

Coachman VIP 520/4

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Big shape-changes happened to the VIP range last year; this year it's the turn of the heating system



SPECIFICATION

PRICE £23,195
BERTHS 4
MIRO 1433kg
MTPLM 1585kg
BODY LENGTH 5.54m
SHIPPING LENGTH 7.19m
WIDTH 2.32m
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Not long ago, the VIP range was thought of as somewhat subdued in appearance. Quietly confident in its quality status and with understated graphics, this range has long enjoyed a repeat-purchase loyalty. VIPs still attract that loyalty and, of course, they're renowned for their quality status. But last year the exterior appearance changed out of all recognition. Big, arching shoulder lines, grey roof rails and a sunroof appeared, and graphics got bigger and bolder. The VIP had undergone a transformation that hauled it up into the status of simply stunning.

So now what? All ranges get changes of some sort to mark new model years. And it was always certain that Coachman wouldn't tweak the eye-catching body lines for 2014. So the Hull factory's designers turned their attention to equipment to enhance the appeal of VIPs for 2014; specifically, the heating system, which is upgraded to the new Truma Combi system with isotherm ducting. That's ducting of a smaller diameter than the main warm-air tubing, running behind the lounge settees. The isotherm ducting has small

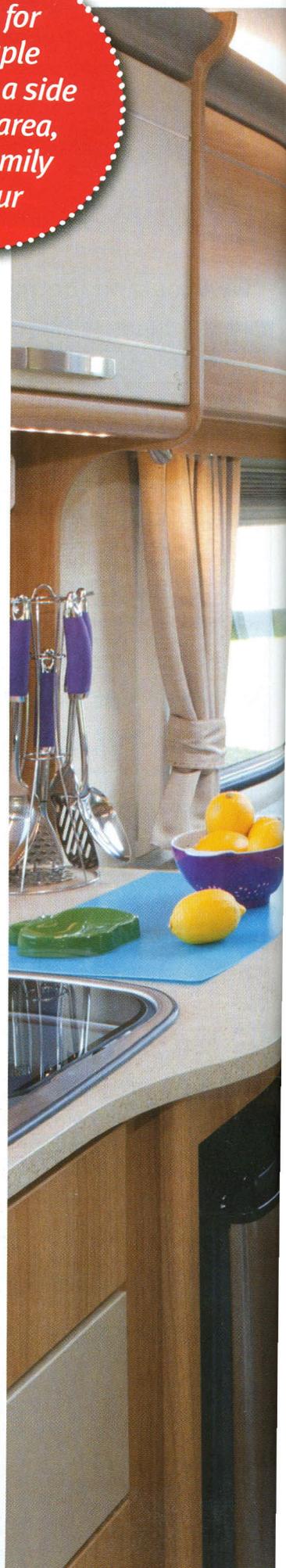
perforations through which air is emitted, creating what Coachman likes to call a "curtain of warm air".

This system develops 6kW of output when used on gas. It has a facility for rapid warm-up of both space-heating and water, and automatically switches to electricity when the temperature you've set on the programmable control panel is achieved. Used on electricity alone, the output is 1.8kW. It's a sophisticated system, with an 'eco-fan' setting to minimise 12-volt consumption, useful if you're away from mains hook-ups, and a night-time setting for quiet running. The control panel, located on the wall of the dresser in the 520, has a simple selector knob to choose functions on the screen above.

The 520's layout gives you an offside dining area for two and a rear shower room. That gives it appeal to both couples who want a permanent dining area and families with two young children who can sleep in the bunk beds that make up in the dining area.

It's a versatile layout, and the versatility is enhanced further by the length of the lounge seating; at 1.93m they are long enough to make single beds even for tall people. Additionally, the lower

Ideal for a couple wanting a side dining area, or a family of four



£259.23



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Pale greys and concealed white lighting ensure the 520 is light and bright

TEST FOUR-BERTH WITH VERSATILE LAYOUT

VERDICT

Exterior 8

Stunning, eye-catching looks with roof rails, grey skirt, sunroof and rich red graphics.

Dining 8

Another eight for three dining options, the side table, the pull-out top of the chest of drawers and the table that's easily drawn out from its cabinet alongside the wardrobe.

Lounging 8

Eight for long settees that can seat up to three on each side, making this model a caravan to consider if you like entertaining.

Storage 8

With space under four seating areas, a large wardrobe and seven top lockers, plus two dresser cabinets, the storage element of the 520 easily merits another eight.

Kitchen 8

This kitchen will suit keen cooks; there is plenty of surface and storage space.

Sleeping 8

Marks were gained for long settees that make single beds, as an alternative to a double, and also for the bunk length, which is fully adult-sized.

Showering 7

The washroom is large, but the circular shower isn't especially big.

Interior 7

Calm shades of greys and fawns with a pattern using pale peach and soft green, the VIP's interior look is a touch traditional.

Towing 8

The ATC electronic tow stability system gained a mark here; the 520's tow test, over main roads and Lincolnshire lanes, showed it to be a well-balanced caravan.

Value for money 8

You expect a lot for £23,195 and you get it; the VIP 520 looks and feels like a caravan of quality. And, for 2014, with its more powerful heating system and even a television, the 520 represents top value.

Caravan rating
78/100



A dining room or bunks for two? This choice of space is up to you

bunk is 1.83m long, which is longer than most bunks that convert from dining areas.

The dresser, which forms a division between the dining room and the lounge, is equipped with two mains sockets and TV points. What's more, with the 520 you get an Avtex television, which you can use on 12-volt or mains power, in with the price of the caravan; that's a new feature for 2014. The dresser has a double shelf; the lower one is ideal for copies of *Caravan* magazine!

The 520's kitchen is made for easy and possibly quite adventurous cooking. It has a fixed drainer, and 41cm of workspace to the right of it. Lower storage space is generous, with a cabinet and drawer that are 60cm wide, between the fridge and the oven. Top storage quantity



A circle of LED lights surrounds the top of the shower unit

matches the practicality below, with two large lockers that contain fittings for four mugs, six stemmed glasses, two bottles and a rack designed to contain both plates and dishes.

The big-storage story continues in the washroom, where the wardrobe occupies almost all of the nearside wall. There's more than a metre of hanging width, plus a large space for shoes beneath, and shelving both inside the wardrobe and outside, alongside the washbasin. Not enough? Two deep drawers are tucked under the wardrobe too.

If you are looking for a caravan with a spacious washroom you've found one here, with floor space 1.2m deep at the largest point. The shower is circular; it's 60cm in diameter. Two rather special refinements will catch your eye



The washroom contains a wardrobe, drawers and shelving

in the washroom. In addition to the usual casement containing a pleated fly screen and an obscure blind, the window has a high-quality satin fabric folded blind which descends when you release a cord. The second feature is a row of LED lights surrounding a black shower rose mount which rises up into the ceiling of the shower.

VIPs have long been known for their style and attention to fine detail and these examples are typical of the marque.

WE LIKE

- ▶ The rapid warm-up heating system
- ▶ The size of the kitchen
- ▶ The versatility of the layout
- ▶ The television that comes with the caravan

WE DON'T LIKE

- ▶ Shower could be bigger

TEST LOCATION: Woodland Waters Holiday Park, Ancaster, Grantham, Lincolnshire



The side dining area layout is pleasantly open plan