



Mercedes-Benz B-Class

Be all you can B

Review | The B-Class is Mercedes-Benz' family car. It is not a classic sedan, instead the body type is something between a van and a luxury car. Since 2005 Mercedes-Benz has had great success with this comfortable space miracle and now it is time for a brand new B-Class. This generation is supposed to offer even more space and an even richer feeling.

Remove the logo off of the nose, the logos on the rear and all badges in the cabin. Even then a Mercedes-Benz can easily be recognised by doing a short testdrive. It is the top of the range Mercedes-Benz models that especially perform with so much ease that the driver automatically relaxes. Many give such a feeling of superiority that the driver gets a self-satisfied smirk on the face without noticing (look for it next time you're in a traffic jam).

The previous generation of the B-Class distinguished itself from other MPVs (Multi Purpose Vehicles) by offering plenty of luxury and an above average build quality. Still the privileged feeling of driving a genuine Mercedes-Benz was lacking. The new B-Class does offer that feeling from the moment the driver gets behind the steering wheel!



Just like every other MPV, the B-Class offers lots of cabin space. The designers succeeded in hiding the basic square shape even better than before. Instead the B-Class looks more like a tall estate than a streamlined van. The sleek nose seamlessly goes with the boxy cabin to make for a dynamic appearance that is rare among cars like this.

Space

Despite the trend, the B-Class does not offer a raised seating position. Instead, the driver sits like this is a normal car. The head and legroom in the front is excellent. The seats can be adjusted in every which way, to allow for an excellent driving position.



In many previews Mercedes stated that the B-Class would offer more room in the back than the S-Class (Mercedes' top class limousine for politicians and captains of industry). Now that the B-Class is available for testing it turns out this was an empty promise. The B-Class does offer lots of head and legroom in the rear, yet a true limousine certainly is more comfortable! Also: the rear of the front seats is made of hard plastic and to protect one's knees the rear passengers automatically sit sideways slightly.

Easy Vario Plus

Measuring 486 litres the boot is of average size. By folding down the back seat this can be extended to 1,545 litres and that's just above average.

With the optional "Easy-Vario Plus" the front passenger seat can also be folded up, so even long pieces of luggage will fit. When the vehicle is fitted with the base "Vario Plus" the back seat is mounted on rails, so that, depending on the situation, more boot space or more legroom can be created.



Equipment

It is the build quality and equipment level that raises the B-Class above other MPVs. Depending on the chosen trim level the atmosphere in the cabin is either chic or sporty. The materials used are always of top quality. Despite the version the steering wheel is pleasantly small and sporty.

Except for some details, the B-Class is always more basic than the more expensive models. For example, the display on the dashboard is fixed and doesn't move out of sight when the car is parked (and therefore might draw attention from the wrong crowd). It is as if the makers had to hold back to prevent the B-Class from exceeding the bigger Mercedes-Benz cars. Some buttons and levers are also simpler to emphasize this is "just" a B-Class. Also: an everyday feature like keyless entry is not available.



The stock audio system has fair sound quality for a car in this price range. Because of the great improvement, the optional "Harman Kardon" system is still worth the extra money.

Optionally the B-Class can act as a "router" so that all occupants can share one gateway to the Internet. However, Mercedes opted for Bluetooth to do this, which means every connected device needs its own driver. Because of Apple's policy, this means an iPhone cannot join the Mercedes network. It would have been smarter to share an Internet connection via wifi, in that way it would have worked with all devices.



Every B-Class comes with "Collision Prevention Assist" as standard. A radar in the nose looks ahead and warns (or brakes) if a head-to-tail collision is imminent. With the extra "Pre Safe" package the seat belts are tensioned and the windows are closed if an accident is unavoidable.

"Blind Spot Assist" is a warning light in the mirror that

shows if there's an object in the blind spot. This only works at speeds above 30 km/h, so in city traffic it cannot prevent accidents with bicycles.



Handling

The test drive had an unfortunate start. The first corner after the parking lot was sharper than anticipated. Because braking will just cause the car to lose its balance, the only solution was to keep steering. It turned out the B-Class grips the asphalt like no other! Both handling and the feeling in the steering wheel are much better than those of other MPVs.

This is doubly so for the basic suspension in combination with 17 inch rims and size 225/45 Dunlop tyres. The optional sports suspension certainly does improve roadholding, but it is so firm that the novelty wears out quickly. The B-Class with sports suspension is as firm as the average hot hatch and that's very unpleasant for the passengers.



Petrol

The B-Class is available with two petrol and two diesel engines. Both petrol engines have a displacement of 1.6 litres, because of different motor management they have an output of either 122 PS / 200 Nm or 156 PS / 250 Nm. Maximum torque is available from very low revs (1,250 rpm) so shifting is merely optional.

The difference between both engines is only noticeable when driving hard. Although the "B180" already performs very well, the stronger "B200" really spits nails at high revs. The factory promises the B-Class will do 5.9 litres per 100 km, but this is almost impossible to achieve. Expect about 7 litres per 100 km in real life.

To save fuel, all engines are fitted with a stop/start-system, this applies to the automatic as well. In the latter case stop/start only functions when firmly pressing the brake. By loosely pressing the brake pedal one can avoid the engine from stopping. This really comes in handy in heavy traffic.



Diesel

Both diesel engines also have an equal displacement. The "B180 CDI" and "B200 CDI" both measure 1.8 litres. The "B180" generates 109 PS / 250 Nm which is already more than sufficient to come along with traffic.

The "B200 CDI" delivers 136 PS / 300 Nm and does so with more ease. Because the maximum output has to be used less frequently, the stronger diesel used less fuel than the base model (test figures: 5.5 litres per 100 km for the B180 CDI and 4.8 litres for the B200 CDI). When combined with the seven-speed automatic gearbox, just a gentle touch on the accelerator is enough for a powerful acceleration. In this way the B-Class really gives that superior feeling that distinguishes a Mercedes-Benz from just an average car.



Conclusion

Family cars come in all shapes and sizes. The Mercedes-Benz B-Class offers lots of space and

practical use, but distinguishes itself with more dynamic looks, an immaculate build quality and sublime handling. Thanks to modern technology all engines perform well, while fuel economy is favourable as well.

Optionally the B-Class can be fitted with many luxury and safety enhancing options that were only available on the big Mercedes models up to now. This is why the B-Class delivers that true Mercedes-Benz feeling more than ever before. ■



Specifications

Mercedes-Benz B-Class B200 Sport

Size and weight



Length x width x height	436 x 179 x 156 cm
Wheelbase	270 cm
Kerb weight	1.395 kg
Trailer	695 kg
Trailer - braked	1.200 kg
Fuel capacity	50 l
Luggage space	486/1545 l
Tyre size	205/55R16

Engine and performance



Capacity	1595 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/
Max power	156 PS @ 5300 rpm
Max torque	250 Nm @ 1250 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	8.6 secs
Top speed	220 km/h
Average mileage	5.9 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	8 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.7 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	138 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 23,995
Price base model	Â£ 21,290