

New Mercedes-Benz Tourer Means Bus Brilliance

A technologically leading-edge mid-sized bus, the Tourer, has been officially launched on the New Zealand market by Mercedes-Benz. Based on an Extra-long Sprinter van, the Tourer brings luxury car standards of safety, drivability and passenger comfort compared with the truck-based vehicles that until now have dominated the sector, says Brian Carr, Mercedes-Benz Light Commercial Vehicles Sales Manager. "For tour operators who want to complement their own quality brand and achieve low operating costs at a very competitive purchase price against the Fuso Rosa, the Tourer is a serious option," he adds. The Tourer arrives in New Zealand either fitted with 19 passenger seats plus the driver's seat, or as a trimmed and lined shell, complete with windows, ready for a local seating fit-out to meet specific customer requirements. Importantly, the Tourer also completes the Mercedes-Benz passenger service vehicle range, making it by far the most comprehensive in New Zealand. "We start with the Vito Mixto with five seats, the Crew Bus with nine, the Mini-Bus with up to 11 and then go to the Sprinter range with 12-15

seats," Brian explains. "Now we have the Tourer with up to 20 seats, then the full-sized bus and coach range with from 30 to 50 seats." Even with its standard seating the Tourer offers additional seating versatility. For example a seat between the driver's and front passenger's seat can enable it to seat 20, or the rear-most row can be deleted to enable the bus to accommodate the driver and 15 or 16 passengers plus additional luggage. "The Tourer is also suitable as a school bus as it exceeds the latest safety and emissions requirements in the new contracts, and with bench seats and standing room can carry approximately 30 students," Brian says. Standard features of the Tourer include an electric sliding door with a step that automatically deploys when the door is opened and retracts when it is closed. The door can be operated from the dashboard, from the door itself or remotely from the driver's key. The Tourer arrives fully ducted for heating and cooling in the front, with a separate roof-mounted air-conditioner for cooling in the passenger

compartment. Optional additional heating and air-conditioning equipment can extend to separate temperature and air flow controls at every passenger seat.

Powering the Tourer is a choice of the Mercedes-Benz OM 646 DELA four cylinder common rail diesel engine with ratings of 110kW (150hp) and 330Nm or the powerful OM 642 DELA common rail V6 diesel rated at 135kW (184hp) and 400Nm. Both engines meet the Euro 4 emissions standard.

Standard transmission is the refined Mercedes-Benz five-speed full automatic, while a six-speed manual gearbox is optional.

The Tourer's industry-leading adaptive ESP stability control system, which compensates automatically for changes to the vehicle's centre of gravity as the number of passengers on board increases or decreases, also incorporates traction control. But for arduous conditions the Mercedes-Benz 4ETS all-wheel-drive, which includes high and low ratios and electronically controls torque delivery to each wheel to optimise traction, is also available.

Although the national network of Mercedes-Benz dealers prides itself on after-sales service, the before-sales service available from Daimler Trucks also leads the industry, says Brian Carr. The company's experience in modern technologies is unmatched.

"We can provide technical support for vehicle modifiers in every area from additional lighting to connectivity with external devices," says Brian. "There's the potential to fit systems that enable passengers to connect their own iPods to listen to their

own music, power their laptops or recharge their camera batteries. "It's now even possible for a passenger to take a photograph of a scene or fellow passenger and email it home or post it on their Facebook page while traveling in the bus to the next destination," he adds.

Despite its level of technological support and its comfortable accommodation for up to 20 passengers, the Tourer is externally surprisingly compact. On a wheelbase of 4325mm it measures 7345mm in overall length and is just 2700mm high. Drivers will also welcome its nimble 15.6 metre turning circle.

Passengers will be impressed by the European standard of ride comfort provided by the Tourer bus, but operators are more likely to appreciate its low total cost of ownership.

"The purchase price is highly competitive, but up to 40,000km service intervals, fuel-efficient diesel engines and high residual values ensure the total cost of ownership is unbeatable," says Brian. "As the old saying goes, quality doesn't cost, it pays."

