

Kitchen is well lit and specified

# Slide Show

John Parsons and Pat Taylor decide Fifth Wheel Company's new 'baby' is another strong performer

**Vehicle supplied for test by:**  
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In 2011, the Fifth Wheel Company launched the Inos, its first conventional caravan design. Many loved the slide-out concept which provided such great on-site living space – but it did come with a hefty price tag and weight penalty. Now there is a smaller, single-axle version which is both lighter and somewhat more affordable. This 'baby' two-berth Inos has all the luxury and quality construction of its bigger brother, and many of the same fittings, but manages to fit it all into a more compact space.

We set out to see how well this worked out on a three-day winter trip. It must be pointed out straight away that the Inos on this test was a prototype.

## CONSTRUCTION

The single-axle Inos is constructed in a similar way to its Fifth Wheel stablemates – using a four-element vacuum-bonded body panel system with 35mm panel thickness all round featuring a superior grade Styrofoam core for insulation.

Inside, the floor is covered with a waterproof, non-slip safety vinyl while the cream walls are matched with dark wood, burgundy leather upholstery and brushed steel furniture details. It all looks classy and epitomises the build quality for which this Welsh-based company is famed.

Outside, the BPW chassis features the IDC anti-snake control system and Winterhoff 3,000kg hitch. The heavy-duty corner steadies are manually

operated, the rear ones being a bit hard to reach without getting on your knees. A mover system is an option and a conventional awning rail is fitted.

The all-British, hand-built Inos looks compact on the road but offers plenty of room on site thanks to the nearly 4m-wide, electrically-operated slide-out system.

## TOWABILITY

We went out in gusty winds and heavy rain – not ideal towing conditions. But the Inos towed impeccably with never a twitch – even downhill in a crosswind which has potential to upset even the best rigs.

Sure, we were using one of the best towcars around in the shape of the Land Rover Discovery 4, but even at the legal maximum of 60mph on the wide-open and exposed A55 on the way to The Caravan Club site at Chester Fair Oaks, we encountered no problems whatsoever. A great towing performance.

To be fair, the single-axle Inos' fully-laden MTPLM is 1,800kg (which gives it a payload of 200kg) and the Disco's kerbweight is about 2,600kg, so there was a favourable weight ratio of approximately 70%. However, the adverse weather made it a severe test, and our 20.5mpg towing average was good going for these conditions. As the combined weight is in excess of 3,500kg, you do, of course, need the appropriate driving licence.

## USABILITY

When you step inside the single-axle version of the Inos, it doesn't quite have the 'Wonderland' effect of its bigger brother, but the full-length slide-out does create masses of free space when you're on site. Opening the slide-out is still a matter of pushing just one switch and the 12V motor does the job. In this prototype model it was noisy and clunky in use, but the company plans to employ a different system in production. Considering the caravan is only 5.75m (18ft 9in) long, the space created is truly impressive – indeed, the U-shaped lounge can seat up to six people.

We liked the 'tilt-to-open' cupboard catches, which were a delight to use and match the style of the drawer handles below. The rounded dining table, which narrows at one end, can take four place settings, but it is heavy and awkward to remove from the narrow slot in which it lives.

Naturally, the Alde wet heating system featuring 5.5KW gas and 3KW electric modes means you will keep nice and warm in the Inos no matter how cold it is outside.

Fresh water comes from either a 40-litre inboard tank or from an outside Aquaroll or similar. The internal tank can be topped up from the Aquaroll via a Whale inboard pump system so you have an 80-litre water supply at your disposal.

## LIVING AND SLEEPING

First that bed: it's extremely comfortable but you can only have the pillows one end due to the positioning of the single reading light. The bed is also in a 'north-south' alignment which doesn't suit everyone. An 'east-west' island bed might be a better answer, and, as is usual with this company, it is "already working" on both these aspects. There is no way to separate the sleeping and living areas.

We call it a 'semi-fixed' double bed as you do have to fold the mattress over for travel. But this is quick and easy to do and allows excellent access to the bathroom when the slide-out is closed. Though Inos is marketed as a two-berth, one extra person could sleep in the U-shaped front lounge. Two grandchildren would also be no problem – well at least while they were asleep...

There are lots of overhead lockers, but most are a bit of a stretch for those under 6ft tall. Similarly, the excellent lift-and-slide rooflight needs a lower operating handle for the more vertically-challenged.

There is good storage under the main bed and front seat, but we would like a drop-down flap here to access the full-width front locker, so you could get shoes out of the way.



The double bed is very comfortable



Mattress must be folded for travel



Slide-out creates lots of extra space on site

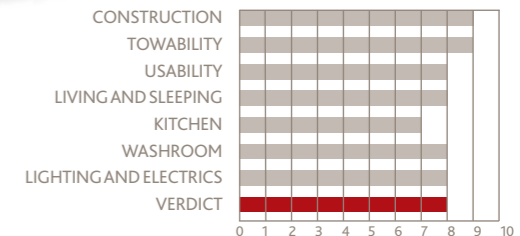
“It looks compact on the road but offers plenty of room on site”



A solid towing combination

## TECHNICAL

### RATINGS



RRP/as tested	from £34,000/£36,230
Overall length	18ft 9in (5.75m)
Overall width	7ft 6in (2.29m); 9ft 6in (2.9m) inc slide-out
Overall height	8ft 10in (2.7m)
Internal length	18ft (5.49m)
Max internal height	6ft 7in (2m)
MRO	1,600 kg (31.5cwt)
MTPLM	1,800 kg (35.4cwt)
User payload	200kg (3.9cwt)
Berths	2
NCC approved	no
Caravan Club insurance quote	£489.41*

Figures supplied by manufacturer  
\*Standard 5Cs cover based on four years' no claims discount with a £100 excess, value of £36,500. £500 contents cover and assumes the caravan has a tilt sensor, tracking device and IDC stability control. Super 5Cs cover is £573.99. Prices and conditions are correct at time of publication.

Club insurance: 01342 336610 • Info: fifthwheel.co.uk



“There is an abundance of overhead LED lighting”

Spacious U-shaped lounge can seat up to six people

Expect to see this on production models. This locker has outside access which makes it ideal for storage of mains lead, winding handle, muddy boots and the like.

The Avtex TV is fixed on one side of the lounge area though it will swivel to some degree, and there is an extra TV point on the other side. Practically, however, there is only one place from which to watch and that is on the front seat in the lounge.

Safety is a priority in the Inos, with not only the usual smoke and CO detectors but also an LPG gas leak alarm.

### KITCHEN

Worktop space is not the best in this kitchen, though it can be extended by using the dining table or with the drop-down flap at the side. The reason for the lack of space is the vast fridge freezer which, along with the microwave on top, takes up all the vertical space on the left of the four-burner piezo ignition Spinflo Caprice cooker. There is an alternative kitchen option available which features a smaller fridge and brings the microwave lower.

Over the hob is a powerful extractor fan and really good LED lighting, aided by useful natural light from the window. This

kitchen is clearly part of the modular approach used by Fifth Wheel, in that it is carried over directly from the twin-axle version (see our test in the April 2012 edition of the magazine).

There is room for an electric kettle on the left of the hob unit and a useful double mains socket positioned there, too. There is a plate rack in the locker above, but sadly for some, no cocktail cabinet. The sink tap folds down for travel, and the sink itself is reasonably proportioned. Storage under the kitchen sink comprises two deep drawers and a cutlery drawer.

### WASHROOM

The end washroom is also carried over from the twin-axle version. It is entered via a neat and solidly-made sliding door and contains a separate, square-shaped shower with high-quality domestic-style fittings and bi-fold door. The sink is slightly angled, which allows users more room to bend forward and wash. There is an extractor fan fitted as standard.

The Thetford C263 cassette toilet is well positioned but, in this caravan, the flush system seemed a bit mean with its delivery. The cassette access hatch is on the



Hinged flap extends the amount of work surface available in the kitchen

nearside – not everyone’s ideal location if you have the awning up.

There is ample storage in the bathroom with cupboards under the sink and two compartments on the nearside back wall, one of which houses the Alde header tank.

### LIGHTING AND ELECTRICS

Much of the electrical equipment is as featured in other products from the same maker – in other words, there is an abundance of overhead LED lighting. The only area that misses out is the lounge, which could do with some spotlights for reading. There is access to all fuses, trips and the RCD in the wardrobe. Four mains sockets are provided, and there is a 12V stereo CD and radio in the front lounge.

The PC 250 control panel is just above the door and gives press-button readouts for water tank levels, battery state and inside and outside temperature (though, oddly, the figures disagreed with those on the Alde panel). A 22A switched mode charger system keeps the battery up to strength. ■

### VERDICT

The Inos single-axle brings the Fifth Wheel Company’s construction and quality within the reach of more towcars and wallets. It is some 700kg lighter on MTPLM and £6,000 cheaper than its twin-axle brother, yet loses little of the latter’s spacious appeal.

This early version had some niggles which are already being addressed before final production. As usual, this family firm’s commitment to customer satisfaction was highlighted by an in-depth feedback session after our test.

Baby Inos is still a luxury buy at a start price of £34,000 (£36,230 as tested), but if you want top-class fittings and ‘bullet-proof’ build quality then it has great potential.

