



# LITTLE WONDER



L-shaped lounge is surprisingly big

This tiny new two-berth with an MTPLM of under 1000kg makes a big impression on **Rob McCabe**

**F**OR SUCH a small caravan, the new Elldis Xplore 302 aims to make a big difference. It not only gives you the wherewithal to utilise more compact and economical towcars (certain models of Vauxhall Corsa or Fiat Punto Evo for example), it also gives you the potential to avoid expensive storage fees by keeping it at home.

You don't even need to eschew details such as all-round blinds and flyscreens, hot water, shower, television aerial, loose-fit carpet, warm-air heating or a 'proper' kitchen, all of which are present and correct on this, the smallest UK-made caravan currently on the market. But how does it measure up? Read on...

### CONSTRUCTION

There's nothing of concern on the outside: all body panels join up neatly, while the jockey wheel handle and corner steadies operate quietly and smoothly. The GRP front panel can be easily repaired.

What few quibbles there were awaited me inside. Some of the overhead locker doors on our test model were already a bit saggy, drooping slightly when opened. The quality of presentation didn't match the outside either, with untidy joinery in places. I felt that shelf edges could have been finished off better and when I looked up from the seat in the front nearside corner, I saw some rough-edged woodwork that

didn't exactly make me feel as though I was being pampered.

### TOWABILITY

I did mark the Xplore 302's 'Towability' score as 11, which resulted in a short arithmetic lesson from the editor – but you get my drift. The mention of two superminis in the introduction as potential towcars for this diminutive two-berth is no exaggeration: either would be perfect, even with the 302 laden all the way to its MTPLM of 950kg. Other good matches include the Renault Clio Sport Tourer 1.5dCi and the Volkswagen Polo 1.6 TDI – and it's not often you'll see these getting a mention in this section of your magazine.

The 302's ultra-compact dimensions and lack of bulk also make it child's play to manoeuvre by hand, whether it's to persuade it that last couple of inches onto the towball, or to nip out in the evening and aim the picture window in the lounge directly at the sunset over the hills.

### USABILITY

Quite rightly, Elldis has made the L-shape lounge area the 302's dominant presence – a clever touch that makes it feel much more roomy inside than you'd expect.

This spaciousness extends to storage provision, too, especially in the rear kitchen, which includes a cupboard under the sink that could accommodate a small child, never mind a couple of cereal boxes.

Tug on that floor-level handle at the very front of the lounge and, instead of the little cubby hole you'd expect to find, you get a surprisingly large drawer. The big, deep overhead shelves in the front corners add to the 302's impressive storage score.

There's plenty of hanging space in the wardrobe but, if you need more, there's another hanging rail above the shower – just the job for damp towels, dripping waterproofs or swimwear. The loose-fit rug is good to see, but it's a shame there's not an extra little square to cover the last bit of the lounge – it would've made a big difference.

For all that the lounge is nice and spacious, there are the inherent compromises that come with the L-shape layout. The free-standing table will need to be brought into play at every mealtime and the fold-out TV shelf on the offside isn't in the optimum position – but the layout dictates it can't be anywhere else.

Heating is taken care of by an innovative, space-saving Whale blown-air unit that lives under the floor. It does a fine job (not much area to cover, admittedly), but it has quite an audible presence in a quiet caravan. There's a becalmed night-mode setting, but it's still not as hushed as a conventional space heater on a low electric setting.

The two waste-water pipes exit at the back of the caravan, which can be awkward on those pitches where access is difficult.

Got a muddy dog to rinse off after its daily walk? If so, you'll appreciate the little hatch on the washroom wall, through which you can pass the showerhead so it can be used outside. I'm sure many caravanners with mucky pups of the human variety would appreciate this feature on family caravans.

### LIVING AND SLEEPING

The 302's interior is virtually all lounge: it extends from the front window all the way back to the door (although I use the term 'all the way back' relatively speaking).

Sadly, it fails to deliver much in the way of comfort, unless you're the lucky soul who bags the front nearside corner – the only really comfy seat in the house. Everywhere else leaves you feeling perched, and if you sit anywhere along the front bit when the big, single-piece blind is down, the back of your head is in near-constant contact with said blind.

Given all this, I think the so-called picture window is a luxury the 302 can't afford: a regular-sized window there would have given the means to extend the seating by just enough to create another comfy corner on that side.

However, the double bed is much more like it. The rearranged upholstery (and you do need to rearrange every piece) makes a comfortable mattress and, although it's not exactly the biggest double ever, there's more than enough space for two.

### KITCHEN

This is a very usable facility that manages to punch above its weight, given the constraints of space, although there's obviously not a lot of work surface available. A little area to the left of the sink is all that's on offer, and you'll need to find room for the electric kettle there, too.

Both the cooker and sink benefit from Elldis's now legendary 'Chinchilla' unbreakable glass covers/chopping boards, so you can always use the sink cover as an extra preparation surface. It even has a little finger-hold groove in it that allows you to undertake a spot of gentle draining while the cover's down.

The Spinflo hob – like the sink, tastily finished in brushed stainless steel – has three burners, one of which will accommodate a wok or casserole dish. There's even a grill and oven, although they're combined into one space-saving unit that means you can use only one or the other. The upside of that is a huge pan cupboard underneath.

The fridge – on the left as you face the rear – is another bijou fitment, but you get the all-important, wine-bottle-and-a-couple-of-cans-of-lager-sized, full-width freezer compartment.

Lighting is above average. As well as the striplight over the sink, the ceiling >>



Kitchen is well lit and well appointed for its size



'Chinchilla' covers double as work surfaces

“The kitchen is a very usable facility that punches above its weight”

RATINGS	
CONSTRUCTION	8
TOWABILITY	10
USABILITY	9
LIVING AND SLEEPING	8
KITCHEN	9
WASHROOM	8
LIGHTING AND ELECTRICS	8
VERDICT	8

RRP	£10,494 OTR
Internal length	3.20m (10ft 6in)
Shipping length	4.69m (15ft 5in)
Overall width	2.15m (7ft 1/2in)
Overall height	2.73m (8ft 11in)
Internal headroom	1.91m (6ft 3in)
MRO	796kg (15.6cwt)
MTPLM	950kg (18.7cwt)
User payload	154kg (3.1cwt)
Berths	2

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The double bed is reasonably sized and comfortable once all the upholstery has been rearranged (below)



Right: decent washroom offers the extra benefit of an exterior hatch through which you can pass the showerhead

dome above the entrance door is pretty much directly over the hob as well. The galley is most definitely one of the 302's strong points.

**WASHROOM**

The smallest room of the smallest caravan has a big surprise – that exterior access locker. Not only does it give you the means to use the showerhead outside, but you can chuck wet towels, muddy shoes and the like onto the shower tray.

That aside, all the essentials are there: wash-hand basin with mixer tap, shower (albeit a bit cramped) with its own mixer tap, loo, skylight, a decent-sized shelf and a mirror-fronted cupboard.

**LIGHTING AND ELECTRICS**

All the lighting, of course, is supplied courtesy of the 12V system – and there's enough of it to go round. A ceiling dome and three reading lights take care of the lounge, while the other dome and a striplight do a good job with the kitchen, as we've discussed. The single downlighter in the washroom is all that's needed in there.

There are two mains sockets: one in the kitchen and another, with adjacent 12V and aerial sockets, serving the needs of the TV in the front lounge.

No complaints there, although a third one up in one of those big front shelves would have been perfect for a radio. By way of a solution to this, you could buy a digital radio with a rechargeable battery pack and keep it topped up by charging it overnight when needed.

**VERDICT**

There's no doubt that this caravan's tiny size will be a deal-maker. Folk with an Xplore 302-sized space down the side of their house or with a compatible towcar will buy it on the basis of centimetres and/or kilogrammes alone. It feels more spacious inside than its looks suggest, too.

But the limited seating comfort is disappointing – make sure you subject it to a thorough lounging test if you're giving it a forecourt once-over. ■

