



# Drop-bed gorgeous 'vans

Instead of buying a new entry-level 'van, you can get more bang for your bucks by buying a pre-owned coachbuilt with extra goodies, when the high-rollers trade up



**FIND ME A... DROP-DOWN BED COACHBUILT**



**PRICE TARGET £40,000**



**DEALERS WHO CAN HELP Camper UK and Highbridge Caravans**

**I**nnovation is one thing that the motorhome market has never been short of. That's what these two vehicles have in abundance; not least because of the drop-down beds over their respective lounges. These beds are all the rage in the rest of Europe, but here in the UK the trend is more of a slow burn. Take a closer look next time you see such a vehicle – they're highly space-efficient.

New models with drop-down beds are selling, however, and, although they're as rare as hen's teeth on the secondhand market,

they are starting to become available. More important – and you read it here first – vehicles like this just might hold their value better in the long-term compared with other types of motorhome, such as overcab coachbuilds.

With this in mind, I've featured two very different types of drop-down-bed models here. The Bürstner Ixeo Time it585 is a compact motorhome, with a sub-6m overall length. Look inside with wonder, however, at the large lounge, spacious L-shaped kitchen and clever washroom – yes, it's a 'Tardis'.



**Left** Dean Hyde from Camper UK in North Hykeham, Lincoln  
**Right** Martin Neale from Highbridge Caravans in Somerset



Its rival this month, a one-year-old Chausson Suite Relax, may share the same Fiat Ducato underpinnings (although it comes with the extra of the 150bhp engine upgrade), but it's a very different beast. For starters,

it's some 1.5m (4'11") longer, and can happily accommodate four for travel and sleeping.

These two manufacturers certainly aren't afraid to try different things. Chausson and Bürstner operate within much larger manufacturing groups –

## 2011 (11) BÜRSTNER IXEO TIME IT585



ⓂPrice now £39,995 ⓂPrice new £45,000 (est) ⓂBase vehicle Fiat Ducato ⓂEngine 2.3-litre, 130bhp ⓂBerths/travel seats four/four ⓂLength/width/height 5.99m/2.30m (excl mirrors)/2.75m (19'7"/7'5"/9'0") ⓂMTPLM 3500kg ⓂMileage 7500 ⓂContact Camper UK, Station Road, North Hykeham, Lincoln, Lincolnshire LN6 3QY Tel 01522 697 070 Web [www.camperuk.co.uk](http://www.camperuk.co.uk)

## 2012 (12) CHAUSSON SUITE RELAX



ⓂPrice now £41,995 ⓂPrice new £51,000 (est) ⓂBase vehicle Fiat Ducato ⓂEngine 2.3-litre, 150bhp ⓂBerths/travel seats four/four ⓂLength/width/height 7.49m/2.30m (excl mirrors)/2.89m (24'9"/7'7"/9'6") ⓂMTPLM 3500kg ⓂMileage 632 ⓂContact Highbridge Caravan Centre, Bristol Road (A38), Highbridge, Somerset TA9 4EX Tel 01278 782 725 Web [www.highbridgecaravans.co.uk](http://www.highbridgecaravans.co.uk)

**Vs**



Bürstner is part of the Hymer Group and Chausson part of Trigano. Both are bristling with innovation, the result of each company enjoying a kind of 'favoured son' relationship within its respective massive manufacturing set-up.

I've selected my dealers carefully, too: Camper UK in Lincolnshire and Highbridge

"If you intend to use the Chausson as a full four-berth, be aware of the rather paltry payload"

in Somerset are long-term franchisees of Bürstner and Chausson respectively. Indeed, Highbridge claims that it was the first UK retailer to represent Chausson, some 12 years ago. These two dealers are consistently high scorers in the annual *Practical Motorhome* Owner Satisfaction Awards. Buying a motorhome is not just about price, it's also about the ongoing service offered.

## BODYWORK

2011 (11) BÜRSTNER IXEO

TIME IT585 ★★★★★

2012 (12) CHAUSSON SUITE

RELAX ★★★★★

This pair were only born a year apart, but they're rather different in size, as well as in aspects such as the more traditional aluminium exterior for the Bürstner, compared with the rugged polyester (GRP) of the Chausson's coachbuilt body.

The bodywork on both vehicles is almost as good as new; there's a slight graze on the driver's door and smallest of dings on the side of the Bürstner. The Chausson, meanwhile, really is as new. They are both young enough to be well within the manufacturers' warranties.

Both original owners headed to the options lists to enhance the looks of their new purchases. The Bürstner has a Champagne finish, plus

## 2011 (11) BÜRSTNER IXEO TIME IT585



- ❶ It's a roomy lounge, considering the external dimensions. Upholstery is a matter of taste, and pale sections may show any marks
- ❷ The washroom features a swing-out basin and fully lined shower area
- ❸ This excellent kitchen includes the optional grill/oven. There is generous overhead locker storage in the kitchen and you'll be impressed by the superior quality hinges
- ❹ The drop-down bed is manually operated and has a high-comfort cold-cell foam mattress



## 2012 (12) CHAUSSON SUITE RELAX



❶ The compact washroom just about caters for all your shower, toilet, handwashing and storage requirements

❷ The transverse French bed is unusual, but effective ❸ This is a kitchen location like no other, right in the centre of the vehicle. It comes with an outdoor grill, too! ❹ The Chausson has a highly roomy lounge, with space to move around in it. Having a central travel seat is unique. Swivelling cab seats are a bonus



reversing sensors; although, perhaps a little surprisingly, there's no awning or bike rack. Inside, the Bürstner benefits from the Chassis Pack (cab air-conditioning, Pioneer stereo, cruise control and passenger airbag) and an opening front sunroof.

The Chausson's first owners bought the £1900 Silver Pack

"The Burstner's manually operated bed has a generously thick one-piece mattress on a slatted base"

and also specified a full-length awning, Fiamma rear rack with luggage box, and Paintseal finish, plus a Cobra alarm and Vision Plus rear-view monitoring system.

One other external feature might endear the Chausson to you: it's the locker that houses a fold-out gas cooker. Its three gas rings or griddle add up to a feature you won't find on any other brand of motorhome.

If you intend to use the Chausson as a full four-berth, be aware of the small payload (240kg before extras have been added). Talk to Highbridge about a chassis upgrade if this is important to you.

### LIVING

2011 (11)

BÜRSTNER IXEO TIME IT585

★★★★★

2012 (12)

CHAUSSON SUITE RELAX

★★★★★

How can such a compact vehicle as the Bürstner have a lounge as big as this? It's huge, with a pedestal table to seat six, seven or eight people when the cab seats are swivelled. Step down from the lounge and its next key selling point is the spacious, L-shaped kitchen. With great storage as well as worktop space, it easily has room for its optional Smev grill/oven. There are criticisms,



though. First, the upholstery is showing early signs of wear in a couple of places, and the light colour will pick up marks. Second, the seating foam isn't as dense as you'd hope, and has certainly lost some of its original support.

Meanwhile, with an extra 1.5m (4'11") of bodywork to play with, the Chausson Suite Relax offers a floorplan like no other – from its transverse French bed at the back, to its (literally) central, 'walk-around' kitchen and forward-facing travel seat. It all seems so roomy. Among a host of clever touches, the Chausson has an electrically operated height-adjustable table.

The Bürstner has the edge in overall build quality and boasts concertina blinds.

One flaw in the Chausson is a set of holes from the slight re-adjustment of the location of the flatscreen TV bracket.

Nevertheless the Chausson has a superior specification. It has a 184-litre Dometic Tec-Tower fridge/freezer, with an oven/grill atop (some folk might consider the latter set too high). It also has a diesel-fuelled heating system, allied to a Truma boiler for hot water (although the floor-level controls could prove annoying). The Ixeo model has a Truma Combi system that works on gas as well as mains.

bed, but in the Chausson it's probably the French bed at the back, which has a sliding bedroom door to create a bedroom. The bed has a slatted base and a comfortable enough mattress. The next owners may also want to use the electrically operated double over the lounge – it glides down to two different heights.

## WASHROOM

2011 (11)

**BÜRSTNER IXEO TIME IT585**

★★★★☆

2012 (12)

**CHAUSSON SUITE RELAX**

★★★★☆

The Bürstner washroom is a triumph of design and practicality. There's a bench toilet on the back wall, a larger rooflight overhead, a solid shower floor and a swing-out basin. Double-fold doors open out across the toilet to give more showering space.

The Chausson lacks the clever design of the Bürstner's washroom, but matches its specification and adds a small opening window. There's a fixed sink, swivel-bowl toilet, circular shower cubicle and adequate storage, plenty of towel rails and a toilet-roll-holder. Showering is cramped in the Chausson; that fixed sink is in the way and the folding door is fiddly, though we like the duckboard.

## STORAGE

2011 (11) **BÜRSTNER IXEO**

**TIME IT585** ★★★★★

2012 (12) **CHAUSSON SUITE**

**RELAX** ★★★★★

Storage is lacking in the Bürstner, but the Chausson has it in abundance, with full-height shelved cupboards flanking the kitchen unit, the overhead lockers in the bedroom, plus a sizeable wardrobe. The underbed area is accessible from outside, too. Surprisingly, the Bürstner has a larger, deeper wardrobe.

The overall condition is great in both vehicles and those Bürstner locker door hinges look set to last a lifetime. ☉

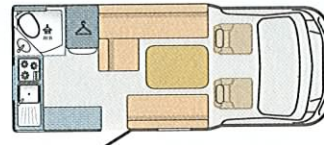
## THE VERDICT

**2011 (11) BÜRSTNER IXEO TIME IT585** ★★★★★

This is an early example of a model that was introduced in 2011, and has scooped numerous awards. It comes with the 2.3-litre, 130bhp Fiat engine and chassis, plus the optional Chassis Pack.

It wasn't sold new by Camper UK, but was traded-in for a new fixed-bed Bürstner; its owners wanted more storage for their longer-term touring plans.

An all-new equivalent would set you back around £45,000, so this is a bargain – it's run in, with any glitches sorted along the way.



This Ixeo has Champagne cab paint and reversing sensors



It has a deluxe Pioneer stereo and Chassis Pack extras

**2012 (12) CHAUSSON SUITE RELAX** ★★★★★

Just as rare as a pre-owned Bürstner Ixeo Time it585, this Chausson Suite Relax had only 632 recorded miles when it came back to Highbridge – simply because its first owners had come into property. With an interior layout like no other, it has the 150bhp engine upgrade, and quite a few nice extras. It fits the mantra: "Why buy new when you can buy nearly-new?" Its condition is 99.9 per cent as good as when it was brand new, just over a year ago.



The Suite Relax has an awning, rear rack and luggage box



Spot the reversing camera, air con and passenger airbag

## OUR FINAL THOUGHTS...

Camper UK's Dean Hyde believes that the Ixeo Time it585 and others like it will be as popular as Autocruise Vistas or Valentines, so innovative are they. It's hard to disagree – we see drop-down bed vehicles like this as the forerunners of an increasingly popular type of motorhome for a long time to come.

The Suite Relax is a highly creative piece of kit, and it's likely to be much in demand on the secondhand market; not least because of its ability to offer full four-berth accommodation.

Neither of these vehicles will hang around long; they both offer so much, that they're neck and neck in this month's challenge. It's mainly down to buying a 'van to suit your touring plans.

We've picked the Bürstner as our winner this month: we like its bigger payload and the bed's thick mattress and manual operation.

## SLEEPING

2011 (11)

**BÜRSTNER IXEO TIME IT585**

★★★★☆

2012 (12)

**CHAUSSON SUITE RELAX**

★★★★☆

Be warned: neither vehicle has a blemish-free record when it comes to the mechanism of its drop-down-bed. My advice is to investigate fully and take at least one test drive. There's no arguing with the comfort, though. The Bürstner's manually operated bed has a generously thick one-piece mattress on a slatted base.

The main berth in the Bürstner is the drop-down