



## MERCEDES-BENZ CLS

### Feeling tense

IT'S A ROOF TENT. A TENT on the roof. It really is that simple. There's a ladder in it, you latch it on, climb up and go to sleep. On the roof of your car. Cool, eh? And just think of the possibilities. I've been doing a lot of that over the past few weeks, and so far I've used it to kip over at a mate's rather small cottage, on top of a hill just to wake up to a stunning view on a sunny morning, outside a country pub so I could enjoy lock-in to the full, and on one occasion actually in a campsite.

So, why's it on the CLS? All part of my quest to test the CLS's abilities as a family all-rounder. Well that, sheer curiosity and an unabashed willingness to make my car look ever so slightly daft. So some facts: it's made by an Italian firm called Autohome and imported into the UK by BOAB, a firm that specialises in expedition equipment.

You use a crank handle to raise and lower it, which takes about 30 seconds, it's got a built-in mattress and light, it's remarkably comfortable to sleep in, has built-in windows, you can leave sleeping bags and pillows up there while driving and it generates surprisingly little wind noise. Oh, and it costs £2,887. Yes, I know that's frightening, but it's chiefly because this one is made of carbon fibre, so only weighs about 40kg. Other, heavier models are available from £1,300.

So my raffish four-door coupe now has a rather unbecoming roof-top toupe. My kids think it rocks, and it's helped push the CLS's practicality to the limit. The concept of travelling light is alien to camping if you've got kids, yet the boot (520 litres, no less) swallowed cool bags, footballs, a spare tent (just in case, you understand),



**ARRIVED**  
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**SPEC**  
CLS 350 CDI  
Sport

**PRICE**  
£52,993  
**£57,943**  
as tested

**MILEAGE**  
5,178

**TEST MPG**  
38.1  
Not what we  
hoped for, but  
it's improving

**WHY IT'S HERE**  
Can the CLS  
hack it as a  
family car?

**BY**  
Ollie  
Marriage

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chairs, a table, and all manner of other stuff.

This led me to realise that the CLS might actually be more practical than it needs to be. It carries four in comfort, and, if the boot was a little less large, maybe Merc could have done something more interesting with the rear end styling. Don't get me wrong, because I do admire the CLS from certain angles. Not the rear, though. Never the rear. It's just too clumsy. Not that anyone else has had a go at the styling lately – they're too busy wondering what on earth's on the roof.

Weirdly, the roof tent has improved economy. At my, ahem, normal motorway cruising speed, the wind was threatening to tear tent from roofbars, so I've slowed down and am now regularly getting over 40mpg. And that's another thing that makes me a happy camper.

## Mercedes CLS test notes

### Good stuff

- The tent: talking point, sleeping space, comes in various sizes, attracts mucho attention.
- An E-Class has a 540-litre boot, this is only 20 litres smaller. Very practical.
- I'm now a COMAND Jedi: no need to look at the controller to toggle between audio, nav and phone.

### Bad stuff

- The tent may sport thick canvas 'walls', but let's not pretend England is warm on a summer night, OK?
- Why are all Merc cabins almost identical? Felt cheated when I got in a £25k C-Class with exactly the same steering wheel and switchgear.



**HOW ARE WE GETTING ON?**  
HAPPY CAMPER-TASTIC