

DAVID STOKES REPORTS ON THE CLUB'S SPECIAL AWARDS FOR CARAVANS, TRAILER TENTS, POP-TOPS AND FOLDING CARAVANS UNDER 1000 KILOGRAMS

THE LIGHT BRIGADE

THE Club's fourth Lightweight Leisure Trailer Awards were judged and presented this year at the NEC, Birmingham, during the National Boat Caravan and Leisure Show. Prices in this year's line-up ranged from around £1300 to just under £14,000, so there was something for everyone. The competition attracted 33 entries – by far the largest field in the competition's history.

The idea in holding this competition is to encourage manufacturers to 'improve the breed' and to help Club members make an informed choice. The Club designed an excellent score sheet enabling each of the three judges to score the entrants for build quality, day and night layout, equipment levels and, for those caravans and trailers one has to erect, the helpfulness of the handbook.

There are five classes in this competition: trailer tents under and over £3100; folding campers/extendible folding caravans; folding caravans and pop tops; and conventional caravans.

Trailer tents under £3100

WINNER
Cabanon Venus DL
£2575

This is a solidly-built two-berth trailer tent with a bed measuring 140 x 210cm consisting of a removable mattress with washable covers. Well-equipped, the trailer comes complete with jockey wheel, spare wheel and carrier plus a 2.5m awning with a zip-out panel to accept an extension for what the company calls an optional Tall Annexe for extra visitors. Other standard items include cabin roof lining, a full set of curtains and corner steadies.

The trailer is of steel construction and has a seating area and locker storage. For £40 an optional padded seat backrest can be inserted between the mattress and the side cushion for extra support and comfort. For



UNDER £3100 WINNER
Cabanon Venus DL



“The Venus’s kitchen design means it can be used en route to cook a meal or just make tea”

users who want to stay only one night in any one place, the sleeping part of the Venus can be used on its own to save time in erection. The optional sun canopy can be fixed either directly to the cabin or on the front of the awning.

The Venus is offered with or without brakes; but the £200 extra cost is a small price to pay and will reap rewards on resale.

At the price shown the Venus comes with a detachable kitchen with a two-burner hob, grill, sink and drainer but no tap – you get your water from a container with a tap. The Venus's kitchen design means it can be used en route to cook a meal or just make tea.

Ex works weight is 315kg and maximum gross weight 500kg.

Runner-up
TRAILER TENTS
UNDER £3100:
Cabanon
Stratos L



OVER £3100 WINNER
Camperland Camp-let Concorde

“an additional 2.5 square metre guest compartment can be zipped into the side to accommodate additions to the family”

Runner-up

TRAILER TENTS
OVER £3100:
Combi-Camp
Venezia King Size

Trailer tents over £3100

WINNER

Camperland Camp-let Concorde
£3,595

Here's a lightweight four-berth trailer tent weighing in at just 250kg unladen, with a capacity to carry a further 200kg of equipment. On the top of the trailer's lid is a carrier for any extra bits of kit needed for the trip. Some luggage can also be stowed inside the Concorde.

The kitchen is at the rear of the trailer and hinges out at right angles to the trailer so it can be used 'on the run' to make tea in a



Runner-up

FOLDING
CAMPERS AND
CARAVANS:
Conway
Crusader

FOLDING CAMPERS AND EXTENDIBLE FOLDING CARAVANS WINNER

Pennine Pathfinder



layby by just hinging it out and boiling a kettle. There is a three-burner gas hob, an electric water pump, 13-litre water carrier and a 12-volt power point.

The Camp-let won points for its versatility: an additional 2.5 square metre guest compartment can be zipped into the side to accommodate additions to the family, the children's friends or cousins or family friends. A hanging rail (standard) can be clipped into the side of the sleeping area to keep your smarter clothes from being creased.

There are many optional extras available for this trailer tent, including a sun canopy (£199) that can be zipped to the front of the awning to create more room. For good practice a spare wheel and its holder (£49 and £39 respectively) should be first on everyone's options list.

A front storage box costs £175 and a transit cover £139.

Folding campers and extendible folding caravans

WINNER

Pennine Pathfinder
£9149

Top of the range of Pennine's offerings and one of the largest and best equipped folding campers on the market, this is also one of the most expensive. There's a slight discrepancy between the number of berths and seating capacity, which means a sixth occupant would have to use a folding chair at the table's head.

The kitchen is well equipped, with a three-burner hob, grill and oven, a good-sized fridge, sink and drainer with hot and cold water. Glass tops can be lowered over both the sink and the hob. Nice touches include a pull-out chopping board under the drainer and, above the hob, a small three-shelf unit for herbs and spices.

At each end of the Pathfinder are two good-sized double berths – one king sized – the fifth and sixth berths being made from the dinette. Not so common with trailer tents and folding campers is a toilet and washroom compartment. The Pathfinder's washroom sports a Thetford cassette loo plus a tip-up basin with hot and cold water heated by a Truma unit.

Storage space is plentiful, with four reasonable-size cupboards and under-berth space plus the wardrobe. Equipment even includes a clock.

On the road, the Pathfinder is 4.78m long overall, 2.12m wide and just 1.39m tall, with internal body length of 3.35m. On site it expands to give a length of 6m and a maximum interior height of 2.2m. Ex-works weight is 820kg and the maximum gross weight 1000kg.

Optional extras include an awning at £895, awning extension £269, bike rack £139 and an outdoor storage cover at £149.



FOLDING CARAVANS AND POP TOPS WINNER

Wheelhome Sprintaway Lux

Folding Caravans and Pop Tops

WINNER

Wheelhome Sprintaway Lux
£11,475

It is rare nowadays that we can say we have something new in the way of a caravan, but Wheelhome's Sprintaway is a wonderfully thought-out and engineered micro caravan that is certainly something very new indeed. Tiny – no wider than a small car at just 1.68m (5ft 6in), just 3.9m (12ft 9in) long and 1.88m (6ft 2in) high – it will fit in a garage and is not a difficult caravan to tow.

The designer had in mind to build a caravan for those who are feeling too old for caravanning and feel it is time to pack up and do something else. Wheelhome's concept is to make life as easy as possible. For instance, it must be the smallest caravan to have a remote-control Truma mover included in the design, and both the grey water outlet and the fresh water inlet are at waist level to reduce bending.

Owing to the Sprintaway's shortness there are only corner steadies at the rear. For levelling you place a wedge under the lower wheel and use the electric mover to drive the caravan up until it is level. Built into the floor are a five-gallon water tank, space for the spare wheel and the 110Ah battery. This is kept charged by a 55-Watt solar panel flush mounted on the roof.

To stand up without banging your head, the roof hinges at the front, allowing up to 1.96m (6ft 5in) headroom; and under the roof is what Wheelhome calls a 'lay-flat wardrobe' – a hinged tray where clothes are placed so they don't get creased.

In the kitchen area is a two-burner hob (a grill is available as an option) plus a microwave on a slide-out shelf. Opposite the hob is a sink and drainer with a 50-litre fridge underneath – a compressor type, which means it doesn't have to be on the level to operate. Under each of the seats (which make up into two single beds or a double), is an area for storage but there is an ingenious piece of design here: the storage boxes have angled slides on each side so they can be slid out for easy access. A brilliant piece of caravan design and engineering.

Runner-up

FOLDING CARAVANS AND POP TOPS:
Gobur Carousel
10/2T

Runner-up

CONVENTIONAL CARAVANS:
Lunar Ariva

Conventional caravans

WINNER

Avondale Dart 380-2
£10,945

A traditional design in every respect, the Dart 380-2 is a two-berth, well equipped caravan for the couple who have a medium-sized car but do not want the expense of towing a large caravan and the fuel bill that goes with it. Owners of Avondale's smallest caravan do not have to go without comfort or even luxury. The soft furnishings are covered in tasteful fabrics and making the beds up does not require the skills *Krypton Factor* contestants.

Elm-look furniture gives a light and airy feel with an impression of space, the seating is comfortable and the kitchen has everything you need. It comes with a four-burner hob, grill and a good-sized oven, sink and drainer with hot and cold water. A Dometic fridge is larger than you might expect in a caravan of this size, and in one of the two upper lockers there are racks for your plates and cups. Under the sink are two cupboards, with a shallow but tall cupboard beside the fridge, while for TV addicts there is space on top of the fridge with power and aerial sockets.

For those who like to have all facilities on board there is a hot shower, washbasin and a Thetford cassette loo in the compact washroom. The beds can either make a double or two singles. All this and warm air heating.

The Dart is just 3.8m (12ft 5in) long (5.14m or 16ft 10in overall), with a maximum weight right on the limit for this competition: 1000kg.

CONVENTIONAL CARAVANS
Avondale Dart 380-2

