



Home from home

ANDREW DITTON checks out a top-of-the-range caravan from Coachman



Right: The VIP's large washroom



VERSATILITY is the number one feature of the layout of the Coachman VIP 520/4, one favoured mainly by couples. Yet if guests or grandchildren descend for an overnight visit, the side dinette makes into an adult-sized bed with a teenager-sized bunk above.

Coachman caravans have the edge when it comes to choosing a quality unit for District Association meets, attending a Temporary Holiday Site, or simply embracing the freedom that comes with doing away with an electric hook-up. LED spotlights help make the battery last longer than in earlier models, and the semi-fitted microwave oven may be easily removed and left at home, leaving a super storage cupboard in its wake. Heating is provided by a Truma dual-fuel blown air system, which burns less bottled gas than a wet central heating system when taking the chill off a spring evening.

As a range-topper, this VIP caravan comes laden with goodies, from AL-KO ATC stability control through to a fitted Phantom satellite tracking

system. New for 2010 is the one-piece door that houses a useful bin, but no opening window. If you caravan with free-ranging pets or toddlers, the lack of stable door may be a setback. However, Coachman argues that a single-piece door offers a better fit.

Consolidating its position as the tourer of choice for sociable types, the main dining area can seat six people quite comfortably, but if a less formal evening is called for, you could just about squeeze ten inside. New modern furniture gives the interior an uplifting and contemporary feel, although none of the handle-free roof lockers have positive catches to keep them shut when on the road.

Preparing dinner is a pleasure at the spacious galley. It's a pity the door to the microwave cupboard cannot be opened when the oven's in use as it's in the way of the Omnivert extractor fan. The cooker is left a little in the dark by the LED light strip over the sink, and while food preparation space is on the scarce side, the neat unit under

the lavish cocktail cabinet opposite can be pressed into service when it's time to dish up.

Saving the best to last, the gargantuan washroom is a delight. Contained within is one of the largest double wardrobes you'll ever find in a caravan. Everything has been well thought out, from the courtesy light in the wardrobe to the position of the mirrors and light fittings.

Being a Coachman, the quality is stunning. Not a single manufacturing fault was encountered, no matter how deep we dug. Get to site with one of these beauties and you'll know you have 'arrived' in more ways than one.

Verdict: Wonderfully versatile range-topper that ticks all the right boxes. Quality you can almost taste, but you'll need a hefty car to tow it.

at a glance

COACHMAN VIP 520/4

Price as tested £18,795 plus delivery

Club Care insurance £296

Fridge capacity

107 litres

Heating Gas and electric space heater with blown air

Water system Onboard pump; 10 litre dual-fuel boiler

Electrics Four interior 230V sockets; one exterior 230V socket

Gas Fittings for two 7kg cylinders

Kitchen Four-burner gas hob; grill; separate oven; microwave oven; extractor fan

Washroom Electric-flush toilet with wheeled cassette tank; separate shower cubicle; washbasin

Specification includes Wheel lock; door flyscreen; electronic stability control; alarm and sensors; satellite tracking system; radio/CD/DVD player with iPod and MP3 connectors; external barbecue point; exterior aerial/satellite input

Options include Change of soft furnishings; wrap-around seating; higher MTPLM plate

Length x width x height 7.29m x 2.26m x 2.7m

Bed sizes Front double 2.06m x 1.37m or two singles 1.90m x 0.70m; side single 183cm x 64cm; side bunk 1.80m x 0.58m

Mass in Running Order 1,404kg

Maximum Technically Permissible Laden Mass 1,585kg

User payload 181kg

Warranty Six years body integrity; five years component

Plus points Top quality; good warranty; enormous wardrobe; removable microwave; contemporary interior

Minus points Heavy; battery charger 'whirrs' at night; kitchen lighting could be better; no light to lower bunk

Manufacturer

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