



# Bargain BUYS

Our expert caravan tester, Rob McCabe, delves into the used market once again, selecting layouts and prices to suit differing requirements

**Make and model:** Abbey GTS Vogue 215  
**Year of manufacture:** 2003  
**Current price:** £6,495

**T**his two-berth GTS celebrates its 10th birthday next year, when it can expect to receive plenty of complimentary 'oooh, you don't look anything like your age' comments.

It's an observation that has a great deal of substance behind it. Outside, the hard-wearing GRP sidewalls and all other bodywork panels are blemish-free. Indoors, the upholstery in the opulent lounge is in fantastic condition – the seating is plump and supportive, and it has obviously been protected fastidiously against fading over the years because the colouring is still rich and vibrant. The same applies to the fixed carpet – one small stain on the washroom floor notwithstanding, it's in great nick.

Equipment borders on lavish: a fitted stereo, hitch stabiliser, illuminated cocktail cabinet, exterior mains socket and gas barbecue point are all part of the deal.

Often, it's the kitchen appliances that betray a caravan's true vintage – years of Sunday roasts, hob spillages and washing-up tend to leave an indelible legacy. Not



here, though – the spotlessness of all parts of the spark-ignited cooker verges on amazing and the glass-cover-protected sink still has its fitted basin in place. The worktop, enhanced by a pull-out extension, is as new; the same can be said of the fridge.

After the kitchen impressed so much, it was no surprise to find that the big rear washroom did the same. The sealed circular shower bears no staining around the mastic and the loo is pleasingly pristine. It's a really good room all round – nice to look at, plenty of storage (including the wardrobe with its big, deep shelves) and spacious enough to serve as a proper dressing room; the two-piece corner mirror with downlighter is especially helpful in this regard.

It's not often that the electrical connection leads get a mention as a point of

interest – but they do here. In fact, there are no fitted leads. Separate 12N and 12S sockets live on either side of the A-frame and connect to separate heavy-duty, HGV-style coiled leads that are connected only when needed. It's a clever, permanent solution to the always-present risk of cables trailing on the road. ■

### VERDICT

Congratulations to the previous owner on making sure that the next keeper gets a luxuriously-appointed caravan that is in amazing condition for its age. There's nothing I can say against it.

### TECHNICAL

**Price when new:** £13,220  
**Overall length:** 20ft 7in (6.28m)  
**MRO:** 1,103kg (21.7cwt)  
**MTPLM:** 1,311kg (25.8cwt)  
**User payload:** 208kg (4.1cwt)  
**Berths:** 2  
**Warranty:** 12 months parts and labour



**Make and model:** Bailey Ranger 540/6  
**Year of manufacture:** 2008  
**Current price:** £9,995

**F**or 10 grand, you get what is effectively a new six-berth caravan. I'd love to know if this Series 5 Ranger has actually ever been used in anger, because it doesn't look like it. Maybe it used to belong to whoever owned the time-warp Abbey...?

Everything on this four-year-old tourer is in unused, as-new condition: locker doors open with factory-fresh stiffness; the one-piece carpet looks untrodden on; blinds and flyscreens (including one for the entrance door) are super smooth; the upholstery is firm and comfortable; the washroom and kitchen bring a smile to your face.

The layout is distinctive, with three-in-a-vertical-row fixed bunks on the rear offside, with a seating area opposite that converts into a substantial single. The parallel sofas at the front are massive, with plenty of room to seat six. The double bed they convert into isn't just king-sized, it's Henry the Eighth-sized.



“The parallel sofas are massive, with plenty of room to seat six”

**Clockwise from top left:** practical and tidy kitchen; light and airy lounge; kitchen has good amount of work surface; this model comes with a motor mover, adding to its value for money

Like most six-berthers, the 540/6 will excel at accommodating four or five – in which mode there are a number of permutations. For example, you can use all three bunks and leave the seating area as is; or you can use the upper two bunks only and hinge up the bottom bedbase to take advantage of a cavernous storage facility.

The interior is bright, fresh and modern (the excellent big sunroof with a quartet of downlighters is a pleasing touch), and everything you need for comfortable family holidays is included – hot water, space heater with blown air, decent-sized fridge and shower. The wash-hand basin mixer tap doubles up as the shower head, but that's unlikely to matter much to owners with larger families, who would probably rather throw themselves down a well than use the caravan's shower in anything other than an emergency.

The kitchen is great, with lots of storage that includes two pull-out wire baskets. Work surface is increased by an extension

that unclips and drops down into the rear living quarters.

If the Ranger's apparent newness alone doesn't sell it, then here's something that will – it's fitted with a remote-control motorised mover, making its already keen price that bit keener still. ■

### VERDICT

Shows how a well-looked-after, popular model retains its value – new it was £10,995. But I'd take it!

### TECHNICAL

**Price when new:** £10,995  
**Overall length:** 23ft (7.02m)  
**MRO:** 1,060kg (20.9cwt)  
**MTPLM:** 1,300kg (25.6cwt)  
**User payload:** 240kg (4.7cwt)  
**Berths:** 6  
**Warranty:** 12 months parts and labour

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**Make and model:** Ace Jubilee Aristocrat  
**Year of manufacture:** 2008  
**Current price:** £10,995

Clockwise from above: it may be basic, but en suite looks barely used; light cabinet network looks modern; tidy and clean exterior

With a high-falutin' name like the Aristocrat, the Ace is giving itself a lot to live up to. To give it its due, it does make a very good first impression, what with its shiny alloy wheels, smart fixed double bedroom, fitted microwave, stereo radio/CD player and striking, laminate flooring (the loose-lay carpet was stowed under the double bed).

Ace (discontinued in 2008, making this one of the last models built) was a budget-priced range within the Swift Group, so compromises do make their presence felt when you look a little closer. There's no wide-opening sunroof in the bedroom, for example, and the en-suite washroom is on the plain side of basic.

The interior is bright, airy and modern, with lovely woodwork that's really pleasing on the eye. There's a palpable feeling of space, too – this is wonderfully-roomy holiday accommodation for two, that's for sure. That massive dresser on the nearside offers a home to your TV. To watch in bed, just raise the venetian blind that covers the hatch. The blind was a little lop-sided when raised. This, plus a missing cooker knob and non-functioning hydraulic stays on the two front overhead lockers, will be put right during the pre-delivery inspection that all Pioneer's used caravans receive before going to their new homes. They are also given a full service.



“ The interior is bright, airy and modern, with lovely woodwork ”

The dealer's sales staff confirm that permanent-bedroom caravans continue to be the biggest sellers, with couples attracted by the luxury of never having to make up a bed again.

The bedroom here is a fine example of the breed, with nicely-placed over-the-shoulder lights, little shelves for specs and suchlike and two windows – one on the nearside and a smaller one opposite, adjacent to the vanity unit. The mattress is very comfortable and offers good support.

In the kitchen, the hob includes Swift's now-familiar electric hotplate alongside three gas burners. With a separate oven and grill, plus the microwave, all the cooking options are covered, and there's a ceiling-mounted extractor fan for when it all gets a bit steamy in there. ■

**VERDICT**

A handsome, comfortable, spacious, caravan which is not only well equipped but is also in great condition.

**TECHNICAL**

- Price when new: £12,495
- Overall length: 23ft 7in (7.19m)
- MRO: 1,254kg (24.7cwt)
- MTPLM: 1,460kg (28.7cwt)
- User payload: 206kg (4cwt)
- Berths: 4
- Warranty: 12 months parts and labour

