

Words & pictures  
Ben Field



# Room for two

Bailey's 635 features a layout designed to give a couple the maximum amount of space in a sub-seven metre coachbuilt – and it costs less than £40,000

## AT A GLANCE

- PRICE FROM £38,795
- BERTHS/TRAVEL SEATS 2/2

**B**AILEY has only been building motorhomes since 2011 but it has become a big player in that short time with the Approach SE range and its replacement, the Approach Autograph line-up. For 2015, Bailey has added a lower-price, entry-level range of four motorhomes under the Approach Advance banner. It hopes this will take its production to over 1,000 motorhomes a year.

The range goes from the two-berth, sub-six metre, 615 (see the January issue) through to the six-berth, front-dinette-and-end-lounge 665. In between are the fixed bed 640 and the 635 tested here.

The 635 features an entirely new layout for Bailey (though not for the industry) with a large front, *vis-à-vis* lounge, mid-mounted kitchen and end washroom. It's a dedicated two-berth with room to breathe in a 6.63-metre-long coachbuilt body.

The 635 will debut, with the rest of the Advance range, at the early 2015 shows, but here, by way of a sneak preview, is its first full road test.

## A MORE SLENDER CONTENDER

The Bailey Advance coachbuilt bodies are 8cm narrower than the Autograph range, and this helps to give the models a neat blend where the body joins the cab. The low-line roof describes an attractive curve above the windscreen, but the body lacks curvature elsewhere and ends up looking rather boxy and, it has to be said, caravan-like.

Looking thoroughly modern, however, is the new Peugeot Boxer front end. The 2014 facelift has trimmed all the excess fat off the cab and given it a really clean new look. The sharp lines of the lights and the smaller bumper are the stand-out design features over the old model. The bumper isn't all form over function, either. Where the previous bumper was one



- FOR** • Well-priced and well-equipped • Plenty of storage • Large, open-plan layout • Large end washroom with great separate shower • Great to drive, with Al-Ko chassis
- AGAINST** • Peugeot engines less refined than Fiat • Boxy external looks • Fiddly, small bore waste water drain

Even with the free-standing table erected the lounge feels very spacious

**WHAT'S NEW?**

The Bailey Approach Advance 635 is all-new for 2015. It is part of a range of four Approach Advance models that includes a pair of two-berth motorhomes, a four-berth (albeit with only two travel seats), and a full six-berth. All are based on the recently facelifted Peugeot Boxer and sit on a lowered Al-Ko chassis. Prices start at £38,515.

Construction uses the same Alu-Tech system and similar insulation and panel thicknesses as the more expensive Approach Autograph models.

The first examples of the Advance range are expected to appear on dealer forecourts in April, by which time they will have made their public debut at the Manchester, Glasgow and NEC shows.

See the January 2015 issue for a report on the smaller Approach Advance 615 model.

**QUALITY COUNTS ★★★★★**

Bailey has made the 635 more affordable by not going spec-mad, or going for exotic trim levels. But it is certainly no exercise in austerity with corners cut in quality. In fact it retains a lot of the opulent feel of the Approach Autograph range. On the test vehicle, the cupboard doors over the kitchen had a large gap between the base and the cupboard carcass. Up front the headrests appeared to have been hurriedly trimmed, and were rather a poor fit. It is worth remembering that the vehicle shown is a prototype – these small faults will be finessed out of the production models.

solid lump of plastic that needed complete replacement in the event of a prang, the new bumper is made up of several sections, all individually replaceable should you have a knock.

Body and cab graphics are minimal and tasteful, only on the roof and across the back does Bailey indulge in a bit of free advertising, its name writ large and picked out in silver.

The Alu-Tech body is pre-fitted with fixing points for a ladder, roof rack and bike rack, which will ensure secure fitting of these useful extras.

**DRIVING THE NEW BOXER**

The cab facelift extends inside with an interior that looks, and feels, just a touch less van-like than before.

Little appears to have been done to the 2.2-litre HDi engine, which is still noisy on first start-up and generally less refined than the 2.3-litre Multijet II unit found in

the Fiat Ducato. For all that, the Peugeot engine pulls very well for its 130bhp output (no upgrades are offered, nor is there an automatic), and markedly better than the facelifted Ducato that seems to have lost some grunt under the surgeon's knife.

Like the Autograph range (and uniquely at this price point), all Advance models sit on a really low Al-Ko AMC chassis. This creates an easily accessible (30cm) entrance step up into the habitation area, but it's what the chassis delivers out on the road that's far more significant.

The 635 is exceptionally stable. It corners without excessive lean and isn't sent off course by sidewinds or when passing trucks out on the motorway. The steering is direct enough to kid you that you're driving a large van conversion. You get a similarly good drive in the Autograph models, but in these there is always the wider body to consider – there are no such concerns



External hatch could usefully be bigger



Kitchen top lockers open outwards

with the relatively narrow Advance models. If your move to a coachbuilt has been put off because of sloppy handling concerns, try a Bailey Advance – not all coachbuilts are the same.

The 635's 6.63-metre length is no trouble to position when on site. The door mirrors provide great vision down the flanks for fear-free reversing; just remember that there's a 1.9m body overhang behind the rear tyre. The Bailey's low ride height does a good job of disguising the overhang when you view the motorhome side on. But wiring for a reversing camera is included in the price if you want extra assurance when manoeuvring.

All Advance models have a maximum weight of 3,500kg, so they can be driven by anyone with a regular car licence, without the need to take an additional test to gain the C1 entitlement. This makes the Advance range accessible to a much wider, and potentially younger, group of buyers.

**STEP INTO SPACE**

Open up the habitation door (towards the rear on the nearside), take the small step up and the interior rolls out before your eyes all the way to the distant outpost of the cab. It is truly vast in here, and the feeling of space is helped greatly by the simplicity of the layout. Here's an open-plan space unencumbered with a fussy dinette, a washroom that looms large centre stage or an awkwardly placed kitchen.

In the lounge, near-two-metre-long benches face each other across a wide aisle. There's room for three on either settee, with two more on the swivelled driver and passenger seats. Four could eat at the fold-out table that stands firmly on proper legs – no socket-mounted, single-legged, wobbly tables here, thank you.

The ceiling height in the lounge is 1.95m, and the combination of a rooflight, large windows either

It doesn't feel budget or basic in here, despite omissions like the lack of an overcab sunroof



Dresser unit adds extra worktop opposite the galley



**FACT FILE**

**PRICE FROM** £38,795

**PRICE AS TESTED** £39,994

**EXTRAS FITTED** Premium Pack – cab air-conditioning, passenger airbag, Remis concertina windscreen blind, removable cab carpet, DAB radio with Bluetooth connectivity and USB connection point (£1,199)

**OTHER EXTRAS AVAILABLE** Motorhome bedding sets to coordinate with soft furnishings (£209), microwave oven (£149), four-year extension to standard six-year bodyshell integrity guarantee (£199), three-year extension to standard three-year manufacturer warranty (£795)

**TYPE APPROVAL** European Whole Vehicle

**BERTHS** 2

**TRAVEL SEATS (INC DRIVER)** 2

**DIMENSIONS** 6.63m L, 2.34m W, 2.78m H

**INTERIOR HEIGHT** 1.95m (lounge), 2.10m (kitchen)

**MAXIMUM WEIGHT** 3,500kg

**PAYLOAD** 729kg

**BEDS** Double 2.07m x 1.86m or singles 1.86m x 0.73m

**FRESH WATER** 90 litres (inboard)

**WASTE WATER** 90 litres (underslung)

**GAS** 1 x 13kg and 1 x 6kg

**LEISURE BATTERY** 80Ah

**MAINS SOCKETS** 5

**BASE VEHICLE**

**PEUGEOT BOXER AL-KO**

**ENGINE** 2.2-litre HDi, 130bhp, Euro V, front-wheel drive, six-speed manual

**MPG ON TEST** 26.0

**COOKING/HEATING**

**COOKING** Thetford Duplex oven/grill and three-burner hob

**FRIDGE** Dometic 103-litre fridge

**HEATING** Whale 4kW blown-air, gas/mains

**BOILER** Whale Rapid Heat 8-litre, gas/mains

**WHERE CAN I BUY A BAILEY 635?**

There are approved Bailey motorhome dealers all across the UK. Go to [baileyofbristol.co.uk](http://baileyofbristol.co.uk) click on the 'choose your retailer' link and tap in your postcode to find your nearest dealer.





No shortage of room here for the chef to work



With its separate shower, the washroom borders on palatial

side, and the great swathe of windscreen up front mean this is a space that is going to feel light in all but the dreariest weather. When the light does fade, six LED spots and a roof-mounted lamp do a good job of illumination.

Storage up front would be good for a family of four, for a couple it is almost overkill. There are six overhead lockers with shelves, and deep, open-fronted storage above the cab on both sides. Under the nearside bench there are two storage boxes big enough for bags and bedding. The front storage box can also be accessed through an exterior hatch. One problem here is that the hatch is significantly smaller than the box, so any large loading, or unloading, will need to be done from the inside. This could be a problem if you need to pack up a grubby barbecue and charcoal or a mud-soaked awning groundsheet.

**FUNCTIONAL FOR FOOD**

Given the entry-level nature of the 635, Bailey hasn't gone spec-crazy in the kitchen. This is a functional, no-frills kind of place, and I don't think the motorhome suffers one bit because of it.

At the heart of the kitchen is a Thetford Duplex

oven with a triangular, three-burner hob set into the worktop above. For £149 you can complement the cooking facilities with a microwave in one of the cupboards above the kitchen. The Dometic 103-litre fridge next to the oven has plenty of capacity for a couple's chilled needs. The matt finish front of the fridge is a great idea, it's not going to pick up scratches and is a lot easier to keep clean than stainless-steel or gloss black.

Worktop space around the hob and sink is bordering on plentiful for a motorhome. If that's not enough, there's just under a metre-wide of clear worktop space across the aisle on the nearside of the 635.

Where many motorhome kitchens feel cramped, the 635's is anything but. The aisle down the centre of the 'van is wide so an open fridge door won't cause a roadblock, and if two people want to work on lunch together they can, without getting in each other's way.

Storage in the main kitchen is abundant for a two-berth. There are three shelved cupboards above, two below and a cutlery drawer. On the test vehicle, the larger double-door cupboard over the kitchen had a large gap between the base of the doors and the carcass. This is a just-built prototype, not a current production model, and

**WHO IS BAILEY?**

Bailey started business in 1948 and built caravans exclusively until the 2011 launch of the Approach SE range of motorhomes. It made a huge splash, thanks to its combination of keen pricing and high spec, while its extensive crash-testing programme made Baileys the standard-setters for safety.



The Approach Autograph range arrived in 2013, and for 2015 the new Approach Advance range joins the Bailey line-up.

The Bristol-based company builds caravans and motorhomes on a fully-mechanised production line and employs 325 people.

All its vehicles have used Alu-Tech construction since 2009.

**THANKS TO**

Yarwell Mill Caravan and Camping Park, Mill Road, Yarwell, Cambridgeshire PE8 6PS. Tel: 01780 782344 yarwellmill.co.uk



**BEFORE YOU BUY  
CONSIDER THESE...**



**FROM  
£38,849**

**Eddis Autoquest 175**

**BASED ON** Peugeot Boxer

**NOTES** This is the motorhome that the Bailey has to beat. The Autoquest 175 introduced the end washroom layout to the budget-priced coachbuilt market. It's significantly longer than its rival from Bristol, at 7.20m, but doesn't appear to offer a great deal more, except a 155-litre fridge/freezer. The essential Lux Pack adds £1,225 to the price.

**READ THE ROAD TEST** December 2013 (Marquis version)



**FROM  
£46,999**

**Swift Esprit 442**

**BASED ON** Fiat Ducato

**NOTES** The Swift Esprit range is aimed more at the Bailey Approach Autograph than the cheaper Advance range, but Swift's entry-level Escape doesn't come in end washroom format. Like the Eddis, the Swift is well over seven metres long but here you get more spec and sleeker looks for your extra cash. Remember that the extra half-metre of length will make it less manoeuvrable, though. *Photo shows Bessacarr version.*

**READ THE ROAD TEST** December 2013 (Bessacarr version)



**FROM  
£39,790**

**Chausson 510 Flash**

**BASED ON** Fiat Ducato

**NOTES** If the Swift and Eddis above appear huge to your eyes and even the Bailey looks a bit big, how about this six-metre Chausson? It's still got a really roomy lounge (with a big overcab sunroof for added daylight), as well as a superb end washroom, although the kitchen has only a high-set grill and no oven. It makes up for that with a double bed that simply glides down from the ceiling at the touch of a button. And you can also have this model on the fabulous-to-drive Ford Transit. *Photo shows Ford-based version.*

**READ THE ROAD TEST** March 2014



Lounge settees convert easily into single beds or this huge double

judging by the superb fit of the rest of the cupboard and locker doors, this fault isn't going to find its way into a 635 at your nearest Bailey dealer.

If you lost one of the upper cupboards to a microwave, there are two overhead lift-front lockers on the nearside you could utilise, and then there's the huge shelved cupboard beneath the worktop on the same side.

Running straight on from the lounge without any walls or barriers to impede it, the kitchen already benefits from the natural light that fills the motorhome. The kitchen also has its own rooflight, and a good-sized side window above the hob, set into a pale wall for maximum light reflection. In addition, there are three flush-fit LED spotlights set in a plinth above the kitchen cupboards and a further three beneath the cabinets to illuminate the worktop.

**AS BIG AS AT HOME**

Washrooms that spread out across the full width of the motorhome at the back are more often found in larger,

high-end offerings. To find one in a sub-£40,000 vehicle is welcome. But then the 635 has clearly been designed as an open-plan layout; to put a washroom anywhere else but across the back wouldn't have worked with that remit.

So here it sits, just past the kitchen and immediately on the right as you enter the motorhome. The door opens to reveal a loo, washstand with basin and a separate shower cubicle. Here's the reason end washrooms are so desirable – everything has its own space, with no need to share your shower with a toilet or do battle with a clingy, space-saving shower curtain.

The shower cubicle is not that much smaller than most of us have at home. The plastic moulding is beautifully finished and includes a shelf and a pair of light pods for LED spots. There's a roof window and a bi-fold shower door that properly seals off the cubicle from the rest of the washroom. The showerhead is a water-saving Ecocamel.

With the loo seat turned into position, legroom in the



Gas struts on settee bases for easy access



Overcab shelves are ideal for cab window screens



**If only it didn't look so boxy and caravan-like**

washroom becomes more limited – you're not tripping over, but you can't march about the space unimpeded. A small window on the back wall lets in enough light to make the washroom bright and welcoming, while the light, curved ceiling is effective at multiplying the available natural light. At night, a single ceiling-mounted light, in conjunction with the shower LED spots keeps the washroom well lit.

There's shelved storage in the washstand, below the basin, and the 635's wardrobe is positioned on the offside with a long rail for hanging clothes and room below for shoes, washbags and other bathroom storage overspill.

You always want a washroom to be warm. With a dedicated vent pumping warm air from the Whale 4kW heater, the 635's is always a few degrees above the rest of the 'van. Cosy.

Fit and finish of cabinets and equipment is very good. That's a sentence that could be applied to the rest of the 635, bar that small glitch in the kitchen. It's made all the more impressive because this is a first-off-the-line prototype. Rarely are such development vehicles so well finished, especially at this end of the market.

**A VERY BIG BEDROOM**

What happens when you take two large benches and turn them into a bed? You get a double that is 2.07 metres long and 1.86 metres wide – or one of the biggest beds you're



**Wardrobe is included in the rear washroom**

likely to see in a motorhome of any size. If you're old school, that's 6ft 9½in by 6ft 1in. And if you're comparing it with home then it beats a super king-sized mattress on both length and width!

Making up this behemoth of a bed is incredibly easy (as long as you've got sheets and duvet of sufficiently gargantuan dimensions) – slats pull out of the offside bench to meet the nearside bench, then the bench base and back cushions pull down on top and the bed is made in under a minute. It's comfortable, too. This is helped by the fact that the bench cushions are designed for sitting and lying on, and they don't have to fulfil that additional task of being a firm, belted travel seat.

The benches can also be made into two single beds. At 73cm wide they aren't over-generous for the fuller frame, but if you're relatively slim and tall, the 1.86m length will be fine for you. And, of course, in single bed mode access to the washroom at night is as easy as at home.

Obviously, you lose the lounge when the bed is made up, although there is still room to sit in the swivelled driver and passenger seats. In the summer, the fold-out table can go outdoors and you can lounge and eat out there, leaving the bed made up, if you like. The well-thought-out design of the 635 means that access to and through the kitchen isn't restricted when the bed is in position, so a morning cup of tea, or even breakfast in bed will be no problem at all. Pass me the papers and a bacon buttie...

**IF YOU CAN'T AFFORD NEW...**

Here are three lower-cost front lounge 'vans to tempt you...



**2014 Elddis Accordo 105**

**NOTES** If you can live with one owner putting 1,300 miles on the clock since this was registered last year, you can save more than £4,000. The previous owner had a reversing camera fitted, making the Accordo even easier to manoeuvre. But as this is only six metres long it won't have the spacious feel of the Bailey, although the layout is broadly similar.

**DEALER** Coleford Leisure  
colefordleisure.co.uk



**2001 Auto-Sleeper Pollensa**

**NOTES** This has a front lounge with a full dinette and side settee. Its rear kitchen has the compact washroom alongside. It's covered just 33,500 miles in 14 years, so has had a fairly easy time. Accessories include an awning and a TV. Upholstery is typically garish for the year, but at this price you could factor in a retrim. Alternatively, revel in the retro looks and put the money towards an extended trip.

**DEALER** Southdowns  
southdownsmotorhomecentre.co.uk



**2008 Swift Bolero 630 EK**

**NOTES** The Bolero is a good-looking, 6.54m low-profile with a front lounge, rear kitchen and corner washroom. The lounge converts into a double bed or singles, but the washroom is not palatial – for that you'd have to find a Bolero EW. This example has done 32,000 miles. It comes with an awning and a TV aerial and was one of the first of the modern low-profiles.

**DEALER** TC Motorhomes  
tcmotorhomes.com

**WHICH motorhome says ★★★★★** The Approach Advance 635 has a terrific layout for two. It is well built, great to drive and only the only give-away that it is an entry-level motorhome is the price tag.

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