

The simple things in LIFE...



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REVIEWED

This was one of those impromptu moments – which are usually the best. A last minute decision by the family was made on sun-rain-sun-rain type day in early autumn to have a sleepover in a Coachman Pastiche 520/4.

Our location: Grove Lock Marina near Leighton Buzzard. This fairly new CL site lies on the Grand Union canal nestled under dramatic wide skies where narrowboaters and caravanners live in perfect harmony. The facilities are immaculate and no stone (literally) is left unturned. The owners have even had the good foresight and good heart to create a semi open fire area with oodles of free wood, so visitors can talk the night away in all weather and keep warm doing so. There is a manned marina office and all the whiz-bang features you would

expect from a quality site.

The Coachman Pastiche 520/4 was parked up in a wide, open field with spectacular open views in all directions. Nearby was the canal with some great walking or running in both directions. The Grove Lock pub is next door and well worth a visit. There is a 24-hour Tesco in Linslade and the bridge where the infamous 'great' train robbery (Biggs & co) occurred is but a short cycle ride away.

Light and spacious

The layout of the Pastiche 520/4 makes this a

perfect caravan for a family holiday. It is light and spacious, with gloriously comfortable bench style seating arranged towards the front. The skylight above allowed what little light there was that day to stream in and show off the subtle interior design to full effect. The rear washroom is hotel standard and very spacious. There is a circular shower unit, cassette toilet and a basin that would look equally at home.... um... at home. The huge wardrobe to the right as you walk in the washroom provides ample space for clothes, towels, shoes and the removable tables.



We also liked the way the middle dinette flipped smoothly into a bunk bed, which was surprisingly solid and fully protected with clip in sides. The front seating area turned into a very large triple bed; again requiring effortless work to prepare for a night's sleep.

Plenty of room

The kitchen area is well laid out with a sensible amount of worktop space; although you can always do with more. The hob has three gas rings and an electric hotplate. Hanging rails, light wood overhead lockers and underbed storage mean there's plenty of room for all those holiday essentials.

The 520/4 comes equipped with a control panel featuring a built-in voltmeter, awning, water pump, lighting and master switches, as well as a Pioneer entertainment centre with remote control radio, CD and MP3 player with DVD playback. And to ensure the caravan is safe from potential theft, it has a remote control alarm system with PIR and tilt sensors.

Set up on an almost empty field and beside one of the solid iron barbecues provided by the owners (at no extra charge), we set about on a cookathon of bangers, homemade coleslaw (from Tesco's), beans and mash washed down with a local cider (for the adults) and local apple juice (for the children).

Pretty soon a ferocious, almost biblical, rainfall replaced the sunny spell and so it was all inside for a game of cards. The rain pounded outside and as the sun sank we perfected the internal lighting to a comforting glow, and all was well with the world. The evening drifted along gently (for a change) and – it has been said many times I know – but the lack of computers, TVs, PS3s or any of the myriad devices designed to remove you from the real world made this a true family affair.

We have said it many times in the past in the pages of Discover Touring – and we will say it again: touring in this way always provides a perfect opportunity to unite a family that may have become disengaged in recent times and gives the chance for each member to re-discover each other. If this sounds a little naff – and I am sure it does – I don't care because it's true.

So there you have it, the Coachman Pastiche 520/4 is brilliantly arranged, delightfully simple to use, does not cause any stress and allows for a family to detoxify in complete comfort.

Always a sad day when these mini holidays come to the end – and the caravan is given back to its rightful owner (in this case Coachman) - but, hey, you get to keep the memories.

For more information please visit: www.coachman.co.uk and www.canalmarinas.com 