

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Rob McCabe looks at a quality layout that offers separate areas for adults and children to keep everyone happy

However enthusiastic you and your other half may feel about a prospective new caravan, the most you can reasonably expect of your offspring is a vague nod and a murmur of, "Yeah, it's okay, I s'pose."

But if your chosen new vehicle is an upmarket model with two proper rooms – one for you, one for them – that have had equal amounts of love lavished on them by the designers, you're far more likely to get a "Wow! How good is that?"

Coachman's new Amara 570/6 is intended to fall into the latter camp. There is a separate living/sleeping area at the back featuring a seating area and a couple of permanent bunks. This room actually offers the potential for four beds

Vehicle supplied for test by:
Coachman Caravan Company, Amsterdam Road, Sutton Fields Industrial Estate, Hull HU7 0XF. Call 01482 877405.



to give six berths overall, but it will surely also tempt buyers looking for four-berth luxury. Let's see just how good a proposition this family caravan really is.

CONSTRUCTION

Every new Coachman caravan has a reputation to live up to these days – a reputation of near-indestructibility and build quality beyond reproach. Evidence of this was provided by subjecting our test

Amara to close scrutiny – this revealed nothing but high-quality materials, beautiful finishing and fine attention to detail throughout.

Super-solid aluminium sidewalls are joined precisely to acrylic-capped ABS front and rear panels and a laminated roof. Inside, the ash-design woodwork is thick and thumping, and the aluminium-framed sofa/bed bases have an equally-pleasing heft. Open the drawers and

you'll see they glide along on steel runners, suggesting they'll still be gliding along for many years to come.

If monumental structural integrity is more of a priority for you than keeping weight in check, come right in and get comfy, for here's your caravan.

TOWABILITY

If you're going to be pulling this big Amara along at anything approaching its near-1,600kg MTPLM, you'll need some serious motoring muscle.

Although that points you in the direction of the 4x4s, you can sit nearer the road if you want to, courtesy of big estates such as the Mercedes E-Class and some versions of the Audi A6 Avant. But if you're travelling with a full complement of six, nothing short of a seven-seat Discovery will do.

It's the inevitable price you pay for such a well-equipped, muscularly-built piece of caravanning real estate.

It's a big old thing to manoeuvre around by hand, so when placing it on your pitch you'll need to let the car do all the work, call for reinforcements – or invest in a motorised mover.

USABILITY

You won't want for much in the usability department. The loose-lay carpeting fits perfectly and can be removed in three easily-wielded sections – the flooring underneath is attractive, too. A full-length flyscreen means the entrance door can safely be left open on sultry summer evenings (remember them?). Said door, new this year, is very smart: it's a double-sealed, single-piece fitment with a useful waste bin attached.

Your storage options are plentiful. The beefy front bed bases lift up easily and are happy to stay in place all by themselves; the nearside one has a hatch on the front, too. And the base of the lower fixed bunk at the back also raises to reveal a massive area that will accommodate a substantial amount of the holiday paraphernalia that can so easily accumulate. In transit, this lower bunk folds up completely out of the way to provide a 'garage' space for bikes or other bulky bits of kit.

The deep wardrobe includes a wall mounting for the rear lounge's clip-on table. Right next to it, the big free-standing table for the front has its own full-height house, and, pleasingly, there are further storage opportunities within.

The sealed wet locker on the nearside exterior wall houses a mains socket for use in the awning, and there's a gas barbecue point next to it.

LIVING AND SLEEPING

Let's start at the back. The two fixed bunks take up the offside wall in this room. There is a seating area opposite which can be made into a bed and a cantilever bunk is folded away unobtrusively behind this. The practical chest/table top has an aperture within which are not one but two mains sockets and connections for TV aerial and 12V leads.

Obviously, the seating area is lost completely when the two nearside beds are in place, and I can't imagine many users would go to the faff of putting them away and making them up every day – on the basis that life really is too short.

As a result, this room is definitely at its best when being used to accommodate >>



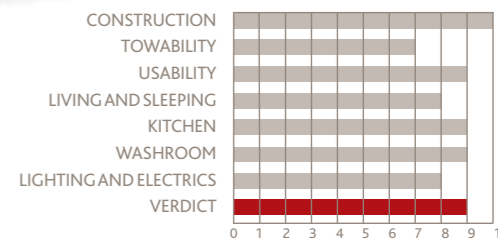
Above: kids get their own rear seating area...

Right... which at night can magically turn into a pair of bunks if needed



TECHNICAL

RATINGS



"...beautiful finishing and fine attention to detail throughout"



Spacious washroom with separate cylindrical shower

RRP	£18,670 OTR
Overall length	24ft 8in (7.51m)
Overall width	7ft 5in (2.26m)
Overall height	8ft 9in (2.67m) inc TV aerial
Internal length	19ft 2in (5.85m)
Max internal height	6ft 5in (1.95m)
MRO	1,409kg (27.7cwt)
MTPLM	1,595kg (31.4cwt)
User payload	186kg (3.7cwt)
Berths	6
NCC approved	Yes

Figures supplied by manufacturer

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



“The Amara makes cooking duties as painless as possible”

Above: handy electric hotplate and three gas burners should be up to the job of preparing family meals

Right: fixed rear bunks measure in at 5ft 9in x 2ft each



two (or perhaps three – making up the lower-level bed alone would not be quite such a chore). The seats themselves exhibit the same welcome comfort as those at the front, although the backrests are slightly shorter.

Everyone gets a great bed, but there may still be some jockeying for position when deciding who sleeps where. While the top fixed bunk has its own nice little window, the lower one is curiously bereft. Opposite, the occupant of the pull-out upper bunk can choose from two reading lamps; down below, there's nowt. A stick-on, battery-powered wall lamp from a camping shop will have to do.

The front lounge is a most-pleasing facility that delivers don't-want-to-get-up comfort in sofa mode and can't-wait-to-get-in comfort as a bed. The sprung upholstery really is of top quality.

If you're not overly tall, you can have single beds (5ft 9in x 2ft 5in); otherwise, the generously-sized double (6ft 8in x 4ft 4in) is made by pulling out the base from the offside sofa. It's quick, secure and obviously means no risk of slat hell.

KITCHEN

It's always going to be a challenge catering for six, whether you're in the wide, open

expanses of the kitchen at home or making the most of the limited space available in a caravan. Luckily the Amara makes cooking duties as painless as possible.



While work surface is modest in its own right, the sunken stainless steel drainer next to the sink can be used. And if you don't need the sink itself, you can place the fitted acrylic cover/chopping board over the basin and take advantage of that as well. Standard equipment extends to an overhead extractor fan, a smart new Caprice cooker with an electric hotplate to accompany the three gas burners and – a godsend in any family caravan – a microwave concealed in its own eye-level compartment.

Sadly, the one thing you don't get is acceptable lighting: the narrow LED strip offers unspectacular illumination, with the poor old hob left pretty much in the dark.

WASHROOM

The washroom is a fine piece of design. Even though there are two separate living areas at either end of the Amara, Coachman has still managed to include an attractive, decently roomy area with a separate cylindrical shower cubicle.

It's light and airy during the day and well-illuminated at night, with a ceiling light in the body of the washroom and a separate lamp in the shower. You get two mirrors, an expansive sweep of open shelving and a cupboard under the shapely washbasin. I don't think you could have asked for more.

LIGHTING AND ELECTRICS

With so much attention to detail in some areas – including the superb Pioneer stereo with iPod connectivity and wiring for DVD playback, exterior inputs for TV aerial and satellite dish and the entertainment 'hub' in the rear living quarters – it's disappointing to find just two reading lights in the front lounge. It means just one of you can have a light when reading in bed, which is a bit mean. Similarly, a lamp for the lower nearside bed in the rear quarters is a noticeable absentee.

But, overall, the Amara offers more connections than Heathrow Airport – it's very much a 21st-century caravan. ■

VERDICT

This is one of those caravans you actively look forward to getting back to after a day out: it's just such a nice place to be. The two living areas are very well thought out. Although six can sleep comfortably, I'd say the 570/6 makes even more sense as a knock-out family four-berth.