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Caravan

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January 2016

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PLUS

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Pegasus has become a name synonymous with the Bailey philosophy of providing owners with the unique combination of superior performance, award-winning design as well as market leading value for money.

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For more information on the Pegasus caravan range please visit: www.baileyofbristol.co.uk



New to caravans and caravan & holidays? Find out more about the fresh air, fun & freedom to be had on this great new web site.



'Touring Suffolk is a special feeling, as if you've unearthed a gem that no one else has discovered... until you hit the coast, and find that they've got there before you!'

Alastair Clements **page 24**



Practical
Caravan

East Anglian adventure!

Where are we? Earl Soham, Suffolk

What's going on? We're on our way to Southwold to sample the delights of the pretty Suffolk coastline, from Great Yarmouth down to Woodbridge and the Sutton Hoo estate. On the way, we passed through plenty of pretty villages, including Earl Soham on the A1120, near Framlingham. It's well worth taking the scenic route, to enjoy sights such as Kent's Mill, just outside the village

Which outfit? The trip represented a farewell tour for the much-loved Vauxhall Insignia Country Tourer 2.0CDTi BiTurbo 4x4, hitched up to another long-termer, our Bailey Unicorn Cadiz

Photographer Tim Andrew



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Join the adventure

Get ready for the new touring season with The Caravan Club

With winter just around the corner, there are still plenty of reasons to join The Club and get the most out of your membership. In addition to the widest choice of stunning sites with over 200 Club sites and 2,500 smaller 5-van locations, joining today comes with a whole host of benefits:

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- SAVE money with our exclusive member offers
- FREE access to our website including online booking and Club Together members' forum – perfect if you're looking for ideas for next year
- Explore our 56 'Open All Year' sites – a new one for this year is Southport, which has recently been refurbished ready for 2016
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»PITCHSIDE VIEW

ALASTAIR CLEMENTS



ALASTAIR Is a keen caravanner who can be found pitched at sites across the UK and further afield, along with his wife and two young daughters

Inspired to take an eastern odyssey

A FEW YEARS ago, while staying on a site in the Lake District, we got talking to the owners about where they go on holiday. Surely they could never wish to leave such a stunning place? “On the contrary,” they told us, “we always go to East Anglia. It’s peaceful and easy to navigate, with wonderful nature reserves.”

What higher praise can you get? Which is why this month we decided to find out what all the fuss is about, and bring you some of our favourite things to see and places to stay in the region, from north Norfolk to the Suffolk coast. I’ve been enjoying the sandy beach at Southwold while Bryony Symes struck inland to explore some of the county’s prettiest villages and Jeanette Musgrave headed north to visit a blue-blooded country pile.

We hope it leaves you inspired to follow in our wheeltracks!

Al alastair.clements@haymarket.com

Stacie's trip to the Cotswold brought back childhood memories for Ray Smith



Thanks for the fond memories

I very much enjoyed Stacie Pardoe's Cotswolds feature (December issue). This area was home to me during my childhood, and many memories came flooding back.

Until the late 1950s, my father was head gardener at Abbey Park, mentioned in the feature, when it was a private estate. To the north end was a Victorian garden, with a traditional walled area that held greenhouses for grapes, soft fruit, melons and so on, and with beautiful flowerbeds and shrubs towards the 'big house'. This was Georgian and stood where the block of apartments stands now. You can just make out the semi-circular carriage drive before what was a very imposing façade and entrance to the house.

Our house was in the garden and is still there – the only original Cotswold stone house among the more modern boxes.

It now stands in Dugdale Road, named after Major Dugdale who was the owner of estate.

While at school I was a keen member of the Air Training Corps and this linked to more memories raised by your article. South Cerney was then home to Bradleys gravel pits and to No 2 Flying Training School RAF and this is where I first took to the air.

Your photograph of Minchinhampton Common was also evocative – the nearby Aston Down airfield was then an RAF Maintenance Unit and home to an ATC Gliding School where, in addition to gliding, I learnt basic driving skills and towed for the first time - a trailer-mounted winch with Ford V8 power, which was probably way above the 85% weight ratio to the 15-cwt Bedford 'tow car'.



WRITE TO Letters, *Practical Caravan*, Broom Road, Teddington TW11 9BE



EMAIL letters@practicalcaravan.com

If, as you indicated, you do return to the area, I strongly recommend a visit to the Corinium Museum of Roman Cirencester – just walk up Black Jack Street from the church and keep going – it’s really excellent and interesting.

In the 1950s, Cirencester had a population of about 8000, but 57 pubs. Young men of my generation had to compete for the attention of the young ladies with the Americans from the nearby Fairford SAC base and the rich young gentlemen from the Royal Agricultural College just out of the town.

There were two railway stations: the Town station on a spur to the mainline at Kemble on the Cheltenham to Paddington line, and Watermoor, on the Cheltenham to Southampton line. The latter line has been converted to a cross-country cycle route over much of its length,

Happy days, and thanks again for reminding me of them.

Ray Smith

THAT FEELING OF SATISFACTION

I have been restoring a caravan and have nearly finished it – I just have snag jobs and curtains and new seat covers to make, and a few pieces of kit to buy. Recently I managed to successfully fit and, with help from my auto-electrician friend, wire up my leisure battery and Zig unit and two 12V cigarette lighter-type sockets for charging phones and so on. It all works!

The only issue I’ve had is with the plug outlet for my water pump – the live wire was broken and has been replaced. I have 12V lights, and both new sockets work. I am one happy and very excited man to see it all working after two months of solid graft. Having dealt with holes in the floor, copious glue adhesives and chemical paints, I can now sit in my caravan on the driveway and feel that it has all been worth it.

Because I have always named my cars after my nan on my mum’s side, who I was very close to, I’ve decided that every van I ever own will be named after my



A PC feature inspired Sue Johnstone to visit Seahouses

father’s mum, who I never got to meet. Long may Florenda ride the roads damp free and cared for.
Mark Tedin

DAYTIME LIGHTS, ARE THEY LEGAL?

My caravan lights come on when I start the car because of the daytime running lights, am I breaking the law?

Chris Moulds

Nigel Hutson replies...

The caravan lights coming on isn’t a problem at all. After all, if you want to drive with your headlights on during the day you can, and there’s no law that says you can’t. DRLs on caravans are cool!

Old Volvos always had their lights on when the engine was switched on and, in turn, trailer lights, if one was connected.

YOU’RE AN INSPIRATION

We stayed at the Seafield site at Seahouses, and visited Bamburgh, as well as Lindisfarne and Alnwick, and took a boat trip to Farne islands – all inspired by the November issue of *Practical Caravan*. We loved every minute of our tour.

Sue Johnstone

ANOTHER RALLY SUCCESS

Thought I’d send you an update of our recent European Rally to the Vosge Mountains of Alsace this September. Readers may recall my letter in the August issue (‘Come join us’) calling for others to join us on the rally.

Here’s a little about the trip... Camping de Noirrup in Le Tholy was the base for our rally and site manager Jean Yves made us all very welcome. The weather was variable but, in true British style, >>

Local knowledge The Kingdom of Fife

Practical Caravan’s Andy Stewart spent his first 19 years in the Kingdom of Fife and returns every year to revel in the clean air, green hills and fishing villages of his youth.



1 Stay here

Scone Camping and Caravanning Club Site is situated within the peaceful grounds of Scone Palace. Wildlife is abundant at this site with deer, owls and ospreys all spotted here. If you’re lucky you may find yourself pitched next to a family of resident black rabbits.

2 Eat here

Anstruther Fish Bar serves some of the best fish-and-chips in all of Scotland and offers the chance to soak up the view of the picturesque fishing harbour. Jahingar’s in St Andrews is a favourite of many locals; friendly staff and fantastic Indian food ensure a return visit every time.

3 Walk here

When the weather’s agreeable – or you’re hardy enough when it’s not – St Andrews’ sands are a great stroll that lets you sneak a peek at The Old Course. The Hill of Tarvit near Cupar has three different routes that take in the Hill itself, plus the Mansion and surrounding woodland.

4 See here

For something a little different The Scottish Deer Centre is a perfect day out. Fourteen species of deer hailing from China to Canada can be found in 55 acres of Fife countryside; as well as wolves, wildcats and the occasional bear.

Don’t miss

The town of Guardbridge is home to Eden Mill Distillery and Brewery. Character, creativity and a passion for their craft are all proudly displayed during a tour of the facilities, not to mention a superb selection of unique beers, gins and whiskys.



»SAVERS

STACIE PARDOE seeks out giveaways, great deals and top tips to cut the cost of caravanning for readers

Start the New Year in Manchester

We have 10 pairs of tickets to The Caravan and Motorhome Show at Event City to give away.

Taking place from 21-24 January, the event will showcase more than 200 exhibitors and the latest models from leading manufacturers; it's an opportunity to take advantage of show-only discounts.

New to the show for 2016 is the 'Get Back to Nature' stage, where you can pick up touring inspiration and expert advice from celebrity speakers. The zone will also feature Forest Rangers who will be running various children's activities.

The show is free for under-16s and tickets include free parking and admission to the co-located event Destinations: The Holiday and Travel Show.

For your chance to win a pair of tickets, enter online at www.practicalcaravan.com before midnight on 31 December 2015. *Practical Caravan* readers can also book tickets for the special offer price of £7.50 in advance. Simply visit www.CaravanShows.com or call 08448 737 349 quoting PCVM.



WIN!

Mudbuster cleaners

We have some bottles of MudBuster Caravan & Motorhome Exterior & Interior Wash & Wax, which came out on top in our recent product test (November 2015), up for grabs.

Our tester loved the fact that it can be used inside and out. The litre bottle produces 70 litres of dilute cleaner and can be used on most interior surfaces, including carpets.

If you'd like to get your hands on a bottle of this fantastic all-round cleaner, enter online at www.practicalcaravan.com before midnight on 31 December 2015.



WIN!

WIN WITH MILENCO!



The contributors of our *Star Letter* and *Star Photo* each win a pair of **Milenco Grand Aero towing mirrors**, worth £50. They're designed to fit all wing mirrors and offer an outstanding view.

If you have a top tip, send it in for a chance to win four **Milenco Stacka corner feet**, worth £14.

For further details and a list of retailers, visit www.milenco.com



George Roberts' ralliers meet a llama on a trip in the Vosges Mountains

we made the most of it. Jean Yves had arranged some interesting coach trips.

The rally began with a wine and nibbles evening, which proved a great success, with acquaintances renewed and new ones made. The following night we got together in the local restaurant, Le Chaud Costet, for a welcome dinner to the rally. An excellent three-course meal was washed down with liberal amounts of wine.

Our first coach trip was a 'discovery of the Vosges area'; the countryside was beautiful. We made a difficult journey up the side of a hill, with many tricky turns to negotiate, to a mountain-top restaurant, where we had magnificent views of the valley and surrounding mountains, before settling down to another excellent three-course meal washed down with more wine.

We journeyed through the Vosges Mountains to Gerardmer, where we took a boat trip around the lake, followed by a beer in the local hostelry.

Our next jaunt took in Nancy and the magnificent Stanislas Square. Then we had a short drive to the Marne Canal, where we boarded *La Bergamote*, a large barge, for a three-hour cruise down the canal and another huge meal with wine.

We had three free days to explore the area before our next visit, which was to Mulhouse. The 1.5-hour journey over the Vosges Mountains, took us past the highest peak, the Ballon de Alsace, to the Cité du Train museum – the French National Railway museum.

Our final coach expedition was to Strasbourg, where we took a boat trip through Strasbourg's old quarters, past fortified towers and

low-level gun emplacements to the European Assembly.

After the boat tour we walked past the magnificent cathedral to the Caveau Restaurant Gurtlerhoft, a warren of a place that had once been the cellar for the cathedral. After dinner and a short walking tour we had an hour to explore before we met for the tram taking us back to the coach and our return to La Tholy for the final 'leaving meal' of the rally.

The price for the visits made, meals enjoyed, wine drunk, 14 nights pitching and the Dover-to-Calais ferry crossings was about £925 per couple – amazing value. However, what made it special was that everyone joined in.

Our 2016 rally will be in Loches, France, staying at Camping Le Citadelle. If any readers would be interested in joining us, please send me an e-mail (gjandm.roberts@gmail.com) or call 01234 772 181 and I will ensure you are kept up to date on the details.

George Roberts

f TOURING IN IRELAND

I live in Ireland and there are many excellent sites over here. The website I use is www.camping-ireland.ie. For most sites you don't have to book, but ring to check if you are travelling from the UK. For beaches, Sligo is good. Atlantic Park is a prime surfing spot. Same for the sites in Doolin Clare as you have Lahinche on your doorstep. In terms of driving time from Dublin, Sligo, Galway, Cork, Wexford are all about 2.5 hours. Most roads are tolled and change is required: usually about €3 for a car and caravan. Go through the lorry barrier because the other will have height restrictions.

Chris Pinner



BRYONY SYMES is an intrepid explorer who loves finding new and unusual things to do

BRYONY'S 5 essential events for... Festive fun

1 December-17 January

goldilock, stock & three smoking bears



With a twist

For an alternative to the usual panto, leave the children at home and go to see *Goldilock, Stock and Three Smoking Bears* at The Wardrobe Theatre in Bristol.

Stay at Baltic Wharf Caravan Club Site
Web www.caravanclub.co.uk

8-9 January



S. Rowley

A bygone era

The International Mummers Festival in Stroud brings together larger-than-life characters, myth, legend and traditional folk drama, and this year is combined with Stroud Wassail.

Stay at Tobacconist Farm
Web www.tobacconistfarm.co.uk

30 Dec-1 Jan



Chris Watt

New Year antics

Edinburgh's Hogmanay festival is a historic New Year celebration, including a torchlit procession, concert, ceilidh, fireworks and 'The Loony Dook'.

Stay at Edinburgh Caravan Club Site
Web www.caravanclub.co.uk

14-31 January



Mario Rota

Folk in Glasgow

The Celtic Connections festival explores folk, roots and world music, with more than 300 events, and a show for every taste from 2100 artists.

Stay at Red Deer Village Holiday Park
Web www.craigendmuir.co.uk

6 January



Tales of old January

Join the Bodmin Wassail on Twelfth Night to indulge in the eating, drinking, singing, storytelling and fundraising that is part of this ancient tradition.

Stay at Bodmin Camping and Caravanning Club Site
Web <http://bit.ly/1lpkYES>

» YOUR PHOTOS

STAR PHOTO

Paul Gibson
wins a pair of Milenco Grand Aero towing mirrors

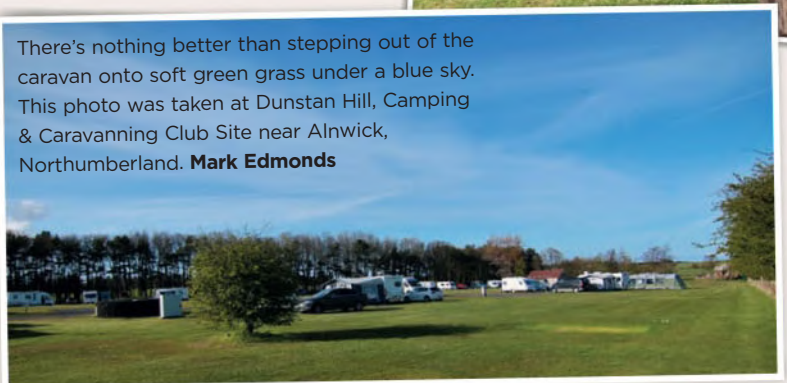
Rickels Caravan and Camping Site is not far from Docking, north Norfolk. The area has many attractions within driving distance. **Paul Gibson**



We have stayed at South Lytchett Manor Caravan Park on several occasions and love it. My husband is disabled, and the staff always assist me to set up. **Trevor and Sue Lyward**



There's nothing better than stepping out of the caravan onto soft green grass under a blue sky. This photo was taken at Dunstan Hill, Camping & Caravanning Club Site near Alnwick, Northumberland. **Mark Edmonds**



Taken at around 7.30am in October 2015 during our stay at Burtree House (adults-only) Caravan Park, just outside Bedale. **Rosemary Wood**

Christmas CRACKERS!

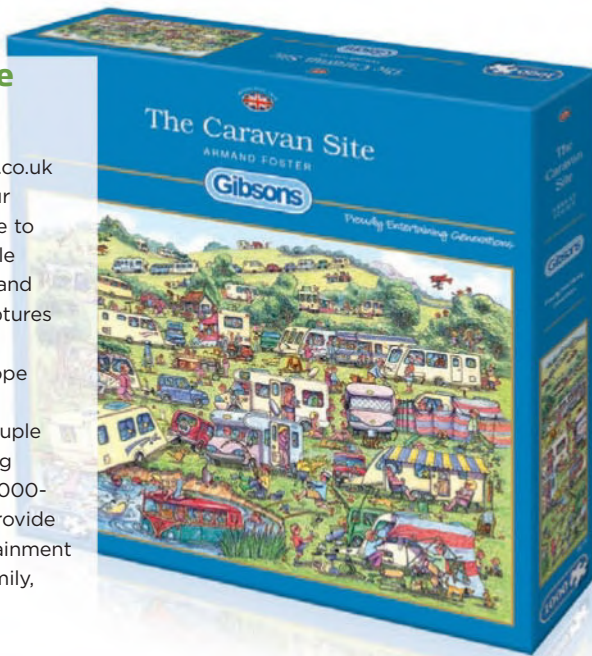
Members of the *Practical Caravan* team offer their favourite ideas for stocking fillers to bring a smile to the face of the caravanner in your life

The Caravan Site jigsaw puzzle

Price £10

Web www.gibsonsgames.co.uk

You will need to clear your tourer's freestanding table to accommodate this sizeable jigsaw. Illustrated by Armand Foster, the jolly scene captures the fun and some of the misadventures that we hope to never witness on a real campsite – though the couple struggling with the awning seems very familiar. The 1000-piece jigsaw, which will provide hours of rainy-day entertainment (or frustration) for the family, measures 48cm x 68cm when complete.



Reisenthal Carry Cruiser Trolley

Price £99 **Web** www.happybags.co.uk

This tough shopping trolley from online luggage specialist Happy Bags is just the thing for transporting kit or groceries to and from your van. With a capacity of up to 40 litres, the robust trolley should have room for a touring shop. The removable lining is washable, comes in 10 vibrant colours and features a shoulder strap and clips to attach to a store trolley.



TLKR T60 Motorola walkie-talkies

Price £54.99

Web www.motorolasolutions.com

Children love to go exploring with new friends when they are on site, but when they've roamed out of sight, walkie-talkies are the perfect companion to help keep track of them and to call them in when lunch or dinner is ready.

These T60 units from Motorola's TLKR range will do just that. They boast eight transmission channels, have an 8km range and use rechargeable batteries. A hands-free function and features including five call tones, a belt clip and carrying loop ensure that there's no excuse not to answer parental calls to return to base.



View Quest retro radio

Price £59.99

Web www.myvq.co.uk

This natty retro mini radio features DAB and Bluetooth functionality as well as conventional AM/FM, so you can use it to listen to your MP3 player, and keep up with what's happening on your favourite radio show while on tour. Wrapped in leatherette, the unit comes in 14 colourways and features connections for a headphone jack, aux-in and a USB port. It runs on either mains or battery power and, weighing in at less than a kilo, it shouldn't take up too much of your payload allowance!



Isabella camping chairs

Price From £84

Web www.isabella.net

After a long day's sightseeing a good set of camping chairs is a must for relaxing on tour, with a glass in hand, and this stylish range from Isabella will certainly look the part on site.

There are three new styles to choose from (left from top): Thor (£84) Odin (£90) and Relax (£105).

Each chair has an aluminum frame and black polyweave seating, weighs just over 5kg and can take a 120kg (18 stone-plus) load. All feature a padded neck support and eight sitting positions. They also fold down for stowing.





Let's Go Camping!

Price £8.99

Web www.kylebooks.com

Caravanners who love craft will adore *Let's Go Camping!*, a fantastic book that teaches you how to crochet a full camping scene. There's a whole section dedicated to making a caravan, complete with bunk beds, cupboards, cushions and even the kitchen sink. Each scene features detailed step-by-step instructions and lists all the materials needed to complete the parts. A great project that's rewarded with a wonderful keepsake of our great hobby.

FastFuse caravan T-shirts

Price £8.95 plus p&p

Web www.etsy.com

Show your touring colours with this design from T-shirt specialist FastFuse, which follows the popular 'Keep Calm and Carry On' theme. They are made from pre-shrunk cotton, are available in eight colours and in sizes from S-XXL.



Snuggle Sacs

Price From £35

Web www.snugglesac.com

These fleece sleeping bags are great to snuggle up in on tour and save the hassle of messing about with sheets and duvets if you have to make up beds in the van. There's a fantastic selection of patterns and sizes suitable for tots to teens, as well as a new adults range, so all the family can look cool while keeping cosy and warm.

Smarter iKettle 2.0

Price £99.99

Web www.smarter.am

This innovative digital kettle is controlled remotely via an iPhone or Android smartphone and can be commanded to boil from the comfort of your bed! It will tell you when it's ready to pour and has reminders to refill when empty. Other features include a 'keep warm' mode and four temperature settings. It has a 1.8-litre capacity, uses 1850W and has 240V power. There's a variety of coloured skins available if the original silver doesn't match your scheme.



Edifier MP211 speaker

Price £39.99

Web www.edifer.com

This lightweight portable speaker is ideal for taking on tour. Just connect it to your smartphone or MP3 player via Bluetooth and enjoy your music wherever you are. The long-lasting lithium-ion battery can be recharged via a micro-USB cable. The MP211 is available in five colours. **PC**



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www.lunarcaravans.com

Martin Roberts



Star of
BBC One's
**Homes under
the Hammer**

My home from home

HERE'S YOUR STARTER for ten: what is it that us caravanning types and farmers have in common?

"We both spend a great deal of time outdoors?" Yes, but there's something else.

"We plough on regardless, in all weather conditions?" True, but it's not that either.

"We have a closer-than-average association with sewage?" Getting there... but no. The answer is that we are both almost universally despised when we travel on the roads of the United Kingdom. Take a straw poll of any group of people and ask them to name something they don't like about either of us, and I can guarantee that they'll answer: "Being stuck behind a caravan/tractor [delete as appropriate] on a busy road."

I guess there's not much else to dislike. After all, the answer isn't likely to be: "Oh... you... you have toilets that you have to empty yourself." Or, "You... you use barbecues a lot."

Nope. It's only when we stray from our dedicated enclaves that we begin to incur the wrath of complete strangers. I'm generally a considerate tower and, when I see a build-up

of more than five or so cars behind me, I pull off the highway as soon as it's safe to do so in order to let them pass. I think that there's a legal requirement for tractor drivers to do the same.

However, there are some members of our respective groups who I fear may be giving the rest of us a bad name. I'm talking about *you*, Mr BMW X5-driving, Bailey-towing annoyance on the narrow roads as I was making my way down to Dorset a few weeks ago. And *you*, Mr John Deere-driving, slurry tanker-towing, headphone-wearing, inconsiderate pain-in-the-bum on the road from Longleat to Frome only yesterday.

So, as part of my ongoing campaign to improve the image of caravanning among the wider public, could I politely suggest that your New Year's resolution is to spend a moment or so – in fact, about as long as your New Year's resolutions normally last – pulling over when there's just *one* car behind you.

Perhaps some new, shiny and extended 'superview' wing mirrors would be the thing to look out for in the January sales, if you

haven't already got them. Alternatively, I've always quite fancied the idea of a pop-up periscope that drops down from the rooflining of the car, before hydraulically extending upwards to above the height of the caravan, enabling a complete 360-degree panorama of the car and caravan circumference (green roof algae and all).

Of course, I can't enforce anything on our agricultural co-nuisance-creators, but we 'vanners will at least no longer give Joe Public any cause to complain.

Good luck with that... and a very Happy New Year from me.

Visit Martin's website www.martinroberts.co.uk for information about him, his books and his property training weekends, and follow his adventures on Twitter @TVMartinRoberts

MY OTHER CAR IS
A TRACTOR



Honk if
you're on
the pull!

"Take a straw poll of any group of people, and ask them to name something that they don't like about us. I can guarantee that they'll answer: "Being stuck behind a caravan/tractor..."

Don't make
me hurry when
I'm towing
slurry!

Me and my caravan... An open & shut case



Bryony Symes finds out why Jeremy Greenwood swapped from modern vans to a 1970s folding caravan

AS A CLASSIC car enthusiast, Jeremy Greenwood wanted a caravan that would look good behind his elderly Mini Van. Clearly, a modern caravan like those he had owned previously would not fit the bill.

The Mini Van itself is quite special: Jeremy's first car had been a Mini, and he had been interested in buying a panel van or estate version for a while.

"It was a now or never; purchase prices were getting silly, but mine had been 'customised' and the gearchange needed work, so I managed to get it for sensible money," says Jeremy.

It was a bit of a project, but Jeremy enlisted Old Skool Minis of Birmingham to reinstate the rear van doors and fit a four-speed automatic gearbox. Once a towbar from Watling Engineers was attached, he was ready to start his Mini adventures.

Towing capabilities

Jeremy has owned or had access to caravans for 25 years, but those he used most recently were modern – dramatically different to any classic caravans that would look good with a Mini.

"I've towed with a variety of Land Rovers and, because of my job designing towing technologies at Land Rover, I also have access to various caravans, from a six-berth Avondale to a two-berth T@B. Perhaps the most unusual thing I've towed is a 12-tonne Road Train at the Eden Project, performing a nerve-racking hill start on a 1-in-8 slope to demonstrate the electric Land Rover's towing capabilities."

The Mini's towing capabilities, though, wouldn't stretch quite that far. Jeremy started looking for a light caravan and came across the Portafold website, where he found a van advertised on the forum. The uncluttered nature of the Portafold makes it suitable for spontaneous weekends away and, after years of 'posher' caravans, Jeremy was beginning to miss this simplicity.

The Portafold was marketed as a lightweight four- or five-berth that could be erected by one person in one minute. In reality, it is far easier to have another person around when putting up the sides. And the fifth berth is a removable board across the front where the sink is housed, so probably wouldn't pass as a bed under today's safety standards. The van is light enough to be towed by anything with an 800cc engine, but it is very basic.

"I like to use my classics, so the glassfibre and steel construction of the Portafold was a distinct benefit, with no wood that could rot – a problem

"Like a lot of classic cars, the classic caravans tend to use bits from elsewhere"

that a lot of older caravans suffer from," Jeremy says.

"It was in a usable condition, but I decided to spruce it up a little. I contacted the Portafold Register to find out how old it was; from the chassis number, they were able to say that the van was constructed in 1972. For a 43-year-old van, it was really in remarkably good condition. And it only cost £1000."

There were very few things to change on the van, but Jeremy added LED lighting, using the roof fins as recesses and a jack plug for power. There were also a few repairs to the glassfibre, which were easily done with a kit from Halfords. The outside was painted in British Racing Green and satin white – perfectly matched to the Mini.

The curtains and seat covers were a little tired, so Jeremy

broke out his mum's old sewing machine and bought some fabric.

The first attempt at re-covering the cushions produced a Möbius strip, but with a little patience he produced a decent, clean set of soft furnishings. He also added headlining material in Ventrup and replaced the rear lights with earlier-spec round lights – just because he could.

It all hinges on folding

All seemed fine, until Jeremy took the van on its first run-out, when he discovered that most of the hinges that allow the caravan to fold had broken. Luckily, these special brass hinges are still available via the Portafold website. In fact, the Portafold site was an invaluable resource, he says.

"Like a lot of classic cars, the classic caravans tend to use bits



Repairs to the Portafold were cosmetic rather than structural. Here, Jeremy replaces the roof lining with headlining material in Ventrup



The van's simplicity allows Jeremy to use it spontaneously



In British Racing Green (the base) and satin white, the 43-year-old Portafold perfectly matches Jeremy's classic Mini Van

from elsewhere. Some of the Portafolds used Mini hubcaps, which are readily available, but mine uses the stronger and longer Rubery Owen hubs and so needs a deeper hubcap. As with classic cars, joining the register or club is essential. On the site there are links to get all the special parts, as well as a history of the firm and plenty of advice.”

Ready for Cropredy

The organisation also holds annual gatherings. This summer, Jeremy attended Retrofestival, where there were 49 other Portafolds. Many of these were used to support a classic car, so

the conversation quite naturally ranged between classic cars and classic vans. This year, Jeremy took the van to the Fairport Convention Cropredy Festival and to the Peak District for a walking weekend.

“I’ve used the Portafold mainly for weekends rather than longer holidays,” he says. “The best trip so far was the Cropredy Festival, where the van fitted in with the friendly, hippy feel, while leaving me significantly more comfortable than the tenting majority. I took a barrel of home-brewed beer and made a passable curry, so gaining popularity with my tenting friends.”

The layout comprises two bed boxes with a gap that can be filled with boards to make a generous double. To the rear is a sink area, which originally had a glassfibre moulding but is now made of wood, the extra berth, as well as a table and a couple of curtained-off storage spaces. The bed boxes provide the bulk of the storage when the van is folded for the road. It is really more comfortable as a two-berth, though.

There aren’t a lot of modern conveniences: apart from the LED lights that Jeremy installed, there is just a Campingaz stove. If there’s snow outside, Jeremy admits that he could easily be persuaded back into the T@B or Avondale with central heating, insulation and no draughts!

Age shall not wither

This van came as a shock to the family, which is used to tourers with all mod cons.

“It is regarded with polite amusement, as part of Dad’s midlife crisis,” Jeremy says. “But that’s fine because I have gone round the clock and am now 18 again. I’ve had some lovely boys’ weekends with my son, though.”

The same could be said of the caravan – it certainly isn’t showing its 43 years. **PC**



The roof fins and metal windows give the van a 1960s look



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TRAVEL NEWS



with **Sarah Wakely**

Eastern England is packed with thrilling holiday destinations. We tell you about some of the best in this month's travel section, plus noteworthy locations for holidays and breaks

Reader tips

Any ideas for touring with a baby?



Simply enjoy it and do the same as you would at home!

Phil Q

The priority is safe sleeping. When a baby is very young, this isn't a problem, because you can put a Moses basket well back on a double bed. If your child is a bit bigger, put them to sleep somewhere they can't climb out.

Mel

Put the steriliser in the awning to reduce steam in the van. We used the side of a cot on the side dinette as a bed and prepared all foods at home, froze them and took them out each night for the next day. If baby is an early riser or doesn't sleep well, ask for a quiet corner on site.

Martin 24

I bought a rectangular piece of tent window mesh, bound the edges and added poppers. It was fastened to the edge of the bunk and the bottom edge of the bunk above to prevent 'fall-out'!

Audiorob



Lincoln pulls out all the stops on its outdoor ice rink

Get your skates on tour

THANKS TO THE UK's indoor rinks, ice-skating is hugely popular year-round, but there are few things that feel more festive than slipping and sliding around one that's outdoors! Many cities across the land set up temporary examples. To find one, look at the new online 'Winter Warmers' guide from Visit England, which details eight of the best.

On the list, you'll find Winchester's lovely rink in the heart of the city's Christmas

market, open from 19 November-3 January. England's largest outdoor rink is at York Designer Outlet's Winter Wonderland from 21 November-3 January; after your visit, enjoy a hot drink at the Alpine Café.

If you're touring in eastern England – the focus of this month's travel section – take a spin on the decorated rink in central Lincoln.

For more seasonal inspiration, visit www.visitengland.com/things-to-do/winter-warmers.

The real clean machine

Of all the tasks that need doing when you're touring, emptying the chemical toilet is among the worst. So I was pleased to read about Thetford's new cassette-cleaning machine: you slot the unit into the front, turn the outlet pipe and remove the cap. The machine then empties



the unit, washes it and the cap clean, then doses it with fresh chemicals. The process takes three minutes.

It is being tried out at sites in Holland, where using it costs €3.50 (£2.50).

For more about the machine, see www.thetford-europe.com/thetford-machine.

Continent for first-timers

If you fancy towing abroad next year for the first time but are apprehensive, a Caravan Club European tour may be right for you. They're open to members and are led by experienced guides. Recently added destinations include Provence (£1065 for two), and the Algarve and Andalucía (£2300), which includes excursions to Lagos and Cliff Richard's vineyard.

You can opt for one of three 'First Time Abroad' tours, which include a course on driving on the right-hand side of the road.

Visit www.caravanclub.co.uk/overseas-holidays/european-tours.



PLUS **Great Escape** Alastair Clements explores Suffolk's coast **p24** **Getaway** Bryony Symes visits the region's villages **p32** **Weekender** The Musgraves go to Norfolk **p36** **Sites & sightseeing** Eastern England **p40** **Getaway** Shopping in York **p50**



Treasures OF THE FAR EAST

In search of a beach holiday with a difference,
Alastair Clements and family headed for East Anglia
and Suffolk's beautiful Heritage Coast

Did you know that?

George Orwell was expelled from school in Southwold for sending a dead rat to the town surveyor

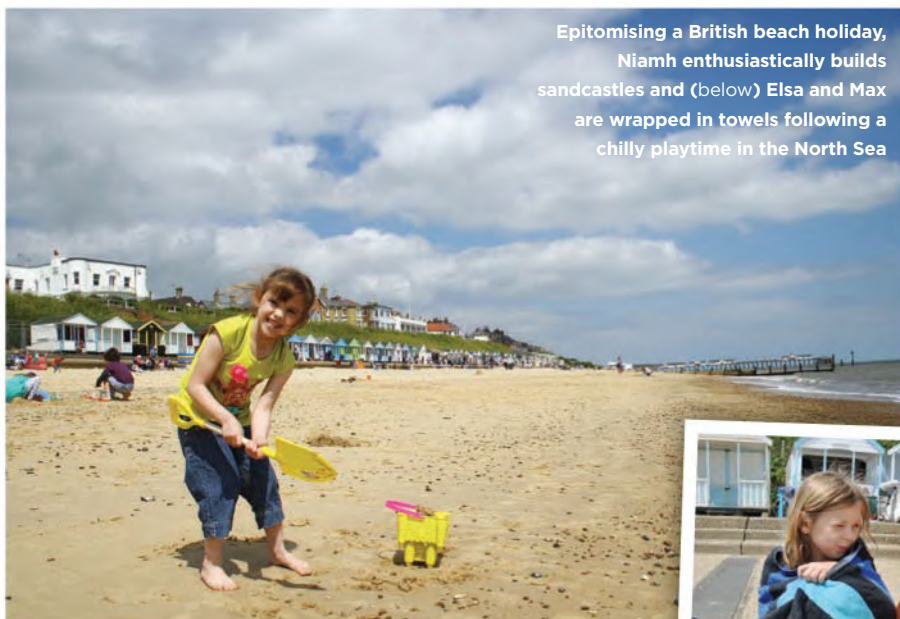


Did you know that?

Southwold provided the beach backdrop for the movie *Iris*, starring Judi Dench and Jim Broadbent



On site the children enjoyed a new-found freedom to go exploring



Epitomising a British beach holiday, Niamh enthusiastically builds sandcastles and (below) Elsa and Max are wrapped in towels following a chilly playtime in the North Sea



English holidays for the Clements family have always involved heading south out of London and turning right – bound for the west, be it Dorset, Somerset, Devon or Cornwall. In part that's because we visit Granny and Grandpa on the way, but unfortunately it means that the kids are missing out on great swathes of the British countryside – not to mention its coastline.

So when our great pals the Hunt family called to tell us that they had got hold of Gran's campervan for half-term week, and wanted an adventure, we decided that this time when we got to the M25 we would turn left, and venture east to the Suffolk coast.

Although not much more than 100 miles away from our south London home as the crow flies, East Anglia feels like another world – not least because there are almost no motorways: the various estuaries ensure that few main roads make it to the coast. Still, despite being single-carriageway for the majority of the route, the A12 gets us there briskly enough – passing through a flat, green

landscape that's lush with farmland, boosted by the region's rich soil. Naturally marshy, it was first drained by the Romans and has long been a key contributor to Britain's larder.

That same earth – along with the care of the on-site team comprising Dave, Gerry, John and Liz – ensures that The Camping and Caravanning Club's Kessingland site is verdant. The Vauxhall Insignia Country Tourer's four-wheel drive makes it easy to get our Bailey Unicorn Cadiz installed on our grass pitch, and while we pitch the awning the kids set off to explore their surroundings. Although we're near the A12, the high hedges that surround the site and the 5mph speed limit make it feel safe, so the kids are soon enjoying their new-found freedom.

Our first day is spent exploring the local area, checking out the former fishing village that the site is named after and sampling a pint of the local brew in the Five Bells Inn.



It quickly becomes clear that there is a special feeling to touring Suffolk, as if you've unearthed a gem that no one else has

discovered yet... Until you hit the coastline and you find that they've got there before you!

A foot in each camp

We discover this when day two dawns bright and clear, and we pack beach towels and – optimistically – swimmers, then head for nearby Southwold. Unlike so many of our seaside resorts, which have had to sell their souls in order to survive, Southwold treads the line between traditional charm and commercial reality. This is obvious from the moment we arrive, as we park (for free!) in the town centre, in the shadow of the 1890 Southwold Lighthouse. Little ones might recognise it from the CBeebies series *Grandpa in My Pocket*, which also features Southwold Pier as a location for Miss Smiley's café. But the association is not enough to

Your trip planner

All the vital statistics and further info

When to go

If you want to make the most of the beach, the summer is best – but be aware that the nearer you get to high season, the bigger the crowds at the larger resorts. Early autumn, particularly if we have another Indian summer, or late spring are also good bets – we went for the latter, and the site's hard ground and good drainage kept the grass pitches intact.

Way to go

Access to the Kessingland site couldn't be easier, because it's located just off the main A12 roundabout (albeit at the end of a rather bumpy road). That means a very pleasant, if relatively long, drive from the M25 if you're approaching from the south. If coming from the north, take the A14 exit from the A1 then cut across country or turn on to the A12 after skirting around Ipswich.

Food and drink

■ **The Anchor** Fantastic menu (we had superb beef brisket and pork belly) at this historic pub in Woodbridge.

Tel 01394 382 649

Web www.theanchorwoodbridge.co.uk

■ **Kessingland Pizza** This takeaway delivers to the site! **Tel** 01502 744 229

Web www.justeat.co.uk

■ **Five Bells Inn** A short drive from the site, this pub has a lovely beer garden with free-roaming chickens

Tel 01502 675 249

Web www.five-bells.com

■ **Potters Rock Factory** One of several traditional confectionery shops along Regent Road, Great Yarmouth.

Tel 01493 856 629

Find out more

■ **Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB**

Web www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org

■ **Sutton Hoo**

Tel 01394 389 700

Web <http://bit.ly/10BNFxt>

■ **The Sutton Hoo Society**

Web www.suttonhoo.org

■ **Africa Alive!**

Tel 01502 740 291

Web www.africa-alive.co.uk

■ **Great Yarmouth Pleasure Beach**

Tel 01493 845 546

Web www.pleasure-beach.co.uk



'This is a brilliant traditional pier, from its broad boardwalk to its coin-operated telescope ...'

persuade the kids to tour the building – not when there's a sandy beach to explore.

Once we find a stretch where Basil the dog is welcome, and I nip back to the pier to grab buckets and spades, the sandcastle-building begins in earnest. This is an idyllic British beach, quite apart from its soft sand: beach huts line the front, with the attractive seaside architecture of the town behind and the worst of the sea kept in check by rocky groins. Not that I have any plans to follow Basil and the kids into the water today: instead I pop into town to grab a picnic at the Co-op, and we settle on the sea wall to munch slightly sandy sausage rolls with the shivering kids wrapped in towels – the British seaside holiday distilled!

For pudding, we amble back to the pier and grab ice creams all round. This is a brilliant traditional pier, from its broad boardwalk to its coin-operated telescope and the wacky 'Under the Pier Show' – an exhibition of bizarre homemade slot machines.

Unexpectedly, you'll also find a huge mural of George Orwell at the pier's entrance: apparently the young Eric Blair (to give him his real name) moved to the town in his teens after his father retired, and returned in his 30s to live beside the chippie on the High Street! His sister even ran a teahouse in the town – though we're relieved not to discover 1984-style surveillance cameras everywhere.

You can find out more about the resort's history in the town's museum or the Sailor's Reading Room, or if you prefer to stretch your legs you can join the Suffolk

Coast Path, which spans the coast

for 50 miles from Lowestoft to Felixstowe. However, we are neither culture-vultures nor fitness fanatics today, because the children – Elsa, 9, and Niamh, 6, plus pals Max, 9, and Hannah, 6

– have discovered the amusements, and are already clamouring for a tubful of 2p coins. Once they've had their fill of >>





CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT Elsa and Max meet the Lion King; Niamh strokes some black-faced Somali sheep; and ring-tailed lemurs. All are at home in the neighbouring Africa Alive!

flashing lights, loud electronic noises and poor-quality plastic toys, we head back to the van, make up the front double bed and put on a movie for them, while the grown-ups – Emma and me, plus Becks and John – enjoy a glass or two and watch the reflections of the sunset in the gently rotating wind-turbine vanes overhead.

Meeting the wild neighbours

Two nights of listening to the sounds of exotic animals on the other side of the hedge are enough to work the kids into a frenzy of anticipation. No, Suffolk doesn't have a problem with oversized vermin: the noises are coming from the other reason why we chose this site, the Zoological Society of East Anglia's Africa Alive! wildlife park. Quite literally on the doorstep, this fantastic attraction is an unexpected sight to come across in the flat Broads landscape of northern Suffolk, and there are special offers for those staying at Kessingland C&CC site – which is good news when entry for a family of four will set you back north of £60. Not that it isn't worth it: the chance to see rhinos, zebras, meerkats, otters, monkeys, porcupines, flamingoes, wild dogs, vultures, cheetahs and more is a true privilege. And as a bonus, because the site is only a five-minute stroll away, we could leave Basil in

'Inspired by her *Born Free* namesake, Elsa heads straight for the Kingdom of the Lion, ably protected by Max''

the van with the rooflights open, and return to check on him every hour or so.

Walking through the Lemur enclosure gives Niamh the chance to get up close with the tame Somali black-faced sheep, while Hannah is thrilled to feed the goats in the farm area. Inspired by her *Born Free* namesake, Elsa heads straight for the Kingdom of the Lion, ably protected by Max, and all of the kids are soon running from enclosure to enclosure to collect stamps for the Passport Challenge, all desperate to win an animal medal from mascot 'Reggie the Lion' for completing their passports. What energy they have left is then expended in the huge play area, while the parents busy themselves with more mundane things – such as the fact that the food is surprisingly reasonable, with great kids' boxes... well, we were left feeling rather peckish after watching the giraffes' feeding time!

Of course, if you're keen to see a few more local critters there's nearby Benacre National Nature Reserve, while fans of winged wildlife should check out the RSBP reserve at Minsmere, which boasts more than 300 species of birds. But none of them offer the opportunity to find your way back to the site on foot by following the wind turbine!

We had thought that the kids' appetite for seaside fun had been sated by our visit to Southwold.

We thought wrong. So the next item on the agenda is a short trip across the border into Norfolk, and one of the region's most famous holiday destinations: Great Yarmouth. Now, a word or two of warning here: it might be located in the Broads National Park, but this is a town where, if you plan to visit the front at least, you need to leave your cynicism in the car – or, even better, back at the site. Because the only way >>>





Did you know that?
Somalian black-faced sheep are known as 'fat buttocks sheep', because they store fat in their hind quarters



Niamh and Elsa received their animal medals by collecting stamps from different enclosures to complete the Passport Challenge: animals they visited include the reticulated giraffe and Egyptian vulture



Why we stayed at... Kessingland Camping and Caravanning Club Site

Non-members are welcome at this attractively landscaped site, with spacious grass pitches in the shadow of two large wind turbines – whose rhythmic sound is never unpleasant. It's not the only unusual noise at Kessingland: from your pitch you can here the lions roar and the birds squawk in the adjacent Africa Alive! wildlife park.

The pitches have hook-up and, like the rest of the site, are beautifully maintained; the single large toilet block isn't the most modern we've seen, but it's very clean and there are separate rooms for disabled visitors and families. A small shop on-site sells camping essentials, along with some local produce, and there are security barriers, plus a laundry. TV signal is poor, but there is club Wi-Fi (at extra cost). Families will appreciate the large kids' play area and the safe feel from the surrounding hedges, while there's a short dog-walk area and, if you want to stretch your legs further afield, the sand/shingle Kessingland Beach is a mile-and-a-half walk away.

Address Whites Lane, Kessingland, Nr Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 7TF
Tel 01502 742 040
Web www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk
Charges Pitch+2+hook-up £19.65-£30.65 (plus non-member supplement)
Open 17 March-31 October
Pitches 90

Our outfit

This trip was the final outing for our Vauxhall Insignia Country Tourer 4x4, and we stayed aboard our long-term Bailey Unicorn Cadiz with a Vango Varkala 280 awning. Despite a full boot and four passengers, the Vauxhall's 195PS BiTurbo CDTi engine made light work of pulling the Bailey Unicorn's 1496kg MTPLM.



The site's spacious grass pitches are overshadowed by two large wind turbines



Did you know that?
Great Yarmouth features its own Nelson's column, in tribute to one of Norfolk's most famous sons

Great Yarmouth offers no apologies for its traditional seaside fare: the children enjoy a ride on well-cared-for donkeys, while the Clements family fool around on the seafront



Ship aground in Sutton Hoo

Following such excesses, it's time for the parents to wrest back control of the itinerary, so for our final full day we head 40 miles south and a little inland to the National Trust's Sutton Hoo. On the way, however, we decide to stop off in nearby Woodbridge to pick up a bit of shopping – or at least, that is the excuse to park up and nip into The Anchor, a much-recommended pub on the quayside with attractive and historic interiors. More importantly, it also serves a fine pint of IPA and some fantastic yet well-priced food – my beef brisket is sensational, but Emma swears that her slow-roast pork belly with *dauphinois* potatoes is even better!

Sutton Hoo itself is a fascinating place, and one that – we discovered too late – you really need to dedicate at least a full day to. In fact, you could easily spend a couple of

days exploring this site, which is two attractions in one. The most famous element, drawing some 100,000 visitors to the venue every year, is a series of burial mounds thought to have contained the remains of the Wuffingas Anglo-Saxon kings of East Anglia. Key among these, and the first to be found, is the grave of King Raedwald, who was buried in around AD625 along with his treasures – and even his goft ship.

This was unearthed in 1939, just a few months before the outbreak of war, by local archaeologist Basil Brown. There is a recreation of the burial chamber inside the Sutton Hoo exhibition. (Dog owners visiting the exhibition will be pleased to know that there is a loop outside to tie up your four-legged friend, along with topped-up water bowls.) There is plenty to see, including the mounds themselves: further excavation in the 1980s and early 2000s revealed more than 40 more mounds, including one containing an Anglo-Saxon warrior and his horse, plus various graves. Inside the visitor centre the kids have a go at making origami ships. Before heading into the burial chamber, the children can even become Saxons themselves, courtesy of a large dressing-up box!

We can't leave without paying a visit to the second part of the Sutton Hoo estate,

to enjoy this Blackpool of the east is to throw yourself into it; and if you need any pointers, just watch the children.

As we drive in along the seafront, the “oohs” and “aaahs” build, and by the time we have found a space for the car (£4 this time, free parking here is pretty limited) they have decided the order of the day ahead, ride by ride. First is the huge inflatable ‘Everest’ slide on the beach, where fearless Niamh throws herself down with abandon, while those seeking a quieter thrill sample the fairground swing boats or feel the sand between their toes on the well-kept beach.

The weather is great so we decide to skip the temptation of the Britannia Pier and instead pay £10 to give all four kids the ultimate traditional seaside treat: a donkey ride. The Parkers Donkeyworld animals are well cared for (passengers are limited to eight stone), and the children are delighted by this simple pleasure, as they plod the length of the pier and back, in the shadow of its theatre. The rickety rollercoasters of the Pleasure Beach are next, then yet more 2p coin-push machines before candyfloss and sticks of rock from the Potters Rock Factory. As darkness begins to fall, we pour the weary kids back into the car and return to the cosy warmth of the van, where for once they turn in without complaint.



ABOVE Pick a rock, any rock, from the **Potters Rock Factory, Great Yarmouth** BELOW Niamh was fearless on the inflatable 'Everest' slide in **Great Yarmouth**. RIGHT Looking the part dressed as Anglo-Saxons at **Sutton Hoo**



Tranmer House. Although it appears unrelated to the historic treasures, the handsome 1930s mansion overlooking the River Debden valley in fact belonged to Mrs Edith Pretty, who employed archaeologist Brown to dig on her land and later gave the hoard to the British Museum. Her family donated the 200-acre estate to the Trust in 1998, and there is now a recreation of Basil Brown's workshop in the grounds.

A highlight of this building for the children is the attitude that the Trust has

taken to its preservation: far from the 'Please do not touch' line of old, it welcomes kids to sit on the sofas and listen to the gramophone as they search for items on their 'Tranmer Trail' worksheets. Elsa is bowled over when one of the volunteers lets her flick through the pages of a first edition of *Little Women* – the very book she is reading back at the van.

There are apartments to rent within the house, which is rather tempting because the rain is beginning to fall, as if signalling the end of our fun. The heavens open as we pack

up the awning and hitch up for the gentle trundle back down the A12 to reality. This area of the UK is hardly undiscovered, but compared to many more popular beach resorts it never seems overcrowded. It has culture, nature and (hopefully) sun, sand and sea – what more could you want?

Trouble is, with only a week available to us, we've barely dented our 'to-do' list. So will we head east again instead of west? Definitely – now, if we could only persuade Granny and Grandpa to relocate... **PC**

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Norfolk Broads

This tranquil, open site is to be found in the midst of the Norfolk Broads, equidistant from the appealing local villages of Horning and Ludham. **Tel** 01692 630 357

Kersey

Kersey was once famous for the cloth it produced; the community today centres on a village hall, church, school and pub

'Whenever I mentioned Kersey to anyone, they all said that it is a lovely place'



Getting to know Rural Suffolk

Bryony Symes tours Suffolk's narrow lanes to discover the charm and history of ancient villages

Long Melford



The Holy Trinity church was mainly constructed in the 15th century but the 'lily crucifix' window is thought to be older



IN 1934, FIVE years before the commencement of WW2, there were around 2.5 million motor vehicles on Britain's roads: it was the golden age of motoring, when 'bright young things' liked to escape to the country – think stories by PG Woodhouse and Agatha Christie. It was the year that *English Villages and Hamlets* by Humphrey Pakington was first published, providing a touring guide to rural idylls. My plan was to use our Swift Lifestyle 4 as a base from which to follow his chapter on Suffolk: to explore some of the prettiest villages in England and to see how much they had changed since his book hit 1930s retail shelves.

Taking the long road

I pitched the Swift at Polstead Camping and Caravanning Club Site, just south of the first group of villages that I wanted to see. Having set up the van, I jumped back in my Suzuki S-Cross tug to start exploring.

My first stop was Long Melford, a large village that, despite being established in Tudor times and being endowed with beautiful architecture and a very long, tree-lined street, is only mentioned by Pakington as a location reference for the nearby village of Cavendish.

Walking through Long Melford from the Old School Community Centre, I passed all sorts of interesting old buildings – from the colourful and crooked timber-framed houses to the

stately stone of the Robins Row building. This is clearly a village much admired by and catering for tourists. There are many tearooms, characterful pubs – The Bull looks particularly interesting – and even a Heritage Centre, although it was closed when I visited.

Following the road past the impressive Melford Hall, a National Trust property with gorgeous grounds, you'll find the church, another pub and pretty houses looking onto common land. The church itself has an interesting Lady Chapel, whose function covers meeting place, schoolroom, place of worship and more. This chapel was built in 1496, with the rest of the church completed in 1484. The Clopton Chantry Chapel at the west end of the nave is thought to be older, from about a century before the bulk of the building

was completed. Fascinating artwork and poetry are inscribed on the stonework, and its 'lily crucifix' stained-glass window is thought to be from around 1350.

But why did Pakington prefer Cavendish? I drove the few miles between them to find out.

You can definitely sense the 'dignity', which the author attributed to Cavendish. At the centre of this village lies a large green, which you can imagine being the community's social hub, especially because there is a pub facing it. After buying a loaf of bread from the small shop, I struck up a conversation with Colin, who has spent most of his life in the village.

"Best part of 50 years I've been here, and it has barely changed in that time," he said.

One set of buildings that Colin pointed out to me was the pink almshouses, also known as

the Hyde Park Corner cottages, which date from the 16th century but have been rebuilt twice since then. Behind the cottages is a church with a strange wooden construction at the top of the tower holding a bell, which traditionally signals that communion is about to start.

Hunger took hold and I headed back to the site. Just a few minutes' walk away is The Brewers Arms, a carvery and bar where I sat down for its meal deal of the day – a giant burger and chips for just £5.95.

After dinner I made the most of the evening light by running to Polstead village and back, following the map available from the campsite. It is a hilly route, through woods, bringing you out by the village post office and hall, and a lovely-looking pub, all facing on to the green. If you were to walk this mile-and-a-half route, it would take around 45 minutes.

Tudor villages

Suffolk has a huge number of traditional timber-framed houses and many of the villages I visited had quite a collection, but I wanted to start the next day with possibly the fairest of them all. Throughout my tour, whenever I mentioned the name 'Kersey' to anyone, they all said that it is a lovely place.

Pakington wrote: 'Few villages hide their charm so successfully from the outer world as does Kersey.' >>>

Cavendish



In front of St Mary's Church are the famous pink almshouses, which were built in the 16th century and have been much renovated since

And as you approach, all you do see is a small church and a collection of rooftops. Turn right at the church and drive down the hill to be surrounded by picturesque cottages. The village straddles a stream, which forms a ford over the road.

There is a pub here, which serves teas and lunches, and ‘honesty boxes’ where you can pick up any surplus homegrown food. This is one of the touches of village life that I found across Suffolk – so many of the villages could provide you with local food, eggs, flowers and more. I liked the honesty box that had been painted to match the timber-framed building it was attached to; complete with climbing roses!

I passed many of Suffolk’s wheat fields to see another recommendation – Lavenham. It is widely considered to be the finest medieval village in England, so I was keen to take in its atmosphere and wander among the colourful cottages.

Downhill from the impressive Church of St Peter and St Paul, past seemingly endless timber-framed houses, with walls and roofs set at curious angles, you’ll find interesting shops and pubs en route to the market square, plus Little Hall House and Garden and the beautiful and historic Guildhall. Sadly, I missed opening hours by just 30 minutes.

Everything was shutting up for the evening, which I took as my cue to head back to the site. Before I got back in the Suzuki, though, I rewarded myself with an ice cream, fighting off the ‘thunder bugs’, which would apparently be swarming the area until the harvest was over.

The warmth of the day stuck around, while I had an al fresco dinner and chatted to the people on neighbouring pitches, before turning in for the night.

The allure of teashops

Woolpit, on the old road between Stowmarket and Bury St Edmunds, has retained its charm. This is partly attributable to the building of the A14 nearby, taking the worst of the traffic away from the village.

Along one side of the square is a row of businesses, including a fish-and-chip shop, bakery, tearoom, hairdressers and the community hall. In the centre of the square is the prized but redundant water pump.

The community centre had a sign in the doorway saying ‘museum’, so I went in and up the stairs into a hall, which was being set up for a lunch club.

Around the walls were murals depicting the village and put up to celebrate the millennium. It turned out that the museum has limited opening hours, but luckily the lady who looks after it, Elizabeth Cockayne, was enjoying a cuppa with a friend in the tearoom downstairs. I joined them for a few minutes, learning about the village’s past and the legend of the Lady’s Well (a moated spring in a field north-east of the church, which drew many pilgrims).

I went out into the lanes to find the Lady’s Well, but was soon distracted by the delicious aroma of cheese scones, which lured me back into the teashop. I sat and watched village life unfold and chatted to Chris and Carol, who were running the tearoom.

Of Woolpit, Pakington wrote: ‘The place is graced by charming and dignified houses.’

It has grown with the times but still has both a close-knit community feel and beautiful medieval and Georgian buildings. And, having met Chris, Carol, Elizabeth and Brenda, I decided that it was my favourite village.

Medieval machinations

Bildeston is the next village that I came to. After lunch at The Crown, I picked up the *Bildeston History Quarterly* from the shop and wandered the streets, admiring the many old buildings. But where was the church? I asked a local and was directed up a narrow lane. It is odd to have a village church located on top of a hill, half a mile from the main settlement and surrounded by ramshackle farm buildings and two cottages. The view back to Bildeston is great, but I can’t imagine that it is very convenient for attending services!

The church dates from the 14th or 15th century. One theory for its location is that the original medieval village was in fact by the church, with evidence



Kersey

Honesty boxes are a feature of rural Suffolk life, and this one, painted to resemble a medieval house, is particularly delightful



Lavenham

The village of Lavenham is renowned for its collection of medieval buildings. Tourism replaces the wool trade as the principle industry



Bildeston



The 15th-century Bildeston Crown was once a coaching inn and is now a restaurant, so why not treat yourself to lunch in a cosy atmosphere?



Mellis

This gorgeous telephone box was rescued by the council and its renovation became a community project

of earthworks in the nearby fields suggesting the position of the late Bildeston Hall and village. Perhaps the village died out because of the plague? Or moved down the hill when a market charter was granted, to take advantage of passing trade? Noone is really sure.

I also picked up a tidbit on information about another village that I should visit – Mellis. Armed with this teaser, I headed back to the caravan to plan my last day of exploring.

Mellis is a small community spread out around an area of common land, with a railway crossing, a pub on the corner and the gem that I was searching for – a stained-glass telephone box. The local council rescued it in 2012 and it became a community project to replace the glass and restore the box.

Artist's paradise

In Pakington's book, the nearby village of Hoxne is described as 'a pleasant place, with variegated houses... peeping out between the stout trunks of the trees on the green'. I found it much the same: come off the main road at the top of the village to enter a peaceful slice of quintessential English life.

There is a shop and post office, selling fresh bread, and a (hopefully) temporarily shut pub. There was a number of people milling around the square and looking at the buildings, and I soon realised it was a painting group. I spoke to one man, Brian, who is Suffolk born and bred, and tried out the book's

pronunciation tip; 'Hoxne... which you will be pleased to pronounce like aspirated oxen.' It seems that you need a proper Suffolk accent to pull it off.

I carried on towards the village of Euston, which has only a few houses scattered along the avenue-like main road. I was curious as to what was in Euston Hall though, after seeing English Heritage signs for it.

To reach the hall and its church, you must pass through a gate onto the estate where there is a sports field and the impressive church in the distance. From my walk across to the church I could see the back of the hall, with one wing covered in scaffolding. It is undergoing restoration work and will re-open later in 2016, and the church was steadfastly locked, so I could do no more than wander around the churchyard.

As I made my way back to Polstead to pick up the van before the rush-hour traffic, I reflected on the contrast between the villages in Suffolk: from those that seem to be trying to spread out as much as possible, to those that are so compact that they are barely a dot on the map. But each has a personality of its own.

Exploring the Suffolk countryside can turn up real village gems, including some that I cannot understand why Pakington did not include them in his own travels. A lot of the villages have grown, but most have maintained their close-knit community feel and rural charm, and are worth including in a tour. **PC**



Hoxne

Hoxne's attractive buildings were providing the perfect subject for a local painting group during Bryony's visit



Euston

Euston boasts a fine church and a hall, which hosts various events during the year

Why we stayed at...

Polstead Camping and Caravanning Club Site

There are three main areas to the site: the hardstandings, the grass pitches and the tent field. The facilities block is fairly central, with everything you could need, including details of local walks. Kids will enjoy the adventure play area, which is in the grass pitch field, and there is a secure storage area.

It is a 45-minute walk through woodland to Polstead village, where there is a country pub serving food (Tuesday-Sunday). Just a five-minute walk from the site is The Brewers Arms, which serves



food daily, including a carvery.

Address Holt Road, Polstead, Suffolk CO6 5BZ

Tel 01787 211 969

Web www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk

Pitches 60

Charges Pitch+2+hook-up £18.85-£25.45

Weekender

Exploring North Norfolk

The Musgraves' curiosity about Little Massingham's church had been piqued on an earlier visit



East Anglia: estate of mind

Jeanette Musgrave is enchanted by local villages, countryside... and celebrities



PETER AND JEANETTE MUSGRAVE tour around the UK and France in their pop-top 2010 Hymer Feeling 430. They live in Cumbria, which makes it easy to take long weekend breaks in the Lake District

THE SUN GENTLY peeped in through a small gap in the window blind as I lay in my comfortable bed and indulgently stretched the time frame between sleep and wakefulness. It didn't last long because my slumberous state was alarmingly shattered when a cacophony of geese honked a warning, indicating an impending take-off.

I scrambled out of bed and stumbled into the awning to witness the magnificent daily ritual. Thirty or more geese were readying themselves for a day's foraging elsewhere. They routinely take off at dawn and head for the wheat and barley fields that stretch for miles and miles in northern Norfolk. They return at night with full bellies and spend their evening socialising at Gatton Waters.

True to form, this morning's departure was magnificent. A cloud of geese passed overhead and targeted the bright yellow sun; another glorious chill-out day had begun.

This was the first morning of our summer stay at Gatton Waters, a lovely rural site with a very large lake (about eight acres in area)

that is generously stocked with carp, tench, bream and other types. It's very handy for caravanners who like to fish or those, like my husband Peter and me, who love quieter sites set in wonderful countryside.

There is a mixture of seasonal and touring caravans on the site and the facilities are good, with four toilet and shower blocks dotted around. So there's no need to rush off in the morning to ensure yourself of bagging a shower cubicle – which all adds to the gentle pace of any holiday.

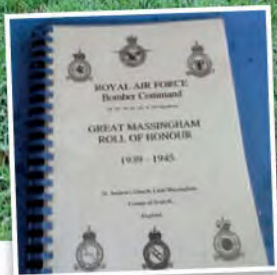
A little church beckons

Gatton Waters is perfectly located for exploring northern Norfolk, especially if you enjoy cycling. That's because many peaceful roads pass right by the doorstep.

After a lazily flitting away some time by walking around the lake and generally winding down, we packed up the bike panniers with the obligatory sun cream, water and packed lunch, and cycled off to a church in Little Massingham, some 10 miles away.



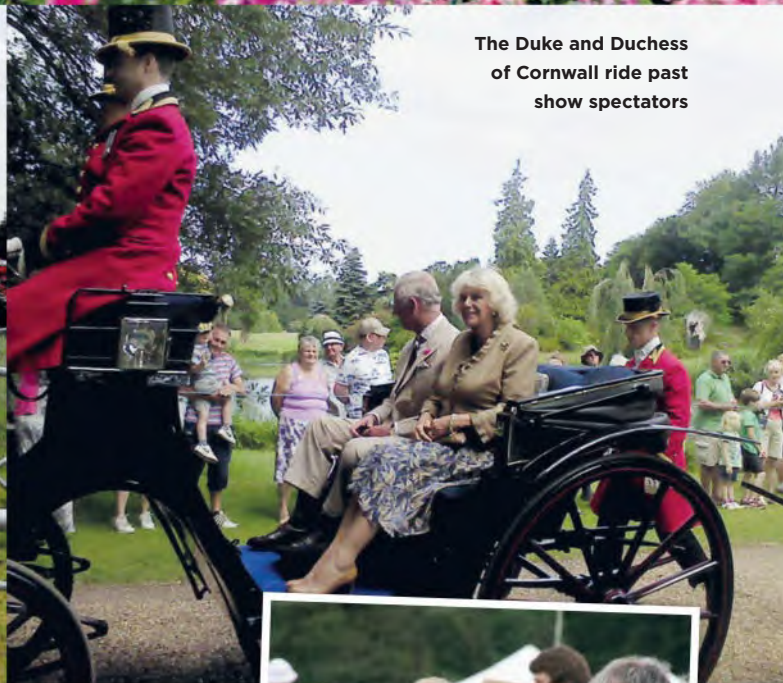
War graves and memorial plaque at St Andrew's testify to the RAF's local link



For £10, visitors to the Sandringham Flower Show got a day in horticultural heaven



Motorcycle displays were part of the show's entertainment for the non-green-fingered



The Duke and Duchess of Cornwall ride past show spectators

It's not a very strenuous ride because it's mostly flat. Norfolk, believe it or not, does have a few gentle hills – and you definitely notice them when you're riding a bike! Having spotted the church on a ride the year before, I wanted to return and take a longer look, or rather a look at what's inside.

During World War II, Norfolk was a strategic area for the Royal Air Force. There were countless airfields dotted around; some are now home to sheep and others still function as landing strips, mainly for small private aircraft and microlights. Massingham was home to operational aircraft, such as the Blenheim, Mosquito, Boston and the B17 Fortresses.

St Andrew's Church in Little Massingham is on a smaller scale than the many huge churches that sit magnificently throughout the Norfolk countryside. Nonetheless, it is a beautiful, serene and interesting building. It's special because it holds a Roll of Honour dedicated to those who lost their lives on flying missions, mainly during WWII.

I've never experienced war and listened to my father's only occasional stories of his wartime flying, but still found the Roll of Honour deeply moving. The details of the gallant young RAF men are succinctly recorded. A sentence alongside each name gives details of their ages, home towns and quite often records the last few moments of a shortened life.

Recalling the tragic toll

It may be almost impossible to believe that, just over 70 years ago, the quiet country lanes around the church were filled with military traffic. Bombers would noisily limp home after a night's mission, filling the sky with a thunderous throbbing drone.

I pictured a young crew taking off from the airfield just a mile or so away and then, as recorded, it was last seen ditching over the Channel, crash landing in a foreign field or being shot down. Many of the crew members were British but some were from the USA, or Canada and other



The event attracted gardening enthusiasts, Royals and crowds of celebrity-watchers

Commonwealth countries, souls far from home never to return to their loved ones.

We took our leave and, in a reflective mood, cycled through the peaceful countryside and silently thanked those who made it so for us.

The next day or so was spent cycling, walking and exploring deserted country lanes, gloriously wide sandy beaches, several local pubs and delightful places to eat. >>

5 more for... Flower shows

Get ideas for your own garden at one of these great events

1 Cornwall

Kick off the 2016 show season on 2-3 April at Boconnoc House for the best in Cornish horticulture and a gardening masterclass.



Stay at Eden Valley Holiday Park
Web www.edenvalleyholidaypark.co.uk

2 Harrogate

The outstanding Harrogate Spring Flower Show in Yorkshire, on 21-24 April, features the largest UK exhibition of floral displays, a plant pavilion, show gardens and more.



Stay at Harrogate Caravan Park

Web www.harrogatecaravanpark.co.uk

3 Blenheim Palace

The Capability Brown landscape in Oxfordshire's stately home is a spectacular setting for this early summer flower show, 17-19 June.



Stay at Bladon Chains Caravan Club Site

Web <http://bit.ly/1Mt2g70>

4 Shrewsbury

It isn't just flowers on show at the Shrewsbury Flower Show, 12-13 August.



Cookery and gardening Q&As are on the bill.

Stay at Beaconsfield Holiday Park

Web www.beaconsfieldholidaypark.co.uk

5 Southport

There's a Mediterranean theme to this year's event, 18-21 August, which will include show gardens, a food festival and entertainment.



Stay at Hayfield Camping and Caravanning Club Site

Web <http://bit.ly/1WrnLAS>



Vintage steam engines and tractors joined the exhibits at the Sandringham Flower Show LEFT The estate's museum includes the Royal Family's collection of retired motor cars

Celebs come up roses

Then came one of the events that I was most looking forward to: the Sandringham Flower Show. Its patrons are Her Majesty the Queen and the Prince of Wales.

Held every year on the last Wednesday of July, the show attracts both the green-fingered and the green-welly brigade – the latter, I suspect, hoping to catch a glimpse of Prince Charles, Camilla or possibly a celebrity or two. Dames Judy Dench and Maggie Smith have both been there as royal guests.

I do enjoy a spot of gardening, but I have to confess to being a bit of a royal/celebrity-watcher as well. At the bargain price of £10, we got to the show, which proved to be a brilliant day out. The flower, vegetable and garden displays were of excellent quality, and the entertainment side was really good, too. Steam engines, vintage tractors and the Imps

youth motorcycle display team thrilled those who were not that interested in flora.

Towards the end of the show, the air above Sandringham resounded to the wonderful Merlin-engine throb of a lone Spitfire in a marvellous display. The ticket also allows you to stroll around the gardens and visit the museum, which exhibits motor cars of yesteryear used by the Royal Family.

We waved to the Royals in their open landau, and filled up on hot pulled-pork sandwiches, fresh strawberries and cream and local beer. We were then ready to cycle two miles to Gatton Waters for a snooze before supper – all local produce from the show.

The following day, we made ready to head for home, taking the awning down for an early start on the morrow without a cross word spoken. The chill-out factor of this break was obviously still evident! **PC**

We stayed at... Gatton Waters

This adults-only site extends across 24 acres — eight of which are covered by a well-stocked coarse fishing lake. Even if that's not how you relax, you'll be lulled into a sense of calm by Gatton Water's tranquillity. It is also a very sociable place, with a bar that opens four nights a week; it is ideal for meeting fellow campers and enjoying the hospitality of proprietors James and Carolyn Donaldson.

In addition to the lake, Gatton Waters provides washblocks and a dog walk where your pet may be taken off the lead. You can order milk and a newspaper for the next morning, while the village shop is a three-minute drive from the site's security gate.

It is conveniently located for visiting Holkham and Houghton halls, as well as



Gatton Waters owner James Donaldson does groundskeeping at the tranquil campsite

other historic homes, nature reserves and beaches. There are numerous good pubs, restaurants and tearooms.

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SITES & SIGHTSEEING

EASTERN ENGLAND

You'll enjoy historic attractions, spectacular scenery and top campsites in this popular region, says **Bryony Symes**

FROM ITS LIVELY costal resort towns to its charming villages and stunning scenery, eastern England has a huge variety of attractions to visit. Wildlife lovers will really be in their element: there are numerous nature reserves, and the waters of the Norfolk Broads are a haven for birds

and other fauna. The area has a fascinating history to explore, too, with monuments and artefacts dating back to the time of the Romans and Anglo-Saxons. The coastline, meanwhile, ranges from the pebbled shores of Suffolk to the vast sandy beaches of Norfolk.



Thinkstock/Gordon Bell Photography



Things to do

- 1 Lincoln Castle
- 2 Holkham Beach
- 3 Suffolk Heritage Coast
- 4 Sandringham Estate
- 5 Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds
- 6 IWM Duxford
- 7 Houghton Hall
- 8 Horsey Windpump
- 9 Natureland Skegness
- 10 Colman's Mustard Shop

Sites featured

- 1 Run Cottage Touring Park
- 2 Fen Farm Caravan Site
- 3 Highfield Farm Touring Park
- 4 Walnut Lakes Caravan Park
- 5 Woodhall Country Park Campsite
- 6 Petwood Caravan Park
- 7 Eastview Camping and Touring Park
- 8 Cherry Tree Touring Park
- 9 Peewit Caravan Park
- 10 Delph Bank Touring Park



The 19th-century Cley Windmill, located in Cley next the Sea in Norfolk

1 Crime and punishment

There's more to Lincoln Castle's history than you might think. The recently restored Victorian prison in the grounds will teach you about life behind bars, allows you to follow the lives of those who worked at or served time there, and see the 'separate system' that kept prisoners isolated.

Web www.lincolncastle.com

2 Be on the beach

Whether you're keen to catch a rare glimpse of winter sunshine or take a bracing, moody walk in the rain, Holkham beach is a great place to do so: its vast expanse and the

sand dunes that form its backdrop are beautiful in all kinds of weather. After your winter stroll, head for the Victoria Inn: it's just a few minutes' walk from the beach, so you can warm up there with a cup of tea.

Web www.holkham.co.uk

3 Cross rivers in Suffolk

Take a stroll around Walberswick, a traditional village on Suffolk's Heritage Coast, and see the distinctive architectural style of the area. Keep an eye out for the exhibitions often held by local artists, too.

In the summer months you can catch the 'human ferry' across the River Blyth

to the charming town of Southwold. There's also a disused railway bridge across the river that's been transformed into a pedestrian pathway.

Web www.explorewalberswick.co.uk

4 A spot of regal flair

The Queen's country residence at Sandringham sits in 8000 acres of parkland and features gardens, a museum, visitor centre and of course the house itself. The house, museum and gardens are open from April to October, but the vast country park is free to visit all year round.

Web www.sandringhamestate.co.uk »

5 A howling good time

There's no need to be down once Christmas is over – the pantomime season is still in full swing! Venues across the region will host their own shows, including *Snow White* at the Theatre Royal in Norwich (15 December-17 January). Head to the Theatre Royal in Bury St Edmunds, meanwhile, and you can take in the grandeur of the building while laughing along to *Jack and the Beanstalk*, from 27 November until 10 January. **Web** www.theatreroyalnorwich.co.uk; www.theatreroyal.org

6 Take to the skies

The fascinating story of aviation really comes to life at IWM Duxford, which features displays and interactive exhibitions, as well as a huge collection of static aircraft. There are military vehicles and artillery for you to wander around, and you can also get to know about the men and women who worked at RAF Duxford over the years. **Web** www.iwm.org.uk/Duxford

7 A full house

Houghton Hall – which was built in 1720 for Britain's first prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole – is one of the finest Palladian houses in the UK, and it offers a huge amount to see and do. You can roam around the beautiful state rooms, walk in the five-acre walled garden, marvel at the model-soldier collection and explore the contemporary sculptures. **Web** www.houghtonhall.com



By gracious permission of HM The Queen



1 Learn all about life in the clink at Lincoln Castle's Victorian prison 2 Enjoy a wintery walk along the sands of Holkham Beach, which featured in the film *Shakespeare in Love*



Keith Mincham

3 Catch a ride across the River Blyth at Walberswick with one of the ferry operators 4 Visit the Queen's royal residence at Sandringham; the country park is open all year round 5 It's behind you! Watch a winter panto

8 Perfecting a pump

Head to Horsey Windpump to learn about how the Horsey Mere – and so much of the fenland in this area – was created by wetland drainage. The windpump was undergoing restoration as we went to press, but it's still full of fascinating information on its history, and the views of the nature reserve are great. **Web** www.nationaltrust.org.uk

9 Animals matter

Natureland in Skegness has been caring for seals that have washed up on the beaches around the area for half a century; here, you can find out more about the animals and the work that's carried out to protect them. You'll also see alpacas, tropical butterflies, an aquarium and more. **Web** www.skegnessnatureland.co.uk

10 Condiments of old

Visit Norwich's most famous factory – which now houses the Colman's mustard shop and museum – and find out how Jeremiah Colman's mustard empire grew from its humble beginnings. Don't forget to pick up a supply for your caravan's kitchen cupboard after you've sampled the range! **Web** www.mustardshopnorwich.co.uk



6 Learn all about our aviation past at IWM Duxford 7 Houghton Hall is a fine example of Palladian architecture 8 Horsey Windpump is an iconic landmark where you can find out more about the local wetland 9 Natureland in Skegness makes for a great family day out 10 Love mustard? Don't miss the Colman's museum in Norwich!



National Trust/Jonathan Cass



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1 Run Cottage Touring Park

Run Cottage is a beautiful, family-run site in a lovely location close to Suffolk's Heritage Coast. It was the regional winner in the *Top 100 Sites Guide 2015* and makes a perfect base for exploring the area's many attractions, including the Sutton Hoo archaeological site, the castles of Framlingham and Orford, Constable country and the towns of Aldeburgh and Woodbridge.

There is a pretty shingle beach just a mile and a half away, and a village shop and pub are within walking distance.

The focus at Run Cottage is on giving visitors a quiet, relaxing break: there's no bar or restaurant, but you will find wildlife in abundance. Take a stroll by the stream at the bottom of the site and catch a glimpse of a kingfisher, while ducks, egrets and more can be right on your doorstep if you nab a pitch next to the pond.

Site essentials

Address Alderton Road, Hollesley, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3RQ
Tel 01394 411 309 **Web** www.runcottage.co.uk **Facilities** Dog walk, tourist information, washblock, dishwashing area **Open** All year
Pitches 45 **Hardstandings?** Yes **Pitch+2+hook-up** £18

Readers' views...

"This park has pleasant staff, is beautifully presented, with clean and warm facilities. There is a good feel to the place in general."

"It was beautifully laid out, and did not feel at all busy despite our visit being at the end of July. All the site facilities were spotlessly clean. The extremely friendly owners keep the site to a very high standard."

"This is our fifth visit in two years. We always receive a friendly welcome. The site is spotless with plenty of space for the van and awning. Andy and Michelle are always busy on the site."

2 Fen Farm Caravan Site

Fen Farm has been in the campsite business for 90 years: its visitors have long-enjoyed the attractions of Mersea Island, and continue to do so. The park offers a quiet and relaxing place to stay: you won't find any bar or club here, but there's plenty of wildlife and birdlife. There is a board in reception where you can record the local critters that you spot and get an idea of what to look out for.

Facilities at the park include award-winning washrooms with solar-powered water heating and 10A electric hook-up.

The island has prime bird-watching and nature reserves to explore, especially in Cudmore Grove Country Park. There are also opportunities for geocaching, with nearly 20 caches on Mersea Island. And if you've never had oysters, this is the place to try them!

Site essentials

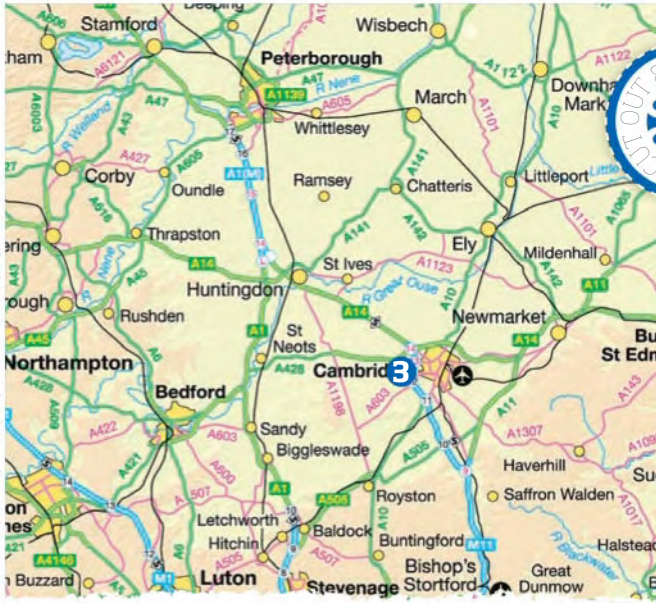
Address Moor Lane, Colchester, Essex CO5 8FE **Tel** 01206 383 275
Web www.fenfarm.co.uk **Facilities** Wi-Fi, tourist information centre, washblock, launderette, play areas, dog walks, chemical waste disposal, family washroom, recycling, storage **Open** 11 March-31 October **Pitches** 65 **Hardstandings?** No **Pitch+2+hook-up** £18-£27

Readers' views...

"The site is extremely clean and tidy, with fantastic washroom facilities. It is peaceful and relaxed, with plenty of space even when fully booked. There's a beach and nature reserve within walking distance."

"It is very well cared for with spacious pitches, friendly, knowledgeable staff, and immaculate toilets and showers. There were even unexpected touches for the children such as a treasure hunt."

"We found friendly, helpful staff, and an incredibly clean, tidy and well-laid-out site. The scenery is beautiful; a true oasis in Essex."



3 Highfield Farm Touring Park

Highfield Farm is located just five miles west of Cambridge. You can easily catch the No 119 bus into the university city, or use the Park and Ride, if you don't fancy driving your car.

The eight-acre site is part of a working farm and has been divided into distinct areas, allowing guests to be pitched in the area that best suits their needs. The grass and hardstanding pitches, which have 10A electric hook-up, are set around the perimeter of each area, leaving a wide, open space in the centre.

The village of Comberton, which has a post office, shops, a golf course and, of course, a pub, is just 1.5 miles from the site. Surrounding villages also have a wealth of good food and drink venues to choose from.

Site essentials

Address Long Road, Comberton, Cambridge CB23 7DG **Tel** 01223 262 308 **Web** www.highfieldfarmtouringpark.co.uk **Facilities** Shop, dog walk, washblocks, information centre, chemical waste disposal, dishwashing area, launderette, gas exchange **Open** Easter-31 October **Pitches** 120 **Hardstandings?** Yes **Pitch+2+hook-up** £20-£24.50

Readers' views...

"We have been coming here since 1969 and highly recommend it. It is very clean and tidy, and the layout is very generous."

"The owners are friendly, professional and knowledgeable. It is a quiet, well-organised site, with plenty of toilets, showers and washing/laundry facilities that are kept very clean."

"The friendly staff keep all washblocks spotless. There is a lovely walk around the site on adjoining farm land. It has a happy, welcoming feel, which continued throughout our stay."



4 Walnut Lakes Caravan Park

Enjoy a relaxing holiday in this pretty area of Eastern England with a stay at the 10-acre Walnut Lakes Caravan Park. Those who like angling will particularly revel in their visit, because there's a pair of fishing lakes stocked with roach, bream and carp, and the hardstanding pitches are located around the lakes. There are four lodges for hire, too, with fishing for two included in the cost, in case your non-caravanning friends want to join you for a spot of angling.

Walnut Lakes is within walking distance of the village of Sutterton, where you'll find a couple of pubs, restaurants and a chippie takeaway. It's an adults-only park, so you're assured of a relaxed, calm atmosphere. However, every now and then you may be treated to an air show overhead from a Lancaster bomber and Spitfires flying to and from events.

Site essentials

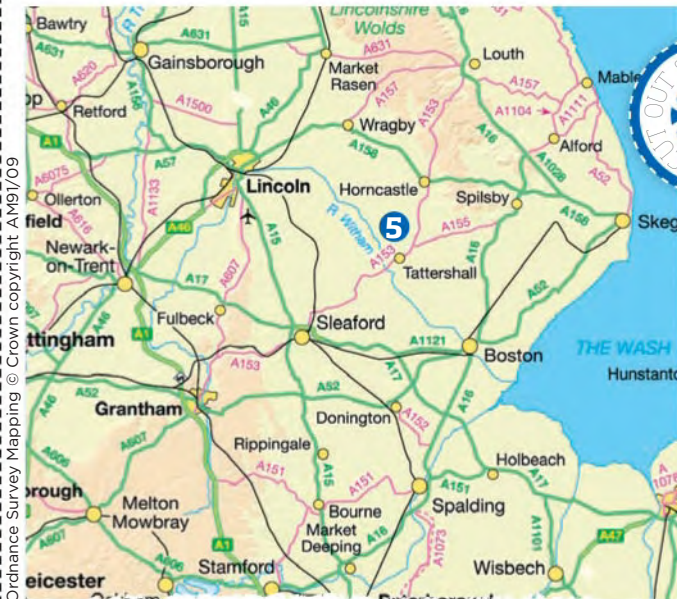
Address Station Road, Algakirk, Boston, Lincoln PE20 2LQ **Tel** 01205 460 482 **Web** www.walnutlakes.co.uk **Facilities** Dog walk, fishing lakes, washblock, launderette **Open** 20 March-30 September **Pitches** 10 **Hardstandings?** Yes **Pitch+2** £14 + pre-paid electric card (£1-£5)

Readers' views...

"It has one of the best layouts of a site that we have ever stayed on in 30 years of camping, and the well-marked entrance to the park was a bonus."

"The proprietor is very friendly and helpful. The layout of the site is great, amenities are immaculate with toilet and shower facilities that exceed expectation. The dog walks were good, too."

"The site is beautifully laid out around the lake, spotlessly clean, with a fantastic walk and lovely scenery. It is just idyllic and there is fantastic cycling - we couldn't ask for more."



5 Woodhall Country Park

Those who enjoy watching wildlife will be in their element at Woodhall Country Park, which incorporates a series of paths and wetland meadows to create an area that fauna find irresistible. The 110 pitches are set amid the woodland.

Anglers can fish at one of a trio of lakes stocked with carp, tench and rudd, while nature lovers can keep an eye on the birds and wildlife from one of the site's two bird hides. Bike hire is also available for exploring your surroundings. The park is within a conservation area in Lincolnshire, and just outside the village of Woodhall Spa, which boasts the unusual Kinema in the Woods cinema as well as independent shops and cafés. The site is also just five miles from the market town of Horncastle.

Site essentials

Address Stixwold Road, Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire LN10 6UJ
Tel 01526 353 710 **Web** www.woodhallcountrypark.co.uk **Facilities** Shop, fishing lakes, washblocks, launderette, dishwashing area, recycling, disabled washroom, Wi-Fi, play area, bike hire **Open** 1 March-30 November **Pitches** 110 **Hardstandings?** Yes **Pitch+2+hook-up** £19-£24

6 Petwood Caravan Park

Petwood has almost 100 touring pitches but manages to retain a pleasant, intimate atmosphere. That's thanks in part to the site's layout, where pitches are never be too far from the clean washrooms or the shop that can be found at the park's entrance. A dog-walking area and a small lending library are welcome features.

The village of Woodhall Spa itself has a number of attractions, including the interesting Cottage Museum, and the National Golf Centre. From the site you also have access to a public park with a heated outdoor swimming pool, children's playground and tennis courts. A nice personal touch is the newspaper service, which is available at weekends and in high season, and the reception sells basic essentials.

Site essentials

Address Off Stixwold Road, Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire LN10 6QH
Tel 01526 354 799 **Web** www.petwoodcaravanpark.com
Facilities Shop, disabled washroom, washblocks, dishwashing area, launderette, dog walk, tourist information **Open** 18 March-16 October **Pitches** 98 **Hardstandings?** Yes **Pitch+2+hook-up** £20-£24

Readers' views...

"We liked the cleanliness and the feeling of being at one with nature. This really is a proper five-star park with all the facilities you could hope for. It has easy access, with pleasant and helpful staff."

"The first impression is one of care and commitment. The pitches are generous in size and there are plenty of washblocks, which are maintained to a high standard. This park is a great place for tranquility."

"The price was good and it was nice to have a good-sized, fully serviced pitch and not too close to adjacent pitches. We have now visited on three consecutive weekends and have booked again."

Readers' views...

"It is such a well-kept site; very well spaced with first-class toilet/shower/laundry blocks that are very well kept. It is one of our favourite sites – a pleasure to visit."

"There are immaculate facilities and the family/disabled toilet and shower room is ideal for babies and toddlers. The staff are very friendly and cannot do enough for you."

"We found this to be an immaculate site, with fantastic facilities. Nearby there is a beautiful town, a heated lido, and great food. There is also an on-site shop for basics."



7 Eastview Touring Caravan Park

The seaside resort of Skegness has attracted visitors for many decades, and it remains as popular today as it has always been; fortunately there are lots of campsites close to the town that will easily allow you to explore the area – and the 15-acre Eastview is one of the best.

Adjacent to the site you can indulge in some fishing, or take a walk to Chapel St Leonards, which has a sandy beach, amusements, restaurants and shops. If you want to go a little further afield without taking the car, there is a bus to Skegness. Family attractions in the area include Fantasy Island, with its Wild River log flume, rollercoasters and a large outdoor market, and the Natureland Seal Sanctuary, which is also home to penguins.

Site essentials

Address Trunch Lane, Chapel St Leonards, Skegness, Lincolnshire PE24 5UA **Tel** 01754 875 324 **Web** www.eastviewcaravans.co.uk

Facilities Washblock, launderette, Wi-Fi, play area, dishwashing area, chemical waste disposal **Open** 1 March-31 October **Pitches** 56, with hook-up **Hardstandings?** Yes **Pitch+2+2(children)+hook-up** £18-£25

Readers' views...

"The park has great facilities, friendly staff and a good location. It's a five-minute walk from the beach and Chapel St Leonards centre. It's great value: we have returned a number of times over the past three years."

"This is a beautiful, clean site with heated toilets and showers, a children's play area, well-maintained grass, and helpful and friendly staff. It must be the best site for tourers in Chapel St Leonards."

"The staff are friendly, and the facilities blocks have underfloor heating and clean showers. It is a well-kept site with plenty of shops and pubs close by, and fishing ponds across the road."



8 Cherry Tree Touring Park

The adults-only Cherry Tree Touring Park is just a 20-minute stroll away from a lovely stretch of Lincolnshire beach that's been awarded a Blue Flag. If you prefer more strenuous walks, the Lincolnshire Wolds are within easy driving distance. The site's nearest village is Sutton-on-Sea, which has pubs, a post office and a shop.

The 20 seasonal pitches and 40 hardstanding touring pitches all have electric hook-up. If you're not too hot at reversing, there are easy-access pitches that you can drive on and drive off with no hassle.

Dogs are allowed both on site and on the nearby beach, and once you get to the beach there are miles of promenade to wander, so you can have plenty of invigorating walks. Places to visit nearby include Alford, the resort town of Mablethorpe, and of course Sutton-on-Sea.

Site essentials

Address Cherry Tree Cottage, Huttoft Road, Sutton-on-Sea, Lincolnshire LN12 2RU **Tel** 01507 441 626 **Web** www.cherrytreesite.co.uk

Facilities Wi-Fi, dog walk, disabled washroom, washblock, dishwashing area, launderette, tourist information **Open** 4 March-30 October **Pitches** 40 **Hardstandings?** Yes **Pitch+2+hook-up** £19.50-£24.50

Readers' views...

"This is the perfect site for us; it has spotlessly clean facilities, is quiet and peaceful and guests and staff alike are friendly. The owners take pride in running the park."

"We had a fantastic welcome and were shown to the pitch by friendly staff. The site is immaculate, with clean facilities. The pitches are well spaced out and the grass and hedges are well maintained."

"The location is great – it is so close to the coast. We had a warm, friendly welcome. There are great facilities and it is a well-manicured site with nice-sized pitches."



Ordnance Survey Mapping © Crown copyright AM91/09



Ordnance Survey Mapping © Crown copyright AM91/09



9 Peewit Caravan Park

Felixstowe's four-mile sea front is just a 10-minute walk from family-run Peewit Caravan Park. This is a popular park with a good touring area alongside the static caravan park. Stay here to explore the Suffolk coast and the Blackwater and Orwell Estuaries, but it is also a good place to stop over if you're taking a ferry from Felixstowe. There is a code-locked gate at the back of the site for easier access to the coast.

The facilities include some unusual extras: there is an area set up for boules/petanque, as well as a well-maintained bowls green. Be prepared to leave a £10 deposit in return for the key to the washblock. Children are well provided for on site with play areas, and off site they can let off steam on the beach and pier.

Site essentials

Address Walton Avenue, Felixstowe IP11 2HB **Tel** 01394 284 511
Web www.peewitcaravanpark.co.uk **Facilities** play areas, boules/petanque/bowls areas, washblock, launderette, dishwashing area, chemical disposal point **Open** 19 March-30 October **Pitches** 45
Hardstandings? No **Pitch+2+hook-up** £18-£20.50

Readers' views...

"This is a very friendly site with a community feel to it. We had originally booked for two days but we soon decided to extend our stay for a further three days and were lucky to be accommodated."

"It is a very friendly site. Our children were able to go to the reception area alone, and feed the fish and go on the internet, without us feeling that they might be unsafe."

"During our stay, the staff worked above and beyond the call of duty; nothing was too much trouble and the site was immaculate."



10 Delph Bank Touring Park

Delph Bank promises a quiet, relaxing, adults-only break. The three-acre site's village location in the Fens is ideal for exploring the nearby nature reserves and the coastline around the Wash. Here you can follow the 13-mile Peter Scott Walk from Sutton Bridge to King's Lynn. The village of Fleet Hargate has a pub, a shop, a tearoom, a garden centre, a chinese restaurant and a half-hourly bus service between Spalding and Kings Lynn.

Also close by and worth visiting is the market town of Holbeach, and further afield you'll find Boston, Wisbech, the Sandringham Estate, Grimsthorpe Castle and Lincoln. This peaceful site is great for getting away from it all, but if you find yourself needing to reconnect with the outside world, it does have Wi-Fi.

Site essentials

Address Old Main Road, Fleet Hargate, Holbeach, Spalding PE12 8LL
Tel 01406 422 910 **Web** www.delphbank.co.uk **Facilities** Dog walk, Wi-Fi, washblock, tourist Information, launderette, disabled washroom, recycling, chemical waste disposal **Open** 18 March-31 October **Pitches** 38 **Hardstandings?** Yes **Pitch+2+hook-up** £19.50-£25

Readers' views...

"The owners, Jennifer and Michael, are lovely people, and the shower block is first class. This was our third visit and we shall go again!"

"The site owners greeted us on arrival and were very warm and friendly. The site is immaculately maintained, with spotless toilet and shower facilities."

"We were impressed by the cleanliness, the standard of maintenance and the caring attitude of the owners. The fact that it is adults-only was great and the location is ideal."

Weekender

York, North Yorkshire



The atmosphere at York's Victorian Christmas Market is enriched by the aroma — and flavour — of mulled wine



Buying into winter touring

Nigel Hutson has put December caravan trips to York high on his to-do list



NIGEL AND KAY HUTSON (from right) are regular visitors to York, where they meet Nigel's parents for some sightseeing and shopping in the city's Christmas market. Rallying friends (from left) Anne and Colin Freear joined them at Fountains Abbey

ONE OF OUR MOST beautiful cities, York, needs no introduction, because it is well and truly on the tourist's map. Contained within the old city walls are magnificent York Minster, Clifford's Tower (English Heritage), Fairfax House, the Treasurer's House and the Mansion House. They are all well worth a visit, to say nothing of the quaint, 'olde worlde' streets. Then there are the various museums. The list goes on and on.

A few days in December in the caravan might not be at the top of most people's to-do lists, but an annual trip to York at that time is pretty high on mine, because I combine sightseeing (usually less crowded than at the height of summer) with Christmas shopping. It must be on my parents' list, too, because they join my wife Kay and me with their caravan to make it a family affair.

Seasonal stalls and smells

Staying at the Caravan Club's Rowntree Park site next to the River Ouse allows you to avoid starting the car during your stay, unless you

wish to venture further afield. This is because the city's attractions are all well within walking distance. There's also the Beechwood Grange site on the outskirts, which is convenient for one of the many park-and-ride services that operate in and around York — parking in the city can be a nightmare.

We were up early to beat the rush for our first morning of shopping. All the high-street chains are represented, interspersed with bespoke shops plus, from early December to Christmas, there's a Victorian-style Christmas Market in the heart of York. Not only do the stalls have a Victorian appearance, but many stallholders also dress in period costume.

I must admit that the mulled wine and other seasonal aromas were really good (even at that time in the morning) and helped create a great atmosphere. After buying a few presents from here, it was time to part with my 'hard-earned' in the shops.

After lunch, Kay continued with her retail therapy before returning to the caravan to write cards while listening to Christmas



A chartered steam train rolls into York railway station



A replica of Stephenson's Rocket at the National Railway Museum



The family dines on a full Christmas lunch at the Corner Cupboard



Ice sculptures add to the festive flavour of York's old city

carols. Meanwhile, Dad and I wandered off to the railway station, because I'd heard that one of the many chartered steam trains that visit York was due to arrive.

We had only a few minutes to wait before the A4-class locomotive *Union of South Africa* steamed in from Norwich. It was quite apt, because perhaps the most famous A4-class, *Mallard*, had recently celebrated the 75th anniversary of its setting the world speed record for steam locomotives in 1938.

Class-A trains and dining

Still in the train mood, we took a short walk to the National Railway Museum. Entry is free, although donations are justifiably invited. Because many of the exhibits are in working condition, there's a regular change-around. You can't help but be impressed by the size and majesty of the larger engines, but there are also models and much smaller artefacts.

There's something there for everyone, not just train enthusiasts, including a replica of Stephenson's *Rocket* and a Japanese Bullet

train, which you can wander through. To our surprise, *Mallard* was there together with two more A4-classes, so we'd seen four of the six surviving A4s in one day. Another famous engine, the *Flying Scotsman*, was in the workshop being overhauled – and was totally unrecognisable.

That evening, we decided to eat out and, following a recommendation by Suzanne Asquith in *Practical Caravan*, we ate at one of the two Rustique bistros in York (www.rustiquerestaurants.co.uk). The one we used was on Castlegate, but there's another on Lendel. Two or three Christmas parties were going on at the time so, though the place was busy, the atmosphere was great. It was a splendid recommendation (excellent food at an incredibly reasonable price), and one that we shall definitely return to.

The following morning, after a brief venture into the shops and a walk around the ancient city walls, we left York in the car to make our way to a prearranged lunch at the Corner Cupboard (www.thecornercupboard.co.uk)



Shopping in hand, Kay descends from a walk around the old city walls

[co.uk](http://www.practicalcaravan.co.uk)) at Birdforth, near Thirsk. Located in an old schoolhouse, it's part-shop, part-tearoom. While it's classed as a gift shop, the items on sale are very tasteful and often unusual, including old furniture.

Even though the main reason for our visit was lunch, Kay bought several items from the shop, including an attractive Christmas lantern, which was put to use later back >>

5 more for... Christmas markets

Make a dent in your holiday gift list at one of these great events

1 Winchester

From 19 November-22 December, stalls will fill the High Street and the beautiful cathedral grounds, where you'll also find an ice-skating rink.



Stay at Folly Farm Caravan Park
Web www.follyfarmcaravanpark.com

2 Lincoln

More than 200 stalls stocked with all manner of gift-worthy goods will be set up in and around the medieval square near the city's cathedral from 3-6 December.

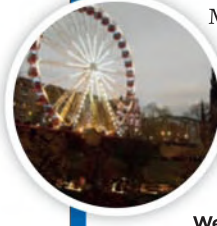


Stay at Orchard Park Touring Caravan & Camping Park

Web www.orchardcaravanpark.co.uk

3 Edinburgh

Go to the Scott Monument at Mound Precinct and East Princes Street in the Scottish capital for this varied market from 20 November-4 January.



Stay at Drummohr Holiday Park

Web www.drummohr.org

4 Rochester

Around 70 stalls are set up in marquees in the castle gardens, at weekends from 28 November-13 December. It includes seasonal entertainment.



Stay at Bearsted Caravan Club Site

Web www.caravanclub.co.uk

5 Birmingham

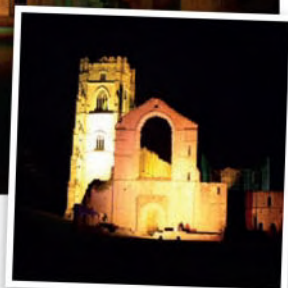
The city hosts the UK's largest outdoor Christmas market from 12 November-22 December. It is called the Frankfurt Christmas Market, after its twinned German city.



Stay at Kingsbury Water Park C&C Club Site
Web <http://bit.ly/1lHtc9k>



Multicoloured floodlights turn Fountains Abbey's ruins into a spectacle during carol concerts RIGHT The abbey is one of the best-preserved Cistercian monasteries in England



at the caravan. Although it is referred to as a 'tearoom', the food is fabulous. We all had a traditional Yuletide lunch, which included all the trimmings, followed by individual puddings wrapped in muslin.

It was time to walk off that lunch, so we drove to Fountains Abbey (National Trust) near Ripon, where we had arranged to meet regular *Practical Caravan* ralliers Colin and Anne Freear, who were pitched nearby.

Fountains Abbey is one of the largest and best-preserved ruined Cistercian monasteries in England, and its setting is without question one of the most spectacular. Founded in 1132 by only 13 monks, Fountains remained a successful community for several hundred years before

falling victim to Henry VIII's Reformation. It must have been on a par with the best of our large cathedrals when built.

Complete with carols

After a brisk walk around the adjacent Studley Royal Water Garden, we returned to the abbey's beautifully floodlit ruins. A visiting choir was singing Christmas carols and quite a crowd had gathered to join in. This happens each Saturday and Sunday during December. What makes it even more interesting is that the floodlights are coloured, which creates quite a spectacle.

Our time in York was over all too quickly, but it exceeded our expectations. Shall we return? We've already booked for next year! **PC**

We stayed at... York Rowntree Park Caravan Club Site

With 102 hardstanding pitches spread over four acres and their proximity to York's city centre, there's no wonder that this is a very busy and popular site. Due to the narrow roads leading to the site, arrival and departure times are strictly adhered to, which is sensible.

The site is up to the usual Caravan Club high standards and there's a large heated toilet block with full facilities. Because the site does flood on occasion when the River Ouse overflows, the washblock is raised, which means access is via a flight of steps. However, there are facilities for the disabled, too.

Surprisingly, TV reception is pretty poor, but it is possible to link into a boosted signal at each electric hook-up bollard as long as you have a good length of coaxial cable.



You can get into the festive spirit at Rowntree Park, because it is open all year round

Local shops nearby are stocked with basic provisions and, of course, York is within easy walking distance from the site.

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SHOWROOM NEWS



with **Niall Hampton**

Layouts that step away from the norm have been a feature of 2016 tourers. This month we look at two luxury vans; one has a walk-through washroom, the other puts its kitchen up front

American travel trailers are coming!



REGULAR READERS MAY recall our trip to the Louisville RV show last winter, where we got up close and personal with a bewildering selection of American recreational vehicles.

As our March 2015 report confirmed, the American take on caravans, or 'travel trailers', is very different to ours. The biggest contrast can be seen in the popularity of 'toy haulers', towed by hulking pick-up trucks with engine sizes that are mind-boggling to us Brits. But we're not talking children's scooters and board games; 'toys' to these users mean things such as quad bikes, jetskis and other kinds of outdoor paraphernalia.

At the more restrained end of the market we found a wide variety of travel trailers that look more familiar to European eyes. And one of these, the Forest River R-pod, is set to arrive on these shores in January.

Built on a single-axle chassis and with bodyshells made from lightweight aluminium and glassfibre, the R-pod models destined for Blighty have been redesigned with UK

running gear, overrun brakes and 220V electrics. Four models will launch initially, covering two- to five-berth floorplans, all with slide-out walls to maximise the interior living space. Weights will be between 1100-1350kg.

Standard spec is generous, with alloy wheels, LED lighting, CD/radio with Bluetooth, three-way fridge, blown-air heating, kitchen extractor fan and outside shower. All models can take UK awnings.

Perhaps the most eye-catching thing about the R-pod is the price; these American imports will start from £17,999. And thanks to a special offer, buyers at the Camperex 2016 show (8-10 January at Liverpool Arena, www.camperex.com) will get £2000 of extras (including a roof air-con unit, microwave, leisure battery and Tracker alarm) for free!

To paraphrase Colin Welland's famous acceptance speech at the Oscars, it really could be a case of "The Americans are coming". For more information about R-pod, see www.rpod.co.uk or call 03453 191 029.

The Forest River R-pod will be on sale at the Camperex show in January

In brief...

Local memorial for Don Amott

One of the best-known figures in the leisure vehicle industry has been immortalised in bricks and mortar. The Don Amott Memorial Hall, Hilton, Derbyshire, commemorates the man who started a caravan business in the '60s that grew to also encompass motorhomes and holiday parks. Following a refurbishment funded by the firm, the former Hilton Village Hall provides facilities to groups in the area local to the original dealership, started by Don Snr in 1963. "I wanted to create a lasting tribute to my father," says current chairman Don Jnr. "I'm proud of my roots and Hilton, which is the home of the firm and many of our employees."



Leisure World enters the Elddis elite

North-eastern dealership Catterick Caravans has been awarded 'Super Site' status by Elddis, so will now have every 2016 Xplore, Elddis and Buccaneer on display. And sister sites Ebor Leisure World and Tyneside Leisure World will also be retailing models from the County Durham manufacturer. "The Xplore, Elddis and Buccaneer models were received extremely well at our exclusive 2016 preview, and this has given us confidence to roll out these great caravans across the Leisure World dealerships in the north east," says director Matthew Kinsell.

For more information, see www.leisureworldgroup.com.



PLUS

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Test bench We test 17 dashcams **p70** **Running reports** News from our fleet **p74**

FIRST LOOK

Lunar Delta RI

Lunar's new Delta RI has taken the tourer world by storm, winning *Practical Caravan's* coveted Tourer of the Year Award for 2016. **Andrew Jenkinson** finds out why it did



Together with the large rooflight, the deep lounge windows allow in plenty of daylight

For an upmarket, twin-axle tourer, the lounge seats are short, which may make meals for more than four a bit cosy

Sumptuous upholstery and an attractive colour scheme make the Delta lounge feel especially welcoming

Price £26,199
Berths 4
MIRO 1550kg
Payload 160kg
MTPLM 1710kg
Awning 1090cm

THE DELTA RANGE has been around since 1980 and, in its 36 years, it has offered luxury and low weights. Known by many as a well-specified range, the Lunar Delta line-up for 2016 may just include its best model to date: the RI.

Lunar has rather cleverly taken a layout that originated in the world of motorhomes, featuring an end island bed and a full-width washroom amidships, and improved upon it.

Coachman took the plunge and introduced it in the VIP 545/4 and Laser 650/4, which

made their debuts at February's NEC show. Showgoers liked them and the Coachman models sold well, but there were drawbacks. The washroom felt tight for space and there were two entrances from there to the rear bedroom, to access either side of the lengthways island bed, the foot of which extended right to the washroom bulkhead. This made the layout feel claustrophobic.

Lunar has stepped into the breach by coming up with a twist for the floorplan, which was an ideal addition to its Delta a range. Lunar enlarged the washroom and turned the island bed through 90°, transforming it into a transverse double, which permits a single entrance to the bedroom. To complete the layout, the bed was made

retractable, to allow access around its foot. These tweaks make the Delta RI a very desirable luxury tourer.

Pitch and set-up

The Delta RI is built on an Al-Ko twin-axle chassis, which comes with heavy-duty steadies, the ATC trailer-control system and an AKS stabiliser. The Delta range also receives Al-Ko's automatic brake adjuster, a spare wheel and an underslung carrier.

Attractive alloys and decals complete the exterior design of this smart tourer.

A wet locker is also part of this luxury package and for those who like to cook outside a barbecue point is standard spec, as is an exterior mains socket.

The front and rear panels are full-height moulded ABS units.

The chrome-effect grabhandles can be backlit in the evening. The Delta has an external showerhead, pipe and connector, which are ideal for washing off the dog!

Lunar fits a 40-litre fresh-water tank with automatic changeover – when the onboard tank empties, the water system draws on an exterior source. A Wastemaster grey-water carrier is provided as standard kit.

The Delta has the latest Status digital TV/radio aerial, while the large gas locker is easy to access.

Lounge

If we have any niggles, then we may as well get them out of the way first. There's a slight one in the lounge. This is a four-berth, right? Yes, but the van will more than likely be used by a couple



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT LEDs are used throughout the Delta to provide a wide variety of lighting options. The attractive front panel, decals and alloys set it apart from the rest of the Lunar line-up. The digital control panel is directly above the glazed, one-piece entrance door



The galley has generous amounts of storage and workspace, as well as a separate oven and grill, three gas burners and an electric hotplate



The island bed is a breeze to retract in the morning and extend for bedtime using Lunar's 'easy action' day/night mode

than by a family. The lounge is a little on the short side; four adults will find it a tad cosy, though not a tight squeeze. We reckon an L-shaped lounge would work better here. Perhaps that could be offered as an option for 2017.

Otherwise, the lounge is comfortable. We like the sumptuous upholstery and colour. The deep front windows allow in plenty of natural light. This is bolstered by the Maxi Sky-View rooflight, which has been enlarged for the 2016 model year to a whopping 1.5m x 0.6m and works better than before.

Good overhead lockers and excellent night-time illumination are other features of the lounge, while the central chest of drawers and mains

socket plus the alarm sensor are situated here, too.

Front access flaps in the seat bases allow bedding to be retrieved without disturbing the seat cushions. The freestanding table is lightweight, while a slide-out section of the chest of drawers serves as a coffee table.

Kitchen

The Delta's kitchen is well-equipped and practical. It sports a Thetford Aspire 2 oven, a dual-fuel hob and stainless-steel sink with a clip-on drainboard. The worktop is generous but, for those who want more, a fold-up extension flap is provided.

Only one mains socket is fitted here, as is the switch for the top-notch kitchen lighting, including that built into the surround of the gloss-finish

overhead lockers. They look great and, with the LEDs on, they're stunning.

Ample storage space in the galley is freed up because the 180-litre fridge/freezer is across the gangway. Above it is an easy-to-access 800W microwave.

Beds

One of the Delta RI's two comfortable doubles is the island bed at the rear. Lunar's designers cleverly opted for a transverse bed measuring 1.83m x 1.34m. For less than £30 extra, it can be lengthened with an optional 0.10m extension for the supportive air-pocket mattress, making it 1.93m (6ft 4in) long.

Either way, its 'easy action' day/night mode simplifies retracting it for the day and extending it at bedtime.

The lounge, meanwhile, can be converted into a good-sized, 2.11m x 1.51m, double bed using conventional pull-out slats.

Washroom

Once you've passed through the main living area, you reach the washroom, and it's here you realise what a great design this is. Lunar has added bags of floor space and storage by fine-tuning the layout to have one door between the bedroom and washroom rather than two. The result is a washroom that feels much bigger.

The domestic-style shower cubicle is a good size, while the handbasin and the cupboard supporting it are centred width-ways. Just above the basin is a large mirror. On the nearside is the electric-flush toilet. >>



The washroom has one entrance to the bedroom, which creates more floor space. The specification includes a handbasin, toilet and mirror



The separate shower cubicle is close to domestic size, while nearby on the offside wall are a mirrored cupboard and a heated towel rail



The grabhandles have LED courtesy lights behind them to make finding them at night simple RIGHT The alloy wheels get AI-Ko Secure locks

As you enter the bedroom, you'll see a mirror on the left that folds out to reveal extra storage – a welcome touch. Good natural and artificial lighting, and plenty of ventilation round out the room.

Storage

The Delta RI offers a huge amount of storage, especially if used by two – even with four, though, you won't go far wrong. The lounge has deep overhead lockers while the kitchen has

large cupboards with drawers. Opposite is a corner cupboard with shelves above; a glass-fronted drinks cabinet would have been the icing on the cake.

The washroom has excellent storage, from its cupboards to a small wardrobe. Towards the rear, two nearside wardrobes flank the island bed's headboard. Overhead lockers and an enormous expanse under the bed offer more storage than most couples will need. Still, better too much than not enough!

VERDICT ★★★★★

The Delta RI really works. It's got good spec, storage and a spacious end bedroom. The washroom and large side kitchen work well. It's no wonder that this luxury tourer won its class and the overall honours in our Tourer of the Year. Despite its size, it is lightweight with a 1550kg MiRO. This is a tourer that's going to prove a top seller at the high end of the market in 2016.



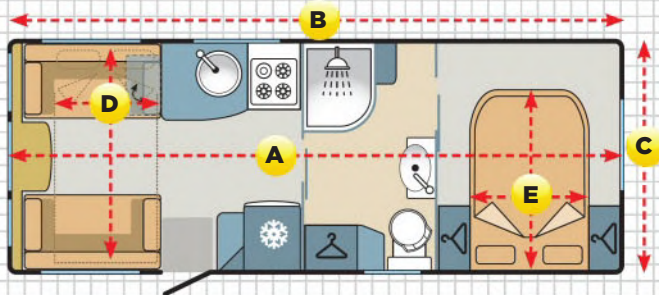
Good
The variety and provision of storage options are both generous. The washroom and end bedroom are the stand-out features. Lighting is excellent throughout this spacious van.



Bad
The front lounge may become a little tight with four diners. Pity there's no cocktail cabinet

Lunar Delta RI

Price £26,199 Berths 4 MiRO 1550kg Payload 160kg
MTPLM 1710kg Awning 1090cm Contact Lunar Caravans Ltd,
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Tel 01772 337 628 Web www.lunarcaravans.com



Measurements

- A** Interior length 6.16m **B** Shipping length 7.89m
- C** Overall width 2.33m **D** Front double bed 2.11m x 1.51m
- E** Island bed 1.83m x 1.34m



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The interior is contemporary. Otherwise, this is the same as the Conqueror in kit and layout.

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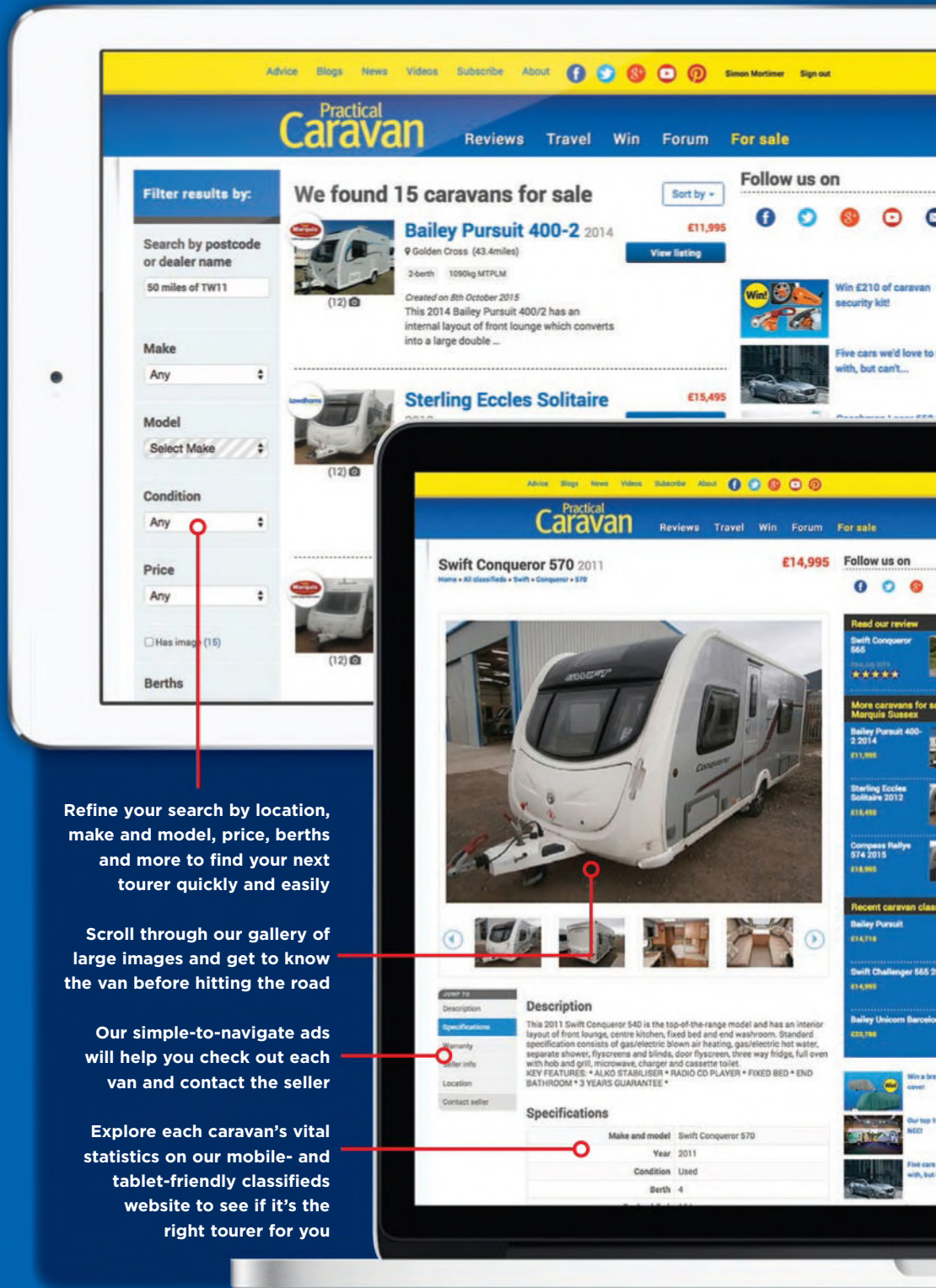
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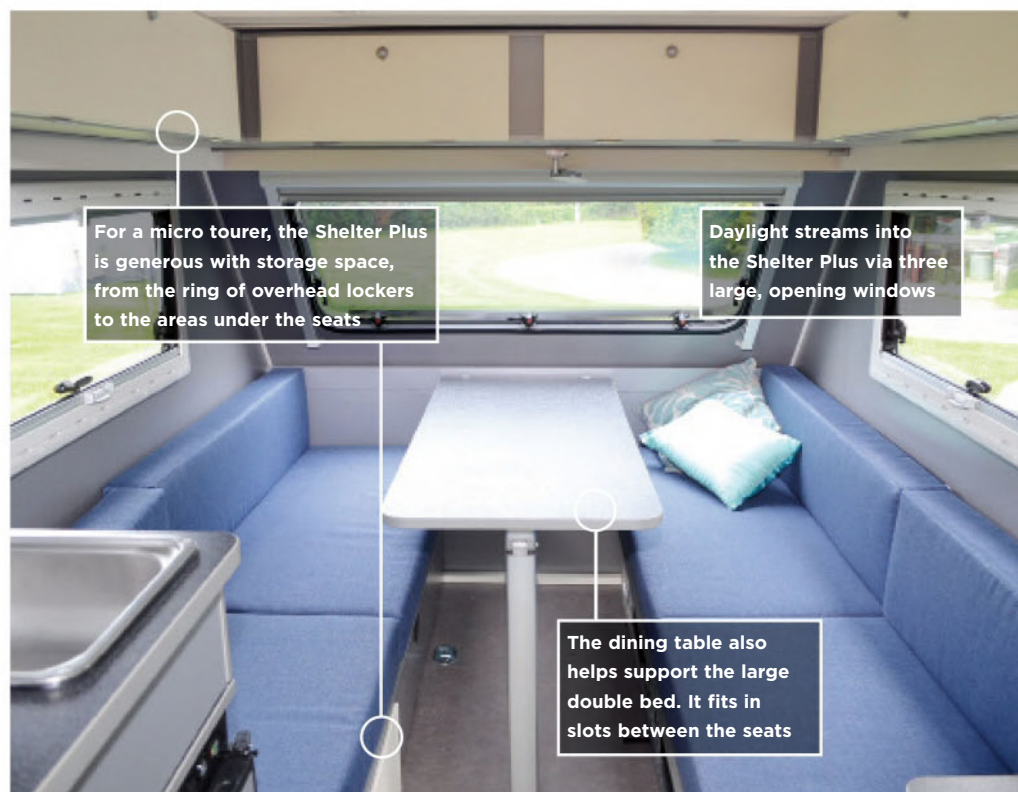
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FIRST LOOK

Kip Shelter Plus

Intrepid adventurers will love this van for its versatility, but do the additional features and options make sense when you add up the numbers? **Bryony Symes** takes a look



For a micro tourer, the Shelter Plus is generous with storage space, from the ring of overhead lockers to the areas under the seats

Daylight streams into the Shelter Plus via three large, opening windows

The dining table also helps support the large double bed. It fits in slots between the seats

THE DUTCH-MADE Kip Shelter Plus is a little adventurer that is perfect for short getaways, is suited to almost all tow cars and can be personalised to your tastes. There are lots of options for bringing the outside in, or the other way around, with a portable kitchen unit that can be used outdoors and space to store bicycles, a motorbike or surfboards ready for your next active outdoor break.

We had a look at the Shelter Plus with the following options added: blue metallic paint, alloy wheels, service package (which includes a jack, chocks and spare wheel), Whale space heating, and a side locker. Buy the Basic Shelter from £8995 or the Shelter Plus that starts at £11,995, and then choose the extras and design you want.

Pitch and set-up

This lightweight, compact van can be towed by a huge number

of tow cars, even if you've chosen to increase its MTPLM from 750kg to 900kg. This boost provides sufficient payload for plenty of other features from the long list of possible additions to make the Kip Shelter Plus distinctly yours.

This model is all about flexible use; to increase living space, there are three options. First, the sturdy De Waard awning features removable sides and is available in a range of colours.

The Atomatent allows you to create the kind of covered areas you want by unzipping different sections of the canvas. You can create an awning or keep it closed up to protect against inclement weather.

Finally, there's the De Waard Basail tent, whose unusual shape gives it great height. It has a removable floor, two windows and an awning. It even lets you decide whether to extend it with a 150cm-deep porch awning.

The sidewalls of the Kip Shelter Plus can be customised to your specification. Keep the standard Aluminium Raw plating or upgrade to a blue- or silver-metallic bodyshell. There is a selection of designs or you can supply your own photo and colour scheme, all as cost options.

Its standard equipment list is fairly impressive for a micro-tourer: hinged front and side windows, 230V electric hook-up connection (but no leisure

battery), aluminium roof rails, gas and water pipelines. An on-board water tank is housed in the front locker, along with the optional service package and the steady winder.

Setting up the Kip Shelter Plus takes just a few minutes, including pushing up the pop-top roof, which is a breeze to use and boosts headroom to 1.98m. Nevertheless, the hooks that hold it down are strong.

There is also a handy awning light and ample storage in the seat boxes, though external access to them is a cost option.

Lounge

The Shelter Plus has a multifunctional main space. The large dinette/lounge seats six people, while the tabletop doubles as the base for the bed. This can be removed to make room for keeping your bike, board and other large pieces of outdoor equipment while in transit, as part of a sports package. To create this space, fold up the offside sofa; dedicated attachment rings on the floor allow you to secure your kit with tensioning straps.

Even the lighting is flexible: three spotlights are fitted to rails running through the caravan, along which the lamps can be moved, depending on where you need illumination.

Another creature comfort is the underfloor heating, which warms the interior very



The interior of the Kip is very flexible. While in transit, the offside seats can be folded to support outdoor kit; at night, the area becomes a bed



effectively. If you get too warm, simply unzip the flaps in the pop-top to catch a breeze.

There are two pairs of electric sockets, one on either side of the door for charging all the vitals and, of course, powering the essential kettle.

Kitchen

The flexibility of this van is carried through into the galley. The Shelter Plus is fitted with a 60-litre fridge, a two-ring gas hob and a good-sized sink.

The hob and sink can be removed as a unit and relocated outside for al fresco cooking. One end is supported by a leg and the other is hooked on to the caravan to the left of the door. Water and gas connectors make it easy to start cooking in the awning – freeing up space inside.

Sleeping

The double bed is constructed by moving the table down to a slot between the two sofas. Then rearrange the cushions to provide a comfortable and spacious place to rest your weary head. The blinds combine with the caravan's effective heating to create a relaxed and comfortable sleeping environment.

Washroom

There is no washroom in this van, because it is designed as a back-to-basics tourer. However, there is the option of adding a Porta Potti Qube 335.

Storage

The nearside sofa has storage built into it, including an easily accessed drawer and a compartment that can be opened from the outside – an optional extra. A large cupboard is by the entrance door, and others for storing food and utensils across the aisle. It's generous for two people's needs.

There are also spacious lockers around the edge of the pop-up roof, with room for clothes and even bedding.

The beauty of this van is that it enables you to indulge in your favourite outdoor activities. If you're a cyclist, the Bicycle Package provides a bike carrier, connection bar and securing rings on the floor, so you can safely transport your cycles inside.

The Motorbike Package includes a foldable, easy-store ramp for getting the bike into the caravan, a wheel lock and securing rings in the floor.

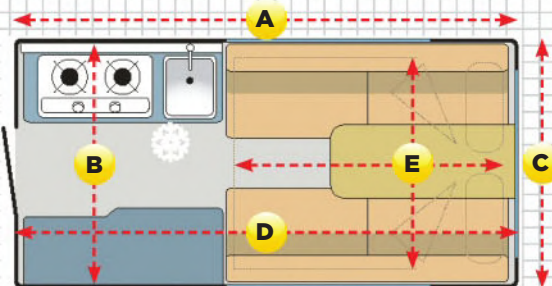
There is also a Surf and Kite Package for those into surfing or kite-surfing. This includes soft rubbers to protect two boards, a board rail that can be stowed on arrival at the site, and securing rings in the floor.

All of these are enabled by the wide caravan door at the rear, which can be extended from 74cm to 85cm, and a sofa seat that can be folded up and out of the way to create a large, simple-to-use storage area.

FROM TOP LEFT
Spotlamps can be moved along rails to wherever you need the light. You can choose solid-colour or flashier exteriors. The simple kitchen features a sink/hob unit that can be moved outside

Kip Shelter Plus

Price £11,995 **Berths** 2 **MiRO** 595kg **Payload** 155kg **MTPLM** 750kg
Contact Blackmore Vale Leisure
Address Sherbourne Causeway, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 9PX
Tel 01747 851 497 **Web** www.kipshelter.com



Measurements

- A** Shipping length 4.60m
- B** Interior width 1.70m
- C** External width 1.85m
- D** Body length 3.45m
- E** Double bed 1.70m x 2.00m



INSURANCE QUOTE £30.04/mo

Quote based on caravan and equipment at the value of £16,500 ■ Contents cover £500 ■ No additional security device discounts ■ 4+ years NCD ■ £100 excess ■ 6% is added for instalments, equivalent to 13.8% APR. ■ Subject to terms and conditions, and insurer's acceptance of the risk

Web www.caravanclub.co.uk/caravaninsure **Tel** 01342 488 312

Or try these alternatives



Trigano

Mini Silver
Price £11,525
Funky mini pop-top is the closest rival to the Kip. If its 750kg MTPLM is too high for you, opt for the cheaper, 100kg lighter 270.



Knaus

Sport & Fun
Price £14,495
It's bigger and heavier than the Shelter, but the Sport & Fun is likely to appeal to similar buyers who seek a break from the norm.



T@B

320 RS
Price £8950
Funky T@B is the default choice for individualists, but its 750kg weight includes only a 100kg payload, and no room for bikes!

VERDICT



The Kip Shelter Plus is a funky tourer for more adventurous caravanners who don't need all the comforts of home. It's not bare-bones, especially if you dip into the long list of specialist options. This van is ideal for quick getaways by active people, but they'll want to book a site with decent facilities.



Good

This is a very versatile caravan that is best suited to adventurous couples. Its underfloor heating is superb



Bad

There's little galley worktop, and no separate lounge or washroom

Live-in test 

Adria Astella 613HT Amazon

Slovenian manufacturer Adria's flagship range has been tweaked for 2016 with two extra berths, lighter weights and more kit. But is its beauty more than skin deep?

The amidships lounge makes a very social space, with an armchair on the nearside and a domestic-style lamp



 £24,135	 Berths 4	 MIRO 1665kg	 Payload 160kg	 MTPLM 1825kg	 Awning size 1072cm
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Where tested Camping Bled, Kidričeva cesta 10c, 4260 Bled, Slovenia

When tested September 2015



The Astella 613HT Amazon is heavy (1825kg) for a single-axle caravan



INTRODUCED IN 2012, the Astella remains at the top of Slovenian manufacturer Adria's catalogue. Unlike the majority of its siblings, the flagship makes few concessions to the conservative British buyer: there's a kitchen across the front of the van, rather than the expected parallel sofas, and a centrally placed, L-shaped lounge. From there back, things get a little more conventional with an end washroom and either a nearside fixed double bed (for the Rio Grande) or, as here, a pair of fixed twin beds. But no one could accuse it of looking conventional: from its silver sidewalls to its roof-rails, its dark wood finishes to its leather and chrome, this is one stylish caravan.

The 'Glam Edition' tag may have been dropped from the Astella's title for 2016, but the sense of glamour remains, outside and in. The range has a small but loyal band of followers. In an effort to increase their number, Adria has worked hard to broaden the appeal of the Amazon and the Rio Grande for 2016 by turning them from two- into four-berth models, with an additional double bed made up from the lounge sofa.

But the question remains: does the concept work for British buyers?

Design ★★★★★

Another attempt to appeal to a wider audience can be found on the spec list: thanks to revised construction, the plated MTPLM is down by a whopping 175kg to 1825kg – and that despite the addition of a 50-litre on-board water tank. Nonetheless, this is one seriously hefty van, and one that will need a similarly hefty tow car – one weighing in at 2147kg if you prefer to stick to the two main clubs' 85% rule for safe and secure towing – which is why it seems all the more unusual that Adria persists with a single axle for the Astella, when most vans of this type will be twin-axes on seasonal pitches. If you're not worried about overall weight, and the standard 160kg payload seems a bit meagre, you can upgrade to a 2000kg MTPLM – giving a useful 335kg payload.

All of that mass sits on an Al-Ko Delta galvanised chassis, while the body features Adria's 'iShape' family look with ABS front and rear panels and polyester sidewalls and roof finished in snazzy silver-grey. Thick Styropor insulation helps it to achieve EN1645 Grade 3 for thermal insulation.

The kit list is impressive, with seven-spoke alloy wheels, an external gas barbecue point, a two-part glazed entrance door and a huge double-glazed »

'The "Glam Edition" tag may have been dropped from the Astella's title for 2016, but the sense of glamour remains, outside and in'

The lounge looks plush with its leather upholstery, large window and dark cabinetwork



ABOVE Chair has high back and bolsters for optimum comfort
BELOW A light on an extending arm gives a domestic-style ambience and is handy for reading



panoramic sunroof. Smart tail-light units and a high-level brake light contribute to the automotive look.

Pitch and set-up

★★★★☆

Getting the heavy Amazon onto a pitch isn't easy, but it is simpler than manoeuvring a twin-axle – though the majority of owners will still choose to fit a mover. There are heavy-duty steadies all round, with long tubes giving access to the front bolts – which

demand care to avoid scratching the front panel when using a powered winder – and little guidance to the rears, so they can take a bit of finding. You'll want to get it pitch-perfect, too, because the waste-water outlets are well aft of the axle line.

Once pitched, the Astella is highly user-friendly: the awning light is mounted centrally, there's a superbly engineered retractable Thule step making a portable plastic item redundant, and the services (water-tank

filler, external water pump, electric hook-up, fridge vents, plus toilet cassette and flush) are all relegated to the offside to avoid cluttering the awning.

Towing

★★★★☆

You could be forgiven for expecting a single-axle of this size to be a pig to tow, and it's true that a 2.48m-wide caravan probably isn't ideal for beginners, but nor does it feel particularly intimidating on the road. The body length sneaks under 7m, so

you won't need a car weighing more than 3500kg to legally tow it, but this is really a van that's best pulled by a large 4x4.

We hitched up to a Range Rover SDV8 and it never felt anything other than utterly stable, aided by that wide track, though a twin-axle would suffer less buffeting when overtaking HGVs. Some of that stability can be put down to a very capable tow car, but the Adria has a reassuring spec, too: the alloy wheels wear wide 215 R14 tyres, and the chassis is equipped with an AKS stabiliser, shock absorbers and Al-Ko's 'premium' braking, with automatic adjustment. All 2016 Astellas come with ATC, too, as part of the standard Anniversary Pack – which also includes concertina flyscreens and blinds, those smart roof-rails, plus carpets, chopping board and drainer.

Lounge

★★★★☆

Wow. That's the phrase most likely to come from your mouth the first time you step aboard an Astella. Adria calls it 'loft-style living', but we're more inclined to compare it to a Monegasque yacht or high-end hotel suite. This caravan screams luxury –



ABOVE Wire racking is good for storing jars and tins
LEFT The kitchen has optimal illumination from the panoramic rooflight

particularly if you choose the optional £1100 'Fumo' leather, and the overwhelming majority of buyers do.

The central lounge consists of a comfortable, thickly padded L-shaped sofa on the offside with a large separate armchair opposite – perfect for relaxing into with a book. This adds an extra seat at the freestanding table, a sturdy, high-gloss affair with heavy telescopic base, making room for five or six when entertaining.

Despite its location amidships, the lounge is perfectly bright enough during the day – thanks to a combination of two side windows, a wind-open Midi-Heki rooflight and the light flooding back from the panoramic sunroof over the kitchen. The lighting gets even better at night, when you can choose the level of Lumens according to your mood, from a mixture of bright ceiling units, LED spotlights, attractive ambient lighting below the overhead lockers and a wonderful swing-out lamp with a shade that gives a cosy domestic feel – ideal for a board game or an intimate dinner.

Kitchen ★★★★★

In some tourers, the on-board chef can be made to feel something of a second-class citizen; not so here, this is a wonderful space both to cook and to socialise, with the kitchen opening out into the lounge so that you can chat as you rustle



ABOVE & RIGHT **Twin singles are longer and wider than most, with adjustable headrests** LEFT **The made-up double is narrow and the cushions aren't comfy**



up dinner, then pass over the crockery. This is also the brightest place in the van, beneath that vast panoramic sunroof and with an additional front window that opens wide to evacuate cooking smells.

There are neat touches such as a high-level shelf that's ideal for herbs and spices (though remember to pack them away on tow!), the huge drawers that easily swallow pans and serving bowls, or the way the hob drains into the square stainless-steel

sink, making it easy to clean. Some may complain that there are only three gas rings, and no electric hotplate, but unlike most square hobs the in-line version really can accommodate three pans. A glass cover drops down should you need more worktop, but this area rarely feels short on space, with preparation space on either side.

So far, so good. But there are flaws, which peg back the scoring in this round: for a start, there is only one socket (though there

are more in the rest of the van). Perhaps more of a problem, certainly for shorter caravanners, is that the oven and separate grill are sited high above the fridge/freezer, itself a little smaller than we'd like in a tourer of this calibre, at 104 litres. For those who simply must have a microwave, that's something to haggle over with your dealer.

Beds ★★★★★

Fixed twin single beds remain a popular choice among touring couples, offering berths that don't have to be made at night or broken in the morning, yet giving free passage to the washroom in the night, without waking your partner. And few tourers have fixed twins as good as these: at nearly 6ft 7in long and 2ft 9.5in wide they are significantly longer and only fractionally narrower than a conventional domestic single. Yet this tourer's vast width allows for generous beds without compromising the walkway between them: this bedroom never feels cramped.

Adjustable headrests on each side mean that you can prop up the mattress to act as a chaise longue for afternoon reading, »



ABOVE **The washroom features hotel-style luxury with ambient lighting** LEFT **Storage is good around the stylish vanity unit**



LEFT The panoramic window opens to release cooking smells
ABOVE The spacious wardrobe contains the Alde central heating



ABOVE The large external locker takes up the kitchen's dead space
RIGHT Gas locker holds other kit. You can stand on the long A-frame



or perhaps birthday breakfast in bed, and each side gets a handsome shaded lamp – but no oddments shelf. You'll find the television stand here, on a swing-out arm so that it can serve both the bedroom and the lounge, along with a screen to close it off from the rest of the van, plus a pair of windows and another wind-open Midi-Heki.

So why doesn't the Amazon get five stars in this section? Unfortunately, in opening up this van to more occupants, Adria has opened itself up to criticism: once you've lugged the table out of the way and pulled out the bed base, the front 'double' is just 6ft 2in x 3ft 10.5in, so your guests are going to get very cosy. They may also struggle for comfort: no complaints about the sprung bed base, but the jumble of wedge-shaped cushions makes for an undulating mattress.

Washroom ★★★★★

Bearing in mind the quality and style throughout the rest of the Astella, it's saying something for this washroom that it is likely to be one of the most memorable areas of the van. Those hotel suite analogies return as you take in the mixture of browns and dark woods, set off by chrome and subtle ambient lighting – even in the shower!

That shower is served by both the on-board water tank and an external submersible pump, though we found the water pump noisy when used for extended periods. The centrepiece is a bowl sink and chrome mixer tap in front of a large mirror, flanked by useful storage for cosmetics and with a big cabinet beneath.

There's the familiar Thetford swivel cassette toilet, with electric flush and a window featuring misted glazing for

privacy. The large separate shower cubicle has a bi-fold door – though it isn't fully lined. There is, however, a hanging rail for wet clothes, plus a mirror and a radiator.

Storage ★★★★★

In a caravan of this size you expect plenty of storage, and the Astella delivers. There's an enormous wardrobe slotted in alongside the armchair to provide a visual barrier between the living and sleeping areas, and it's deep enough that there's no intrusion from the tank for the

Alde wet central heating on the rear wall. Beneath it there's another cupboard with a shoe store, and if you need further hanging space you can flip up the shelves in the full-height cupboard on the left-hand side of the kitchen.

Eight huge aircraft-style overhead lockers are distributed throughout the van, and all have positive latches, though only one is shelved. There's plenty of room for bedding in three bed boxes beneath the sofa and armchair – though the lion's share of the area beneath the main sofa is taken up by the water tank. The space under the twin single beds can be accessed by lifting the bed frames on gas struts, though unfortunately there are no separate internal access doors and external access is only to the nearside.

The kitchen is packed with storage solutions, from the bottle storage by the entrance door to triple wire racks that pull out as a single drawer. The 'dead' space in the corner of the kitchen isn't wasted either, creating a large external locker that's ideal for kids' toys or chairs, to complement the vast front gas locker, where you'll also find the steel spare wheel.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Let's get one thing out of the way first: whatever the spec sheet says, this is not a family caravan; it's a couple's van that can occasionally accommodate a couple of (slender!) guests when needs be. With that in mind, four stars may seem a generous score, but it is testament to just what a special tourer this is, offering serious levels of luxury and build quality for a price that looks remarkably low in comparison to its rivals. Its unusual layout and high weight mean that this is likely to remain a niche caravan, but it's one that is very easy to fall in love with. **PC**

'The kitchen is packed with storage solutions, from the bottle storage by the entrance door to triple wire racks that open as a single drawer'

Vital statistics

Adria Astella 613HT Amazon

Price £24,135 **Berths** 4 **MiRO** 1665kg **User payload** 160kg **MTPLM** 1825kg **Awning size** 1072cm
Address Adria Concessionaires, Unit 2, Drury Drive, Woodhall Business Park, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 1WH
Tel 01787 888 980 **Web** www.adria.co.uk

Standard equipment

Construction

Al-Ko Delta galvanised steel chassis; 'iShape' body with ABS front and rear panels and polyester roof and sidewalls; sandwich construction for floor, roof and sidewalls with Styropor insulation (34mm floor, 29mm sidewalls and roof); decorative roof-rails and side skirts

External equipment

Integrated gas bottle locker; external storage locker; two-part glazed entrance door; integrated entrance step; double-glazed windows and sunroof; HOREX concertina flyscreen and blinds for all windows; heavy-duty corner steadies; AKS stabiliser; alloy wheels; shock absorbers; Al-Ko ATC stability control; spare wheel and carrier; high-level brake light; external gas point; LED awning light

Heating

Alde central heating and water heating; 50-litre water tank; external inlet with submersible water pump; waste-water tank

Lounge

Removable carpets over scratch-resistant vinyl floor; freestanding dining table with telescopic base; LED lighting with LED spotlights; ambient lighting below roof lockers; air-con pre-installation; 12V, 230V, USB and TV points; speakers; TV mount; Midi-Heki rooflight

Kitchen

Spinflo Midi Prima separate oven and grill; in-line three-burner gas hob; 104-litre fridge/freezer; stainless-steel sink with chrome mixer tap; sink cover/chopping board and drainer

Washroom

'ERGO' bathroom with Thetford electric-flush C-360 swivel cassette toilet; separate shower cubicle with bi-fold door

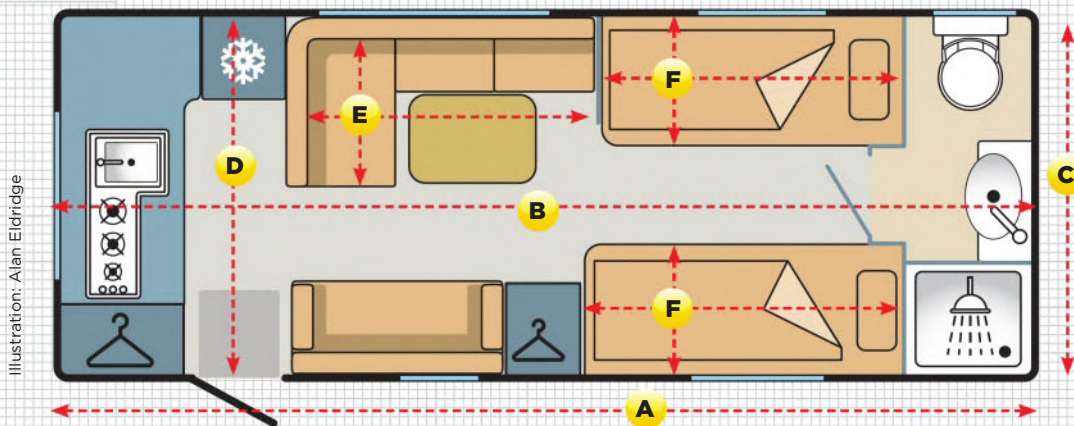
Factory-fit options

Bose sound system including radio/CD/MP3 head unit (£699); leather upholstery (£1100)

Dealer-fit options

Microwave; radio; TV aerial

Plan



A Body length 6.76m **B** Interior length 6.14m **C** Overall width 2.48m **D** Interior width 2.31m
E Front double bed 1.88 x 1.18m **F** Rear single beds 2.00 x 0.85m

Useful info

Perfect partner

For an 85% match, you need a tow car with a kerbweight of

2147kg

Shipping length 8.23m **Tyres** 215 R14 C 108 **Interior height** 1.95m
Overall height 2.58m **Thermal insulation** EN1645 Grade 3



INSURANCE QUOTE £42.74/mo

Quote based on caravan and equipment at the value of £25,000 ■ Contents cover £500 ■ Tracker, alarm, ATC and wheel lock fitted, 10% discount for each ■ 4+ years NCD ■ £100 excess ■ Quote 4.11.2015. Subject to Ts&Cs and Insurer's acceptance of the Risk

Web www.caravanclub.co.uk/caravaninsure **Tel** 01342 488 312

How do the rivals compare?



Buccaneer Clipper

Price £30,899
MiRO 1797kg
Payload 159kg
MTPLM 1956kg

Verdict The only van to get close to the Astella sits on a twin-axle chassis, with transverse twin beds.



Coachman VIP 565

Price £23,995
MiRO 1476kg
Payload 154kg
MTPLM 1630kg

Verdict Smaller and lighter than the Astella, yet feels well-built and plush.

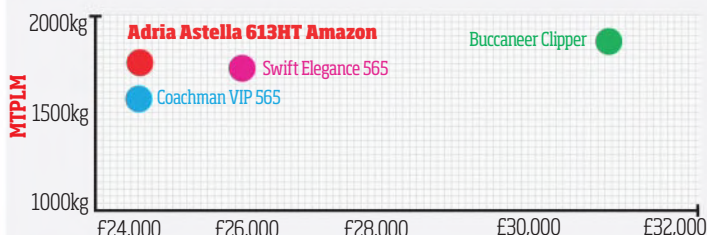


Swift Elegance 565

Price £26,995
MiRO 1570kg
Payload 156kg
MTPLM 1726kg

Verdict More compact dimensions, but much costlier than the Adria, and feels rather smaller inside

How the figures stacks up



The facts behind the figures

Featuring conventional fixed-twin-bed layouts with a front lounge and a central kitchen, the Coachman and Swift are both lighter than the Adria, yet the Swift costs a lot more. The Buccaneer is as large as the Astella, but this is an uncompromising luxury tourer, with weight and price to match, making it most likely to be seen on seasonal pitches.

DASHCAMS

James Stanbury demystifies dashcams, explains why they're popular and what they can do, and tests a selection for image quality, ease of use and value for money

ALTHOUGH SOME BEMOAN the increased popularity of dashcams as surveillance culture gone mad, there are many very good reasons why having Big Brother – or, more accurately, tiny little brother – monitoring your driving is well worth considering.

The simple fact is that many knock-for-knock insurance settlements are classed as 'both drivers at fault' because there are no witnesses and therefore there is no evidence to suggest whose version of events is correct. Obviously video footage of what happened can often clarify matters.

This is just one of many reasons why a growing number of insurance companies offer substantial discounts to drivers willing

to buy and use a dashcam at all times. In fact, the saving made in the first year can often fund the purchase of the unit outright, so it's definitely worth asking about dashcam usage discounts when renewing your premium.

But what exactly are dashcams and how do you use them? Well, dashcams are simply tiny video and sound recorders that are attached to your windscreen and spring into life as soon as they feel the vehicle moving. They record continuously until they register that their power supply (usually from the cigarette lighter socket) has been cut – such as when the ignition has been switched off – or that the vehicle has been stationary for a set period of time.

Because the device records continuously all the time you're driving, it is bound to capture any accident as it happens.

However, it has only a finite amount of on-board storage memory (usually in the form of an SD card), so all dashcams use 'loop' recording. Once the memory card is full the camera automatically records over the oldest files. To prevent accident footage being overwritten, practically all models now have a shock sensor to sense accidents as they happen. Footage around the time of the accident is then automatically protected, and won't be overwritten. You retrieve footage by either plugging the dashcam into a computer or putting the card into a card reader.



Cobra Drive HD CDR900

Price £139.99

Contact 01928 595 364

Web www.cobra.com

It's hard to believe that such a tiny gadget can produce snippets of footage in extremely high-resolution Super HD. Not that this is apparent from the restrictive 40mm screen on the back. Fortunately, the unit hooks directly up to larger screens via its HDMI output, and there's even a Wi-Fi option allowing you to view proceedings on most smartphones. At this price level, it's disappointing that there's no GPS, but with the gold-standard, Ambarella processing chip built in, and an ultra wide-angle lens, it does feel as though excellent optics were Cobra's main priority here.

★★★★☆

Mio MiVue 538 Deluxe

Price £124.99

Contact 03333 000 441

Web www.mio.com

A very close runner-up to the RAC's award-winning 05, which shares many of the same advanced features. Integral GPS, mixed in with the unit's view of the world, allows the internal processor to alert drivers of impending speed cameras (alerts are free for life of the unit) and other safety issues such as forward collisions and accidental lane drift. Optically, the 538 Deluxe is very good, but there are pros and cons when compared to the winning RAC 05; the RAC model definitely has a wider field of view, but this one is better in low light/night-time conditions.

★★★★☆



Mio MiVue 658 WIFI

Price £142.96

Contact 03333 000 441

Web www.mio.com

Mio's second offering has the same excellent optics but the output is enhanced from full HD to the wider screen, with an increasingly detailed, Extreme HD, format. Again, low-light performance is impressive, as is the wide field of view. This time, though, the unit relies on Wi-Fi to broadcast its footage, allowing easy viewing on a smartphone – even if the lack of an HDMI output makes hooking up the unit to a TV a little more challenging. Features-wise, GPS gives speed camera alerts, and the 70mm touchscreen makes navigating the unit's many features considerably more intuitive.

★★★★☆



RAC 05

Price £149.99
Contact 01158 414 016
Web www.rac.co.uk

The very best products tend to be brilliant at what they do, and are feature-laden and well priced. All of which applies to the RAC's newly launched 05 dashcam. Most importantly, it's a star performer optically: footage is clear, covers an impressively

wide area and night time performance is especially good. But it's the model's many extra functions that really make it stand out. Thanks to integral GPS, the 05 will warn you when you're approaching a speed camera, if you accidentally veer out of your lane, or if the vehicle in front has slowed and you're approaching its rear end a little too quickly.

★★★★★



Snooper DVR-4HD

Price £149.99
Contact 01928 579 579
Web www.snooper.co.uk

Features-wise, this is the unit to beat. As well as lane-drift and forward-collision warnings, the DVR-4HD will alert you if the vehicle in front pulls away and you don't, if it's getting dark and you haven't switched on your headlamps, and if you're accelerating or decelerating erratically. Naturally, speed camera warnings are included and Wi-Fi allows footage to be easily viewed on smartphones. Thankfully, the touchscreen makes the unit reasonably straightforward to navigate. But as impressive as the features list is, the optical side of the unit - while very good - slightly trails that of newer entries from Mio and the RAC.

★★★★☆



Transcend DrivePro 220

Price £129.99
Contact 01442 838 280
Web www.transcend-info.com

If you're on a budget and you tend to eschew computers in favour of your smartphone, then this is probably the unit for you. This is certainly the cheapest model in the group with Wi-Fi, and it's actually very well priced, considering the quality of the optics and features. This is also another camera that delivers in low-light conditions, even if the field of view is not quite as astounding as some here. Integral GPS means that all the usual advanced features are present, such as audible warnings for accidental lane drift and when you're approaching the vehicle in front too quickly.

★★★★★

Tsumara G3

Price £139.99
Contact 020 8819 5921
Web www.tsumaracams.com

This may be the model that makes Tsumara a household name. Like Cobra's CDR 900, footage shot with this smart little camera is presented in the widescreen, ultra-detailed, Super HD format. But the G3 slightly trumps the opposition by having the widest field of view here. In other ways, the G3 is a very conventional, no-nonsense piece of kit. Instead of Wi-Fi, there's both HDMI and conventional audio/video outputs. In addition, while GPS is built-in, its role is limited to position monitoring and recording. One bonus is the giant 64Gb memory card included.

★★★★☆



Garmin Dashcam 20

Price £129.00
Contact 08082 380 000
Web www.garmin.com

Garmin has forged a reputation for making very capable, no-nonsense sat-navs, and the Dashcam 20 follows broadly the same approach. Optically, there are better units out there, with wider fields of view and superior low-light performance. But you are unlikely to find anything to complain about with this unit's footage. While GPS is built in, it is chiefly to monitor and record positional information, although it will also support some speed camera databases. The large, 60mm screen is a nice touch though, and this unit can be mounted with either a suction cup or an adhesive pad.

★★★★☆





Transcend DrivePro 100

Price £64.00

Contact 01442 838 280

Web www.transcend-info.com

If Transcend's DrivePro 220 was the choice for Wi-Fi lovers on a budget, this incredibly keenly priced model will find favour with serious computer enthusiasts. That's because as well as coming with software that's compatible with PCs and Macs, it will also talk to the Linux operating system. The camera itself is incredibly basic, and lacks GPS, but what it does, it does very well. As with the Transcend 220, we were really impressed by the 100's low light/night-time performance. Our only criticism of the footage shot is that the width of view is noticeably narrower than many others in this test.

★★★★☆

Next Base iN-Car Cam 521G

Price £179.99

Contact 020 3195 0877

Web www.nextbase.co.uk

Uncompromising optical clarity seems to be the aim of Next Base. A lens aperture of F1.6 gives unprecedented night-time performance, and this is the first dashcam to have a built-in polarising filter. In layman's terms, this means footage will be captured in difficult lighting conditions that other cameras simply won't cope with. As brilliant as the 521G is, though, the field of view is narrower than many here – which is at odds with the no-compromise ethos of the unit. Also, while GPS is used for speed and positional logging, there are few extra features. Even the memory card and AV lead have to be purchased separately.

★★★★☆



Cobra CDR 820

Price £64.99

Contact 01928 595 364

Web www.cobra.com

While it's tempting to whinge about the pokey 40mm rear screen, it couldn't be made any bigger because it pretty much takes up the whole back of the unit. This really is a tiny dashcam and it's frankly staggering that it can produce video in HD format, let alone very passable footage. But despite the respected Amberella chipset making the most of the optics, the unit's small size has, inevitably, narrowed the angle of view – and this is purely a camera, with no GPS facilities for logging your location. On the bright side, it's easy to hook up to large screens, thanks to its HDMI socket.

★★★★☆



Cobra Drive HD CDR 840

Price £99.99

Contact 01928 595 364

Web www.cobra.com

Cobra's third entry here is essentially the CDR 820 with GPS. But this is GPS in its most basic form: purely for allowing analysis of speed and positional data – along with video – should you have an accident. Optically, there's very little to separate the two models, and it's a little disappointing that the field of view remains relatively narrow, especially because this model is quite a bit bigger. However, the increased size does, at least, make it much less fiddly to use and handle. Again, outputs are USB and HDMI.

★★★★☆

RAC 04

Price £59.99

Contact 01158 414 016

Web www.rac.co.uk

The RAC's entry-level model is a world away from its all-conquering sibling. It's as basic as dashcams come, with no GPS or any other features of note. Much like Transcend's budget 100 model, the only output is USB, which means a computer, tablet, smartphone, or smart TV is required to view footage. Optically, the width of view is restricted compared to premium models, but is very much in line with other budget entries. One feature we like is the physical size of the unit and the six buttons – three on each side of the screen – which greatly simplify, and speed up, operation.

★★★★☆



Garmin nuviCam LMT-D

Price £299.00

Contact 08082 380 000

Web www.garmin.com

This combined sat-nav/dashcam unit doesn't make sense if your car already has built-in sat-nav. But as a combined package, the concept works beautifully. The GPS and camera functions complement each other perfectly, with the sat-nav sometimes overlaying the real-time view of the road. We love the 150mm screen and the huge list of features, which includes traffic, speed camera and weather monitoring; lane departure and forward-collision warnings; Bluetooth mobile hands-free capability; and an optional wireless reversing camera.

★★★★☆

For more accessory reviews, check out our website at www.practicalcaravan.com/reviews/accessories



Blackvue DR650GW-2CH

Price £289.99

Contact 01622 528 468

Web www.blackvue.co.uk

Sometimes termed as professional dashcams, models such as this don't seem to offer a lot at first glance. There's no screen at all, so if you want to view the coverage you'll have to hook it up to a smartphone via Wi-Fi. It's also missing a plethora of features, such as forward-collision warnings, which most premium cams have. The integral GPS simply monitors and records speed and positional data, but, visually, the output is superb. This model's most interesting feature is a second camera for the rear window, complete with a length of coaxial cable physically connecting it to the front unit.

★★★★☆

Next Base iN-Car Cam Duo

Price £199.99

Contact 020 3195 0877

Web www.nextbase.co.uk

Next Base's take on a dual-view camera is rather simpler than Blackvue's. The front unit has the usual wide-angle camera for frontal filming, plus a second camera with telephoto lens to film the view behind - but from the windscreen. The idea works better than we expected, but isn't without its drawbacks - such as cars with very high rear windows, or a third rear seat headrest that blocks the view completely. Otherwise, this unit is much like the previous Next Base. Although this one doesn't have the innovative polarising filter, footage is still good and clear. Again, though, few extras are included - budget for a memory card when buying the unit.

★★★★☆



Trackvue DV300

Price £99.00

Contact 01622 528 468

Web www.trackvue.co.uk

A real mixed bag of a package, but one that's not completely without appeal. For instance, a whopping 32Gb memory card is supplied, and the unit has an HDMI output. Optical clarity is pretty good, too, although the width of footage is less than most here. Our first gripe is that only an adhesive pad is supplied to affix the unit to the screen - annoying if you use one camera between several vehicles. But our main moan is that there are just three buttons to access all features, which makes this unit trickier than most to operate. A problem not helped by very poorly translated instructions!

★★★★☆

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Vauxhall Zafira Tourer SE 2.0 CDTI 170 S/S

Tested by Alastair Clements Price £25,675 Kerbweight 1658kg Towing limit 1650kg Towball limit 75kg

IN A NUTSHELL Flexible seven-seater arrives for family towing duties

DON'T BE MISLED by the anonymous exterior – not aided by the Asteroid Grey paintwork – because our new Vauxhall is full of surprises. For a start, it's entertaining to drive when not hitched up to a caravan – not something you expect from a seven-seater people carrier. A little more expected, but no less impressive, is the way the interior works: we've seen Vauxhall's 'Flex7' system before, allowing all five rear seats to fold into the floor to liberate a whopping 1860 litres of space, but higher-spec versions of the Zafira Tourer such as our SE also boast 'Lounge Seating'. Here, the central seat in the middle row tumbles to form an armrest, while the outer pair slide in and back to increase knee and elbow room.

Our Claudia was impressed by the all-round visibility – in particular when pulling out of junctions, thanks to the glazed A-pillars – and the sense of solidity. She was less impressed by the optional (£1200) Navi 950 sat-nav and entertainment system, which is operated by a central dial rather than a touchscreen, but it quickly becomes intuitive. Other options fitted to our car include a spare wheel (£95), a rear-view camera (£200) and the £700



towing pack, which adds a detachable Witter towbar and a trailer stability programme.

One disappointing element of past Vauxhalls has been a lack of refinement, so we didn't have high hopes for our Zafira's new 168bhp 'Whisper' diesel. Yet once warm this unit more than lives up to its name. It's fast, too, and we were looking forward to finding out how it would get on with a caravan behind. All of those seating permutations add weight, which is great news when outfit-

matching. Our SE weighs in at 1658kg, giving an 85% match of 1409kg – more than enough to pull our Bailey Unicorn Cadiz, which has a MiRO of 1337kg. From the moment we pulled away, it was clear that this engine is more than up to the task: the Zafira sprints along with the Bailey hitched up, and feels as if it will be quite capable, even when car and van are laden. Along a blustery M3, there was the occasional wobble from the caravan, but the MPV always felt confident and is more

- Powerful, refined engine; clever interior
- Anonymous looks; small boot with all seats up
- 0080 Miles towed this month
- 30.7 Towing mpg



The Zafira looks better in bright colours, but it tows reliably INSET 'Lounge Seating' won us over

stable when towing behind trucks than lower estate cars. Throw in impressive fuel consumption – which we are reassured will only improve with miles – and it looks to be a promising addition.

Bailey Unicorn Cadiz

Tested by Nigel Donnelly Price £21,055 Berths 4 MiRO 1345kg Payload 157kg MTPLM 1496kg

IN A NUTSHELL Fixed-twin-bed layout is great, except for the beds

I'll admit it. I don't get fixed single bed caravans.

I confess, I didn't like fixed doubles to start with either, and I never loved large washrooms.

The latter, in particular, seemed fine if you liked marching your Aquaroll back and forth from the standpipe all weekend but until fully serviced pitches, with no restrictions on water and waste, got more common, I didn't see the appeal.

Fixed single beds, however, just don't do it for me, so editor Al suggested I took the Cadiz away for the weekend to see if my mind could be changed.

Unfortunately, it wasn't to be the case at the back of the van. The beds are a pinch too narrow (for my admittedly cuddly frame) to get truly comfy, a fraction too short to stretch out properly and, while you get masses of storage underneath them, it's so vast you can't really use it.



The Cadiz towed like a dream, but Nigel Donnelly remains a non-fan of fixed single beds.

Layout aside, I couldn't fault much else. The kitchen works very well, the lounge is fabulously bright by day, and the generous sprinkling of LED lights means you can tailor the lighting by night, ensuring your

glass of shiraz needn't be floodlit if you don't want it to be. The lounge turned into a large, comfortable double bed and, en route to and from the site, it towed beautifully, although it was, admittedly, lightly laden.

So, after a weekend away, my verdict is that the appeal of the good-value, well-equipped Unicorn is obvious. The appeal of fixed single beds, however, remains a mystery of modern caravanning to me.

- A well equipped, comfortable tourer
- It's not everyone's favourite layout
- 0176 Miles towed this month
- 350 Days on test fleet

Škoda Octavia Scout 2.0 TDI 150 4x4

Tested by Bryony Symes Price £25,530 Kerbwieght 1526kg Towing limit 2000kg Towball limit 80kg

IN A NUTSHELL Spacious and powerful tug that's good for everyday use

The Scout is proving to be popular among our team, and as a result I've only recently had much use of it. It took me safely

to Devon, and on a cycling jaunt to Winchester and Hampshire. I've found that it is the best car on our fleet for transporting my

bicycle, although if there were a little more height it would be easier to get the bike in. There is so much boot space that I've used it to lug around a flat-pack wardrobe and I was impressed by how easily the rear passenger seats fold down.

I've been taking advantage of the cruise control, too – easily set using the left-hand indicator arm.

It's the best way to keep an eye on that 60mph towing limit.

Estates are fairly low, but this didn't compromise visibility from the driver's seat or ride comfort.

One small niggle is that the CD slot is in the glove compartment – not useful when you're driving without a passenger.

Towing the unladen Pursuit 430/4 from Bristol to Torquay was a doddle, with little movement from the van. The car manoeuvred the van onto the pitch well. Whether that was down to my reversing ability or control of the car, I'll leave to you to decide.



The Škoda maintained control of the Pursuit (above), while it made light work of pulling the Kip Shelter + for a cycling trip



- Great visibility and handling
- CD slot for stereo is in glovebox
- 0850 Miles towed this month
- 344 Towing mpg

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TALKING TOW CARS



with **David Motton**

After a false start (our first test car arrived without a towball!) we've finally been able to put the hotly anticipated new Volvo XC90 to the test. Was it worth the wait? Find out on page 79.

First drive

Vauxhall Astra 1.6 CDTi 136



THE VAUXHALL ASTRA has long been a model synonymous with dependable, affordable family transport. With the arrival of this seventh-generation model there's more of the same.

There are five petrol versions and three diesels to choose from. Petrol options vary from 99bhp to 197bhp, with diesels offering 108bhp to 158bhp, and there are five- or six-speed manual and six-speed automatic gearbox options, depending on engine.

The new Astra is smaller on the outside than its predecessor (now 4.37 metres long), but offers more room inside. Extra cabin space on tour is always very welcome, but it is also up to 200kg lighter than before so may be less useful when outfit-matching.

Kerbweights across the range (including 75kg for the driver) go from 1248kg (for the 99bhp 1.4 petrol) to 1364kg (134bhp 1.6-litre diesel auto). If you stick to the 85% rule that means you can tow caravans weighing between only 1060kg and 1159kg.

Still, if the weights work for you, there's a lot to like about the new Astra. The 134bhp

1.6-litre mid-range diesel is surely one of the choice models for caravanners, weighing 1350kg in manual form. It has sufficient grunt when driving solo, but we suspect that its performance will be significantly blunted when towing.

The 148bhp, 1.4-litre turbo petrol model is also likely to prove popular. Pleasantly quiet, its engine encourages you to have fun; make use of the 181lb ft of torque (which peaks from 2000-4000rpm) and it's an eager performer.

Whichever variant you plump for, you'll find that the latest Astra is a very likeable thing to drive. The steering is light around town, making the car a cinch to park, and direct. The six-speed manual 'box, meanwhile, is a pleasure to use and the brakes are pleasingly responsive.

There's no doubt that the seventh-gen Astra is neatly packaged and enjoyable to drive. Whether it's heavy enough or has sufficient grunt to cut it as a tow car is something we'll be putting to the test soon.

Lizzie Pope

Price From £18,180
Kerbweight 1350kg
85% match 1148kg
Towing limit 1500kg
Towball limit 75kg

First drive

Ford Mondeo Estate 2.0 TDCi AWD

This isn't our first encounter with the Mondeo, but our first test of the new all-wheel-drive variant. For some, a 4x4 family car might seem overkill, but for a caravanner who struggles to haul their outfit off a slippery pitch it could be just what they are looking for.

Let's start with the bad news. Picking the AWD option adds £1500 to the price and the extra weight (78kg), along with the additional drag, drops official MPG from 62.8 to 57.7 and raises CO₂ emissions by 10g/km to 127. There's also a second added to the 0-60mph time, but we suspect that will be neutralised by the 4x4's superior traction as soon as the surface gets slippery.

And there are plenty of positives, too. That weight is a bonus when outfit-matching and the AWD feels surefooted in wintry weather, with drive going to the rear under hard acceleration or when slip is detected. Most of the time, though, you'll struggle to tell the difference: the gearshift is a shade notchier, and a dash display tells you which wheels are being driven, but that's it.

Nevertheless, it may appeal to those who tour on the wild side, adding a sense of security to the Mondeo's impressive skill-set of spacious interior, sensible price and entertaining driving experience.

Alastair Clements

Price £26,545 (150PS Titanium)
Kerbweight 1675kg
85% match 1424kg
Towing limit 1800kg
Towball limit 90kg



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Photography: Phil Russell

Volvo's big 4x4 is now lighter, but it still weighs more than two tonnes so can tow some big outfits

Volvo XC90

Model tested D5 AWD Inscription **Price** £50,185 **Kerbweight** 2084kg*

What's new?

Just about everything. The old model had been around for well over a decade, so Volvo started with a clean sheet of paper for the new XC90. Say goodbye to the old five-cylinder engine, and hello to a new, highly efficient four-cylinder diesel. Today's XC90 is lighter, more practical, and promises lower emissions than before. The asking price rises significantly, though, as Volvo pushes upmarket.

What are we looking for?

Volvo is pitching the XC90 against the likes of Audi, BMW and Land Rover. The question is, does it have the quality to compete and has the new car's relatively low kerbweight (for a big 4x4) compromised its towing ability?

Towing ability

★★★★☆

Like most types of car, big 4x4s are getting lighter. However, the XC90 still weighs more than two tonnes, with a kerbweight of 2084kg (including 75kg for the driver not included in Volvo's published kerbweight). This gives an 85% match figure of 1771kg. The legal towing limit is 2700kg. That's some 800kg less than the maximum a Land Rover Discovery can legally pull, but the difference is largely academic when a fully loaded twin-axle tourer generally weighs less than two tonnes.

We matched the Volvo to a 2011 Elddis Crusader with a Mass in Running Order of 1642kg. Despite Volvo's switch from five cylinders to four, and a reduction in engine capacity from 2.4 to 2.0 litres, the XC90 had plenty of punch for towing such a heavy van.

There's a steep hill on our route to the test track, and the XC90 breezed up it, with slick changes from the eight-speed automatic making the most of the Volvo's mid-range muscle. Once at the track, the engine's 222bhp and 347lb ft of torque made short work of the

30-60mph sprint, needing just 10.5 seconds.

The new Audi Q7 is even quicker if you opt for the more powerful of the two engine options (look out for our tow test in the next issue). But really, we can't see too many drivers being dissatisfied with the Volvo's overtaking performance.

The combination of a powerful engine, four-wheel drive and an automatic gearbox makes for easy hill starts. The XC90's electronic parking brake held car and caravan still on a 1-in-10 slope and released smoothly. The Volvo pulled to the top of the slope with ease and tackled the same hill just as comfortably in reverse.

Big 4x4s tend to shine in the hill start, but aren't always at ease in the lane-change test, struggling to move so much bulk in a controlled and stable manner. There was no such trouble with the Volvo. Despite rather numb steering the >>

The XC90 range kicks off at £45,750 for the D5 Momentum



*Includes 75kg for the driver not included in Volvo's figure

Towing

The eight-speed auto gearbox helped the XC90 tackle hill starts with incredible ease, and there was no hint of trouble when changing lanes



Elddis Crusader Cyclone courtesy of
Michael Jordan CARAVANS
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Behind the wheel



1 Unusually, the Volvo's touchscreen is portrait-shaped. It takes a bit of getting used to but works well **2** The Drive Mode button allows the driver to switch between Eco, Comfort, Off Road and Dynamic settings **3** The automatic gearbox has a manual override **4** The Bowers & Wilkins stereo uses no fewer than 19 speakers. Unsurprisingly, sound quality is excellent

Rear seats



Lots of space for middle-row occupants, but tight kneeroom means the rear two seats are best reserved for the kids

Luggage



With the rear seats folded away there's 721 litres of boot space **BELOW** With five of the seats raised, luggage room is superb



XC90 changed direction quickly and gripped hard; there was no bullying from the caravan.

At motorway speeds the XC90 is just as assured. Sitting at the legal limit the Volvo feels relaxed and composed.

We've stopped short of awarding full marks because you can buy more powerful 4x4s with even better overtaking ability for similar money. But otherwise the big Volvo is a very good tow car indeed.

Solo driving

★★★★☆

Volvo offers owners the choice of standard steel springs or air suspension for an extra £2150. Our test car came with air suspension, which improved the ride somewhat, although the XC90 still fussed over imperfect surfaces. Our car was also fitted with 21in alloy wheels, a £1450 option; we suspect air suspension with smaller 19in alloy wheels may be the ideal combination.

Our test car was also fitted with the Drive Mode feature, which costs £395. This offers the choice of Eco, Comfort, Off Road and Dynamic settings, altering the steering weight and the responsiveness of the transmission and throttle, as well as adjusting the air suspension. In Dynamic mode the car rolls less in corners, but ride comfort suffers.

Whatever setting is chosen the steering feels rather inert, and while very capable the XC90 isn't especially fun to drive. That's partly down to the engine, which might be powerful and efficient but it sounds bland compared with the six-cylinder engines fitted to many rivals.

It's more of a quick and efficient cruiser than a sporting

4x4 in the mould of a Porsche Cayenne. Still, that means the Volvo is quiet and comfortable on the motorway. It's the kind of car which seems to shrink long journeys for the driver and passengers.

As a solo drive the XC90 impresses, but a more cossetting ride and a more appealing engine note would improve the Volvo further.

Space and practicality

★★★★☆

More than the way it drives, it's the look and feel of the XC90's interior which confirms Volvo's move upmarket.

Perceived quality is right up with the likes of Audi and Mercedes, and a cut above the Land Rover Discovery's cabin. The design is attractive, the tablet-like 9in screen is neatly integrated, and everything feels precisely made from quality materials.

It's a very practical cabin as well as an attractive one. The driver's seat is very comfortable – supportive without being restrictive – and there's enough electronic adjustment to suit drivers of different stature.

Move to the middle row and there's lots of leg- and headroom, even with the panoramic sunroof fitted to our test car (part of the £2000 Xenium pack). There's a hump in the floor for the transmission tunnel, but it's not too intrusive by 4x4 standards. Air vents between the front seats should keep those in the middle of the car at a comfortable temperature.

Those in seats six and seven also get their own air vents, albeit as an optional extra. It's part of the Seven Seat Comfort pack, which also splits the

climate control into four zones instead of the more usual two.

The middle seats tip and slide to give access to the third row. It's a bit of squeeze for adults – there's significantly less legroom than in the third row of a Land Rover Discovery – but children should be happy enough. It's possible to boost rear legroom by sliding the middle row forwards but this will soon make those in seats three to five less comfortable.

Most seven-seaters have tiny boots with every seat upright, but the Volvo's is big enough for a reasonably big shop or a couple of large holdalls. With the third row folded away the luggage space is long and wide, with a capacity of 721 litres. Loading is made easier if you press a button at the side of the tailgate to lower the back of the car – but you have to choose air suspension to get this.

The only minor black mark is that the third row is short of legroom compared with a Land Rover Discovery's. Otherwise this is an exceptionally practical, big SUV.

Buying and owning

★★★★☆

The XC90 is proof that big, powerful 4x4s can be economical. Fuel economy of 48.7mpg and CO₂ emissions of just 152g/km make most big 4x4s look thirsty and inefficient; we achieved 26.1mpg while towing.

Low emissions make the XC90 a much more tax-efficient choice for company car drivers than our favourite big 4x4, the Land Rover Discovery. For private buyers, low tax and fuel bills help soften the blow of the Volvo's high price (£50,185). In truth, the Volvo is not expensive compared with what Audi, BMW

or Land Rover would charge for a similar car, but it's a big jump for anyone trading in an old XC90. Delve into the long list of options and you can really make the price rocket; with all the extras our test car would cost £67,235.

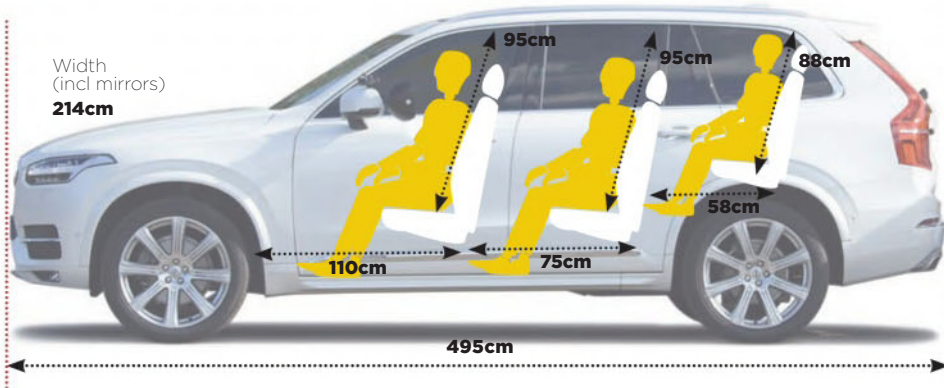
It's not as if the car is poorly equipped as standard. There's plenty of safety kit, although if you want the whole gamut of driver aids you'll need the £1500 Intellisafe Pro pack.

Unsurprisingly, the XC90 has a five-star safety rating from Euro NCAP, while healthy resale values make the Volvo a reasonable investment. »

In detail

Price	£50,185
What Car? Target Price	£50,185
Retained value after three years	55%
Kerbweight	2084kg*
85% of kerbweight	1771kg
Gross vehicle weight	2750kg
Towing limit	2700kg
Gross train weight	5450kg
Towball limit	140kg
Boot size min-max	314-1868 litres
Payload	666kg
30-60mph	10.5 seconds
50-60mph	4.4 seconds
(in kickdown)	
30-0mph	9.7m
Test conditions	Dry
Engine size	1969cc
Power	222bhp @ 4250rpm
Torque	347lb ft @ 1750-2500rpm
Official combined economy	48.7mpg
Towing economy	26.1mpg
CO₂ emissions	152g/km
Insurance group	34
Euro NCAP overall protection rating	★★★★★

*Includes 75kg for the driver not included in Volvo's figure



Perfect partner

With a match figure of 1771kg for 85% of kerbweight, you can safely tow a



Swift Elegance 565



Need a big, luxury 4x4? The XC90 is certainly worth a close look

Verdict



The new Volvo XC90 shows the way forward for the next generation of big 4x4s. Lower weight doesn't necessarily compromise towing ability, certainly not when a car still weighs two tonnes. Frugal engines don't have to mean lacklustre performance, either.

We've no serious complaint about the XC90's towing ability. It's very stable, both at speed and in emergency manoeuvres, and handled the hill-start test with dismissive ease. Its stopping distance was remarkably short, too.

The cabin is beautifully finished, especially in our top-spec Inscription test car. It's very practical, too, although it's a shame some desirable features such as the air vents for third-row passengers cost extra.

The XC90 makes a lot more financial sense for company car drivers than older, less efficient big 4x4s such as the Jeep Grand Cherokee or Land Rover Discovery. Private buyers, too, should benefit from low fuel bills and reasonable annual Vehicle Excise Duty payments.

It's a sensible buy in other ways, too. The XC90 is extremely safe, especially if you

choose some of the driver aids available as optional extras. Resale values are predicted to be strong, too.

It's disappointing that some of our car's most impressive features are costly options, and a more comfortable ride and a bit of character from the engine would make the XC90 better still. Even so, this Volvo is a thoroughly impressive car. **PC**

What can I tow with a B licence?

Anyone who passed their driving test on or after 1 January 1997 has a B licence. You can tow with this licence, but only cars and caravans with a combined Maximum Authorised Mass (MAM) of 3500kg. Since the Volvo XC90 has a Gross Vehicle Weight/Maximum Authorised Mass of 2750kg this leaves only 750kg for the caravan. So unless you're planning to tow an ultralight tourer, you'll need to take a test to upgrade your licence to tow with the Volvo.

How we test tow cars

Practical Caravan's tow car tests are the toughest in the business. Tests include a lane-change manoeuvre and a hill start while towing a suitably matched van. Performance is measured using satellite tracking equipment. Our economy route provides real-world mpg figures. Practicality and solo driving are also assessed.



Tow Car Editor
David Motton
email motty@practicalcaravan.com

For details of cars we've tested previously, visit www.practicalcaravan.com

...or try one of these

New ★★★★★

Land Rover Discovery 3.0 SDV6

Price from £41,600

Starting to feel its age in terms of emissions and quality, the Discovery is still supremely practical. For now it's still our favourite big 4x4, but for how much longer?



Used ★★★★★

Volvo XC90 D5 Executive Geartronic

Price 62-plate, 40,000 miles, £24,645

For less than half what you'd pay for a new high-spec XC90, you could buy a three-year-old example of the old model. You get seven seats, plenty of torque for towing and solid stability.





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Toyota Avensis

Model tested Touring Sports 2.0 D-4D Business Edition Plus **Price** £26,135 **Kerbweight** 1675kg*

What's new?

Toyota has updated the Avensis, with a smart new look inside and out. There are also two new diesel engines, borrowed from BMW. We've been towing with the more powerful of the two, the 141bhp (143PS) 2.0-litre unit, fitted to the Touring Sports (estate).

What are we looking for?

The Avensis has always been a sensible choice, but there are plenty of talented rivals out there. Does the revised Toyota have a bit more personality?

Towing ability ★★★★★

Toyota quotes a narrow range of kerbweights for the Avensis Touring Sports 2.0 D-4D manual: 1600-1610kg. Adding 75kg for the driver to the lower figure gives a kerbweight of 1675kg. That's significantly heavier than some rivals, to the benefit of the Toyota's matching ratios; the 85% figure is 1424kg.

We matched the Avensis to a 2015 Swift Challenger SE 565 with a Mass in Running Order of 1351kg. The Toyota comfortably pulled the Swift up to speed. The engine's peak torque of 236lb ft trails that of some rivals (the equivalent Ford Mondeo has 258lb ft), but it makes up for this

with a strong and smooth response to the throttle, even from low revs.

Our acceleration test from 30-60mph took 13.6 seconds. We were taken with the Toyota's stability as well as its speed. There wasn't much work for the driver to do at a steady 60mph because the car towed straight and true, even in crosswinds.

The Avensis coped well in the lane-change test, too. Vague steering didn't help, but the Toyota gripped hard and even when the caravan began to slide dramatically the Avensis wasn't pulled off course.

The hill-start test also posed little trouble to Avensis. If we're

being picky, it's a shame that the electronic parking brake is obscured behind the steering wheel, but the car pulled easily to the top of the 1-in-10 slope.

It wasn't so happy in reverse, though, with some vibration through the pedal and driver's seat and a burning smell from the clutch.

Solo driving ★★★★★

In everyday driving, the Avensis is a hard car to get excited about.

The ride can be rather lumpy, but it's not harsh. The engine is quiet and refined, but road noise over coarse surfaces can be intrusive. The Toyota handles neatly, but the steering is numb.

Towing

The Avensis might not have as much torque as rivals, but it copes well at the legal limit and feels stable even during quick manoeuvres



Swift Challenger SE 565 courtesy of
Michael Jordan CARAVANS
Tel 01483 203 335

*Including 75kg for the driver not included in Toyota's published kerbweights

In isolation it's fine, and the latest generation is a definite improvement; the trouble is that the average standard in the class keeps getting higher, and from behind the wheel the Avensis fails to trouble the likes of the Ford Mondeo or VW Passat for ride comfort or driver appeal.

Practicality ★★★★★

As with the driving experience, so with the Toyota's cabin. It's a step on from what's gone before, but it's neither the most upmarket family car nor the most spacious.

The dashboard looks smart and the touchscreen is clear and easy to use. However, tall drivers would benefit from a little more reach adjustment for the steering and the finish isn't as plush as a Passat's.

The panoramic sunroof fitted as standard on Business Edition Plus cars lets plenty of light into the cabin, but it

does compromise headroom somewhat in both the front and the back of the car.

Adults should be comfortable enough in the rear seats, although there's less kneeroom than in a Škoda Superb or a Passat. It's also a shame that there are no face-level air vents in the door pillars or even between the seats to help keep rear-seat passengers at a comfortable temperature.

There's 534 litres of boot space with the seats up and 1609 litres with them lowered. That's generous in isolation, but some way behind the most practical family estates.

Costs ★★★★★

The £26,135 pricetag is reasonable, given the long list of equipment fitted as standard to Business Edition Plus cars, including leather and Alcantara upholstery, 17in alloy wheels, LED headlights, sat-nav with an 8in touchscreen

display, and a reversing camera. There's also a plethora of high-tech safety aids, which have helped the car achieve a five-star rating from the crash safety experts at Euro NCAP.

Toyota has a well-deserved reputation for reliability, and the Avensis comes with the reassurance of a five-year, 100,000-mile warranty.

VERDICT ★★★★★

The revised Avensis is better to drive and to travel in than before. A Passat is more fun to drive, rides more comfortably and has more space. However, we've no serious complaints about the Toyota's ability as a tow car, and its reliability and long warranty make the Avensis a sensible buy. **PC**

In detail

Price £26,135
What Car? Target Price £23,916
Retained value after three years 39%
Kerbweight 1675kg*
85% of kerbweight 1424kg
Gross vehicle weight 2100kg
Max towing limit 1800kg
Gross train weight 3900kg
Towball limit 75kg
Boot size 543-1609 litres
Payload 425kg
30-60mph 13.6 seconds

50-60mph 11.5 seconds
30-0mph 10.2 metres
Test conditions Dry
Engine size 1995cc
Max power 141bhp @ 6000rpm
Max torque 236lb ft @ 2250rpm
Official combined economy 61.4mpg
Towing economy 28.1mpg
CO₂ emissions 120g/km
Insurance group 20
Euro NCAP overall protection rating ★★★★★



Behind the wheel

It's not the smartest dashboard around, but you get an 8in touchscreen with sat-nav plus leather and Alcantara seats



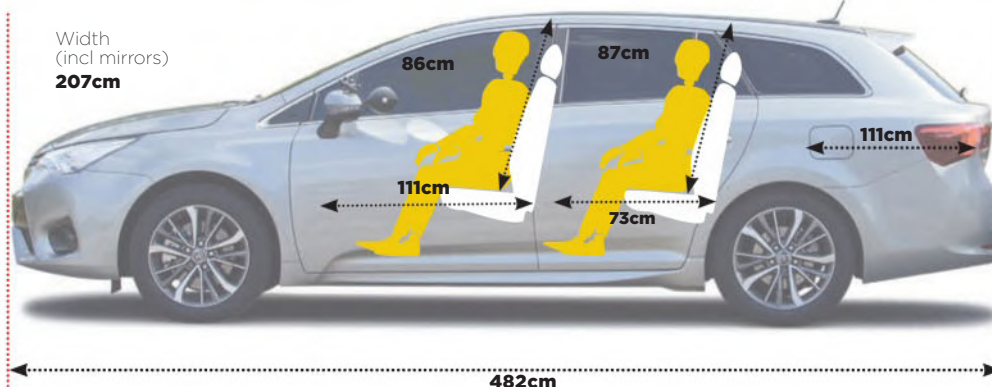
Rear seats

The panoramic glass roof impinges on headroom, but most adults should be able to get comfortable back here



Luggage

The rear seats fold almost flat to yield a well-shaped load bay
BELOW Boot space is average



'Toyota has a well-deserved reputation for reliability; the Avensis gets a five-year warranty'

The Audi Q5 has a firm ride that is ideal for towing, but will divide opinion for solo driving



Audi Q5 2008-2015

The German car-maker hoped its 4x4 would steal customers from BMW's X3. **Russ Smith** explains how to choose a used one

PLAYING TO THE strengths of Audi's Quattro heritage, this was the marque's head-to-head rival for the BMW X3. As well as being better looking (arguably), the Q5 garnered praise for its dynamic abilities and high-quality feel.

From a towing point of view, it has a notably long wheelbase for the body size, which aids directional stability. Inside are

clever touches, such as rear seats with reclining backrests, and a hidden stowage compartment beneath the boot floor.

There are small downsides: rear legroom is limited if those in the front are above average height, and the ride is at the firmer end of the scale – which is no bad thing when towing but won't suit all for regular use.

There's no doubt that the Q5 was and is a good buy new, but the earliest are passing their seventh birthday. So how does it hold up as a secondhand buy?

Model history

The Q5 was launched here in October 2008, but few were delivered before the New Year. There were two diesel and two



Some say the Q5 is more stylish than the BMW X3, its nearest rival

petrol engines, in each case a four-cylinder and a V6. The 2.0 TDI had 167bhp and 258lb ft of torque, while the 3.0 TDI produced 236bhp and 369lb ft. On the petrol side, the turbocharged 2.0 TFSI had 208bhp and 258lb ft, and the normally aspirated 3.2 FSI 266bhp and 243lb ft. For either fuel, the larger engine could only be had with a seven-speed automatic; the smaller engines were offered with the same auto or a six-speed manual.

A pair of detuned economy models were added in October 2009: a 2.0 TDI with 140bhp/236lb ft and a 2.0 TFSI with 177bhp/236lb ft. They were assigned lower towing limits of 2000kg and 2200kg,



LEFT The Q5's wheelbase is long for the size of its body ABOVE The boot boasts hidden storage

Owners' views

Q5 2.0 TFSI Quattro S Tronic

A superb, stable tow car, I'm delighted with the performance and ride with the caravan in tow. It pulls our Coachman like it wasn't there, with pure ease. Fuel economy solo is 33-34mpg and with the van 26-27mpg.

Dean Allen



Q5 3.0 TDI 245 Quattro S Line Plus

It's a great car and does pretty much everything I want it to do. The engine is fantastic, especially in dynamic mode where it responds very quickly. I'll never go back to a manual 'box now there is such a smooth auto 'box available in a 4x4. The sat-nav is in an awkward position and a little irritating to use.

Jessica Bewick



Q5 2.0 TDI 170 SE

The boot is cavernous and I've had everything from flat-pack wardrobes to 7ft Christmas trees in there. The handling is not sporty, involved or good for fast corners; it is quiet and serene. The steering is light for such a big car and the brakes are fantastic. In the snow, the Quattro system has performed faultlessly with standard tyres. The only thing that's gone wrong is that the fuel-filler flap locked shut.

Simon Mathews



From www.whatcar.com



Mid-range SE spec includes leather and lots of toys

If you're looking at a Q5 with the optional panoramic sunroof, listen out for rattling from it on your test drive. This has been common and Audi dealers have spent much time fixing or replacing them under warranty. The rattles often return, though, and once the car is out of warranty it's the owner who picks up the tab or is driven mad.

VERDICT

The Q5 has a lot going for it, including Audi's mostly excellent build quality, and its strength and stability as a tow car, not to mention that refined and reassuring four-wheel drive system. Few problems have come to light, and even the petrol-engined versions return decent fuel economy for a car of this size.

Still, we're wary of the seven-speed auto 'box's reputation, so we wouldn't take one of those on without also purchasing a decent warranty for the car. It adds to the expense, but transmission failure causes the kind of bill that will write off these cars when they're a bit older.



Top tug

Q5 2.0 TDI manual

Given our concerns over auto 'boxes, manuals get our vote, while any four-cylinder diesel since 2012 has the most grunt, returning up to 47mpg.



Barge pole

Q5 2.0 TDI

It's not a disaster, but the entry-level diesel has 16% less pulling power than our Top Tug, and any price advantage it had new is largely eroded.

respectively, and could only be had with the manual gearbox.

In April 2012 the Q5 got the usual mid-term facelift: mostly redesigned headlamps and interior refinements, but more importantly a revised range of more powerful and economical engines – again two of each. The diesels were now the 174bhp/280lb ft 2.0 TDI and a 241bhp/428lb ft 3.0 TDI, offering respective 5mpg and 7mpg better fuel efficiency.

Petrol units were 221bhp/258lb ft 2.0 TFSI and a new supercharged 3.0 TFSI with 268bhp/295 lb ft, both offering 10% better mpg than the engines they replaced. Don't get too excited about the latter engine, because few were sold – we could only find two for sale in the whole country. The auto 'box for both petrol engines was now an eight-speed Tiptronic.

Standard trim included 17in alloys and climate control, but most buyers went for SE with body-coloured bumpers, 18in alloys and leather seats. The top of the range was the S Line with 19in wheels, LED lights, sports

seats and a body kit. The options list was extensive, so it is rare to find two Q5s exactly the same.

Trouble spots

Seven-speed S Tronic automatic gearboxes have reportedly failed at as little as 80,000 miles.

Repairs and replacements can cost £4000-£8000, so you need to buy with care. Put simply, avoid any Q5 automatic that has less-than-perfect gearchanges. The symptoms to look for include hesitant or very noticeable shifts, especially at lower speeds, jerking against the brakes or stalling when stopped at a junction.

Electrical issues have also been noted but, apart from electric seat adjustments, few are happening enough to be listed as a regular problem, so just run through the controls and make sure everything with a switch does what it should.

There have also been issues with the automatic boot-closing system, which may shut the hatch without locking it. Check this, though it can be caused by quite small bits of debris in the surround or latch area.

Audi Q5 – need to know

How much?

£10,500-£36,000

For once, there isn't a premium to pay for a diesel model, largely because nearly 95% of those on offer are diesels. So you may have to pay a bit more for a petrol-engined Q5 – and there isn't much bargaining room.

One-owner/full-history Q5s with below six-figure mileages start from £12,000, at least with a four-cylinder lump. For

something similar with a V6, the starting price is closer to £15,000.

The guide doesn't agree but, in the real world, you can add 10% to those numbers for an equivalent petrol. The model is still current, and top prices run close to showroom levels.

What will it tow?

Kerbweight1880kg
85% match1598kg
Towing limit2400kg

Towball limit75kg
(2009 Q5 3.0 TDI Quattro S Line)

How much is a towball?

Witter flange towbar£120.38
Westfalia detachable£197.80
Fitting extra (www.pfjones.co.uk)

What about servicing?

Q5: interim service £111.11
(petrol)/£138.89 (diesel); full
£185.18 (petrol)/£217.59 (diesel)
(www.servicingstop.co.uk)

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CARAVAN GENIUS



with **John Wickersham**

This month, our tow car guru, David Motton, investigates the latest advances to make towing safer, while Nigel Hutson shows you how to fit a new pop-up rooflight to your tourer



SOME OF US enjoy towing; others find it the most stressful part of caravanning. Whichever camp you fall into, there's a wide range of gadgets and devices to make towing safer and easier. Whether you are looking for a new car or caravan with all the latest developments, or would like to upgrade your current outfit, here's our guide to the technology that will improve your experience of towing.

More stable caravans

Perhaps the most significant caravan safety innovation of recent years has been the introduction of trailer stability systems to caravans. Al-Ko, which manufactures the chassis for the majority of UK-made caravans (including Swifts and Baileys, and most current Elddis tourers), has the ATC Trailer Control System. BPW, which supplies the chassis for the

Elddis Buccaneer (and, until the 2015 model year, underpinned all Elddis models) has intelligent Drive Control (iDC).

Think of these systems as the caravan equivalent of stability control on your car. They're designed to combat the dreaded 'snake', when a caravan begins to swing from one side to the other.

ATC and iDC both have sensors that detect this side-to-side movement, and apply the

caravan's brakes to bring the tourer back into line.

If you tow with a tourer fitted with either system, once in a while you may notice a gentle pull from the caravan, perhaps when overtaking an HGV or when caught by a crosswind. The braking effect soon passes and you can continue unimpeded.

These systems are now common on high-spec caravans and some mid-range models. >>

Stability control

Without Trailer Stability Program



With Trailer Stability Program



Trailer stability programs are fitted to a wide range of tow cars



Al-Ko ATC can be retrofitted to a caravan at the company's UK headquarters in Warwickshire (for £587), by its mobile fitment service (for an additional £100) or at an approved service centre (prices will vary).

Compatible BPW chassis (any chassis with the ZAF-2 hitch launched in 2005) can also have the iDC system added. Costs vary, but expect to pay in the region of £800 to have iDC retrofitted.

Both systems are designed to work with hitch stabiliser. In recent years these have become commonplace, even on budget caravans. Towball-mounted stabilisers are the most common type, the Al-Ko 3004 being the one you'll see fitted to most recent UK caravans. However, Al-Ko is by no means the only show in town: BPW produces the iSC safety coupling, which is compatible with other makes of caravan chassis as well as with BPW chassis.

The hitch stabiliser clamps the towball by means of friction pads, which resist the movement of the hitch on the towball. The

'The hitch stabiliser dampens down any side-to-side movement'

resistance isn't so great that it's hard to make turns or manoeuvre at low speeds, but it is sufficient to dampen down any unwanted side-to-side movements.

Like the stability systems working on the van's brakes, stabiliser hitches can be retrofitted to caravans that don't have them as standard equipment. Just be sure there's enough clearance around the towball for the hitch head – check the stabiliser's handbook for the clearance requirements.

If you don't have a hitch stabiliser, a caravan dealer should be able to fit one for you. Or, if you're handy with a spanner, fitting a stabiliser hitch is a worthwhile DIY upgrade.

More stable tow cars

Of course, the caravan is only one part of the equation. The

towing technology fitted to new tow cars is also improving.

Stability control is now compulsory on all new cars sold in Europe. There's a whole alphabet soup of acronyms for it (ESC, ESP, DSC to name just three) but, whatever labels are applied to them, the different stability control systems perform a similar function.

When sensors detect a loss of steering control, stability control can brake each wheel individual depending on the type of instability that is being counteracted. Braking the outer front wheel will reduce oversteer (when the back of the car slides wide in a corner) while braking the inner rear wheel will reduce understeer (when the front of the car slides wide). Some systems also reduce engine power.



BPW's iSC coupling fits other makes of caravan chassis

One study has suggested that stability control has saved 6100 lives across the EU since 1995.

It has a role to play when towing, too. Research by Bailey, The Caravan Club and the University of Bath published as long ago as 2007 has shown that stability control can reduce the severity of snaking movements when towing.

Now, many cars go a step further and have a Trailer Stability Program (TSP), sometimes called Trailer Stability Assist or Trailer Sway Control. Despite being given its own name, this system is part of the car's stability control rather than being an entirely separate safety device.

As a caravan or trailer begins to snake, it pulls at the back of the tow car. TSP recognises this yaw movement early, applies the

Volkswagen Trailer Assist



The driver uses the door mirror adjuster to pick the angle and direction of the turn



The system helps steer the car through the manoeuvre while the driver controls speed



It determines the van's wheelbase by noting the angle of the hitch at the start of the turn

Land Rover Transparent Trailer



The company has yet to roll out the system, which promises reversing without help



The cameras send images that combine to give the impression there is no caravan



The image is displayed on the rear-view mirror to complete the illusion

brakes individually and reduces engine torque to correct the yawing motion.

TSP works if the car's stability control 'knows' that it is towing, so it's important to use a vehicle-specific wiring kit that will allow the caravan and towing vehicle to communicate.

Making towing easier

While the likes of ATC and TSP make towing safer, other new technology is aimed at making the driver's life that bit easier.

Take VW's Trailer Assist. Reversing is one of the trickier skills for a tow car driver to master, but Trailer Assist aims to make manoeuvring less stressful.

The system combines Park Assist (which helps park in everyday driving) with a rear-view camera. The driver selects the angle and direction of the turn using the door mirror adjuster as a joystick.

Trailer Assist makes a small initial steering input to allow the system to gauge the wheelbase of the caravan by observing the angle of the hitch and using ingenious image-processing algorithms. It then steers the car through the manoeuvre, as the driver controls the speed.

It's very clever stuff, although the driver still has to show some skill and judgement in choosing

when to start the turn. That said, you can partially adjust the steering by using the door mirror adjuster.

Even when using Trailer Assist, reversing is safer if you have someone outside the car to look out for objects the caravan may obscure. If and when Land Rover's 'Transparent Trailer' concept becomes a reality, that may not be necessary. Revealed at the 2015 Burghley Horse Trials, Transparent Trailer uses the vehicle's reversing camera and cameras in each wing mirror, together with a camera mounted on the back of the trailer or caravan. The video

feeds are combined to create an image of what's behind the outfit, displayed on the rear-view mirror, giving the illusion that the caravan is invisible. We've tried a prototype system, and it has great potential for both low-speed manoeuvring and driving on the open road.

The DIY option

The Transparent Trailer system may be very sophisticated, but you can create a poor man's version at home for a fraction of what Land Rover may charge.

Plenty of aftermarket rear-view cameras are available for cars and are relatively

inexpensive (say, £80-£250), especially if you fit the camera yourself. A wireless system with sufficient range could be fitted to the back of a caravan and displayed through a monitor in the car. Or, if mounted to the back of the car, such a system can provide a good view of the towball and the front of the caravan for easy hitching up.

Trailer Vision camera systems (www.trailervision.co.uk) cost more than some (from £329.99 for a camera and monitor), but are designed specifically for motorhomes and caravans and promise clear, full-colour monitors and interference-free images. Monitors can be used with more than one camera to show different views – for example, the towball when hitching up plus whatever is behind the caravan.

Tech and safety

Whether you go for a new car and caravan with all the latest gadgets, or make installing aftermarket alternatives a weekend project, technology is making towing safer and less nerve-racking.

Still, all the technology in the world doesn't replace sensible loading, appropriate speed and careful driving. The most important safety feature is still the one in the driver's seat. **PC**

The DIY option



If you're an avid DIYer, take a weekend to fit a reversing camera to your car or van

DIY mechanic



How to replace a pop-up rooflight

Caravan rooflights can easily be damaged, and soon become dirty. Here, **Nigel Hutson** explains how to replace your unit

POP-UP ROOFLIGHTS have been fitted in caravans for a long time. Years ago they were often made from transparent orange plastic, which gave a really nice light inside the caravan; but for a number of years now they've been made from a white translucent plastic, and are usually double-skinned.

While the double skin is better for ventilation — it means that you won't get a cold shower from dripping condensation first thing in the morning — the skins aren't sealed, and the area between the layers can become very dirty. It's not only unsightly, but it significantly alters the amount of light in the van, too.

My parents' caravan is a classic example. It's of an age before large Heki rooflights or sunroofs were fitted, and both pop-ups (one over the kitchen, the other in the washroom) were quite grubby. But one of the stays broke while they were on a recent trip away, which gave me the opportunity to replace one and clean the other. We sourced an identical rooflight from a breaker on eBay for just a few pounds.

To replace such a unit, you'll need the following tools:

- A small flat-blade screwdriver or sharp knife
- A crosshead screwdriver
- A wide, flat blade (such as a chisel)
- White spirit and a cloth
- Mastic sealing strip (from a caravan dealer).

Getting started

Working inside the caravan, prise out the four small screw caps (one at each corner, if fitted) from the inner trim, then remove

the four screws that hold the trim in place. In our example (pictured right), this piece contained the blind and flyscreen, so if you're planning to reuse them it's worth giving them a quick clean.

With the inner trim removed, you'll see the four metal clips that hold the unit in place. Release the clips by unscrewing each of the screws. These don't need to be removed completely, but they do need to be loose enough so that you can turn them out of the way.

The next two stages are probably the hardest. You'll need access to the exterior roof, and it can be a stretch if the rooflight is in the centre (as ours was)!

Once you've got there, you should break the mastic seal by working your way around the base of the rooflight assembly using a wide, flat blade. However, you must be careful not to damage the roof. Even after 16 years, the mastic on our van was surprisingly supple and grippy. Rather than over-stretching, I released one side then worked on the other from the opposite side.

Once the seal has been broken all the way around, the rooflight unit should simply lift out of the way. They're quite light, so shouldn't present any problems. If there is any resistance, make sure that all of the seal has been broken, or ask an assistant to check that the clips inside the van haven't turned around.

Seal it safely

With the rooflight out the way, remove all of the old mastic. I used a wide

metal wallpaper scraper, but be very careful not to damage the roof. I was able to remove some of the mastic by hand, too. Once this has been done, thoroughly clean around the sides with white spirit, and ensure that none of the old mastic remains.

Once you're happy that the roof is clean enough, cut four lengths of the new mastic sealing strip and place them along the edges of the rooflight aperture, overlapping the corners; make sure that there are no gaps underneath where the strips overlap by pressing one strip onto the other. Next, check that the new rooflight is clean where it sits on the roof (ie remove any old mastic and so on), then place it into the aperture, pressing the edges — and particularly the corners — into the mastic sealing strip. However, be careful not to press so hard that it cuts through the seal.

Once you're happy that the unit is correctly seated, secure it from inside the caravan by using the four clips and screws. Back outside, carefully trim any excess sealing strip, making sure that you don't pull any out from under the rim of the rooflight assembly.

Return inside the caravan and replace the trim, before securing it with the four screws. Check that, if the trim contains both the blind and flyscreen, they are at 90 degrees to the handles used to lift the rooflight;

otherwise you'll have difficulty accessing those handles.

Replace the four screw caps (if fitted), and the job is complete.

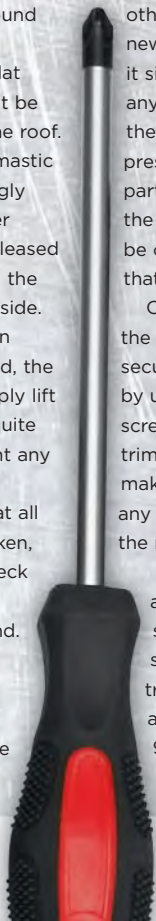
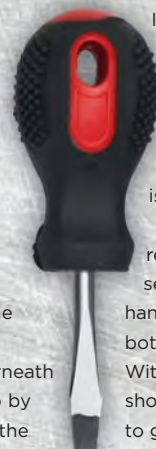
Cleaning your unit

If the original rooflight is in perfect working order but simply needs a clean, it's a very simple task to remove the covers. It doesn't matter whether the rooflight is open or closed for this.

Working outside the caravan, remove the four screws that secure the covers to the handles. Ensure that you retrieve both the screws and washers. With these removed, the covers should simply lift off. Take care to get hold of both parts (particularly if there's a breeze!) because they're very light. Also, be sure to retrieve the four rubber washers between the lower side of the covers and handles — these are the main seal.

You'll now be able to access all areas of both parts, so you can give them a clean with soapy water. Despite never having been cleaned before, the grime on our examples came off quite easily. A small brush helped us to access the gaps between the vent slots.

Once you're happy that the parts are no longer dirty, you can reassemble them. Make sure the four black rubber washers are correctly seated before you replace the covers. After carefully putting the covers in place (so as not to disturb the rubber washers), replace the four screws and their washers. Nip up the screws, but don't over-tighten them or you could damage the covers and threads. **PC**





Remove the screw caps from the inner trim, then the screws that secure the latter



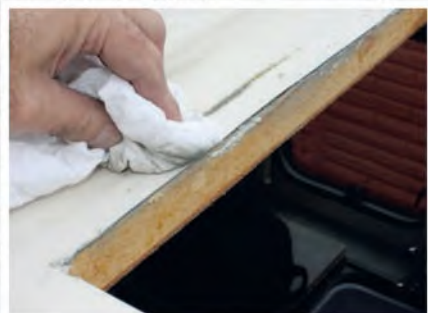
Next, release or remove the four clips that hold the assembly in place



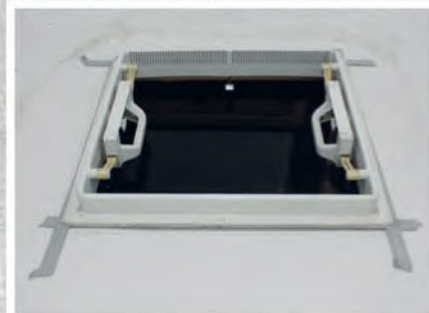
Carefully break the seal of the old mastic before taking out the assembly unit



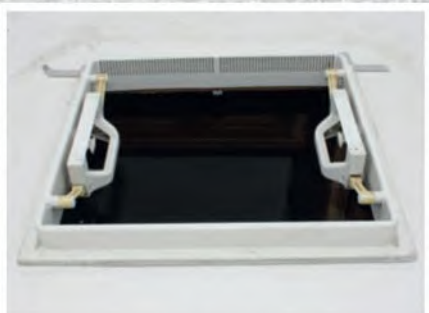
Remove the old mastic from around the edge, being careful not to damage the roof



Thoroughly clean the area with white spirit and peel off any of the remaining mastic



Using a roll of mastic sealing strip, create a new seal around the edge of the aperture



Place the housing into the aperture, then secure it with the clips and screws



Trim the excess mastic sealing strip, taking care not to damage the roof's surface



Next, carefully place the pop-up unit covers back into their original position



Finally, replace the inner trim and screwcaps to complete the jobs



To only wash the unit, remove the four screws and washers, then take off the outer cover



Remove the grubby inner cover. These are light, so keep hold of them in a breeze!



Next, thoroughly clean both covers using a suitable plastic-cleaning product



Ensure that the black rubber washers are correctly seated — these form the main seal



When you're happy that the covers are clean, return them and secure in place

Secondhand Shootout

Price £10,699 MiRO 1384kg MTPLM 1540kg



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The modern, spacious lounge has plenty of deep roof lockers. The van rides an Al-Ko chassis but its AKS hitch stabiliser has been removed. Controls are behind a panel in the front roof lockers. The centre chest once housed a cooler

2012 Concordia Serenity



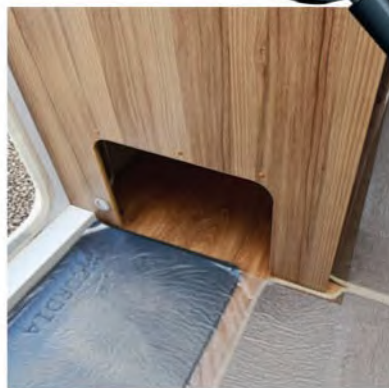
THE FIXED-BED layout has been a mainstay of the big UK manufacturers' ranges for the past 10 years and its popularity looks likely to continue unabated. And with a decade's production to choose from there is no shortage of models on the used market.

The convenience of a fixed bed has not been confined to mid-range and luxury portfolios either: entry-level ranges all have fixed-bed configurations. It doesn't matter which dealer's forecourt you drop in on, there will be a fixed-bed model of some description.

Armed with a budget of £10,800, we went to West Midland Caravans in Coventry to see what it would buy us. A search of its pre-owned forecourt revealed two candidates.

Our first contender was a 2012 Concordia Serenity, a tourer that lasted just one season. It was made by Dunster House, the makers of the extraordinary-looking Stealth tourer. *Practical Caravan* attended its launch and in the March 2012 issue of the magazine reported on the Serenity in a Live-in test.

Caravan close-up



Concordia A neat storage area for shoes in the nearside seat base is just one of several clever design touches in the Concordia Serenity.

Our conclusion then was that fresh thinking made this a real head-turner.

Our second choice was from Elddis: the Rambler is a dealer special based on the Avanté, from the Yorkshire-based Wandahome dealership. Extra kit included an external gas point and Truma awning heater plus more upmarket soft furnishings.

The Elddis has a nearside bed and corner washroom, while the Concordia's bed is on the offside with a full-width end washroom.

The Contenders

2012 Concordia Serenity

What is immediately apparent is the striking profile of the Concordia. The large GRP front panel has a dark-grey, pointed 'shield' design reminiscent of the 'nose' on the Stealth. The GRP back panel is moulded around a similar design and there is no window. The sides are also in scuff-resistant GRP. The body sits on an Al-Ko chassis.

Words and photos: Andrew Jenkinson

Fixed-bed vans for under £11,000



Price £10,499 MiRO 1307kg MTPLM 1500kg

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The smart, spacious front lounge looks very traditional. Mains corner units are supplemented by 12V lighting. Soft furnishings were spotless and offered good support. The body sits on a BPW chassis with a Winterhoff stabiliser

S

2010 Eddis Rambler 18/4 SE

It was originally fitted with an AKS hitch stabiliser, although for some reason this is no longer present on our example. And there is no ATC stability control, but it does have alloy wheels.

The interior looks fresh and modern: its front dinette has domestic-style seating and the roof lockers look well-built. The central chest of drawers invades the gas-locker space allowing a deep front shelf, the whole fitting flush with the sofas. The drawers once housed a coolbox.

Condition-wise, the Concordia was good: nothing had dropped off or broken.

2010 Eddis Rambler 18/4 SE

The Rambler's exterior has a GRP front panel and a full-height GRP back panel. Based on a BPW chassis, it comes with a hitch stabiliser and alloy wheels. Dealer-special spec includes an external gas barbecue point, an awning warmer and an exterior mains socket.

Caravan close-up



Eddis This awning warmer runs off the caravan's Truma heating system; it will help keep an awning warm on a cool summer's evening - a nice touch!

The Eddis is two years older than the Concordia and looks more dated inside, but the traditional treatment is well executed. The end washroom is a corner design, so floor space is tight.

The condition overall is good. This older model is just £200 cheaper than its rival.

Pitch and set-up

2012 Concordia Serenity ★★★★★☆

2010 Eddis Rambler 18/4 SE ★★★★★★

The Eddis better the Concordia by having a hitch stabiliser, lacking on the Serenity. The Concordia fights back with its tough GRP sides, but falls short of the barbecue and exterior mains points present in the Rambler. Neither has a retrofitted mover, but both have alloy wheels and the corner steadies on each are easy to access. Each has a Status 530 TV aerial.

Once the large lid is open, the Concordia's gas locker is divided in two by the intrusion of the centre chest - the gas bottles fit on >>

2012 Concordia Serenity

Vital statistics

Price £10,699
Internal length 5.76m
Overall length 7.58m
Overall width 2.32m
MiRO 1384kg
Payload 156kg
MTPLM 1540kg

Kit list

- Al-Ko chassis
- Status TV aerial
- Alde heating
- LED lights
- Dual-fuel hob
- Separate oven and grill
- Fridge
- Shower
- Awning light
- Radio/CD player
- Spare wheel
- Microwave



The offside kitchen has all the usual kit and plenty of storage, including three useful drawers



KEY

- Seats/beds
- Fixed bed
- Kitchen
- Washroom
- Table/cupboard



The void beneath the squared-off bed gives a feeling of space



Cocktail cabinet sits above a dresser with shelved cupboard



Spotless end washroom, with electric-flush toilet and good storage, looked as new

either side. The Rambler's locker is slightly deeper and a little easier to access. Both have all their service points on the offside.

If you need to manoeuvre the vans by hand, the grabhandles on the Concordia aren't as easy to use as those on the Elddis.

Exterior condition is good on both vans, and the Concordia is the more distinctive looking, but the Elddis wins this first round for its hitch stabiliser, exterior mains and barbecue points and its awning warmer.

Lounge

2012 Concordia Serenity ★★★★★

2010 Elddis Rambler 18/4 SE ★★★★★

Both vans have parallel sofas and a central chest of drawers. However, the recessed drawers in the Concordia allow more room inside the van. The Rambler's upholstery is supportive, but didn't feel as good as the sofas in the Serenity. The cabinetwork is excellent in the Elddis, but the roof lockers are shallow and are beaten for sheer size by those in the Concordia.

The Elddis has mains lights fitted, along with 12V lighting, while the Concordia offers superior LED spotlights. Potential buyers may prefer the more familiar location of the

mains and heating controls in the Rambler – close to the entrance. The TV point is also located here. Those in the Serenity are in the front roof lockers, behind a panel. The TV point is on the deep front shelf.

The Serenity has Alde central heating, while the Rambler relies on Truma blown-air heating, with two vents in the front lounge. The Concordia takes the round.

Beds

2012 Concordia Serenity ★★★★★

2010 Elddis Rambler 18/4 SE ★★★★★

The nearside fixed bed in the Elddis has the familiar base and tapered end, while the Concordia's offside bed is full size and so offers more room, and is open underneath. However, the Rambler's mattress is the more supportive of the two.

Neither of the caravans' front sofas will do service as single beds for adults but both make up into good-sized doubles. Making up the beds is easy: the Elddis uses front slats that pull out, while the Concordia's offside settee has a pull-out frame to form the bed base. It's easier to make up than the Elddis and keeps the Concordia in the lead for this section.

Kitchen

2012 Concordia Serenity ★★★★★

2010 Elddis Rambler 18/4 SE ★★★★★

Both kitchens are well-equipped. The Concordia's worktop is longer and there is more storage, with deep drawers under the sink. The Elddis retaliates with a worktop extension flap and a large dresser opposite. Both tourers offer a separate oven and grill, but the Serenity's hob is dual-fuel, while the Rambler makes do with three gas burners. The sink in the Concordia has a removable drainer, while that in the Elddis is integral. Both have Thetford fridges and each has a microwave set in the roof lockers – the Concordia's is lower than that in the Elddis.

Night-time illumination is better in the Concordia, with LED lights as well as a strip light beneath the roof locker. The Elddis relies on only a strip light. Overall, the very modern-looking Serenity kitchen works the better of the two and it wins this round.

Washroom

2012 Concordia Serenity ★★★★★

2010 Elddis Rambler 18/4 SE ★★★★★

We had forgotten just how good the Concordia's end washroom is! The domestic-

2010 Eddis Rambler 18/4 SE



Limited kitchen storage is supplemented by the large dresser. The worktop has an extension

Vital statistics

Price £10,499
Internal length 5.61m
Overall length 7.34m
Overall width 2.29m
MiRO 1307kg
Payload 193kg
MTPLM 1500kg

Kit list

- BPW galvanised chassis with Winterhoff stabiliser
- Blown-air heating
- Awning light
- Separate oven and grill
- Three-burner hob
- Fridge
- Status TV aerial
- Radio/CD player
- Shower
- Spare wheel
- External gas point
- Microwave
- Awning warmer



Bed has a thick mattress and good storage below, but is hemmed in by washroom wall



Large hob has only three burners and very little worktop



Corner washroom has tip-up basin above a bench toilet



KEY
■ Seats/beds
■ Fixed bed
■ Kitchen
■ Washroom
■ Table/cupboard

sized, moulded shower cubicle has a small roof vent to evacuate steam build-up. The basin in the Serenity is centrally placed on the back wall and has a cupboard below. The space in the Rambler's corner unit is shared between the toilet, a flip-up basin and shower, with the shower tray as the floor. The space is not as large as that in the Concordia, making showering in the Eddis a cramped affair, and there's little storage.

The pair have electric-flush toilets – a Dometic in the Concordia and a Thetford in the Eddis. Lighting is excellent in both washrooms but the Concordia goes one better with LED lights. The Concordia's very contemporary washroom takes the honours.

Storage

2012 Concordia Serenity ★★★★★
 2010 Eddis Rambler 18/4 SE ★★★★★

As already discussed, the storage in the washroom and the kitchen is better in the Serenity, although the Rambler has the larger dresser. The Concordia has a rather swish cocktail cabinet above its dresser. The Eddis has some great storage, but the roof lockers aren't as big as those in the Concordia and the wardrobe can't compete

with the Serenity's double-doored unit, which can accommodate four peoples' clothing. The Eddis scores some much-needed points with the storage under the double bed, while the Concordia's is half open: the boxed-in section is accessed from outside. It's a clear win for the Concordia.

Verdict

2012 Concordia Serenity ★★★★★
 2010 Eddis Rambler 18/4 SE ★★★★★
 For sheer style the Concordia seems to hold all the cards: it still looks very contemporary,

has a superb washroom, a cracking kitchen, a huge bed, Alde heating and great storage, and this example appears in excellent order. Its manufacturer, Dunster House, has since stopped building caravans so there will be no warranty or factory support, but it is a lot of van for the money.

The older Eddis looks dated but it's in excellent condition. Because it comes from one of the big UK manufacturers it will hold its resale value better. However, the Concordia managed to better the Eddis in most sections so it wins this contest. **PC**

West Midland Caravans & Motorhomes

John Bayliss (pictured) is in after-sales at West Midlands Caravans. He told us that the business has thrived over 28 years, with a good selection of pre-owned tourers always on display.

Pam Farrell works in administration and she says that friendly service means that many customers return to the dealership when the time comes



to upgrade. And with around 50-plus tourers for sale and workshops for servicing, the dealership remains a busy one, even out of season.

West Midlands has just been appointed as a new dealership for Venus tourers and in 2014 it achieved *Practical Caravan's* Owner Satisfaction Silver Award for a pre-owned supplier.

Sterling Europa (2006)

Cross-Channel style sets Sterling apart from other UK brands. **Andy Jenkinson** offers advice on picking a choice Europa

THE STERLING EUROPA was Swift Group's trendy portfolio of tourers. It slotted in below the Eccles line-up, but – despite its moderate prices – it appealed to aspirational caravanners.

Breaking away from the traditional interiors of its sister line-up, the Swift Charisma, the Europa had more modern soft furnishings, wood finishes that verged on being Continental and curtains that hung from poles – not rails. Its layouts, though, mirrored the Charisma's, from an end-kitchen two-berth to a twin-axle six-berth.

The Europa was equipped with blown-air heating for year-round caravanning. Other kit includes a shower, aerial, loose-fit carpets and quality upholstery. The kitchens got a stainless-steel sink with clip-on drainer, a separate oven and grill, and a dual-fuel hob.

The 500/5 is a five-berth but instead of a rear dinette an L-shaped rear lounge area leaves more floor space for children.

MODEL HISTORY

The precursor of the Europa range was Bluebird Caravans' Europe, which was launched in 1964, the year after the Poole-based manufacturer merged with Sprite to create Caravans International, or CI. In 1971, the line-up's production was moved to Sprite's plant in Newmarket and its name was changed to Europa.

Modern inside and out, the vans were produced until 1984. The name was reinstated nine years later as part of Sprite Leisure, only to join the Sterling catalogue in 1994, when Swift bought Sprite. The last Europas were produced in 2011.

For 2006, popular layouts in the range included a pair of two-berths: the corner kitchen, end-washroom 390/2, and the larger 460/2. Two four-berth models – the 470/4 and 490/4 – boast offside-corner fixed beds with washrooms opposite.

Large families were catered for with the five-berth 500/5 and the six-berth, fixed-bunk 540/6. The twin-axle, six-berth 600/6 had offside fixed bunks and a large end washroom.

FACTFILE

2006 Sterling
Europa 500/5
Price £6995
Berths 5
MiRO 1185kg
Payload 211kg
MTPLM 1396kg
Internal length 5.13m
Width 2.24m
Seen at Wandahome South Cave, Brough Road, East Yorkshire HU15 2DB
Tel 01430 424 342
Web www.caravanbuys.com

AL-KO STABILISER

Test the stabiliser's friction pads to see whether they need replacing



DON'T GET BURNED
Check the hob for signs of rust or peeling paint

EQUIPPED FOR COOKS

The nearside kitchen boasts a dual-fuel hob, a separate oven and grill, ample worktop, a mains socket and a clock

FRONT AND CENTRE

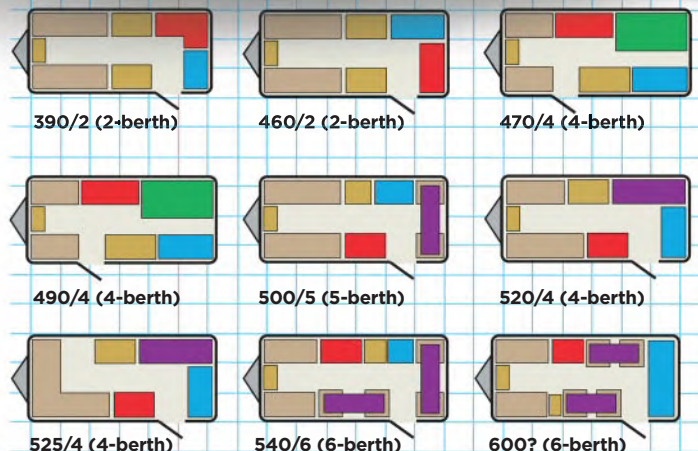
The GRP front panel may fade if it is not cleaned or is otherwise neglected



SOLID UNDERPINNINGS

The Al-Ko chassis is standard fit for all Swift Group tourers

2006 STERLING EUROPA LAYOUTS



KEY

- Seats/beds
- Kitchen
- Washroom
- Fixed bed
- Bunk bed
- Table/cupboard



ROOMY LIVING

The front lounge has plenty of seating and storage space; illumination in the evening is provided by five spotlights



READY FOR ENTERTAINING

Among the overhead lockers in the lounge is this drinks cabinet. Check the hinges, which may need adjusting



COMPACT WASHROOM/SHOWER

The offside washroom is just forward of the end dinette. Ensure the seals around the shower tray are intact



DEDICATED TO THE TUBE
The TV shelf folds away and is easily broken. Check for damage

THREE-QUARTER HEIGHT

The moulded back panel is not full-height. Check it for cracks

EUROPA BUYER'S CHECKLIST

- Check **alloys** for scuffing
- Inspect the **rear panel** for small cracks
- Test the **roof locker hinges**, which may need adjusting
- See whether the **tyres** have been replaced
- Ensure the **mains charger** isn't malfunctioning
- Look closely at the sealant in **washroom** for cracking
- Check the **hob** for peeling enamel and rust

WHAT TO PAY

We found 2006 Europa 500/5s costing £6995 and £7495 at dealers, while a private seller was asking £6295. The cheapest model in the range is the 390/2, starting from around £5500, rising to nearly £8000 for the best 560/6s.

ALTERNATIVES

Sprite Major 5 This has the same layout and similar build quality. It is also lighter and cheaper.

Elddis Avanté 505 The traditional décor is accompanied by decent spec. It weighs 25kg less than the Europa but is roomier.



ALLOY WHEELS

The alloys on this Europa 500/5 were slightly scuffed. Inspect them for scrapes and scratches



PLACE TO PLAY

The L-shaped end lounge provides extra room for children, but it has only three overhead lockers

VERDICT

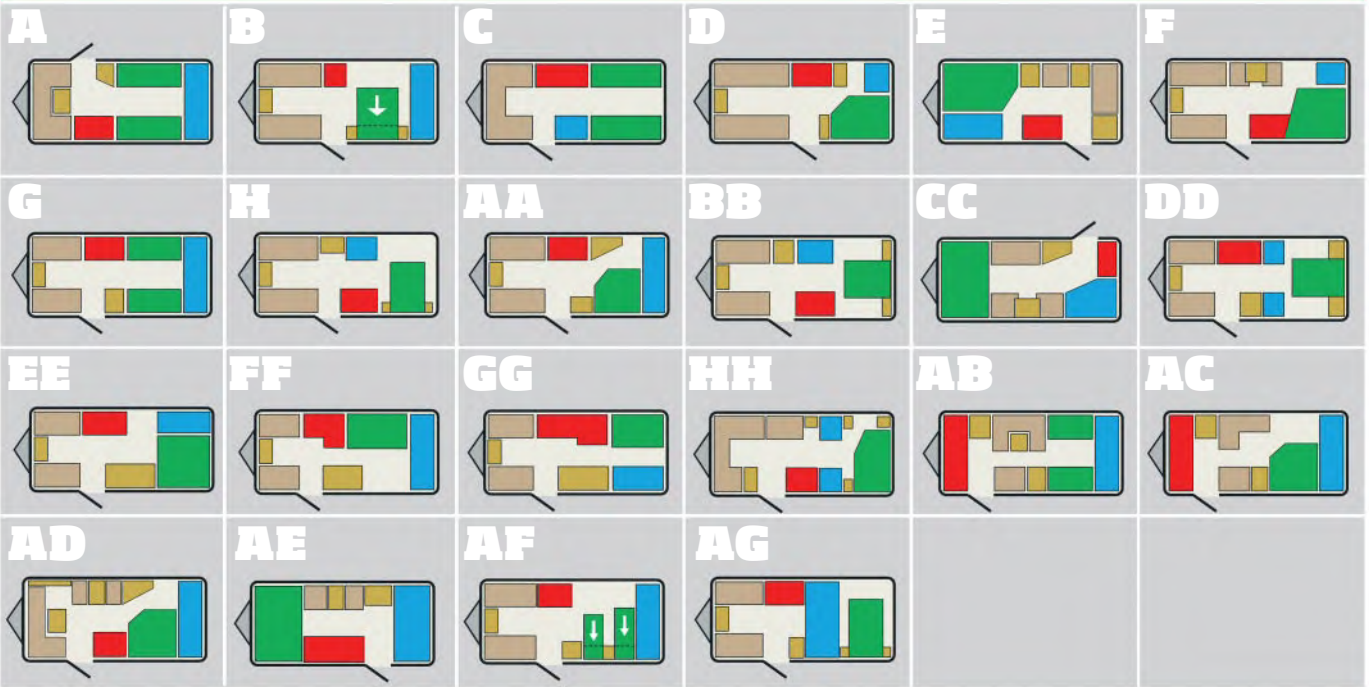
The Sterling Europa stood out from the crowd, with its trendy interiors that especially suited younger owners. Generally well-built, these caravans are durable and have few problems. The 500/5 pictured was in good order and only the hob had signs of rust, while the soft furnishings had worn well. The range is worth looking out for if you're after a used tourer with Continental flair! **PC**

BUYER'S GUIDE

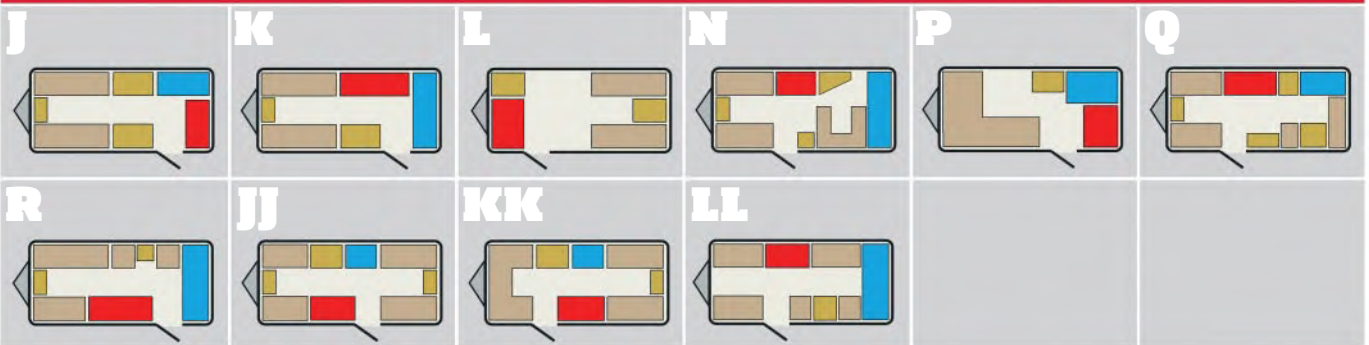
Fully updated for 2016!

Please check model details with the manufacturer or dealer before travelling to view or buy

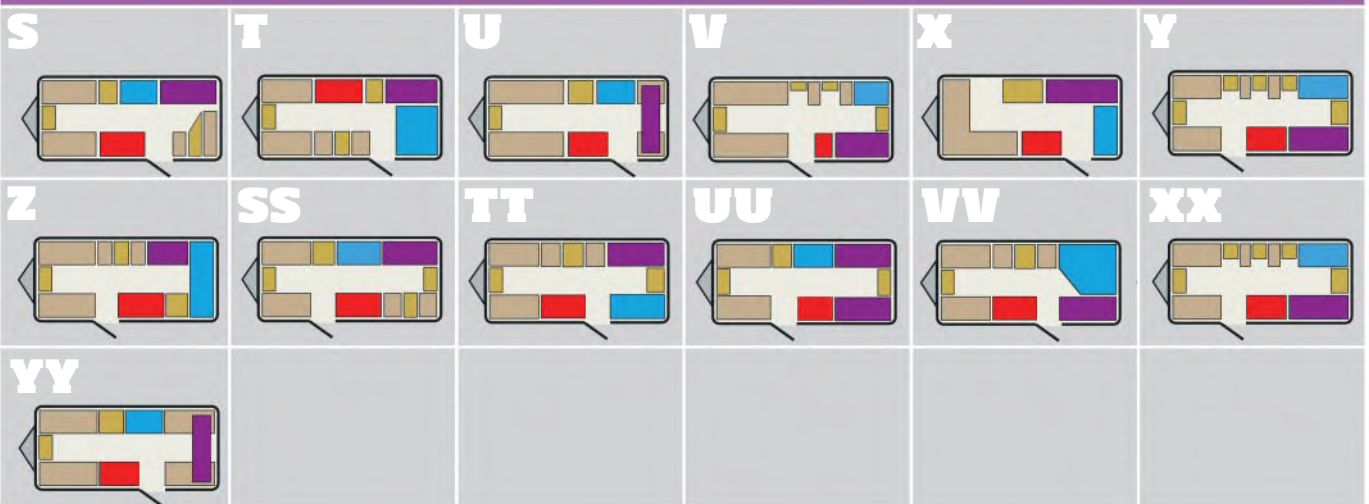
FIXED BEDS



NON-FIXED BEDS



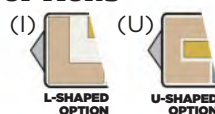
BUNK BEDS



KEY

- Seats/beds
- Kitchen
- Washroom
- Fixed bed
- Bunk bed
- Table/cupboard

OPTIONS



Entry level

New to caravanning? On a tight budget? These ranges of tourers are for you **TA** Twin-axle **+** Practical Caravan top pick

	Price	Berths	Layout	MiRO kg	Payload kg	MTPLM kg	Internal length m	Shipping length m	Exterior width m	Height m	Awning cm
Adria www.adria.co.uk Tel 01787 888 980											
Altea All-new Eden arrives as a 'Silver Collection' anniversary special edition; brightly coloured 4four offers 'Go Signature' personalisation											
362LH Forth	£12,440	4	J	1007	193	1200	3.64	5.70	2.30	2.58	822
472DS Eden SC	£15,390	5	YY	1190	160	1350	TBC	7.49	2.30	2.58	955
532UP Trent	£14,190	4	BB	1198	152	1350	TBC	7.63	2.30	2.58	1009
542DK Severn	£14,190	6	SS	1265	150	1415	5.37	7.49	2.30	2.58	995
552DT Tamar +	£14,390	6	TT	1260	160	1420	5.37	7.61	2.30	2.58	1009
362XH 4four	£16,190	4	J	1100	100	1200	3.64	5.70	2.30	2.58	822
Bailey www.baileyofbristol.co.uk Tel 0117 966 5967											
Pursuit Entry-level Pursuit range continues into 2016 broadly unchanged: low weights and good value											
400-2	£13,190	2	K	918	172	1090	4.18	5.41	2.23	2.61	843
430-4	£13,440	4	AA	1036	193	1229	5.23	6.47	2.23	2.61	955
530-4	£14,205	4	AA	1175	202	1377	5.71	7.38	2.23	2.61	1045
550-4 +	£14,660	4	G	1172	202	1374	5.71	7.38	2.23	2.61	1045
540-5	£14,865	5	T	1182	212	1394	5.71	7.38	2.23	2.61	1045
560-5	£14,965	5	JJ	1229	212	1441	5.71	7.38	2.23	2.61	1045
Sprite www.swiftgroup.co.uk Tel 01482 847 332											
Sprite Triple front window gives Sprite an upmarket new look, making way for the new-for-2016 Sprite Freedom range of budget family vans											
Alpine 2	£13,995	2	K	1025	166	1191	4.34	5.99	2.23	2.67	873
Alpine 4	£14,155	4	GG	1054	190	1244	4.74	6.39	2.23	2.67	914
Freedom 6	£14,395	6	Y	1129	173	1302	5.60	7.25	2.23	2.58	999
Freedom 6 TD	£14,620	6	S	1170	180	1350	5.83	7.48	2.23	2.58	1022
Freedom FB TA	£15,820	6	F	1286	180	1466	6.27	7.92	2.23	2.55	1066
Major 4 FB	£15,655	4	AA	1145	195	1340	5.29	6.93	2.23	2.68	968
Major 4 SB +	£15,655	4	B	1214	201	1415	5.83	7.48	2.23	2.68	1022
Major 6	£15,755	6	Y	1217	218	1435	5.60	7.25	2.23	2.68	999
Major 6 TD	£15,895	6	S	1258	221	1479	5.83	7.48	2.23	2.68	1022
Quattro FB TA	£17,055	6	F	1353	225	1578	6.27	7.92	2.23	2.65	1066
Quattro EW TA	£17,055	6	AD	1359	225	1584	6.27	7.92	2.23	2.65	1066
Venus www.venuscaravans.com Tel 01772 337 628											
Venus Much-revamped last year, Lunar's budget brand gains the popular transverse-island-bed layout among mild tweaks for 2016											
460/2	£13,499	2	K	1020	155	1175	4.59	6.16	2.21	2.61	910
540/4 +	£14,999	4	AA	1135	185	1320	5.62	7.19	2.21	2.61	1010
550/4	£15,199	4	G	1135	185	1320	5.62	7.19	2.21	2.61	1010
570/4	£15,199	4	B	1165	185	1350	5.80	7.37	2.21	2.61	1030
580/6	£15,599	6	Y	1173	207	1380	5.80	7.36	2.21	2.61	1030
620/6 TA	£16,599	6	F	1283	212	1495	6.40	7.83	2.21	2.61	1090
Xplore www.elddis.co.uk/xplore Tel 01207 699 000											
Xplore The 2016 Xplore continues to offer low weights, strong spec and budget prices, with some great layouts for families in particular											
304	£12,529	4	X	886	157	1043	3.80	5.54	2.18	2.65	820
402	£13,499	2	K	963	141	1104	4.30	5.97	2.18	2.65	860
435	£14,549	5	YY	1045	176	1221	4.72	6.39	2.18	2.65	910
574	£14,699	4	G	1081	173	1245	5.50	7.11	2.18	2.65	985
526	£15,199	6	S	1121	191	1312	5.25	6.90	2.18	2.65	965
586 +	£15,399	6	VV	1155	195	1350	6.25	7.29	2.18	2.65	1000

Layout finder

B

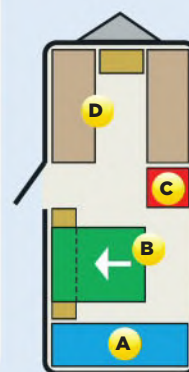
Transverse-island-bed tourers are the height of luxurious touring, given their large end washrooms, and his-and-hers wardrobes.

However, the double beds are not necessarily 'fixed'. They must often be retracted during the day to permit unhindered access to the washroom and extended at night. Some caravanners consider this too much trouble.

These can sometimes be twin-axle tourers.

Pros
This layout is close to that you'd find in a domestic bedroom. It's now available at a variety of prices.

Cons
The lounge may be smaller. The island bed sometimes requires setting up.



Sprite Major 4 SB
This budget model impresses across the board. We'd recommend opting for the Diamond Pack



Venus 570/4
The 570/4's bed may be too short for some, but the van's upmarket interior belies its price



Elddis Avanti 554
This smart Avanti model was the worthy winner of our 2016 Best Tourer for Couples award

A Washroom is spacious with features and storage you need

B It should be relatively easy to access either side of the bed

C Kitchen space can be compromised to allow for the bed

D The lounge can be turned into a bed for visiting couples

Layout finder

S

With a nearside-rear dinette as well as rear corner bunks, this layout has lots of space for the kids, while mum and dad relax in the lounge.

The amidships kitchen is short on work surface, but the side dinette provides extra food-preparation space.

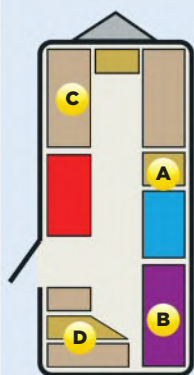
The washroom, opposite the kitchen, is useful for night-time visits, but there is not as much elbow room in the shower.

Pros

Children can take over the rear while their parents relax up front. The rear dinette offers a separate play space, and can usually be shut off from the rest of the van.

Cons

The washroom has limited space, and the kitchen is squeezed between the lounge and the main door.



A This area might house a wardrobe or dresser unit

B Fixed bunks are a staple of five/six-berth caravans

C Make sure that the front double bed is long enough

D Children can base themselves in the dinette

Mid-market

The place there's most competition, which means more choice for buyers **TA** Twin-axle **+** Practical Caravan top pick

	Price	Berths	Layout	MiRO kg	Payload kg	MTPLM kg	Internal length m	Shipping length m	Exterior width m	Height m	Awning cm
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Adria www.adria.co.uk Tel 01787 888 980

Adora Fresh styling and interior 'sky roof' keep Adria's spacious middle-ranker looking sharp; 'Silver Collection' Isonzo adds Alde heating

432DT Loire	£15,450	2	K	1170	130	1300	4.32	6.42	2.30	2.58	890
612DL Seine	£17,690	4	G	TBC	TBC	1600	6.14	8.24	2.30	2.58	1072
612DT Rhine +	£18,290	6	F	TBC	TBC	1700	6.14	8.22	2.30	2.58	1072
613DT Isonzo	£18,390	4	B	TBC	TBC	1750	6.14	8.25	2.45	2.58	1072
613DT Isonzo SC	£19,390	4	B	TBC	TBC	TBC	6.14	8.25	2.45	2.58	1072
613UT Thames	£18,590	4	AA	TBC	TBC	1700	6.14	8.36	2.48	2.58	1072

Bailey www.baileyofbristol.co.uk Tel 0117 966 5967

Pegasus All-change for the Alu-Tech pioneer for 2016, with crisp new looks, lower weights, lower prices and three new layouts

Genoa	£16,999	2	K	1136	129	1265	4.78	6.32	2.23	2.61	931
Modena	£16,999	4	AA	1126	149	1275	4.95	6.49	2.23	2.61	946
Verona	£17,999	4	AA	1281	169	1450	5.63	7.17	2.23	2.61	1016
Brindisi	£17,999	4	B	1286	164	1450	5.84	7.38	2.23	2.61	1036
Rimini	£17,999	4	G	1287	163	1450	5.63	7.17	2.23	2.61	1016
Ancona +	£17,999	5	XX	1296	179	1475	5.84	7.38	2.23	2.61	1036
Palermo TA	£19,799	5	XX	1573	187	1760	6.38	7.92	2.23	2.61	1090

Coachman www.coachman.co.uk Tel 01482 839 737

Vision Coachman's entry-level line-up is strong (and pricey) enough to be considered 'mid-market'. Lighter for 2016, with new family-friendly 570

380	£15,845	2	J	1063	117	1180	4.02	5.65	2.26	2.60	840
450	£16,765	2	K	1162	123	1285	4.63	6.26	2.26	2.60	900
520	£17,895	4	R	1281	149	1430	5.30	6.93	2.26	2.60	970
560	£18,395	4	AA	1322	153	1475	5.65	7.28	2.26	2.60	1005
565	£18,595	4	G	1331	154	1485	5.75	7.38	2.26	2.60	1015
570 +	£18,595	5	JJ	1361	164	1525	5.70	7.33	2.26	2.60	1010
575	£18,795	4	B	1315	155	1470	5.80	7.43	2.26	2.60	1020
580	£18,595	5	Y	1346	164	1510	5.75	7.38	2.26	2.60	1015

Pastiche The enduring Pastiche has also been on a weight-loss plan, and the range has been added to with the innovative front-fixed-bed 470

460	£19,645	2	K	1201	123	1325	4.63	6.26	2.26	2.60	900
470	£19,645	2	AE	1171	124	1295	4.70	6.33	2.26	2.60	910
520	£20,995	4	R	1316	149	1465	5.23	6.93	2.26	2.60	970
560	£21,245	4	AA	1367	153	1520	5.65	7.28	2.26	2.60	1005
565	£21,445	4	G	1381	154	1535	5.75	7.38	2.26	2.60	1015
575	£21,645	4	B	1355	155	1510	5.80	7.43	2.26	2.60	1020

Compass www.elddis.co.uk/compass Tel 01207 699 000

Corona Range resolved for 2016 with fewer models; newest to the line is the 554 with a retractable transverse island bed

462	£17,099	2	K	1112	122	1234	4.66	6.30	2.26	2.65	960
554	£18,599	4	B	1294	153	1447	5.75	7.40	2.26	2.65	1030
566	£19,449	6	UU	1341	173	1514	5.70	7.28	2.26	2.65	1020
574	£18,549	4	G	1296	153	1449	5.72	7.30	2.26	2.65	1020
576	£18,799	6	T	1307	172	1479	5.72	7.30	2.26	2.65	1020

Elddis www.elddis.co.uk Tel 01207 699 000

Avanté The 2016 Avanté takes cues from the upmarket Affinity, and all feature Whale's new Expanse underslung water heater

482	£16,299	2	K	1131	123	1254	4.80	6.42	2.26	2.65	930
550	£17,699	4	DD	1259	153	1412	5.70	7.40	2.26	2.65	1030
554 +	£17,799	4	B	1250	153	1403	5.75	7.37	2.26	2.65	1025
566	£18,649	6	UU	1341	171	1513	5.70	7.30	2.26	2.65	1020



Sprite's Freedom 6 TD shares its standard sibling's styling and build quality; it's a great entry-level van



The Xplore range is manufactured by Elddis; the 526 model features an Al-Ko galvanised steel chassis



New looks for the 2016 Swift Challenger line-up, as well as the company's SMART Plus construction

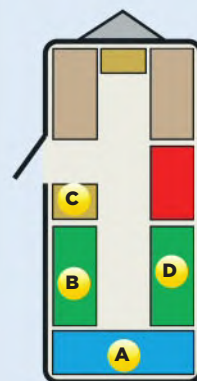
Layout finder

G

Fixed twin beds towards the rear of the caravan are accompanied by a central kitchen and an end washroom, as well as a lounge up front. This layout is great for couples who want to relax in the lounge without having to disassemble a bed every morning. You'll usually find a curtain or screen separating the rear beds from the lounge.

Pros
The pair of single beds means the front double doesn't always need to be made up. The washroom is often quite spacious.

Cons
The side kitchen may not have much space for preparing meals. The fixed single beds cannot be made up into a double.



- A** Square showers are more roomy than circular versions
- B** There's often an external hatch to access under-bed storage
- C** If there's no wardrobe here, expect to find a dresser
- D** Double-check that the rear single beds aren't too narrow

	Price	Berths	Layout	MIRO kg	Payload kg	MTPLM kg	Internal length m	Shipping length m	Exterior width m	Height m	Awning cm
574	£17,749	4	G	1250	151	1401	5.70	7.20	2.26	2.65	1010
576	£17,999	6	T	1268	172	1440	5.70	7.30	2.26	2.65	1020
636 TA	£19,799	6	Z	1432	178	1610	6.25	7.85	2.26	2.64	1075

Affinity Its price puts it in the middle ground, but the Affinity has the looks and the spec to rival plenty of upmarket models

482	£18,999	2	K	1175	123	1298	4.80	6.42	2.26	2.65	930
530	£20,199	3	R	1266	140	1406	5.51	7.12	2.26	2.65	1000
540	£20,099	4	AA	1308	152	1460	5.68	7.30	2.26	2.65	1020
550	£20,399	4	DD	1304	153	1457	5.80	7.40	2.26	2.65	1030
554 C	£20,399	4	B	1324	153	1477	5.75	7.37	2.26	2.65	1025
574	£20,399	4	G	1299	151	1450	5.59	7.20	2.26	2.65	1010

Lunar www.lunarcaravans.com Tel 01772 337 628

Ariva As old as the hills, this is one of the UK's smallest and lightest caravans, but doesn't stint on equipment or build quality

Ariva	£15,199	2	J	840	125	965	3.65	5.17	2.04	2.57	790
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Quasar More stylish interior and a wide choice of layouts gives the Quasar broad appeal; 586 and new 646 are ideal for large families

462	£16,299	2	K	1050	145	1195	4.59	6.16	2.21	2.61	910
524	£17,299	4	R	1139	171	1310	5.20	6.77	2.21	2.61	960
544	£17,799	4	AA	1175	175	1350	5.62	7.20	2.21	2.61	1010
554	£17,899	4	G	1175	175	1350	5.62	7.20	2.21	2.61	1010
574	£17,899	4	B	1213	177	1390	5.82	7.40	2.21	2.61	1030
586	£17,999	6	VV	1228	197	1425	5.78	7.36	2.21	2.61	1030
646 TA C	£19,599	6	VV	1358	197	1555	6.25	7.84	2.21	2.61	1070

Stellar A layout favoured by traditionalist caravanners, adding a little bit of luxury and dramatic interior style from its Lexon sibling

Stellar	£16,999	2	J	1072	138	1210	4.18	5.72	2.33	2.66	880
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Lexon Range rationalised for 2016, with the more conventional fixed-twin-bed 570 replacing the 590

540	£19,999	4	AA	1252	173	1425	5.78	7.33	2.33	2.66	1040
560	£19,999	4	B	1267	173	1440	5.78	7.33	2.33	2.66	1040
570	£19,999	4	G	1277	173	1450	5.79	7.32	2.33	2.66	1040
640 TA	£21,999	4	G	1446	179	1625	6.34	7.88	2.33	2.66	1090

Sterling www.swiftgroup.co.uk Tel 01482 847 332

Eccles Sport and SE unite to become one Eccles range for 2016; Truma heating as standard, with Alde available as an option

480	£17,375	2	K	1165	122	1287	4.40	6.11	2.23	2.61	877
510	£18,325	4	D	1257	150	1407	5.23	6.94	2.23	2.61	960
530	£18,595	4	R	1311	151	1462	5.29	7.00	2.23	2.61	966
565 C	£19,075	4	G	1325	154	1479	5.60	7.31	2.23	2.61	997
570	£19,025	4	AA	1303	154	1457	5.60	7.31	2.23	2.61	997
580	£19,275	4	B	1335	156	1491	5.83	7.54	2.23	2.61	1020
590	£19,625	6	S	1395	176	1571	5.83	7.54	2.23	2.61	1020
640 TA	£20,845	6	UU	1563	180	1743	6.27	7.98	2.23	2.61	1064

Swift www.swiftgroup.co.uk Tel 01482 847 332

Challenger Sport and SE unite to become one Challenger range for 2016; Truma heating as standard, with Alde available as an option

480	£17,375	2	K	1166	122	1278	4.40	6.11	2.23	2.61	877
510	£18,325	4	D	1261	150	1411	5.23	6.94	2.23	2.61	960
530	£18,595	4	R	1297	151	1448	5.29	7.00	2.23	2.61	966
565 C	£19,075	4	G	1320	154	1474	5.60	7.31	2.23	2.61	997
570	£19,025	4	AA	1300	154	1454	5.60	7.31	2.23	2.61	997
580	£19,275	4	B	1323	156	1479	5.83	7.54	2.23	2.61	1020
590	£19,625	6	S	1389	176	1565	5.83	7.54	2.23	2.61	1020
640 TA	£20,845	6	UU	1556	180	1736	6.27	7.98	2.23	2.61	1064



The Clubman SB combines a good kit list with an MTPLM of 1460kg



Swift revamped the Conqueror for 2016: it now feels more upmarket



The Cadiz's new styling works well and it's a great-value van, too

Layout finder

R

With a parallel lounge, dinette and end washroom, this is usually a family-friendly four-berth layout. The dinette normally converts into two bunks and there is a privacy curtain to separate the areas at night.

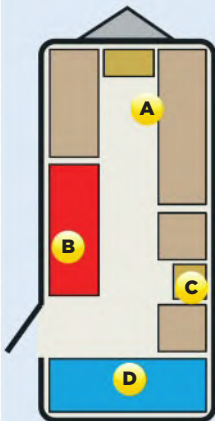
The dinette can be used in a few ways: as extra space for preparing meals, for kids' quiet play or by couples who use it for dining, so they do not have to pack away the double bed.

Pros

The side dinette is a handy eating and break-out area and the end washroom offers comfort and privacy.

Cons

The layout works best with 5.5m bodyshells or longer. Older children may find the bunks uncomfortable.



A The lounge should allow room for four to eat in comfort

B You'll usually find plenty of workspace in the nearside kitchen

C Couples can leave the front bed up and eat at the dinette

D A spacious rear washroom is great if you're camping off-grid

Upmarket

These tourers make few compromises to provide the ultimate in caravan comfort **TA** Twin-axle **⊕** Practical Caravan top pick

	Price	Berths	Layout	MiRO kg	Payload kg	MTPLM kg	Internal length m	Shipping length m	Exterior width m	Height m	Awning cm
Adria www.adria.co.uk Tel 01787 888 980											
Astella Much-improved bed make-up system means that you can now accommodate guests in your glitzy, top-spec and very wide Adrial											
613HP Rio Grande	£23,590	4	AC	1655	160	1815	6.14	8.23	2.48	2.58	1072
613HT Amazon	£23,590	4	AB	1665	160	1825	6.14	8.23	2.48	2.58	1072
Bailey www.baileyofbristol.co.uk Tel 0117 966 5967											
Unicorn Heavily revised Unicorn III rights most of Unicorn II's shortcomings. Great value, and the Seville was our Tourer of the Year for 2015											
Seville ⊕	£19,820	2	K	1242	127	1369	4.92	6.47	2.28	2.61	950
Madrid	£20,955	3	N	1352	144	1496	5.83	7.37	2.28	2.61	1045
Valencia	£20,955	4	AA	1339	154	1493	5.83	7.37	2.28	2.61	1045
Cadiz	£21,055	4	G	1337	154	1491	5.83	7.37	2.28	2.61	1045
Vigo	£21,105	4	B	1346	154	1500	5.83	7.37	2.28	2.61	1045
Barcelona TA	£23,025	4	AA	1560	163	1723	6.37	7.92	2.28	2.61	1091
Cartagena TA	£23,135	4	B	1554	163	1717	6.38	7.92	2.28	2.61	1091
Cordoba TA	£23,135	4	G	1590	160	1750	6.38	7.92	2.28	2.61	1091
Buccaneer www.elddis.co.uk/buccaneer Tel 01207 699 000											
Buccaneer Super-luxurious and now with whopping 8ft-wide bodies, plus the unique Clipper with its transverse fixed single beds											
Cutter	£28,799	4	B	1627	154	1781	5.91	7.94	2.45	2.68	1045
Clipper TA	£30,899	4	AF	1797	159	1956	6.39	8.14	2.45	2.64	1090
Caravel TA	£30,899	4	DD	1764	159	1923	6.39	8.14	2.45	2.64	1090
Cruiser TA ⊕	£30,899	4	B	1764	159	1923	6.39	8.14	2.45	2.64	1090
Schooner TA	£30,899	4	AA	1805	159	1964	6.39	8.14	2.45	2.64	1090
Coachman www.coachman.co.uk Tel 01482 839 737											
VIP No new layouts for 2016, but lower weights make them easier to tow and gold-themed accents add to the luxury feel inside											
460	£22,195	2	K	1291	124	1415	4.75	6.41	2.32	2.65	928
520	£23,775	4	R	1399	151	1550	5.42	7.08	2.32	2.65	992
545	£23,995	4	DD	1480	155	1635	5.80	7.46	2.32	2.65	1038
560	£23,995	4	AA	1447	153	1600	5.66	7.32	2.32	2.65	1024
565	£23,995	4	G	1476	154	1630	5.74	7.40	2.32	2.65	1032
575 ⊕	£24,195	4	B	1460	155	1615	5.80	7.46	2.32	2.65	1038
Laser New 650 with longitudinal island rear bed features a nifty walk-through centre washroom; 620 offers vast interior space											
620 TA ⊕	£26,925	4	R	1671	159	1830	6.22	7.87	2.32	2.65	1070
640 TA	£26,645	4	AA	1641	159	1800	6.22	7.87	2.32	2.65	1070
650 TA	£26,645	4	DD	1651	159	1810	6.22	7.87	2.32	2.65	1070
Compass www.elddis.co.uk/compass Tel 01207 699 000											
Rallye Generous kit levels and fewer layouts for the 2016 season; quality interiors feel opulent without being too showy											
530	£21,399	3	R	1330	140	1470	5.51	7.12	2.26	2.65	1000
540	£21,399	4	AA	1365	152	1517	5.68	7.30	2.26	2.65	1020
550	£21,799	4	DD	1333	153	1486	5.78	7.40	2.26	2.65	1030
554	£21,799	4	B	1368	153	1521	5.75	7.35	2.26	2.65	1025
574	£21,799	4	G	1360	151	1511	5.59	7.20	2.26	2.65	1010
636 TA ⊕	£25,399	6	Z	1583	179	1762	6.34	7.96	2.30	2.64	1080
644 TA	£25,399	4	B	1566	159	1725	6.34	7.96	2.30	2.64	1080



Coachman's VIP range is lighter for 2016; the interiors look classier, too



The Swift Elegance 530's large washroom makes it ideal for ralliers



This luxury three-berth has a smart interior and 6ft 4in sofas

Price	Berths	Layout	MiRO kg	Payload kg	MTPLM kg	Internal length m	Shipping length m	Exterior width m	Height m	Awning cm
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Elddis www.elddis.co.uk Tel 01207 699 000

Crusader Distinctive 'Champagne' sidewalls are the most notable change for 2016. Shamal is dropped to make way for luxurious Aurora

Aurora	£22,599	4	DD	1373	153	1526	5.70	7.32	2.30	2.65	1015
Mistral	£22,599	4	B	1397	153	1550	5.70	7.32	2.30	2.65	1015
Storm TA	£25,399	4	B	1581	159	1740	6.34	7.96	2.30	2.64	1080
SuperSirocco TA	£25,399	4	AA	1583	159	1742	6.34	7.96	2.30	2.64	1080
Supercyclone TA	£25,399	4	G	1593	159	1752	6.34	7.96	2.30	2.64	1080
Tempest TA	£25,399	6	Z	1605	179	1784	6.34	7.96	2.30	2.64	1080

Lunar www.lunarcaravans.com Tel 01772 337 628

Clubman No fundamental changes for 2016, but this is an attractive luxury tourer with some very elegant lighting solutions

CK	£21,299	2	K	1142	123	1265	4.64	6.18	2.33	2.66	930
ES ◊	£22,449	3	R	1273	167	1440	5.51	7.06	2.33	2.66	1010
SB	£22,899	4	G	1305	155	1460	5.79	7.33	2.33	2.66	1040
SE	£22,899	4	AA	1306	154	1460	5.78	7.32	2.33	2.66	1040
SI	£22,899	4	B	1320	155	1475	5.78	7.32	2.33	2.66	1040

Delta RS makes way for fabulous new RI, our Tourer of the Year for 2016. Superb interior lighting and huge rooflight give a great ambience

RI TA ◊	£26,199	4	AG	1550	160	1710	6.16	7.89	2.33	2.66	1090
TI TA	£26,199	4	B	1510	160	1670	6.34	7.89	2.33	2.66	1090
TS TA	£26,199	4	G	1550	160	1710	6.34	7.89	2.33	2.66	1090

Sterling www.swiftgroup.co.uk Tel 01482 847 332

Elite A famous Sterling name returns, offering a more modern interior to its Swift Conqueror twin, wrapped in a stylish new body from the Continental

480	£22,450	2	K	1328	126	1454	4.98	6.54	2.26	2.61	866
530	£24,995	4	R	1434	151	1585	5.45	7.01	2.26	2.61	919
560	£25,495	4	DD	1492	156	1648	5.93	7.49	2.26	2.61	967
565	£24,995	4	G	1498	156	1654	5.93	7.49	2.26	2.61	967
570	£24,995	4	AA	1472	156	1628	5.93	7.49	2.26	2.61	967
580	£25,995	4	B	1494	156	1650	5.93	7.49	2.26	2.61	967
630 TA ◊	£27,695	6	AD	1618	180	1798	6.38	7.94	2.26	2.61	1006
645 TA	£27,695	4	B	1500	151	1651	6.38	7.94	2.26	2.61	1006
650 TA	£27,695	4	DD	1679	221	1900	6.38	7.94	2.26	2.61	1006

Continental Heavyweight flagship gains leather and faux-fur soft furnishings for 2016, for the ultimate in caravanning glamour

480	£24,450	2	K	1354	123	1477	4.63	6.19	2.26	2.61	866
530	£26,995	4	R	1522	151	1673	5.45	7.01	2.26	2.61	954
565	£26,995	4	G	1570	156	1726	5.93	7.49	2.26	2.61	1002
570	£26,995	4	AA	1561	156	1717	5.93	7.49	2.26	2.61	1002
580	£27,995	4	B	1534	156	1690	5.93	7.49	2.26	2.61	1002
630 TA	£29,695	4	AA	1707	193	1900	6.38	7.94	2.26	2.61	1041
645 TA	£29,695	4	B	1700	200	1900	6.38	7.94	2.26	2.61	1041

Swift www.swiftgroup.co.uk Tel 01482 847 332

Conqueror Luxury range is reinvented, offering Elegance style and plenty of kit for less cost and a little less weight

480	£22,450	2	K	1328	126	1454	4.98	6.54	2.26	2.61	866
530	£24,995	4	R	1434	151	1585	5.45	7.01	2.26	2.61	919
560	£25,495	4	DD	1492	156	1648	5.93	7.49	2.26	2.61	967
565	£24,995	4	G	1498	156	1654	5.93	7.49	2.26	2.61	967
570	£24,995	4	AA	1472	156	1628	5.93	7.49	2.26	2.61	967
580	£25,995	4	B	1494	156	1650	5.93	7.49	2.26	2.61	967
630 TA ◊	£27,695	6	AD	1618	180	1798	6.38	7.94	2.26	2.61	1006
645 TA	£27,695	4	B	1500	151	1651	6.38	7.94	2.26	2.61	1006
650 TA	£27,695	4	DD	1679	221	1900	6.38	7.94	2.26	2.61	1006

Elegance Heavyweight flagship gains leather and faux-fur soft furnishings for 2016, for the ultimate in caravanning glamour

480	£24,450	2	K	1354	123	1477	4.63	6.19	2.26	2.61	866
530	£26,995	4	R	1522	151	1673	5.45	7.01	2.26	2.61	954
565	£26,995	4	G	1570	156	1726	5.93	7.49	2.26	2.61	1002
570	£26,995	4	AA	1561	156	1717	5.93	7.49	2.26	2.61	1002
580	£27,995	4	B	1534	156	1690	5.93	7.49	2.26	2.61	1002
630 TA	£29,695	4	AA	1707	193	1900	6.38	7.94	2.26	2.61	1041
645 TA	£29,695	4	B	1700	200	1900	6.38	7.94	2.26	2.61	1041

Layout finder

DD

The island-bed with split washroom is one of the most luxurious floorplans you'll find - occupants get the comfort of a fixed bed, with the flexibility of lounge sofas that can be made into another double up front. What's more, the washroom is usually divided into two areas, meaning that the toilet section remains free when the shower is in use.

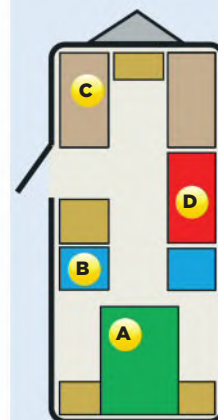
If you're planning to use the front bed, make sure that the sofas are long enough for your needs.

Pros

The island bed has side access for both partners, meaning it's easy to get in and out.

Cons

Island beds swallow a large amount of the van's footprint, so you might find that space is limited elsewhere.



A You're sure to enjoy a good night's sleep on the island bed

B Check the washroom is big enough for your requirements

C Wraparound seating could be an option in the lounge

D Ensure that there's ample storage capability in the kitchen



The VIP 545 has a full-width washroom and great-size sofas



You'll find a retractable island bed in this model, as well as AI-Ko ATC



The Sterling Elite 560's stylish washroom extends across the van

Pennine

Is it a caravan?
Is it a tent? Actually, Pennine Outdoor Leisure's range of folding campers is a bit of both, and the company has more than 30 years' experience of building these lightweight and easily manoeuvrable alternatives to a full-blown caravan.

But it wasn't until 2008 that Pennine really broke the mould. Working in conjunction with awning manufacturer Isabella, and using the 'Conway' brand name, Pennine launched the first ever folding campers (Cruiser and Crusader) to use acrylic, rather than cotton fabrics. Two years later, the Countryman was an all-new layout that won a host of awards – including from *Practical Caravan* – and the company hasn't looked back.

The big attractions remain unchanged, however: they're a doddle to tow and store when folded, take very little time to open up into camping mode, and can be extended using optional awnings.



The Pennine Pathfinder (pictured, also with an awning), retails for £15,495

Niche caravans

Our pick of the tourers that don't follow the crowds **TA** Twin-axle

	Price	Berths	Layout	MiRO kg	Payload kg	MTPLM kg	Internal length m	Shipping length m	Exterior width m	Height m	Awning cm
Airstream www.adventurelv.com Tel 01539 624141/01451 850001											
International Aluminium-bodied American icon continues with its popular Euro-friendly spec and interiors – at a price!											
534	£54,900	4	DD	1478	222	1700	5.32	6.81	2.29	2.65	n/a
604 TA	£59,400	3	DD	1765	235	2000	6.03	7.60	2.29	2.65	n/a
684 TA	£65,700	4	DD	1999	400	2399	6.81	8.25	2.29	2.65	n/a
685 TA	£66,700	5	U	2099	400	2499	6.81	8.25	2.50	2.65	n/a
Eriba www.automotiveleisure.co.uk Tel 01202 600 701											
Eriba Touring Ageless styling has helped these compact pop-tops gather a legion of fans. GT upgrade brings silver body colour											
Familia 310	£13,385	3/4	JJ	690	210	900	3.66	4.83	2.00	2.26	635
Familia 320	£14,125	2	J	720	180	900	3.66	4.83	2.00	2.26	635
Triton 410	£14,205	3	JJ	770	220	1000	4.16	5.28	2.00	2.26	700
Triton 418	£14,125	3/4	JJ	780	220	1000	4.16	5.28	2.00	2.26	700
Triton 420	£15,235	2	J	830	160	1000	4.16	5.28	2.00	2.26	700
Triton 430	£15,235	3	JJ	840	160	1000	4.16	5.28	2.00	2.26	700
Troll 530	£15,975	3	JJ	940	360	1300	4.66	5.76	2.10	2.26	730
Troll 540	£16,305	3	JJ	980	320	1300	4.66	5.76	2.10	2.26	730
Troll 542	£16,345	3	JJ	940	360	1300	4.66	5.76	2.10	2.26	730
Troll 550	£16,705	3/4	n/a	1000	300	1300	4.66	5.76	2.10	2.26	730
Fifth Wheel Company www.fifthwheelco.com Tel 01745 583 000											
Inos Top-spec twin-axes on a BPW chassis and using a standard towball hitch – but with considerable body slide-outs											
7.0 Transverse TA	£41,500	4	n/a	2000	500	2500	7.00m	8.20m	2.30	2.70	n/a
7.0F TA	£41,500	6	n/a	2000	500	2500	7.00m	8.20m	2.30	2.70	n/a
Dreamseeker The smaller of the manufacturer's fifth-wheelers is still a huge and thoroughly luxurious tourer, with master bedroom up front											
Dreamseeker TA	£46,500	5	n/a	2500	1300	3800	n/a	7.60	2.30	3.00	n/a
Celtic Rambler The FWC flagship really does have it all, including electric everything and underfloor heating											
Celtic Rambler TA	£52,500	4	n/a	3200	1100	4300	n/a	8.50	2.30	3.30	n/a
Freedom www.freedomcaravans.com Tel 01785 222 488											
Microlite Entry-level version of these tiny lightweight tourers built in Poland has long had a faithful following here in the UK											
Bijoux	£8995	3	n/a	580	100	680	2.82	4.00	1.94	2.21	n/a
Discovery LE	£9995	2	n/a	600	150	750	2.82	4.00	1.94	2.21	n/a
Jetstream Flagship models offer a little more luxury, but the same light weight											
Jetstream Twin Sport	£11,595	2	J	680	70	750	3.10	4.26	2.03	2.46	n/a
Jetstream First Class	£11,595	2	J	680	70	750	3.10	4.26	2.03	2.46	n/a
Sunseeker 650kg flyweight with a one-piece GRP body and a double-dinette layout that sleeps three											
Sunseeker Prima Classic	£9495	3	JJ	650	100	750	3.10	4.26	2.03	2.46	n/a
Gobur www.goburcaravans.co.uk Tel 01263 860 031											
Carousel Slimline As the name suggests, these folding caravans are narrower to minimise the amount of storage space required											
10/2	£14,495	2	J	655	170	825	3.10	4.42	1.72	1.40	670
12/2	£15,995	2	J	695	205	900	3.56	4.90	1.72	1.40	720
12/2T	£17,795	2	J	720	180	900	3.56	4.90	1.72	1.40	720
Carousel Standard Width Square-rigged full caravans that fold down for ultimate ease of towing, manoeuvring and storage											
12/4	£16,995	3/4	JJ	815	210	1025	3.56	4.90	2.08	1.40	720
12/2S	£17,495	2	J	780	245	1025	3.56	4.90	2.08	1.40	720
12/2T	£19,995	2	J	832	218	1050	3.56	4.90	2.08	1.40	720
12/2TD	£19,995	2	J	837	213	1050	3.56	4.90	2.08	1.40	720
Carousel Clubman More room inside, more comfort, but the same space-saving folding design											
Clubman	£20,995	2	J	892	233	1125	3.96	5.28	2.08	1.45	760-765
Clubman 'L'	£20,995	2	P	897	228	1125	3.96	5.28	2.08	1.45	760-765
Hobby www.hobbycaravansuk.co.uk Tel 01773 853 900											
OnTour Entry-level range still manages to look and feel smart both inside and out											
360 KB	£17,475	2/2	U	967	133	1100	4.57	5.97	2.10	2.62	830
390 SF	£16,975	4	n/a	971	129	1100	4.69	6.10	2.10	2.62	850
460 HL	£17,975	3	C	1088	112	1200	5.34	6.75	2.10	2.62	920
470 KMF	£18,375	2/3	n/a	1096	204	1300	5.43	6.83	2.20	2.62	925
De Luxe More premium styling and a great choice of layouts											
400 SFe	£17,975	3	F	1090	210	1300	4.79	5.97	2.30	2.62	840
440 SF	£17,475	4	n/a	1107	193	1300	4.96	6.14	2.30	2.62	850
455 UF	£17,975	4	HH	1127	223	1350	5.30	6.48	2.30	2.62	890
460 LU	£18,375	4	C	1172	178	1350	5.57	6.75	2.30	2.62	920
460 UFe	£18,775	4	F	1207	143	1350	5.45	6.63	2.30	2.62	900
490 KMF	£18,975	3/2	n/a	1226	174	1400	5.69	6.89	2.30	2.62	925
495 UL	£18,475	4	C	1280	220	1500	5.93	7.13	2.30	2.62	950
540 KMF	£19,975	3/2	n/a	1373	227	1600	6.25	7.44	2.30	2.63	980
540 UL	£19,575	4	C	1339	161	1500	6.10	7.29	2.30	2.63	970
545 KMF	£20,575	3/2	n/a	1434	166	1600	6.25	7.42	2.50	2.63	980
560 KMFe	£20,775	4/2	n/a	1501	199	1700	6.34	7.51	2.50	2.63	990
650 KMFe TA	£19,775	4/2	n/a	1624	276	1900	7.15	8.32	2.50	2.59	1070

	Price	Berths	Layout	MiRO kg	Payload kg	MTPLM kg	Internal length m	Shipping length m	Exterior width m	Height m	Awning cm
De Luxe Edition Sporty looks are combined with compact yet practical floorplans											
440 SF	£17,775	4	n/a	1109	191	1300	4.96	6.14	2.30	2.62	850
460 UFe	£18,975	4	F	1210	140	1350	5.45	6.23	2.30	2.62	900
495 UL	£18,775	4	C	1282	218	1500	5.93	7.13	2.30	2.62	950
545 KMf	£20,875	3/2	n/a	1436	164	1600	6.25	7.42	2.50	2.63	980
560 KMFe	£20,975	4/2	n/a	1503	197	1700	6.34	7.51	2.50	2.63	990
Excellent Mid-ranking foot-soldier, from £18,000-£22,500											
455 UF	£18,175	4	HH	1132	218	1350	5.30	6.48	2.30	2.62	890
460 UFE	£18,975	4	F	1214	136	1350	5.45	6.63	2.30	2.62	920
495 UFE	£19,575	4	F	1268	232	1500	5.58	6.77	2.30	2.63	920
495 UL	£18,875	4	C	1281	219	1500	5.93	7.13	2.30	2.62	950
540 KMFE	£20,575	3/2	n/a	1377	223	1600	6.25	7.44	2.30	2.63	980
540 UFE	£19,975	4	F	1367	133	1500	6.08	7.27	2.30	2.63	970
540 UFF	£19,675	4	DD	1331	169	1500	6.15	7.34	2.30	2.63	970
540 UL	£19,475	4	C	1349	151	1500	6.10	7.29	2.30	2.63	970
540 WLU	£19,975	4	G	1358	142	1500	6.08	7.27	2.30	2.63	970
560 CFE	£20,975	4	E	1465	135	1600	6.34	7.51	2.50	2.63	990
560 KMFe	£21,175	4/2	n/a	1502	198	1700	6.34	7.51	2.50	2.63	990
560 UL	£20,375	4	C	1477	123	1600	6.34	7.51	2.50	2.63	990
Prestige One rung down from the top, so high spec and styling details inside and out											
495 UL	£19,275	4	C	1288	212	1500	5.93	7.13	2.30	2.62	950
540 UFe	£20,475	4	E	1379	121	1500	6.08	7.27	2.30	2.63	970
560 UL	£20,675	4	C	1477	123	1600	6.34	7.51	2.50	2.63	990
560 WLU	£21,675	4	G	1460	140	1600	6.34	7.51	2.50	2.63	990
620 CL TA	£21,475	4	C	1648	252	1900	6.86	8.02	2.50	2.59	1045
650 KFU TA	£20,775	4/2	n/a	1704	196	1900	7.20	8.37	2.50	2.59	1080
650 UMFE TA	£20,375	5	F	1662	238	1900	7.15	8.32	2.50	2.59	1070
660 WFU TA	£21,875	4	FF	1684	216	1900	7.15	8.32	2.50	2.59	1070
720 KFU TA	£22,775	4/2	n/a	1884	316	2200	7.85	9.04	2.50	2.60	1140
720 UKFe TA	£22,775	5/2	F	1893	307	2200	7.85	9.03	2.50	2.60	1140
720 UML TA	£21,975	5	F	1838	362	2200	7.85	9.14	2.50	2.60	1140
Premium This range features a high level of kit, and a price tag to match											
495 UL	£20,975	4	C	1400	300	1700	6.43	7.63	2.30	2.63	945
560 CFe	£23,375	4	E	1588	212	1800	6.84	8.02	2.50	2.63	980
560 UL	£22,675	4	C	1573	227	1800	6.84	8.02	2.50	2.63	980
650 UFF TA	£23,175	4	DD	1707	293	2000	7.66	8.83	2.50	2.60	1060
650 UKFe TA	£23,275	4/2	F	1747	253	2000	7.71	8.88	2.50	2.60	1065
660 WFU TA	£23,575	4	FF	1738	262	2000	7.69	8.87	2.50	2.60	1065
Landhaus The extraordinary looks won't be to everyone's taste, but these are well-built vans											
770 CFF	£24,975	4	C	1929	371	2300	7.76	9.14	2.50	2.80	1100
770 CL	£24,975	4	C	1963	337	2300	7.76	9.14	2.50	2.80	1100
Hymer www.eriba.com Tel 0845 868 1617 (Lowdhams)											
Nova GL Engineered without compromise, but high weights (with optional upgrades) and prices. You do, however, definitely get what you pay for											
470	£23,690	2	LL	1490	110	1600	4.92	6.88	2.30	2.62	939
485	£22,190	4	n/a	1530	170	1700	5.15	7.19	2.30	2.62	962
541	£23,690	4	C	1670	130	1800	5.65	7.64	2.40	2.62	1012
545	£24,490	4	n/a	1660	140	1800	5.50	7.50	2.40	2.62	997
580	£27,350	4	A	1695	105	1800	5.95	8.00	2.40	2.62	1042
585	£26,790	4	n/a	1685	115	1800	5.95	8.00	2.40	2.62	1042
590	£27,490	4	n/a	1695	105	1800	5.95	8.00	2.40	2.62	1042
620 TA	£28,350	4	n/a	1850	150	2000	6.34	8.23	2.40	2.62	1081
Kip www.kipshelter.com Tel 01539 624 141/01451 850 001 (Adventure LV)											
Shelter Minimalist tourer designed to appeal to active outdoor types who fancy upgrading from a tent; Shelter Plus adds a few creature comforts											
Shelter	£8995	2	n/a	560	190	750	4.60	3.45	1.85	2.10	n/a
Shelter Plus	£11,995	2	n/a	595	155	750	4.60	3.45	1.85	2.10	n/a
Knaus www.knaus-uk.co.uk Tel 07964 218 449											
Deseo The American concept of the 'toy hauler' lands in Europe with this practical, versatile van - winner of our Best Specialist Tourer gong											
400 LKK	£10,595	4	n/a	807	193	1000	4.00	5.88	2.18	2.53	868
Transport	£14,295	2/4	n/a	977	523	1500	4.00	5.92	2.18	2.53	868
Sport & Fun Fabulously funky German tourer returns to the UK as an official model for 2016, aimed at younger buyers											
Sport & Fun	£14,495	4	n/a	1130	170	1300	4.80	6.25	2.32	2.57	n/a
Sport From lightweight four-berths to heavyweight twin-axles, there should be something for everyone in this range											
400 LK	£14,295	4	KK	950	150	1100	4.00	5.96	2.32	2.57	828
500 EU	£16,695	4	n/a	1130	170	1300	5.32	7.28	2.32	2.57	960
500 FU	£16,695	4	E	1130	170	1300	5.32	7.28	2.32	2.57	960
650 UDF	£19,495	6	F	1520	280	1800	6.60	8.58	2.50	2.57	1088
700 UFK	£20,395	7	n/a	1570	330	1900	6.90	8.88	2.50	2.57	1118
750 FKU	£20,795	7	n/a	1740	260	2000	7.46	9.44	2.50	2.57	1174
Lifestyle With a breakfast bar and a transverse kitchen, this modern and stylish van is a true break from the British norm											
550 LK	£17,695	4	n/a	1330	170	1500	5.54	7.50	2.50	2.57	982
Südwind Silver This new model brings stylish smooth silver sidewalls and healthy kit levels to the upper mid-range market											
420 QD	£18,595	3	n/a	1050	250	1300	4.44	6.40	2.32	2.57	872
450 FU	£19,995	4	E	1110	190	1300	4.70	6.66	2.32	2.57	898
500 EU	£20,895	4	n/a	1220	280	1500	5.32	7.28	2.32	2.57	960

Focus on...

Gobur

Gobur caravans first started experimenting with folding tourers back in the early 1970s, having realised that some people were put off the pastime by the sheer size and bulk of an average family van. The thinking was that if a 'proper' caravan could be designed with folding sides and a drop-down roof, it would solve the problem of towing concerns at a stroke. It would also have the bonus of being easy to store in a standard garage, and would cut down on fuel consumption.

The first Gobur — called the Govan — was absolutely tiny, but proved to be an instant sales success. The latest Carousels are bigger and much more stylish, but still adhere to the original plan: each can be erected or folded away by one person in less than five minutes.

The current range includes the tiny Slimline (the smallest of which is just 14ft 6in long), the popular mid-ranking models, and the range-topping Clubman.



The Gobur Slimline is one of the brand's three Carousel ranges

Focus on...

Trigano

TRIGANO IS ONE of Europe's largest manufacturers of caravans, motorhomes and trailer tents; it encompasses such names as Caravelair and Sterckeman, as well as the eponymous brand itself.

The company was founded in 1935 as a textile manufacturer, and soon branched out into supplying the tent industry with a range of materials. Within 10 years Raymond Trigano and his sons had established a burgeoning company specialising in camping gear, and the firm launched its first range of caravans in 1971.

Today the Trigano factory in Peñíscola, Spain, manufactures caravans and motorhomes for the likes of Benimar and CI. The company has also recently opened a new factory in Sablé-sur-Sarthe, France. Several companies have established businesses importing Trigano pop-top caravans here in the UK: these include Burcroft Camping in Billing, Northamptonshire.



Trigano is a respected manufacturer of pop-top caravans

	Price	Berths	Layout	MiRO kg	Payload kg	MTPLM kg	Internal length m	Shipping length m	Exterior width m	Height m	Awning cm
500 FVU	£20,895	4	E	1220	280	1500	5.32	7.28	2.32	2.57	960
700 EU	£22,895	4	n/a	1640	260	1900	6.90	8.88	2.50	2.57	1118
750 UFK	£23,495	7	n/a	1810	190	2000	7.46	9.44	2.50	2.57	1174

Südwind Exclusive Luxurious range-topper for the conventional Knaus line, offering families a touch of luxury and UK-friendly sidewalls

580 EU	£24,495	4	n/a	1360	240	1600	5.68	7.82	2.32	2.57	996
580 UF	£24,495	4	F	1390	210	1600	5.68	7.82	2.50	2.57	996
590 UK	£25,495	7	n/a	1630	270	1900	6.60	8.58	2.50	2.57	1088
590 UE	£25,495	4	C	1390	210	1600	5.68	7.82	2.50	2.57	996
650 UDF	£24,495	7	F	1630	270	1900	6.60	8.58	2.50	2.57	1088
750 UFK	£27,495	7	n/a	1830	170	2000	7.46	9.44	2.50	2.57	1174

Eurostar Spectacularly stylish halo model takes its styling from the futuristic Caravisio concept - not cheap, but utterly unique

650 ES	£36,495	4	n/a	2230	270	2500	6.60	9.36	2.50	2.60	1120
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Pennine Outdoor Leisure www.pennineoutdoorleisure.co.uk Tel 01254 386 978

Pennine Thoroughly British folding campers are an ideal option if you don't have much storage space, and only have a small tow car

Countryman	£11,995	4	n/a	620	130	750	2.80	4.00	1.84	1.30	4.35
Fiesta	£12,495	4	n/a	620	130	750	2.80	4.00	1.84	1.30	4.35
Pathfinder	£15,495	6	n/a	840	160	1000	3.55	4.88	2.12	1.39	6.20

T@B www.adventurelv.com Tel 01539 624 141

T@B Iconic German-built teardrop tourer that can be towed by a wide variety of cars, and comes in several funky finishes

320 RS	£8950	2	L	650	100	750	3.40	5.18	1.99	2.45	654
320 OffRoad	£11,500	2	L	675	325	1000	3.40	5.18	1.99	2.49	672
L 400 TD	£15,950	3	H	990	210	1200	4.21	5.96	2.24	2.60	767

Trigano www.thetentshop.co.uk Tel 01604 785 400

Mini Silver Tiny pop-top caravans that can even be towed by small hatchbacks, aimed at active outdoor caravanners

270	£9795	2	J	595	55	650	2.50	3.95	2.05	1.99	n/a
290	£11,525	2	J	680	70	750	2.97	4.42	2.05	1.99	n/a

Silver Compact rising-roof tourer is an ideal option if you prefer to store your caravan in a conventional garage

310	£15,295	2	J	770	180	950	3.90	4.85	1.80	1.98	n/a
380	£15,395	4	J	870	230	1100	4.30	5.25	2.00	1.98	n/a
420	£16,595	4	n/a	965	235	1200	4.90	5.85	2.00	1.98	n/a
430	£16,795	3	C	950	250	1200	4.90	5.85	2.00	1.98	n/a
Premium 440	TBC	4	H	995	205	1200	5.55	5.90	2.00	1.98	n/a
Premium 450 LJ	TBC	2	C	970	230	970	4.40	5.90	2.00	2.00	n/a

Vanmaster www.vanmastercaravans.co.uk Tel 01942 212 194

V range Ultra-luxurious tourers whose ultimate lineage can be traced all the way back to Vanroyce

V450	£39,995	2	K	1350	150	1500	4.60	6.34	2.30	2.64	875
V480	£45,950	2	K	1500	200	1700	4.85	6.59	2.30	2.64	916
V520	£42,995	2	K	1520	280	1800	5.19	6.93	2.30	2.64	950
V580 SD	£48,950	4	R	1600	200	1800	5.88	7.57	2.30	2.64	1010
V580 SBEW	£48,950	4	AA	1600	200	1800	5.88	7.57	2.30	2.64	1010
V580 TB	£48,950	4	G	1600	200	1800	5.88	7.57	2.30	2.64	1010
V640 SD TA	£54,950	4	R	1800	400	2200	6.44	7.94	2.30	2.64	1050
V640 TB TA	£54,950	4	G	1800	400	2200	6.44	7.94	2.30	2.64	1050
V640 IB TA	£54,950	4	DD	1800	400	2200	6.44	7.94	2.30	2.64	1050
V640 SBEW TA	£54,950	4	AA	1800	400	2200	6.44	7.94	2.30	2.64	1050
V640 TBEW TA	£54,950	4	B	1800	400	2200	6.44	7.94	2.30	2.64	1050

Weinsberg www.knaus-uk.co.uk Tel 07964 218 449

CaraOne This Knaus offshoot offers exceptional value for money for first-timers, and a more UK-biased spec for 2016

390 QD	£10,795	4	AE	890	210	1100	4.00	5.92	2.20	2.57	853
400 LK	£10,995	5	n/a	890	210	1100	4.00	5.92	2.20	2.57	853
420 QD	£12,395	4	AE	940	160	1100	4.44	6.36	2.20	2.57	897
450 FU	£13,795	4	n/a	1000	200	1200	4.70	6.62	2.32	2.57	923
480 EU	£14,444	4	n/a	1080	270	1350	5.16	7.08	2.32	2.57	969
480 QDK	£14,395	7	n/a	1080	270	1350	5.16	7.08	2.32	2.57	969
500 FDK	£14,695	7	n/a	1130	220	1350	5.32	7.24	2.32	2.57	985
500 XU	£14,695	4	n/a	1130	220	1350	5.32	7.24	2.32	2.57	985
550 QDK	£15,555	7	n/a	1200	300	1500	5.68	7.60	2.32	2.57	1021
740 UDF	£17,995	8	n/a	1570	330	1900	7.46	9.38	2.50	2.57	1199

Wildwood Design www.wildwood-design.org Tel 07985 395 921

Twagon Revised version of this classic bow-top covered wagon features a single-axle Al-Ko chassis and is light enough for a family car to tow

Twagon	£14,000	4	n/a	950	550	1500	4.12	6.20	2.00	n/a	n/a
Twagon XL	£16,000	6	n/a	1200	600	1800	5.20	6.70	2.50	n/a	n/a

Wingamm www.wingamm.com Tel 0800 255 0012

Rookie 3.5 Ultra-modern and super-light monocoque compact expands to three models for 2016, from the basic light to the well-equipped Wild

Lite	£11,995	2/3	K	710	40	750	3.60	4.46	2.15	2.55	n/a
Pitch	£13,995	2/3	K	730	270	1000	3.60	4.46	2.15	2.55	n/a
Wild	£15,495	2/3	K	750	250	1000	3.60	4.46	2.15	2.55	n/a

Caravans and accessories

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Awnings Porch

Isabella Minor Type IMM004, carbon frame, lightweight, draught skirt, zip-out front panel, mosquito nets, breathable acrylic. £375. Mr Thompson, Worcs. (01299 250 643)

2014 Ventura Cadet 8ft x 6ft, blue/grey, glassfibre poles. As new. £250. Mr Radcliffe, Halifax. (01274 674 758)

Outdoor Revolution 235-250cm x 275cm (w) x 205cm (d), £75.

Kampa Rally 235-250cm x 390cm (w) x 250cm (d), 21.8kg, £100. Each used 3 times. Mrs Mullis, Doncaster. (01302 851 901)

Isabella Minor Moonlight Bolon groundsheet, pegs, rock pegs. VGC. £300. Mr Crehan, Rorkshire. (01709 546 704)

Dorema Omega XL 340cm x 240cm, glassfibre poles, charcoal/grey. Used twice. £325. Mrs White, Herts. (01438 715 819)

Ventura Marlin IXL poles, green/grey, curtains, draught skirt, wheelarch cover. £250. Mr Freeman, Preston. (07816 266 918)

2015 Vango Varkala 420 Air awning. Reluctant sale. £500, buyer collects. Mrs Bayliss, Lancs. (07769 700 583)

Bradcot Portico 230-250 Blue, draught skirt, curtains. Good cond. £100, delivery possible. Mr Partington, Lancs. (07811 450 417)

Quest Windsor 200cm x 280cm, carbon-fibre frame, acrylic groundsheet. Little used, exc cond. £175. Mr Argrave, Weymouth. (01305 771 584)

StarCamp Magnum 260 Used twice. £120, buyer collects. Mr Christie, Oxon. (07843 008 644)

Vango 420 Airbeam 15 months old, used once, good cond. £250. Mr McDonald, Cheshire. (01260 27423/07549 150 396)

Ventura Cadet IXL frame, groundsheet. Used twice, exc cond, illness forces sale. £350. Mr Taylor, Herts. (01923 232 447)

Apache Monte Carlo Special design, two poles. Exc cond. £200, buyer collects. Mr Davidson, Worcester. (01386 792 772)

Awning <850cm

Ventura Atlantic 825cm, glassfibre poles and fittings, marine blue, curtains. Good cond. £150. Mrs Pegg, Devon. (01626 367 680)

Awning 850-950cm

Sunnflair Majestic Lux 870cm x 250cm (d), green/grey, skirt, wheelarch cover, four panels. £150. Breathable groundsheet to fit. £50. All VGC. Mr Woods, Essex. (01268 752 049)

Isabella Capri and Sunshine 900cm, one CarbonX frame fits both; Sunshine new, with zip-in sides and front. £450. Mrs Manners, Isle of Wight. (01983 617 184)

Isabella Ambassador 2501 925cm, IXL poles, maroon/grey, curtains, draught skirt, groundsheet, extra fittings and poles. Mr Powick, Pems. (01437 890 595)

Apache Bordeaux VGC. £150, buyer collects. Mr Davidson, Worcester. (01386 792 772)

Bradcot Classic 930cm, alloy poles, blue/grey, with curtains, pegs, etc. £150, buyer collects. Mr Hirst, N Yorks. (01845 522 790)

Ventura Atlantic 900cm, poles, curtains, bag. Unused. £600. Mr Wood, East Sussex. (01825 740 146)

Bradcot Classic 870cm, easy-alloy frame, wine/grey, curtains, skirt. Good cond. £50, buyer collects. Mr Templeton, Beds. (01525 873 997)

Awning >950cm

Trio Sport Mexico 1000cm, cream/green, wheel cover, curtains. VGC, new van forces sale. £275, buyer collects. Mrs Wellington, Somerset. (07703 549 010)

2006 Ventura Pacific 1000cm, blue/grey, used 6 times, £275. **Annex** £50; with awning £300. **Winter awning** Used once, £25. All exc cond. Mrs Hickman, Lincoln. (07962 144 313)

Pyramid Corsican Size 14, steel poles, charcoal, curtains, Eco breathable groundsheet. Little used. £250, buyer collects. Mr Pritchard, Pems. (01348 840 654)

2013 Isabella Capri 1050cm, CarbonX poles. Exc cond, used once. £650. Mr Williams, N Wales. (01248 715 095)

Pyramid Tuscany 950cm, steel poles, blue/grey, tie-down kit. VGC. £225, buyer collects. Mr Styles, Billingham, Cleveland. (07866 715 438)

Parts and accessories

Alloy wheel and tyre To fit Nissan Qashqai, 215/60R 17 96H. New, unused. £150. Ms Warburton, Lincs. (01522 751 940)

Caravan cover Breath Tec, to fit 12-14ft. New, in box, new van forces sale. £40, buyer collects. Mrs Jones, Powys. (01686 413 165)

Rooftop box Halfords, 360-litre, 60kg, silver, with roof bars. VGC, used twice. £150, buyer collects. Mr Styles, Cleveland. (07866 715 438)

Fridge Sun Gas, absorption, 230V/12V/gas, 75W. **Porta Potti** 165 Elegance. Both new, in boxes. Mr Holdway, Reading. (01189 018 586)

Caravan cover Pro-Tec, to fit Bailey Pageant Series 7 Monarch, easy-fit system. New. £195. Mr Payne, Wiltshire. (07860 638 151)

Hook-up cable, 25m, new, £12. **Cycle carrier** Towbar-mounted, for 3 bikes, allows towing. £15. **Double jockey wheel** Wheelie Eazi, new, £20. Buyer collects. Mr Terry, Worthing, West Sussex. (07966 189 457)

Towbar To fit 2013 Volvo V70 onwards, genuine part, 13-pin. £175. Mr Taylor, East Ayrshire. (07919 625 543)

Caravan cover Pro-Tec, to fit Bailey Pegasus 534. £59. Mr Shannon, Kent. (01959 700 668)

Caravan leveller Milenco, aluminium, bag. Exc cond, used once. £50. Mr Pink, Eastbourne. (07753 125 823)

Hitchlock Winterhoff Robstop WS3000, 2 keys, safety ball. £80. Mr Smith, Huddersfield. (01484 317 591)

Caravan cover Specialised Covers, to fit Bailey Senator Series 6 Vermont, with poles. New, unopened. £200. Mr Ash, Oxon. (01235 559 192)

Wheel lock Al-Ko Secure No 6. £20. Mr Duffield, Essex. (01255 436 541)

Registration number ES64 PES, on retention, needs to go on 1964 vehicle or newer. £1250, all fees included. Mr Ayre, Paignton. (07788 603 636/01803 522 332)

Wheel lock Al-Ko Secure No 20, to fit Bailey, £50. **Caravan leveller** Milenco, aluminium, carry case, £35. Mr Payne, Wiltshire. (07860 638 151)

Gas cylinder 12.5kg, Flogas, £10.

Satellite systems 25in, grey, digital; 21in white, manual, £100 each. **Jump leads** 11ft, heavy-duty, £25. Mrs Brown, Leics. (01530 263 709)

Washing machine Portable, twin-tub, 2.5ft (w) x 3ft (h), especially for caravan or small flat. New, unused. £150. Mrs Cox, Oxon. (01235 766 702)

Digital aerial Vision Plus, with Uni mast. £20. **Tall ladder** SunnCamp, £15. **Windbreak** Outdoor Revolution Windlite, steel poles, pegs, guy lines, windows. £20. Buyer collects. Mr Davis, Walsall. (01922 494 055)

Towel ring and toothbrush/tumbler holder To fit 2010-2011 Lunar caravans, chrome. Exc cond. £20, buyer collects/+p&p. Mr Challenor, Staffs. (01543 672 460)

Leveller Lockloy, £50. **Wheelclamp** Nemesis, £65. **Men's bicycle** Vertigo, 21in frame, 21 gears, VGC, £50. Mrs Watson, Stockton-on-Tees. (01642 765 710)

Caravan levellers 2, Bulldog, New, unused. £48 each or £80 both, buyer collects. Mr Newman, Colchester. (01206 517 829)

Caravan cover Specialised Covers, to fit Lunar Quasar 544, £180. **Mattress topper** Jonic, memory foam, to fit nearside fixed bed, £45. Mrs Davies, Powys. (01938 590 295)

Spare wheel Steel 175 RX13C, 4-stud hold. Buyer collects. Mr Davidson, Worcester. (01386 792 772)

Wanted

Full awning To fit Gobur Carousel Clubman. Mr Goulthorp, Earby, Lancs. (01282 841 664)

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