

Second-hand Shoot-out

Price £8950 **MiRO** 1395kg **MTPLM** 1590kg



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The upholstery in the lounge and dinette is attractive and, after six years, still provides support. The exterior shows no signs of wear. The kitchen falls down in one area: workspace. A single gas strut lifts the front locker lid right out of the way

2006 Coachman Pastiche 520

This month we visit **Brayford Leisure**

BRAYFORD LEISURE WAS established in 1977 on Tritton Road, Lincoln. The company grew, particularly after it amalgamated with Couplands Caravans at Louth, Lincolnshire, in 1996. Brayford was so successful that it soon needed more space to accommodate all of its departments. In September 2004, the dealership moved to its current, purpose-built premises, off the A46 Lincoln by-pass.

As well as being dealers for Lunar and Swift caravans, Brayford sells top-of-the-range special models bearing the Bessacarr badge and based on the Swift Conqueror range. (Bessacarr, Bailey, Sterling and Swift tourers are sold at Louth).

Brayford's general manager, John Ellis, was upbeat about the performance of his dealership when we visited. He said: "We're told that the market is quite depressed at the moment, but I'm pleased to say that we seem

to be very much bucking the trend. Our sales figures are up on this time last year."

When asked which caravans were selling well, he replied, "We seem to be selling most, but the Bessacarrs, Lunar Clubman and Swift Challenger Sports are doing particularly well. The [Lunar] Clubman SB, with the fixed single beds, is possibly the biggest seller at the moment."

As well as the new caravans on display, Brayford has plenty of used tourers, from nearly new models to early 2000s. There's a well-stocked accessory shop and an impressive NCC-approved workshop for servicing and repairs.

Brayford Leisure Caravan Centre

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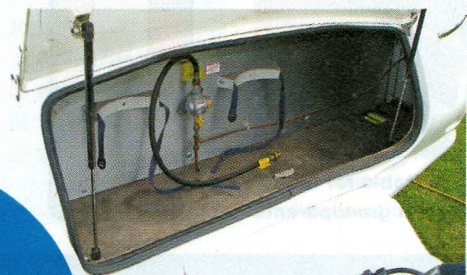
END-WASHROOM FOUR-BERTH vans with side dinettes have been popular since their introduction in the 1980s, defying even the incursions in recent years of fixed-bed vans into their customer base. This layout is one of the most spacious, practical and versatile on the market, whether it's for families, couples who may take along grandchildren occasionally, or ralliers. We're looking at two high-specification models for less than £9000 to see how they've stood the test of time.

The contenders

2006 Coachman Pastiche 520

Conservatively styled, heavy and with a reputation for superb build quality, the Coachman Pastiche models have maintained their reputation over the years, and with justification. The range slots into the middle of Coachman's portfolio, and comes well

Four-berths for under £9000



Price £8995 MiRO 1328kg MTPLM 1525kg

ANTI-CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Drab fabrics and less-supportive cushions make the lounge less appealing. The mains connection, toilet cassette and other external features are on the awning side. There's lots of kitchen workspace. Struts on the gas locker failed to hold the lid

2005 Compass Rallye 524

equipped with neat touches that add to the feeling of class, making the Pastiche a popular buy on the second-hand market.

2005 Compass Rallye 524

Built by the former Explorer Group, which became Elddis Caravans in 2009, the Compass Rallye was a popular caravan in its time. Its distinctive bodyshell and features that are unique to the Consett company adds up to an intriguing rival for the Coachman.

Pitch and set-up

2006
Coachman Pastiche 520

8
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2005
Compass Rallye 524

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The Coachman has AI-Ko running gear, and comes with a button-less handbrake and hitch stabiliser, while the Compass has BPW running gear with Winterhoff stabiliser and buttoned handbrake. Both have underslung spare wheels

and alloy wheels. The Coachman benefits from retrofitted Tyron bands, while the Compass has a Carver mover. Old style 12N and 12S car connections are common to both.

The front lockers of both tourers are huge, and while the Pastiche's lid was held by a central gas strut, the side struts on the Rallye weren't working. Access to the steadies is fairly easy; the front ones on the Coachman have inserts to prevent body damage from a wayward winder. The Compass counters this with guide tubes for its rear steadies.

Both have external gas and mains points, and Truma awning warmers. The Coachman's warmer is sensibly placed near the centre of the van, while the Compass has one at the front. The Coachman's battery/mains inlet locker is on the offside, the one on the Compass is on the nearside, so the lead will trail through the awning. Both lockers are near the front, so they will have a bearing on noseweights. Each has external access hatches to underneath the

nearside seat box. The Compass also has a huge wet locker on the offside. The hatch for the Compass's Thetford toilet cassette is on the nearside, so the cassette must be carried through an awning to be emptied.

Unusually, both caravans have their wastewater outlets at the rear. This can be a real nuisance if you've pitched on a slope. The Pastiche has a slight advantage, though, because they are close together, as opposed to being 22cm apart on the Rallye.

The Coachman takes this round thanks to the better location of its external equipment.

Lounge

2006
Coachman Pastiche 520

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2005
Compass Rallye 524

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The lounges on these caravans are wonderfully spacious. There's ample room in each to stretch out or to entertain a number of guests, >>

2006 Coachman Pastiche 520

Vital statistics

Price £8950
Berths 4
Internal length 5.15m
Overall length 7.29m
Overall width 2.26m
MiRO+ 1395kg
Payload 195kg
MTPLM+ 1590kg

Kit list

- Al-Ko chassis and AKS 3004 stabiliser
- Spare wheel and carrier
- Directional TV aerial
- External gas/mains output
- Truma dual-fuel space and water heaters
- Thetford 96-litre fridge with freezer
- Four-burner gas hob
- Separate oven and grill
- Door flyscreen
- Removable carpets
- Heki rooflight
- Radio/CD player
- Alarm



The overall condition of the Pastiche is superb, despite the slight peeling of the wallboard along the section joins. It attests to Coachman's reputation for reliable build quality



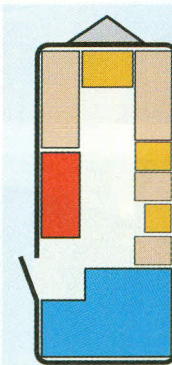
The huge washroom has welcome touches, including a cushion on the toilet seat cover



The side dinette is split from the lounge by a wide dresser (left)



The bunks are suitable for kids tagging along with grandparents



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» especially if the side dinettes are also used. The cushions in the Coachman are in first-class condition and still give great support, while those in the Compass are a little tired and hurt by rather drab fabric. There are bolster cushions at each end of the seats in both, and a couple of scatter cushions, too.

Removable carpets are fitted and the similarity between the two caravans continues with almost identical arrangements for the centre chest and tabletop. Both tables are of the pull out and fold over type, and have two drawers and a small locker underneath.

Heki rooflights, TV points (including a neatly DIY-fitted satellite point in the Coachman), radio/CD players and an array of halogen and mains lights complete the lounges.

Round two goes to the Coachman, then, for its better cushions and more inviting ambience.

Beds

2006
 Coachman Pastiche 520

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 Compass Rallye 524

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The front beds can be either two singles (1.9m x 0.69m and 1.88m x 0.69m, respectively, in the Coachman, or 1.88m x 0.71m each in the

Compass) or large doubles (2.06m x 1.37m in the Coachman, or 2.11m x 1.3m in the Compass). Both doubles are easy to make up, but it would be worth turning the main cushions around to ensure a good night's sleep because of the knee rolls.

Caravan close-up



Coachman This caravan is in what can only be described as immaculate condition. The only issues are peeling tape over wallboard joints and some rust to the shower cubicle fittings.

The side dinettes in both can be converted into bunks suitable for children. They are similar in sizes and construction, with ladders and wooden guardrails to provide protection for the youngster in the top bunk.

Because the beds in both vans are so similar, plus provide reading lights and shelves for the morning cuppa, we'll call it a draw.

Kitchen

2006
 Coachman Pastiche 520

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 Compass Rallye 524

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Both kitchens are very well equipped, but the Rallye has significantly more work surface than the Pastiche, and has a microwave fitted. Four-burner gas hobs, separate grills and ovens are the order of the day. However, the hob controls in the Compass are along the right-hand side of the unit, which could prove rather awkward to use for a left-handed cook. The controls in the Coachman are along the front.

The Coachman's main dining table is stored in the washroom, while the Compass has a more convenient, dedicated space for it between the lounge and the side dinette, opposite the kitchen.

2005 Compass Rallye 524

Vital statistics

Price £8995
Berths 4
Internal length 5.34m
Overall length 7.16m
Overall width 2.28m
MIRO+ 1328kg
Payload 197kg
MTPLM+ 1525kg

Kit list

- BPW chassis and Winterhoff stabiliser
- Spare wheel and carrier
- Directional TV aerial
- External gas/mains output
- Truma dual-fuel space and water heaters
- Dometic 86-litre fridge with freezer
- Four-burner gas hob
- Separate oven and grill, and microwave
- Removable carpets
- Heki rooflight
- Radio/CD player
- Alarm



Minor damage is visible inside, including a hole in the kitchen work surface. The Rallye has a convenient place to store the main dining table just forward of the side dinette

Both vans have end washrooms, nearside kitchens and offside dinettes

KEY

- Seats/beds
- Kitchen
- Washroom
- Table/cupboard



Larger mirrors and more cupboards and shelves beat those offered in the Pastiche



The Compass has an electric-flush toilet, unlike the Coachman



The bunk beds are close in size and build to the Pastiche's

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A wide dresser is fitted in the Coachman opposite the kitchen, dividing the lounge from the side dinette. A second TV point is here, too. The Compass has a much narrower affair, with a fold-up flap serving as a second TV point.

The draw in this round is because each tourer cancels out the other's advantages with its own.

Washroom

2006
Coachman Pastiche 520

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Compass Rallye 524

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End washrooms can be big, and these are both huge, with circular shower cubicles, roomy wardrobes and lots of cupboards. The Pastiche has a manual-flush toilet, as opposed to the electric version fitted in the Rallye.

The Coachman's shower is immediately to the right as you enter the washroom, and the wardrobe is tucked into the rear-nearside corner. A shelf with cupboards underneath runs along the rear wall and widens at the offside corner where the sink is, next to the toilet. A nice touch is the cushion fitted to the toilet lid so it can be used as a seat.

The washroom in the Compass is almost a mirror image of the Coachman's, with the

shower to the left as you enter and the wardrobe in the rear offside corner. If anything there are even more cupboards and shelves in the Compass. It also has larger mirrors.

Despite these advantages, the Compass cannot pull ahead, so the score is even.

Caravan close-up



Compass The general feeling of the Rallye's tiredness was particularly evident in the washroom, where varnish has worn away from the wooden edging, especially in front of the basin.

Verdict

2006
Coachman Pastiche 520

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2005
Compass Rallye 524

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It's hard to tell whether the Rallye has endured heavier use than its rival, but the only faults in the Pastiche are a little rust in the shower and peeling tape over joints in the wallboard. Otherwise, it was immaculate inside and out, as you'd expect of a Coachman.

The Compass looks well used with no major signs of wear. Still, there were small dents on the bodyshell, and similar blemishes inside, including a small hole in the kitchen worktop. Although only a year older than the Coachman it hadn't stood the wear and tear as well.

Both caravans come with 12-month dealer warranties, so they are on equal ground there.

Without question, the Coachman is the better caravan, beating its rival for set-up and in the lounge. Add to the equation that it is a year newer and still £45 cheaper than the Compass, and you've got what looks like a bargain.

Looking for a used tourer? Make sure you check our For Sale site:
www.practicalcaravan.com/forsale

