

COACHMAN

Pastiche 520/4

Two colleagues take a Yorkshire-built caravan on a tour of its home county...

MISSION

To test the side dining area Pastiche as a caravan for two colleagues on a break that was about work rather than relaxation



The Hull-based caravan maker Coachman has been crafting tourers since 1986, but in recent years has gone from traditionalist to innovator. These days Coachman tourers come equipped with expansive sunroofs that look space-age from the outside and space-enhancing on the inside. The external lines are also enriched (in my book) by cutting-edge 'shoulder contours' that make the caravans look more substantial and dynamic and which become estate-car-style roof rails across the top of the caravan. Their raison d'être may only be aesthetic, but it works for me. With Coachman's eye-candy endeavours in mind, and seeking a caravan that would match my VW CC's contemporary lines, we decided this was the company to borrow a caravan from for a working tour.

We hitched up the Pastiche and headed north up the A1M to God's (and Coachman's) Country – Yorkshire. This was long before our superbly hot summer began and, as temperatures hovered around 0°C in the day, and dipped well below zero at night, Caravan magazine Features Editor Ben and I were confident that our superbly insulated and heated Coachman would keep us cosy for the duration of our tour.

Winter warmer

The key to successful four-season touring in the Pastiche is

Grade 3 thermal insulation: a 45mm thick, Styrofoam-core floor

WORDS

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PHOTOGRAPHY

John Sootheran

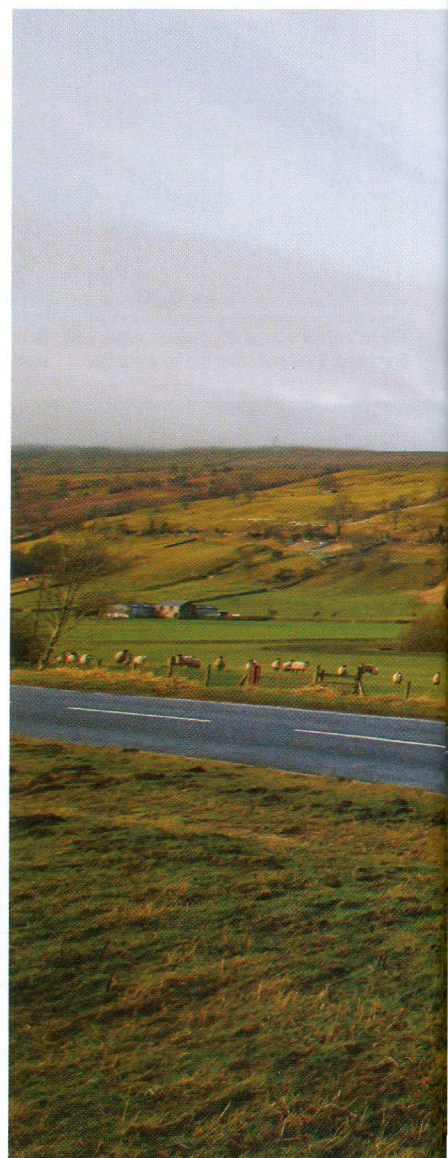


for heat retention and strength; 29mm-thick composite walls, 31mm-thick roof and (in our 2013 model) Truma's 4e Combi-Boiler (4kW gas/1.8kW elec). Indeed, we entered the chilly caravan on the first evening and the temperature was just above zero. Twenty-five minutes after cranking up the Truma heater it was 17°C, and a short while after that, a very comfortable and sustainable 21°C. A decent performance in our book. Similarly, the water heater was fast and effective and the noise from pumps and heaters was never a distraction.

Sleeping

While it's officially a four-berth, this Pastiche is the ideal home on wheels for two, allowing plenty of space for bathing, relaxing, sleeping and hobbies or games.

The long front sofas made super-comfy single beds for Ben



A spacious shower room, with plenty of lighting



Ample space for our supplies – including Yorkshire tea





TESTED IN ACTION

and I (we're both over six feet tall).

The central cabinet is handy for books, watches, alarm clocks and phones etc.

The side dining area swiftly makes into single or bunk beds, measuring about 1.83m in length, so they're ideal for kids and, the lower bunk, for an adult.

The foam cushions on the bottom bunk are thick and supportive and make a good 'mattress' for grown-ups. The mattress for the top bunk has to be stored separately and takes up a good chunk of space.



Showering

Once I'd crawled out of bed, the stylish shower cubicle with futuristic LED lighting proved spacious, and the water heater provided copious quantities of hot H2O. The large wardrobe in here is a boon too, and there are plenty of places to hang towels, which can be notoriously hard to get dry in winter.

High and low-level storage/shelf space is also good, as are illumination and ventilation from window and roof light.

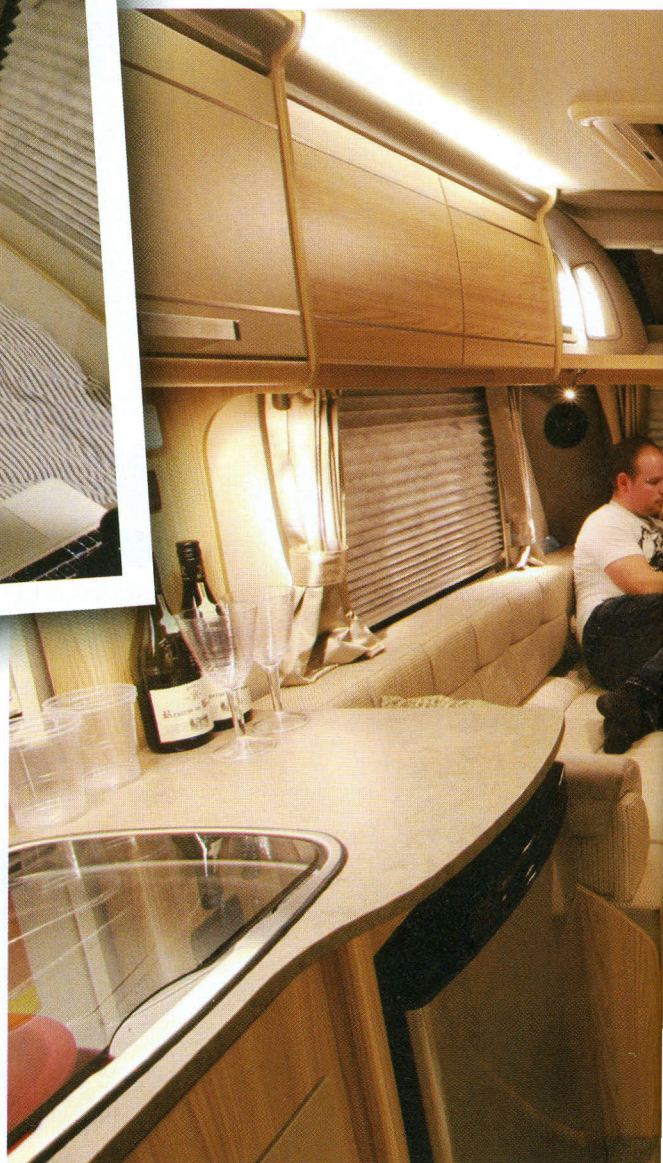
Overall, this shower room is a very nice place to be – easily more luxurious than most en-suites you get in modern homes or hotels.

ABOVE The Pastiche on tow in the Dales, between Grassington and Aysgarth
LEFT Adequate surface space for meal prep after work!





ABOVE Single beds suitable for over-six-footers
RIGHT These long settees are of ample size for stretching out or curling up



Dining

Just outside the washroom is the side dining area that provides decent seating for two and slightly more 'intimate' dining for four!

Again, it's perfect for a couple who don't want to disturb the lounging area when they eat. Being sited right opposite the kitchen also means there's considerably more food prep space and serving is a doddle. A large window illuminates the day's sustenance, and should create

pleasant ventilation when dining in warmer climes. The only drawback is the way the wheelarch boxing encroaches into your legroom when four are dining.

A large freestanding dining table is available for the front dining area and lives in a space next to the wardrobe. For breakfast, with a vista out over the Moors, we simply pulled out the extending top of the front cabinet, which made ample space for two to breakfast comfortably.

WHERE WE STAYED

Spenn House Caravan and Camping Park, Minskip **W** spennhouse.co.uk
Spiers House Campsite, Pickering **W** campingintheforest.co.uk



The offside dining area layout is great for a family or a couple



Towing

We towed for almost 300 miles on our trip, so both got a great feeling for the 520/4's ability on the road.

From motorways to writhing moorland tracks, this Coachman proved a treat to tow.

Admittedly, much of the journey was below 50mph, but then the roads proffered enough potholes, weird cambers, undulations and suicidal sheep to give a rally driver a complex.

Despite all this, the Pastiche (with its AL-KO ATC and AKS stabiliser) barely twitched, religiously following the CC's lead even when provoked. I have never towed a more stable single-axle tourer.

Hey good looking

When we parked in Helmsley marketplace for lunch (paying

£4.60 for two end-to-end spaces, I hasten to add) the caravan attracted a lot of attention. Many people made a beeline to check it out, but unbeknownst to them, Ben had driven through a particularly large and malodorous cowpat on the moors, coating the front of the caravan in reeking liquid dung. I could tell that onlookers really wanted a peek inside this tasty tourer, but the fetid 'force-field' drove them off.

What's cooking?

That evening we cooked a spag-bol in the caravan. While we weren't exactly pushing the culinary envelope, the kitchen proved a great place to work and prepare. There's adequate space next to the cooker, especially when the hinged sink cover is down, while, as mentioned, there's a decent-

sized table right behind you.

Neat LED strip lighting creates a lovely ambient light to work in and is concealed behind wooden trim.

A home-spec microwave hides behind one of the top locker doors, and a 113-litre Thetford fridge keeps everything for four cool.

It's an accomplished piece of design, ergonomic and

seemingly well made, and the clever 'sunken' draining board minimises splashing and spillages. A roof-mounted extractor fan is right above the cooker to control the spread of cooking smells.

Lounging

In the evening we watched a movie on the laptop, and had one sofa each, relaxing long-ways on – essential Pringles and vino on the centre console. Again, most lounges at home aren't this comfortable.

Part of the added appeal throughout the caravan is the excellent lighting. Not only does natural sunlight flood in through the huge front sunroof and windows, but at night, when the blinds are closed, you have a whole range of lighting options to illuminate the interior. These vary from gentle overall ambient rooflights to hidden mood lighting, spotlights, corner lights and reading lights. It doesn't take long to create a cosy and relaxing effect throughout the caravan.

Storage

Storage is good throughout the Pastiche. Lines of top lockers lead from front to back on both sides offering various types of storage inside: full-height, shelved half-height, glass holders, plate racks etc.

The sofas also hide decent storage, though the front offside sofa also houses the RCD, heater and pump.

The tall washroom wardrobe will hang long coats and features drawers and storage cubby holes. I'd say it's ideal for two but you'd have to be very considered in your packing for four.

VERDICT

'Posh'. That's the adjective that springs to mind when describing the Pastiche 520/4. The interior is a superb place to be, with pleasing fabrics, lovely ash-effect panels and lighting that's second to none. The equipment, from Thetford and others, is high quality and well laid out. Sleeping, storage and showering are very good. Cooking even better.

The £22k price tag isn't to be sniffed at, but if you're prepared to pay for a quality caravan of this layout, the Coachman Pastiche 520/4 should be on your shortlist.