

Second sight

Rob McCabe tests an all-new six-berth from the second-generation Pegasus stable

Vehicle supplied for test by: Bailey of Bristol, South Liberty Lane, Bristol BS3 2SS. Call 0117 305 2939.

I'VE LONG championed the effectiveness of the six-berth caravan as a good four or five-sleeper, given the flexibility that the various bigger layouts afford families. As such, this all-new, triple-bunk/corner-washroom offering from Bailey is bound to be one of the most popular in the five-strong Pegasus line-up, which has been revamped for 2011. This newbie, the Ancona, is the largest of the four single-axle models (the twin-axle Bologna heads up the range).

CONSTRUCTION

When Bailey launched its Alu-Tech method of building caravans a couple of years ago, it tentatively rolled it out on just one range – the new Pegasus. Well, two years is a long time in caravan manufacturing, and now the entire Bailey range comes off the Alu-Tech production line.

Five exterior panels – including a massive ceiling/front end – and the floor are joined to each other by interlocking aluminium extrusions. There aren't any

external fixing points on these, which greatly reduces the risk of any water ingress. All this hangs off a composite plastic framework, meaning there's no timber involved in the caravan's structure at all. On the inside, each wall is one sheet of smooth GRP.

The gas locker lid on the latest Pegasus is now the same colour as the rest of the exterior. No longer will your eyes be drawn to it like a big spot on somebody's chin.

The new Pegasus is an impressive structure to behold – perfect joins,

detailed, tidy finishing everywhere you care to look and concrete-like solidity, both inside and out.

TOWABILITY

The Ancona is a big, heavy old thing, so only something chunky will be up to the job of propelling it in comfort and safety.

Once suitably set up, there should be no problems on the road. Al-Ko weighs in with a built-in hitch stabiliser and ATC stability control system, while the weight distribution of the three, heavy on-board appliances is helpful, too, the cooker being right over the axle and the fridge and microwave just in front of it.

USABILITY

Interesting statistic from the recent NEC show: for every one buyer of the Pegasus in its standard, wraparound front seating configuration, there were two prepared to pay extra for the front chest of drawers.

Although it's a shame that you should have to shell out an extra £286 in the first place, I'm with the majority. The chest is a far more practical use of the space and, thanks to an extension that simply slides out from underneath the existing surface, its user-friendliness couldn't be better. The deep front window shelf provides even more space for paraphernalia.

The loose-lay carpet sections fit snugly and will continue to do so thanks to corner Velcro strips on the underside. One dapper little section covers the lounge but its neighbour stretches from there all the way back to the washroom door. Talk about a disincentive to lift it: where are you supposed to keep such a continent-sized lump of carpeting?

Likewise, nowhere has been set aside for stowage of the clip-on table in the side dinette if you're not using it. Even the old standby of a restraint on the inside of the wardrobe wall would have sufficed.

The wardrobe itself is a good size, setting the tone for storage opportunities, which are plentiful. There are six overhead lockers in the lounge alone, although one of these hosts the stereo/CD/MP3 player and the 'down periscope' antenna for the multi-directional TV aerial. On last year's Pegasus, the stereo's head unit was on the outside of the furniture, which I thought made a lot of sense. Looks like I was by myself on that one...

There are front-mounted hatches on the bedlockers, but they're decidedly dinky. Bigger, bulkier stuff may have to be dragged out of the top.

Great to see that the 15in TV/DVD player, part of last year's standard equipment, has been dropped. Not only does this help keep costs down, but it allows you to choose a telly that you like, or just to pack the one from the bedroom at home.

A collection of little things combine to make life easier: the waste bin on the inside of the door; two double coat hooks on the wall; the key shelf above the entrance door; the two sealed exterior lockers, one on the front of each sidewall.

The slide-in-and-out fresh water tank is commendable. It can be used as well as, or instead of, the usual exterior container, so is just the job for quick overnight stops when you need a speedy, ferry-bound getaway the next morning.

There's a general feeling of spaciousness – from the generous width to the 6ft 5in headroom – that will no doubt be especially welcome when there are six on board.

LIVING AND SLEEPING

Day or night, the front lounge really hits the mark. The sofas are comfy and supportive, and there is a fine selection of cushions and bolsters to lean into. Indeed, you can lean into the front corners with as much abandon as you can muster because the back of your head will still be miles away from any blind or curtain thanks to the deep window ledge.

At 5ft 7in, the sofas are long enough for a feet-up afternoon nap, although obviously limited in their use as single beds. The substantial upholstery contributes to a great double bed, which is quickly made by easing out the usual slats from under the front chest. Last year's pull-out footrest-cum-bed-base sections have been consigned to the same history book as that 15in TV.

Six will be able to sit up here in reasonable comfort but the side dinette is no afterthought: it's good enough to allow a practical four-plus-two arrangement at mealtimes. This, too, makes a superb bed (also 5ft 7in long), once you've figured out that you need to borrow the two smaller backrests from the front lounge to get a good, tight fit. There's no privacy curtain here, though, which isn't ideal – if the Ancona is being used as a four or five-berther, I guess this is the bed that is least likely to be used.

Triple bunks are still unusual enough to be a bit of a talking point at parties (well, they are at the ones I get invited to, anyway – once we've stopped talking about awning carpets). The weight limit on each of the upper two bunks is a decent 75kg (just under 12 stone) and the set-up here is a good one. The mattresses are nice and firm and, as you'd expect, each bunk has a window with blind/flyscreen and a surprisingly powerful light. Privacy isn't an issue here – a really good-quality, nicely-conceived concertina blind snicks neatly into place when extended and clips unobtrusively out of the way when not.

The bunk bases are all fixed in place – there's no option to use this bedroom as a giant storage area.



Comfortable front lounge



Kitchen is not short on storage

“No fewer than six downlighters work their magic along the entire length of the kitchen”

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USABILITY	9
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KITCHEN	9
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RRP	£17,040 OTR
Overall length	23ft 9in (7.25m)
Overall width	7ft 6in (2.28m)
Overall height	8ft 8in (2.63m)
Internal length	18ft 8in (5.68m)
Max internal height	6ft 5in (1.96m)
MRO	1,311kg (25.8cwt)
MTPLM	1,499kg (29.5cwt)
User payload	188kg (3.7cwt)
Berths	6
NCC approved	Yes

Figures supplied by manufacturer

Club insurance: 01342 336610 • Info: bailey-caravans.co.uk

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Lack of external fixing points reduces the risk of water ingress



“ The chunky washbasin looks great in what is already an attractive room... ”

Above: Ancona's washroom is both stylish and functional

Above right: triple bunks have good maximum weight limits

Below: microwave enjoys a sensible eye-level location

KITCHEN

The installation of an eye-level microwave is a common-sense move that will be celebrated by sub-six-footers everywhere. There's more wisdom on view immediately opposite, where no fewer than six downlighters – two on the underside of the overhead lockers and four on a ceiling-mounted plinth – work their magic along the entire length of the kitchen.

With the sink cover/chopping board in place, there's decent work surface at your disposal; and if you're washing up using the supplied bowl the sensible shape of the sink means you can still easily rinse and drain stuff. There isn't any purpose-built storage for the sink cover or plastic draining board – odd, when all it needs is a couple of clips on the side of one of the bigger cupboards. Storage is otherwise excellent, bolstered by a pair of wire baskets that slide out of the huge cupboard that also gives a home to the free-standing table.

As well as that 800W microwave, there are four gas burners and a separate grill and oven. A compact sunroof overhead provides ventilation when cooking.

The frosted covers on the overhead lockers help give the kitchen its own identity – which is, I have to say, a highly-likeable identity.

WASHROOM

If the microwave is the centre of attention in the main body of the caravan, it's the chunky washbasin that hogs the limelight in here – deservedly so, because it does look great in what is already an attractively turned-out room.

There's plenty of function to go with the style. The pull-cord for the light is easily grabbed in the dark; two flannel/dressing gown hooks complement the towel ring on the back of the domestic-style door; and there's lots of stowage space, courtesy of a range of lockers and open shelving.

The shower cubicle is well sealed, but there's just one little soap dish so most toiletries will have to go on the floor. And given the excellent attention to lighting elsewhere, the lack of a downlighter in here is surprising.

LIGHTING AND ELECTRICS

As last year, all the lights work off the 12V system – even the two 'mains-style' wall lamps at the front. Each corner of the lounge also has its own directional reading lamp and there's a decorative LED strip running under the overhead lockers above the front window. If you want this mood



Side dinette also makes a good bed

lighting down the sides of the lounge as well, you now have to pay extra for it.

So, the lounge is well-illuminated, as is the kitchen with its aforementioned plethora of downlighters. There's a single downlighter above the nearside dresser, which is good to have on in the evening. A ceiling light near the door, two reading lights in the side dinette and an effective wall lamp for each of the bunks means that nobody on board will be left in the dark. The LED-illuminated grab handles aren't just decorative – they also serve as running lights when towing.

Three interior mains sockets plus a shielded one outside is okay, but a caravan with this particular layout really needs one further back. A low-level one by the entrance door would have served the needs of hairdryer/straightener users and games console addicts alike. The JVC stereo and matching speakers put out a pleasing, rich sound, and the vast, sweeping plateau of dresser top next to the mains/aerial/12V sockets will accommodate a large-screen telly with room to spare.

VERDICT

Pegasus scores highly on the first-impression stakes and gets better from then on. It's comfortable, exceptionally well-presented and well made – although it's not quite perfect, it's had a right good go at it. ■

