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BRÖVAN

PERSONAL & ATTAINABLE VAN BUILDS IN THE HIGH DESERT

By Christina Nellemann | Photos by Sam Hamilton Photo & Tom Sykes

Tom Sykes of **BröVan** is dedicated to building out vans for the bros—and the sisters. Vans that juke away from the overpriced versions seen on many Instagram posts yet can still be used for backcountry camping trips and for trips to grocery and hardware stores.

Based in the Reno/Lake Tahoe area, Sykes worked for years as a residential general contractor and house flipper. Along the way he not only became a certified green builder, but he learned how to do all the trades himself rather than hiring them out. He eventually left the residential business to enjoy being creative on a smaller scale and on wheels.

"I was big into small houses and green building and I've always been into small things that work," Sykes says. "I'm opposed to the way things are going in the U.S., that bigger is better and most people are only using half of their homes. I've always been intrigued with the design of smaller, more comfortable, and healthier spaces that have a little more personal feel to them."

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~

Tom Sykes, BröVan

The Weekender

In addition to creating small places to recreate and enjoy on the road, Sykes strives to build out vans that don't feel out of reach of the average customer. He also doesn't shy away from the smaller, less expensive jobs.

"When I went to these van shows, I got tired of seeing the $150,000 Sprinters. They are cool, but have gotten out of control." Sykes says. "My original intention was to build campers and keep them under the $50,000 mark or around that; a camper for the regular person."

One of his specialties is adding a simple camping system to the Mercedes-Benz Metris. The passenger van is quickly becoming an option for people who don't want to commit the money to a larger Sprinter conversion. Sykes calls his build the Weekender. It includes a poptop with elevating Froli bed platform by **SCA Roofs**, a pair of swivel seats, and a Lagun table. For only $10,500, this daily driving vehicle can quickly be transformed into a camper for a couple or small family. BröVan's Plug N Play Kitchen Box can be added into the trunk area for around $1,000.

"It was important to me to have a vehicle that wasn't a third vehicle you never use unless for camping," Sykes adds. "You can deploy that poptop in two minutes and you have this great hangout space with a cathedral ceiling. Even just going to the beach and surfing, it's a great space to hang out."

THE WEEKENDER PACKAGE

(FOR THE MERCEDES-BENZ METRIS)

- **Froli bed platform + poptop**
- **Driver + passenger swivel seats**
- **Lagun table**
- **Plug N Play Kitchen Box (optional)**

Of course, if you need to go bigger, you can. BröVan offers upfitting services for any type of van. Sykes can assist with building out a van completely or with specific jobs such as electrical and plumbing, or poptop and **Fiberine** roof bubble installations. Each design can be customized for the customer's needs and specific desires. For example, he is currently working on a van build inspired by Stanley Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey" and the owner's grandfather who was an Apollo 17 astronaut.

Along with personal customization, Sykes works to keep van components as local as possible. The electrical systems are run off of **Battle Born Batteries** lithium batteries and insulation is provided by **Havelock Wool**, a Reno-based, non-toxic insulation made from sheep's wool.

Sykes love of both water and land sports is inspiring his own van build, as well as some modular designs he is playing around with. His ideal van would be one that could be used for daily driving, camping, and as a space to hold family members, multiple windsurfing boards, winter gear, and rafts. Modules for living and sports could be added and removed as necessary. In fact, his experience with river rafting is an important part of his overall van build philosophy.

“Efficiency, multiple purposes for components, trying to make things clean, and versatility excites me,” Sykes says. “Besides camping is really about being outside, isn’t it?”

Christina Nellemann writes for the Tiny House Blog and the Tiny House Magazine.