

# Live-in test

# Coachman Pastiche 525/4

Coachman has taken a giant step forward design-wise in recent years. It has just launched a new floor plan aimed at couples who tour with grandchildren. How well does it work?

WE CAN'T RECALL a caravan manufacturer that has reinvented itself in such a short period as Coachman. In two years, it has moved from traditional to cutting-edge design. The drastically revamped 2012 Pastiche, VIP and Laser ranges helped grow the brand's share in the luxury market – and this despite new van sales' falling by one third in five years.

What was the fuss about? The Pastiche was the cheapest of the three Coachman ranges to receive a new body, prominent roof rails, striking graphics and a moulded front panel incorporating a full-width roof window. Also new was Truma's programmable Combi boiler. The bold new looks and smart interior earned the Pastiche 460/2 the Best Caravan for Couples gong in our Tourer of the Year Awards 2012.

The Pastiche did well for Coachman in the 2012 model year, so improvements for 2013 are either cosmetic or upgrades. The biggest change is the introduction of a new layout: the 525/4. The manufacturer says it is a response to customer research and dealership feedback that 'more retired people are either caravanning longer or re-entering the market'. Coachman calls it 'grandparent demand' and has designed the 525/4 to help them take grandchildren on breaks.

It is an extended version of the Pastiche 470/2, deleted for this year, and comprises an L-shaped kitchen, fixed bunks and a corner washroom. We towed it empty with a SsangYong Korando 2.0 EX Auto (a 95% match when fully loaded) to a great site in North Yorkshire, Cote Ghyll, to try it out.

## Pitching and setting up

The panoramic window, high-profile roof rails, one-piece aluminium sides and alloy wheels give the 525/4 a sleek, modern look.



The Pastiche's unusual floor plan separates each area into a clearly delineated 'room'

As a single-axle van, the 525/4 can be manoeuvred onto a pitch by hand, but it's very heavy. We reckon most buyers will invest in retrofitting motor movers.

An AKS stabiliser, external gas and 230V output and a water inlet are standard for the range. Heavy-duty steadies are easily accessed at the front and although there are no guide tubes for those at the rear they shouldn't present a problem. The stand-on hitch cover is ideal for cleaning the roof window. The wide, front gas locker looks like a big, smiley mouth; open it up and



There are separate controls for the Combi space heater and water boiler



**Where tested** Cote Ghyll Caravan & Camping Park, Osmotherley, North Yorkshire (tel 01609 883 425)

**When tested** September 2012

					
£21,595	4	1505kg	160kg	1665kg	1038cm



The panoramic window across the front joins the rooflight in flooding the lounge with daylight. It's flanked by side cubbies and a long front shelf

there's plenty of room for easy access to the gas bottles.

Inside, separate control panels operate the space and water heating, and mains electricity.

### Lounging and dining

Step inside the 525/4 and you have immediate 'wow' factor. The layout gives you distinct 'rooms' and even a 'hallway' marked by a narrow, lit alcove with hooks for coats and low shelving for shoes to the right of the entrance door. The L-shaped kitchen divides the layout and you pass it to reach the lounge.

Cabinets are in a pale, ash finish with silver trim, long silver handles and mercifully few of the fingernail-breaking push buttons used on many manufacturers' lockers. One cupboard houses the radio/CD player with iPod/MP3 connection, and there is an aerial point for a TV behind the offside sofa near the centre chest.

The silvery cream-tweed upholstery is firm and boasts

double bolsters at either end of both sofas. The curtains are pale and silvery, too, and fall in neat pleats from the rails. Drop-in carpets match the contrasting upholstery and worktop colours. It is all very coordinated, and looks classy and luxurious.

LED lights include four spots in the lounge and lighting above the lockers operated by rocker switches. There is a further light above the panoramic roof window. Three front windows, two on the sides and a large rooflight, as well as the roof window, allow in plenty of daylight. Speakers on either side of the front windows face into the lounge. The overall effect is clean and modern.

There's plenty of space for four to lounge in comfort on the 6ft 2in-long sofas and for four to dine at the free-standing table, which is stowed in the wardrobe. The table is large, though, which makes it difficult to wriggle around before sitting down. »



Despite all the gear in the offside seat box, it still has some storage space





The Pastiche provides a midships kitchen that is designed to be used, with lots of worktop and storage, two sockets and all the appliances you need



### » Kitchen

This is a cook's kitchen with plenty of preparation space, drawers and cupboards: there will be no struggle to stow pans, crockery, cutlery and groceries. Overhead is an Omnivent extractor fan. The oven, grill and dual-fuel, four-burner hob occupy the short end of the L, leaving worktop space between it and the recessed drainer and square sink and further space on the other side of the sink, with a socket above that. Glass tops to the sink and hob add to the generous preparation space.

There's another, L-shaped worktop above the Thetford 113-litre fridge against the nearside wall. The overall effect is one of a wrap-around kitchen. There are two sockets and a TV aerial point

above here, but even with a TV in place there is space to put dishes hot from the microwave in the locker above.

Storage options are plentiful, starting with three drawers under the sink and a large cupboard below that, although some of the space is lost to a wheel arch. There are four lockers above the sink and oven, with a Perspex cocktail cabinet between two of them. One contains racking for plates and cups. Shelving deals with the right angle of the kitchen and there's open shelving for taller items alongside the oven. On the opposite wall next to the fridge are shallow cupboards with shelving and a shallow locker above that.

### Sleeping

To the rear of the kitchen bulkhead are the wardrobe and the fixed bunk beds. The bunks are tucked into the offside corner and an aluminium ladder with wide treads to support tender feet permits easy access to the top berth. Each bunk has a window, a spotlight and a curtain, so if one child wants to read, he or she won't disturb the other. A rooflight lets in daylight, while a downlight illuminates »



An aluminium frame pulled from the offside bed box (top) makes it easy to create a large double bed



Separate reading lights, windows and a downlight above the mirror make the children's room a pleasant place at bedtime or playtime





The corner washroom is another distinctive feature of the floor plan, with a separate shower, ample floor space to dress and plenty of towel hooks

» the adjacent wall mirror. In front of the bunks and wardrobe is space where little ones can get dressed or play, and the entire area can be closed off by a folding door, effectively creating a separate bedroom. It also permits adults to reach the washroom without disturbing the children.

At 6ft 2in long and 2ft 6in wide, the lounge sofas make comfortable single beds. Alternatively converting them into a double couldn't be easier: pull the aluminium frame from the front of the offside sofa to form the bed base. Then arrange cushions to form a firm mattress.

Four spotlights provide reading light for two no matter what sleeping configuration you choose, and with worktop both sides of the van and a central chest there are plenty of surfaces for a cup.

### Washroom

There's ample space to get dry after a shower in the large corner washroom. The round shower has a black panel holding the chrome shower unit and a small shelf for soap and shampoo.

The square basin has a chrome mixer tap, a big illuminated vanity mirror above and a cupboard below. Behind the electric-flush, swivel Thetford C-260 toilet is a frosted window and over that is a cupboard for toiletries.

On the back wall, near the toilet, is a towel rail and a shelf. Additional towel hooks and a ring are next to the shower.

### Storage

Storage options abound throughout the Pastiche, not just in the kitchen, where it's excellent. The front seat bases



The wardrobe has drawers that are ideal for children's clothing



The small alcove includes a place to hang wet jackets and put shoes

can hold bedding during the day. Space under the offside seat is compromised by the main electrical unit and the Combi boiler housed here, but there is some room and access to the space is easy, thanks to the hinged lid, which is supported by a gas strut. The central chest has three drawers and a slide-out extension top. A shelf under the panoramic window replaces lockers that otherwise would be on the front wall of the van, leaving two wide lockers and a small cubby with a door on either side of the van.

The large full-length wardrobe between the bunks and the kitchen provides the principal storage space at the back of the van. The table and the TV aerial are located here but neither really impinges

on the space. Inside the wardrobe and low against its left-hand wall are two drawers and a large cubby. These are useful for stowing children's clothes but the bottom of the wardrobe will need to be kept clear to access them. The bottom bunk provides a vast space, just right for children's toys.

## Verdict

This is a modern, classy-looking van with the build quality that Coachman owners have come to expect. However, while the unique layout has the 'wow' factor, it has divided opinion at *Practical Caravan*, which cost it a place in the Tourer of the Year 2013 awards.

Some of our team believe the area in front of the bunks and wardrobe is wasted space. They also argue that the drawers and cubby hole at the bottom of the wardrobe will be hard to access when bulky items are stored there, as often happens. The nearside worktop, which creates a curved corridor, also has its critics.

Others love the extra space, particularly the van's division into 'rooms'. They say the L-shaped kitchen provides a barrier that, along with the folding door, creates privacy for adults and leaves children undisturbed by light and noise from the lounge. The space by the bunks gives children somewhere to play and is ideal for turning into a den. And they love the large washroom and dedicated space for outerwear.

The layout is worth considering for small families, but if you're grandparents looking to take the grandkids away only occasionally, you'll be towing a lot of space that you can't use when the children are not with you. You might be better off with the 520/4, which has a side dinette that can be turned into bunks, or the 565/4, with twin fixed singles. Both have large end washrooms, but you'll miss out on that great kitchen.

The Coachman's weight doesn't compare favourably with those of rival vans, nor does the price, but the high quality will trump these issues for some caravanners and the layout will appeal to families. So, if money is not an issue and your car can tow it, the 525/4 may be the right van for you.

Specifications and comparisons for this model on page 80 »



## Vital stats

# Coachman Pastiche 525/4

**Price** £21,595 **Berths** 4 **MiRO** 1505kg **Payload** 160kg **MTPLM** 1665kg **Awning size** 1038cm  
**Contact** Coachman Caravan Company **Address** Amsterdam Road, Sutton Fields Industrial Estate, Hull HU7 0XF  
**Tel** 01482 839 737 **Web** www.coachman.co.uk **Dealers** 31

## Standard equipment

### Construction

**Sidewalls** Aluminium sandwich, single-piece skin

### Roof

**Front panel** Full-height, acrylic-capped ABS with panoramic roof window

**Rear panel** Full height acrylic-capped ABS

### External equipment

Al-Ko chassis with buttonless handbrake. AKS stabiliser. Al-Ko ATC. Heavy-duty rear steadies. Shock absorbers. Alloy wheels. Spare wheel and carrier. External gas/mains output. One-piece entrance door with flyscreen. Directional TV aerial

### Heating

Truma Combi dual-fuel space heater and water boiler

### Lounge

Blinds and flyscreens to all windows. Drop-in carpets. Directional TV aerial. Branded radio/CD/MP3 player with iPod/MP3 connectivity

### Kitchen

Thetford 113-litre fridge. Separate oven and grill. Three-burner gas hob with electric hotplate. Electronic ignition and flame failure. Recessed stainless-steel sink and drainer. Microwave

### Washroom

Electric-flush Thetford C-260 cassette toilet. Separate shower cubicle. Towel rails

### Security

CRiS number etched to all windows. Concealed data chip. Receiver for Al-Ko Secure wheel lock. Alarm

### Warranty

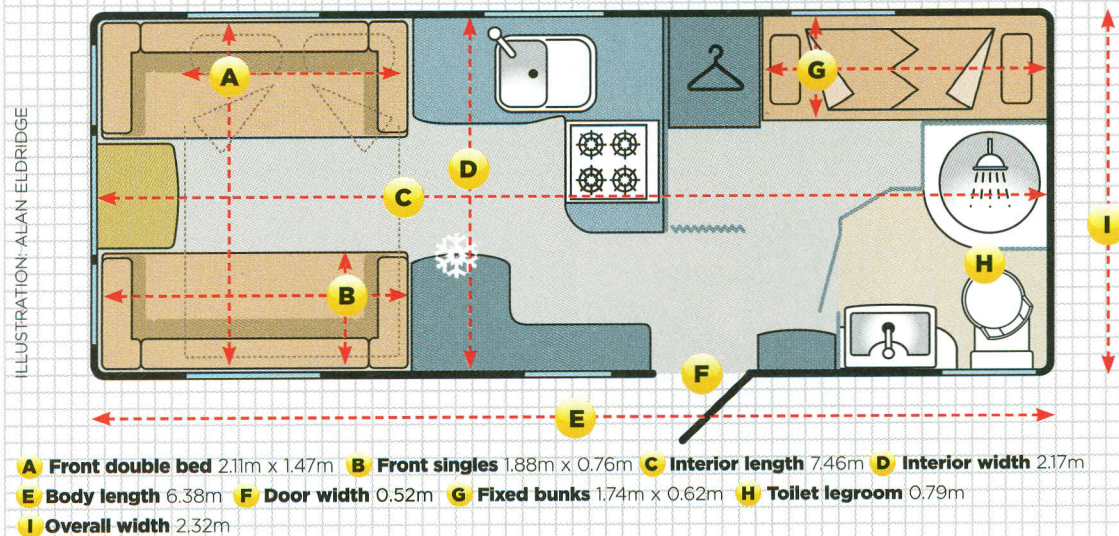
5 years parts.  
6 years water ingress

## Factory-fit options

Al-Ko Secure wheel lock (£250). DVD player (£300). Alternative soft furnishings (£250). Wrap-around seating (Free)

\*Insurance quotes are provided by Coast, are based on maximum discount and are subject to underwriting terms. The Coast touring caravan insurance policy is underwritten by Zurich Insurance plc. Coast can provide 'new for old' cover on caravans up to 10 years old and all policies include accidental damage, up to 180 days' European cover, £2 million public liability and optional equipment and awning cover. In the event of a claim, there is a policy excess of £50. For more information call 0800 614 849 or visit [www.coastinsurance.co.uk](http://www.coastinsurance.co.uk).

## Plan



## Useful info

**Perfect partner** For an 85% match you need a towcar with a kerbweight of 1959kg  
**Gas locker height** 1.34m **Shipping length** 7.45m **Tyres** 195/70 R15 104  
**Door height** 1.7m **Interior height** 1.95m **Overall height** 2.68m

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**Freephone** 0800 614 849

## How do the rivals compare?



**Adria Adora Danube**



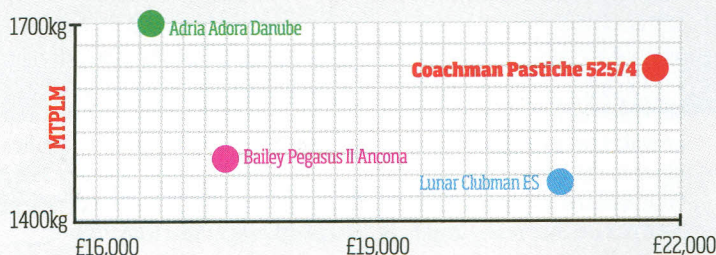
**Bailey Pegasus II Ancona**



**Lunar Clubman ES**

<b>Price</b>	£16,490	£17,495	£20,795
<b>MiRO</b>	1465kg	1311kg	1308kg
<b>Payload</b>	235kg	188kg	152kg
<b>MTPLM</b>	1700kg	1499kg	1460kg
<b>Verdict</b>	The twin beds can convert to a double, but you miss out on an end washroom	This six-berth has a small kitchen, but it's forgivable at £4000 less than the Pastiche	A side dinette provides the bunk space, and the end washroom is great, but the galley loses points

## How the Pastiche 525/4 stacks up



## The facts behind the figures

The 525/4's price and weight make a direct comparison with its rivals hard. The heavier Adora Danube's versatile layout loses out in the washroom, while that of the lighter Lunar has a small kitchen: both are well suited to the grandparent scenario. Price, weight and a good-sized washroom makes the Ancona a good large-family option.