



Looking to replace your caravan but can't afford to buy new? We asked our test expert Rob McCabe to find three used models to suit different budgets

Make and model: Coachman Amara 450/2
Year of manufacture: 2009
Current price: £10,995

From a caravanner's point of view, there are few finer things in life than a late-model Coachman – as proved by this two-berth beauty. It's by far the newest of our chosen trio, the most obvious clues to this being the loose-lay carpeting that looks as though it's been stored in a cupboard these past three years, up-to-date styling cues where exterior graphics and furniture handles are concerned, plus luxuries including a microwave and a variety of audio/visual connectivity options.

This lovely model begs the rhetorical question: why buy new? The asking price of a fiver under £11,000 includes a full service and pre-delivery inspection, as well as a 12-month parts and labour warranty. A new Amara costs £16,590 on the road and, undoubtedly wonderful though it would be to be the first owner of that, the £5,595 saving you'll make from choosing this one instead will buy you a quality awning, a motor mover and a couple of cracking overseas touring holidays.

Although Amara is the cheapest route into Coachman ownership, it is a fantastically-built caravan that makes you feel that little bit special the moment you set foot inside it.

That certainly applies to the sumptuously sprung-upholstered lounge, which is bolstered by a generous collection of cushions to lean into. The only real sign of entry-levelness is the fact that, surprisingly, there are just two reading lights here, one on each sidewall. That's fine if you're using the single-bed option but obviously less than ideal in double-bed mode if you both want to read a few pages before lights-out.

The kitchen looks absolutely fantastic – all the appliances have retained their showroom gleam and the vast swathe of worktop opposite the cooker and sink is not only very useful but also unmarked and glossy. Storage space is almost absurdly plentiful, including a posh-looking cocktail cabinet with its smoked-finish doors.

The washroom is fresh, modern and very appealing – on a remote rally field, where you're lucky to have a standpipe, never mind a shower block, you'll feel very well looked after by this facility – as indeed you will be by the rest of the caravan. ■



VERDICT

Go on – tell everybody on site it's brand-new. Only your bank balance will be able to tell the difference.

TECHNICAL

- Price when new:** £13,739
- Overall length:** 20ft 11in (6.38m)
- Overall width:** 7ft 5in (2.26m)
- MRO:** 1,175kg (23.1cwt)
- MTPLM:** 1,335kg (26.3cwt)
- User payload:** 160kg (3.2cwt)
- Berths:** 2
- Warranty:** 12 months parts and labour



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Make and model: Bailey Senator Arizona
Year of manufacture: 2004
Current price: £7,700

Why would anyone buy a caravan and keep it for eight years without ever using it? I ask only because that's what seems to have been the case with this almost pristine example of one of the more upmarket models of the mid-noughties.

Everything on board the four-berth Arizona, from the fixed carpet to the shower cubicle, the oven and the upholstery, is in immaculate condition. The pale, thick woodwork is unmarked throughout and the lockers all open and close with straight-out-of-the-factory precision. Because of this, there is still the aura of being in a caravan that is just a cut above, even if fixtures such as the reddish carpet and the Spinflo cooker date it a little.

The lounge is terrific – the sofas are just as plump and comfortable as they would have been on day one, and there are four good corners to flop back into. The pair of dimmer-switch-controlled mains lights under the front overhead lockers are a nice touch, as is the stereo/CD player on the offside wall – no need to open a locker door to search for radio stations or change the volume.

At night, the slats move as if on rails (hang on... they are on rails!) to make a huge double bed, while an overhead bunk pulls out easily from the side dinette, where the occupants' privacy is looked after by a full-length curtain.

The kitchen is everything you hope to find in a used caravan – all work surfaces are spotless, as is the oven and grill. Storage is plentiful for a family of four, while there are a couple of nice surprises in the dedicated table store – as well as a pair of pull-out wire baskets, you'll find a



“The kitchen is everything you hope to find in a used caravan”



Bailey-branded wooden chopping board that's shaped to fit the drainer and looks like it's never been used.

I wouldn't be at all surprised if it's the washroom that finally seals the deal on this Senator. It's delightfully spacious, and will win favour with those who like to use



Lounge looks as good as new (top); roomy washroom (above); useful additional dining set-up (above left)

their tourer's washroom as a proper changing room. Focal point is the terrific vanity unit on the left as you walk in: his 'n' her wardrobes flank the wash-hand basin, above which is a big mirror with its own sunken downlighter.

Practical touches abound: front-opening bedlocker hatches, kitchen extractor fan, plenty of lights and mains sockets (including one for the awning), predictably sweet-sliding blinds and flyscreens everywhere (including on the entrance door), hitch stabiliser and very good storage facilities are all part of the deal.

And what a deal, too. ■

VERDICT

Luxury, comfort and the feel of a new caravan for £7,700. It's top money for a 2004 Arizona, but I can't imagine there's a better one anywhere.

TECHNICAL

Price when new: £13,705

Overall length: 23ft 7in (7.19m)

Overall width: 7ft 2in (2.18m)

MRO: 1,203kg (23.7cwt)

MTPLM: 1,472kg (29cwt)

User payload: 269kg (5.3cwt)

Berths: 4

Warranty: 12 months parts and labour





Make and model: Swift Charisma 220
Year of manufacture: 2001
Current price: £5,695

I picked this end-kitchen two-berther out from the massed ranks of Pioneer's used stock because, like the Senator, it has clearly enjoyed a pampered existence. The body styling might be decidedly old-school, but when you step inside, no way does this look like a caravan that's into its second decade.

The plum-coloured fixed carpet and matching patterned upholstery won't be to everyone's taste, but I think it's elegant – and it's refreshing to come across something a bit different. Around about this time, Swift uncovered some rather lovely upholstery colour schemes, some of which were obviously just a bit too

daring for most buyers and never made it back for a second season.

The Charisma was the Swift Group's entry-level range in 2001, but you won't be slumming it here – a TV aerial, mains wall lights, blown-air heater, wide-opening sunroof, cooker with separate oven and grill and an aftermarket stereo are all included. Four mains sockets cater well for the 21st-century caravanner. You'll be comfy, too – the sofas have survived the years remarkably well, although the next owner may care to trawl haberdashery specialists in search of a couple of big, chunky cushions to match the colour scheme.

The end kitchen gives chefs plenty of room to work in while creating their culinary magic. The heavy, flush-fitting lid for the sink needs attention to make it stay

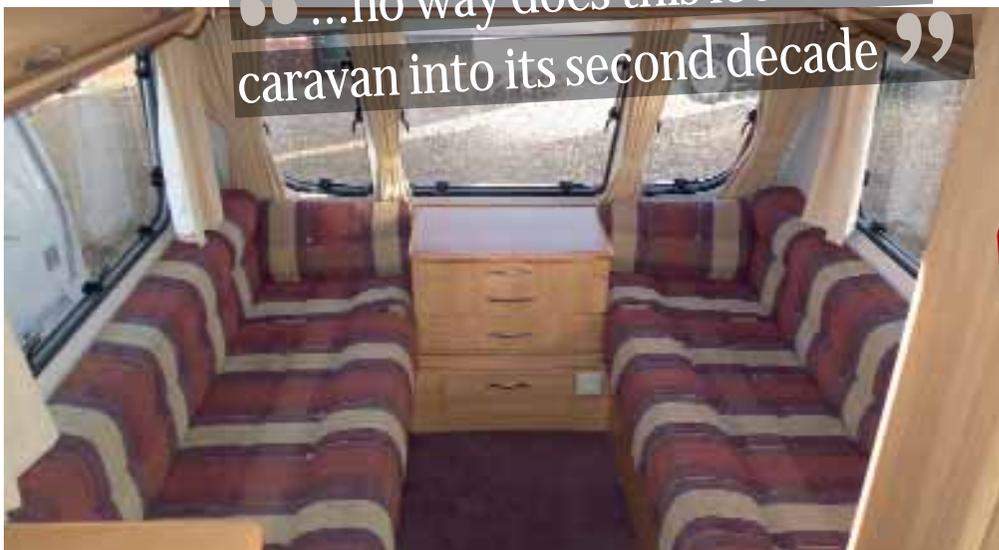
raised unaided: this will be attended to as part of the pre-sale inspection that all the dealer's used caravans receive before going to their new homes.

The washroom can hardly be described as the last word in luxury, but it's functional and roomy. I love the hinged lid behind the fixed loo, which opens to reveal a 'secret' storage compartment. That's a real throwback, as are the basin's twin Whale taps, which have a pleasing retro chunkiness to them. Prospective buyers will be impressed by how clean and fresh-looking the smallest room is.

The door flyscreen is a welcome fitment; likewise the load-spreading feet attached to the corner steadies. Build quality is excellent, with pleasing, accurate joinery on show everywhere. The low weight, even when fully laden, means it can be towed comfortably by many small hatchbacks. ■

End kitchen keeps chef out of the way of other occupants (top right); interior colour scheme probably won't be to everyone's taste (below)

“...no way does this look like a caravan into its second decade”



VERDICT

Want to see what a loved, well-cared-for caravan looks like after 11 years? Come and see this one.

TECHNICAL

- Price when new:** £10,195
- Overall length:** 18ft 2in (5.53m)
- Overall width:** 7ft 1in (2.16m)
- MRO:** 907kg (17.9cwt)
- MTPLM:** 1,115kg (21.9cwt)
- User payload:** 208kg (4cwt)
- Berths:** 2
- Warranty:** 12 months parts and labour