



Mercedes-Benz B-class (2005 - 2011)

From A to C

Review | Mercedes-Benz unleashed a small revolution with the A-Class. Never before had there been a car introduced that managed to get the space out of its height instead of its length. And even when the competition caught up a few years later, the A-Class still remained more than just a spacious little high car. Now the German manufacturer takes it one step further. With the B-Class, Mercedes wants to create a whole new segment for a second time. Does it work?

At first glance the concept of the B-Class is no different from the, by now, familiar A-Class. The newcomer is less high and less narrow, which is mostly beneficial to its looks. For a good sized 4 person MPV the B-Class has a sturdy appearance. Especially the wide rear lights work well. Only the double Mercedes star on the bonnet is slightly over the top.



Interior

What Mercedes means to achieve with the B-Class becomes apparent when getting into the car. Just like the exterior, the interior too has an immaculate finish. This is obviously no family van but a business car with extras. The dashboard is made from a soft synthetic material that gives when it is pushed. Several chrome accents give the interior a distinctive stamp.

With it the B-Class distinguishes itself from the masses, but the privileged feel of a Mercedes is not forthcoming. This is partly because of the equipment for the test vehicle hardly has any option-packages. Like every other Mercedes the optional extras make the car, after which the Mercedes feel does come to expression. According to the pictures in the brochure the B-Class can be transformed into a luxurious alluring business-cocoon with walnut wood and leather.

Space

The equipment may be basic but there is plenty of space. The top of the dashboard is placed over the lower edge of the side windows. Even in the lowest position of the height-adjustable front seat the driver has a relaxed view over the traffic and not an obscured one through it. It does mean that headroom is limited despite the height of the car. Legroom however is enormous. With the front seat in the furthest back position even a 3-metre long driver would be extremely comfortable. The number of pockets and compartments is considerable, including useful extras such as netting to the central console and a sunglass holder above the driver's door.



In the back the B-Class offers a lot of space too. Partly because of the smart shape of the backside of the front seats adults are very comfortable in the back of the "B". The safety of youngsters has been well considered by providing standard Isofix bases to attach child seats. It makes the B-Class at one time elegant enough to take business relations along, while moments later a group of children can take a ride.



The luggage room is in a word huge. The back seat can be folded in two uneven parts for even more space. This does leave a considerable threshold, which can be eliminated with the optional "Easy Vario Plus" system. Moreover this system makes it possible to take out the front seat entirely. In practice this is "vario" although at first not very "easy".

Engines

The B-Class is available in four petrol and two diesel engines. The test vehicle has a 1.7-litre 4-cylinder petrol engine. This engine makes an uninspiring sound and the mechanism of the gearbox can sometimes be heard. This takes a bit off the Mercedes-experience, but in city traffic the B170 is doing well. Here the car is manoeuvrable and easy to judge when parking.

On country roads the B-Class is comfortable and reasonably quiet, but performances lag behind. Once the car has momentum any speed can easily be maintained so that large distances can be covered in all tranquillity. For swift overtaking however changing down a gear is necessary.

Road holding of this slightly higher than average car can be compared to that of most other models this size. In bends the B-Class leans over more than a normal passenger car but this is a matter of adjustment. The road holding is good and the B-Class is in extreme circumstances good-natured and most of all safe.



Conclusion

Did it work? Did Mercedes-Benz succeed for a second time to tap into a completely new segment with the B-Class? The answer is a cautious "yes". Mercedes

find themselves on the slippery slope of the "premium" automobile. This is a nice word for paying more for exactly the same.

After all, a spacious 4 person MPV is nothing new. To put it more strongly: apart from the safety construction, the enormous space or the "Easy Vario Plus" system are not revolutionary. The B-Class is therefore not meant for families who are trying to decide between driving nurseries. For the price of the B-Class driven in this test report, they can easily find a massive 7-passenger space wonder complete with folding seats and roller blinds of a different make.

Each of those family vans though has no flair, charm or appeal whatsoever. It is on those points that the B-Class indeed scores. The B-Class is therefore meant for the business driver that appreciates the luxury and prestige of a Mercedes, but at the same time looks for maximum space and practical solutions. With it the B-Class has literally and figuratively speaking closed the gap between the A-Class and the C-Class. ■



Specifications

Mercedes-Benz B-class (2005 - 2011) B170

Size and weight



Length x width x height	427 x 178 x 160 cm
Wheelbase	279 cm
Kerb weight	1.310 kg
Trailer	645 kg
Trailer - braked	1.300 kg
Fuel capacity	54 l
Luggage space	550/2245 l
Tyre size	195/65R15

Engine and performance



Capacity	1699 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/2
Max power	116 PS @ 5500 rpm
Max torque	155 Nm @ 3500 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	11.3 secs
Top speed	184 km/h
Average mileage	7 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	unknown
Mileage extra urban	unknown
CO2 emissions	171 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 18,485
Price base model	Â£ 17,235