercedes-Benz Marco Polo motorhome by Westfalia.

This model has been around for 34 years but, until now, Mercedes-Benz UK has not stepped into the British market with an M-B-badged offering. Originally launched as a Westfalia-only product on the Mercedes L207/208 van in 1981, the Marco Polo

is now in its fifth generation and M-B UK has confirmed it will go on sale here for the first time next year.

LOTS OF CHOICE

The **Marco Polo** builds on one of the most versatile platforms in the van market: the Merc Vito and V-Class vans, and will be available through Mercedes-Benz car and van dealers in the UK, depending on the platform chosen. Available in a variety of five four-cylinder turbodiesels, it comes with the choice of front-, rear- or all-wheel drive. Yes, on the same platform you can choose whether you want to be pushed or pulled, depending on the engine size. No final list of engines

available for the UK has been announced, though.

For a panel-van conversion, the Marco Polo is luxurious. It sleeps four (two on the fold-down two-seater bench in the cabin and two in the pop-up roof) and seats four comfortably. Both the driver's and passenger's seats can be rotated in conventional fashion, although doing so requires some skill and effort due to the limited space.

The kitchen aisle to the left (in LHD form) contains a cooker, a sink and a nifty coolbox which rear-seat passengers can access while in transit without having to leave their seats. Clever ideas include the foldaway table that stays attached to the

kitchen and slides away when not in use. The hob and sink lids are transparent glass so you still get some light in when they are up.

Another neat idea is the carrying case for outdoor table and chairs, which is suspended from the rear load shelf in order to allow extra storage below.

The control panel in the lower dashboard operates the electrically powered pop-up-roof, programs the stationary heater and displays the levels of fresh and waste water.

We haven't seen previous versions of the Marco Polo in the UK because M-B vans in RHD form always have sliding doors on both sides to reduce the number of body-in-white variants the manufacturer must produce. This has made it difficult to offer a kitchen aisle as in the Marco Polo.

We spoke to Vito expert Andreas Rein and suggested leaving the left door and creating a closed rear panel for the kitchen. "That's not a bad idea, but we will have to see if it could work and what the numbers are," he said. Mercedes-Benz UK

WHAT MOTORHOME? Elevating-roof camper



CHANGING SIDES

Until this year, Mercedes did not produce its popular Marco Polo for sale in the UK. It is due to appear with left-hand drive next year



SLIP SLIDING AWAY

The Marco Polo is full of ideas, such as a folding table that can stay fixed to the galley and be slid out of the way when necessary



LET THE SUN IN

Lids on the hob and sink are made of transparent glass. When they're lifted, they do not interfere with daylight that streams inside



OPEN-AND-SHUT CASE

Another great touch is the purpose-built carrying case for a set of folding outdoor chairs and a table, which makes dining al fresco easy



NOT STANDING ROOM ONLY

As well as providing headroom, the manually operated pop-up roof creates two extra berths – and it's standard fit on the Marco Polo

spokesman Angus Fitton hinted that the reason for the launch delay was partly due to engineering work to enable both variants to be offered in the UK.

MARCO YOUNG AT HEART

As the name suggests, the new **Marco Polo Activity** is aimed at younger buyers who are looking for a vehicle that fits their lifestyles and has space for their outdoor equipment. The Activity has a three-seat bench in the rear (it sleeps three) plus two swivelling front seats. The standard-fit, manually operated pop-up roof offers two extra beds.

The bench and the clever multipurpose table can be moved forwards or

backwards on their sliding rails to maximise living or luggage space. The seats are slightly firmer here and the bed is a little too firm. During our one-night test, the pop-top's bed proved to be ultra-comfortable, thanks to its slatted frame.

According to Andreas Rein, inspiration for the sleeping arrangements came from another part of Mercedes-Benz. "We are a big company, so when we needed advice on how to create comfortable beds in a small space, we sought help from our Actros truck division."

Information on which models will be available in Britain – and when – is due late this year. ©

MARCO POLO ACTIVITY



TARGET MARKET

This version of the Marco Polo is aimed at young outdoorsy types who need space for all their kit, as well as a place to eat and sleep at the end of a day of strenuous activity

