

Help us to buy

a mid-range compact 'van for couples



ON TEST

Bailey Pegasus 2 Genoa

PRICE £15,395

BERTHS 2

Renamed the Pegasus 2, and revamped for the new season, the current Genoa has a more pleasant interior and lower prices, but less standard spec

Coachman Amara Crown 450/2

PRICE £15,800

BERTHS 2

A beautifully built single-axle tourer for two, with an innovative new bed and roomy washroom



THIS MONTH WE HELP

Mick and Lesley Burdett,
from Kettering, Northants

CARAVANNING HISTORY

Mick and Lesley only converted to caravanning three years ago, after buying a nearly-new Avondale Osprey. Both retired, the Burdetts enjoy around a dozen trips away in their van every year, with their three Newfoundland dogs.

LOOKING FOR AND WHY

Mick and Lesley's daughter and her family have joined them for several trips. So, Mick is now thinking of letting them use the Osprey, while they trade down to a two-berth. Whatever they buy, it must have a superb washroom and an easily attached awning for the three dogs.



Our expert

A lifelong camper, Mark Sutcliffe converted to caravanning when he got too old for tents. With two little tearaways of his own, he knows exactly which layouts work for both couples and families and understands the importance of value for money. ►



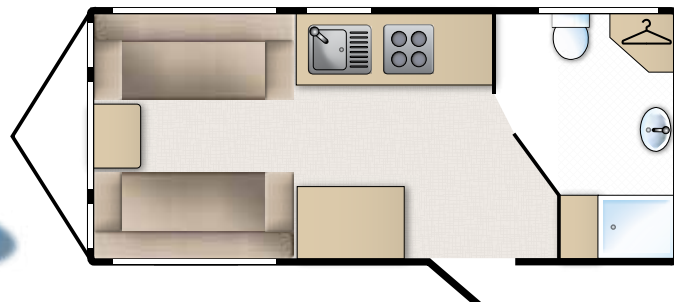
The kitchen offers plenty of worktop space, plus a huge sink and large fridge



Access to the gas locker



Mick liked the spacious shower cubicle but noticed it didn't have its own light



SPECIFICATION

PRICE £15,395, includes 20% VAT, excludes delivery charges of £505

CONTACT Bailey of Bristol, South Liberty Lane, Bristol, BS3 2SS

T 0117 305 2939

W bailey-caravans.co.uk

BERTHS 2

DIMENSIONS Internal length 4.90m, overall width 2.28m, shipping length 6.47m

MIRO 1215kg

MTPLM 1356kg

USER PAYLOAD 141kg

BED SIZES Front double 6ft 10in x 6ft 3in/208cm x 190cm, two singles 6ft 3in x 2ft 3in/190cm x 69cm

WARRANTY 10 years body integrity guarantee, three years' component

HEATING Truma mains and gas blown air heating and water heaters, grade three insulation

Mark says

We like

Roomy, open-plan interior, modern Alu-Tech construction, enhanced insulation, LED grab handles, integrated water tank, good kitchen, standard ATC, good long warranty

We dislike

Odd washroom layout, rather anaemic ambient LED lighting

EXTERIOR

Both Mick and Lesley liked the modern lines of the Pegasus and remarked upon the level roofline and steep, almost vertical drop of the front panel, which maximizes headroom and space in the lounge. Mick liked the options presented by the three separate front lockers and was impressed with the quality of the white central gas locker door, which replaces the previous Pegasus's grey affair.

Although the Genoa gets an exterior barbecue point, Mick and Lesley were more interested in the external 230v socket, which is ideal for powering a small fan heater to keep the awning warm, early and late in the season. They also appreciated the large, bright LED awning light.

8/10

LOUNGE

Although the Burdetts felt instantly at home in the Genoa's spacious wrap-around lounge, they felt they'd probably specify the more traditional opposing settee layout.

Mick thought the cabinetry felt very solid and appreciated the positive locks and splitter shelves in the overhead lockers and both agreed the upholstery was incredibly supportive.

They thought the low energy lighting was good, although Mick said he'd like to see another ceiling light above the front of the lounge. With three 230v sockets, including one on the A-pillar of the front panel, the Genoa has good electrics, but Mick said he wanted an extra socket behind the nearside dresser.

8/10

DINING

In conventional opposing settee layout, the Genoa would fare better here, but the Burdetts quickly recognised the limitations of the wraparound lounge layout.

The problem is that, although the front of the double bed-slat mechanism extends out to form a sort of coffee table, this layout is completely reliant on the standalone table being used for even the simplest meals.

This table is stored under the sink and is quite compact and feels pretty flimsy. Lesley thought it needed to be two inches higher and two inches wider and, although it would cope at mealtimes for just the two of them, entertaining any more would be a real challenge.

6/10

KITCHEN

Bailey's kitchens are among the best in the business, offering generous levels of worktop space, good storage, a huge sink and excellent lighting.

Mick does most of the cooking and he was pretty impressed with the roomy kitchen with its good levels of worktop space, generous storage and comprehensive equipment levels. Mick said he would have liked the option of an electric hotplate, but was otherwise happy with the separate oven and grill and the roomy 120-litre Dometic fridge. The microwave sits opposite the kitchen and, while there is additional worktop space available here, Lesley thought it was too low to work at comfortably.

8/10

SCORES

10 BEST I'VE SEEN 9 TOP NOTCH 8 REALLY GREAT 7 PRETTY GOOD 6 CAN LIVE WITH IT 5 AVERAGE
4 BELOW AVERAGE 3 QUITE POOR 2 NOT WORTH CONSIDERING 1 LEAVE IT ALONE



Mick does most of the cooking and loved the kitchen



There's plenty of locker storage



The spacious interior has a high quality feel, impressing the couple

NIGHT TIME

Lesley didn't like the rather small locker doors in the front of the bed bases, but when she discovered the strut-assisted mechanisms to lift the bed bases, she was impressed by the easy access they offered to the storage underneath.

Mick and Lesley prefer to sleep separately on the twin singles and were more than comfortable with the long, wide berths on offer. They thought the webbed slats to bridge the gap between settees and form the huge double worked fine, but this arrangement wasn't as innovative or substantial as the Coachman's clever motorhome-style pullout slats.

Lesley said the firm upholstery would give them a good night's sleep.

8/10

STORAGE

The Genoa has a very generous level of storage, with more than enough lockers, cabinets and cupboards for the Burdett's needs. The underseat storage is easily accessible via those strut-assisted seat bases, although it's compromised on the offside by the onboard water tank and the water heater. There are 10 standard overhead lockers – most with splitter shelves – and five kitchen cupboards, plus two ¾ length wardrobes in the washroom area.

Externally, while the Genoa doesn't benefit from the Coachman's cavernous gas locker and nearside wet locker, Mick really liked the Bailey's three separate front lockers. The van's payload figure is quite low, though.

9/10

WASHROOM

While the generous washroom is one of the Genoa's obvious strengths, the Burdett's have become accustomed to the even larger washroom in their Avondale Osprey.

Mick liked the chunky Belfast-style sink, but Lesley couldn't understand why there was a narrow gap down the left hand side where it meets the wardrobe, which she thought would be a real dirt trap.

They were disappointed that the shower didn't have its own light and weren't impressed by the gaps at the top and the hinge side of the washroom door. On a positive note, Mick and Lesley appreciated the amount of space on offer in the shower and the sheer amount of storage.

7/10

BUILD QUALITY

Mick admitted that he was pleasantly surprised by the build quality and finish of the Genoa, which he thought represented a big step forward over the Series 1 Pegasus. He was particularly impressed with Bailey's response to the issue of stone-chipping on the front panel, which is now protected by special coverings, plus the re-worked central gas locker door, with its solid feel and chunky locking mechanism. Mick was convinced by the merits of the Alu-Tech construction system and liked the extra warranty included as standard, but wanted to know exactly how much additional servicing would be needed. They also liked the quality feel of the interior fittings.

8/10

2

COACHMAN AMARA CROWN 450/2



The couple loved the modern interior, which is a comfortable place to relax

SPECIFICATION

PRICE £15,800, includes 20% VAT but excludes delivery charge of £495

CONTACT Amara Crown special edition is built exclusively for Marquis by the Coachman Caravan Company, Amsterdam Road, Sutton Fields Industrial Estate, Hull HU7 0XF

T 01482 839737

W coachman.co.uk

BERTHS 2

DIMENSIONS Internal length 4.72m, overall width 2.26m, shipping length 6.38m

MIRO 1254kg

MTPLM 1380kg

USER PAYLOAD 126kg

BED SIZES Front double 6ft 8in x 4ft 9in/203cm x 144cm, 2 x singles 6ft 1in x 2ft 5in/186cm x 74cm

WARRANTY 6 years body integrity guarantee, three years' component

HEATING Truma blown air

Mark says

We like

Refreshing new external styling, clever new bed system, increased headroom, outstanding build quality too

We dislike

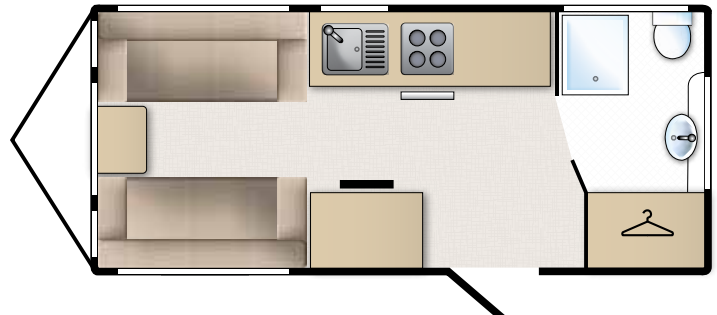
Narrow body, relatively low payload figure



Circular shower cubicle is a neat touch



There's plenty of locker storage but the payload figure is quite modest



EXTERIOR

The Amara was extensively updated for the 2011 season, with an altogether more contemporary look which Mick and Lesley preferred to the Bailey. The front panel isn't as steeply raked as the Genoa's, which is more apparent inside the lounge, which doesn't feel as spacious. There's a new roofline and full-height front and rear panels, which increase headroom to 6ft 5in along the entire length of the van. The standard alloy wheels have cool black detailing and the suspension now benefits from shock absorbers. Grey wheel arch extensions reinforce the sporty look, as do the altogether more modern mouldings on the van's new front and rear panels.

8/10

LOUNGING

Step inside and, although there's only an inch difference in the width, the Amara feels significantly narrower than the Bailey. The Burdetts put this down to the conventional opposed settee layout and the especially wide seat squabs, which are two inches deeper than the Genoa's.

They had no issues over the quality of the fabrics, or the cabinetry, although Mick noted the absence of positive catches on the overhead lockers.

Lesley said she thought the kitchen and lounge merged into a single space, whereas in the Bailey, they remained separate and distinct. Mick liked the quality Pioneer entertainment system, with CD and MP3 playback.

6/10

DINING

Despite its more modest proportions, the Amara is the better of our two contenders when it comes to dining. While it doesn't feel as if it will accommodate as many guests as the Genoa, with the tables in place, there is actually more room to entertain diners.

The redesigned central chest of drawers has a generous fold-over occasional table, which is adequate for light meals, but add in the substantial free-standing table and there's room for six to eat at a pinch. The main table, which is stowed in a dedicated slot between the oven and washroom bulkhead, is bigger, higher and sturdier than the Genoa's rather flimsy affair, but it's tight to move around when set-up.

8/10

KITCHEN

In terms of equipment, there's little to choose between the kitchens in the Amara and the Genoa. Both have comprehensively equipped galleys, incorporating four-burner gas hobs, separate grills and ovens and a microwave over the dresser opposite. The Coachman's microwave is mounted higher than the Genoa's and the fridge is a few litres smaller, but otherwise, there's not much difference.

The Amara doesn't have as much worktop space on the kitchen unit – although the dresser opposite is at a better height for food preparation. While there's a huge cutlery drawer with storage under, this is compromised by the wheel arch intrusion.

6/10

SCORES

10 BEST I'VE SEEN 9 TOP NOTCH 8 REALLY GREAT 7 PRETTY GOOD 6 CAN LIVE WITH IT 5 AVERAGE
4 BELOW AVERAGE 3 QUITE POOR 2 NOT WORTH CONSIDERING 1 LEAVE IT ALONE



Clever new pull-out bed base section is really quick and easy to use



Unit opposite the main kitchen offers extra work surface



The main kitchen has less work surface than the Bailey

NIGHT TIME

Coachman's designers have re-engineered the front lounge seats to simplify the job of making up the bed. The traditional central slats are replaced by a single bed support, which extends from under the offside settee.

Gas struts support the seat bases, allowing much easier access to the bedding storage underneath and the legs of the bed support have adjustable feet for a perfectly level bed.

It all works beautifully, significantly reducing the time it takes to make up the bed but it's largely academic for Mick and Lesley, who generally sleep separately on the twin singles.

At 6ft 1in, the settees make long enough single beds for most couples.

8/10

STORAGE

The Amara has ample storage for two, although the fairly modest payload, which is just 125kg, means Mick and Lesley will have to be careful how they make use of that storage. In all, the 450/2 has nine overhead lockers and several drawers. The strut-assisted seat bases give easy access to the underseat storage, but Lesley said she would have preferred more splitter shelves in the overhead lockers and Mick would have liked positive catches on high level lockers.

The wardrobe has been incorporated in the end washroom, and what a wardrobe it is, offering deep, three-quarter length hanging space with two large drawers underneath.

8/10

WASHROOM

Here is where the Bailey's significantly longer and marginally wider bodyshell becomes quite apparent, but it doesn't necessarily follow that the Genoa has the better of the two washrooms.

As well as the enormous wardrobe, there's a separate circular shower unit, a Thetford C-250 toilet, a full vanity unit and plenty of room for pampering. Neither Mick nor Lesley liked the shallow, rather plastic sink, but they thought the mirror was better positioned.

The framed, domestic-style door ensures greater privacy than the Bailey's un-framed affair and there's a large sink and ample oddsments storage. There's also a window and roof-mounted air vent.

7/10

FINISH AND BUILD

Because it manufactures lower volumes of vans, Coachman can afford to be almost bespoke in its manufacturing processes and it's extremely rare to find a fault, cut corner or example of shoddy build quality.

The more contemporary design and décor of the Amara is a bit of a departure for Coachman however, and while they have come close to achieving the younger, more contemporary feel which many of their rivals have been marketing for a while, Mick and Lesley weren't entirely sure that their attempts at making a van for younger customers was entirely successful.

The cabinetry, soft furnishings and new bed system are all top quality.

8/10

Others to consider

LUNAR QUASAR 462

PRICE £14,595

BERTHS 2

A lightweight alternative to our two contenders, the Quasar is a popular choice for ralliers and older caravanners looking to downsize from larger, heavier vans. Lunar doesn't skimp on the standard spec and the price is attractive too.

ELDDIS ODYSSEY 462

PRICE £16,049

BERTHS 2

Well-built and nicely finished mid-range model from the Eddis stable with a good level of standard spec, but looks heavy compared to the Bailey and Coachman and a little on the pricey side, too. Very sombre interior furnishings could deter some buyers.

SWIFT CHARISMA 230

PRICE £13,751

BERTHS 2

Swift's impressive Charisma may sit in the class below our main contenders, but great interior design and a high level of standard spec mean it can hold its own in this company. An attractive alternative with a very tempting price tag.

STEALTH VALIANT R53

PRICE £15,825

BERTHS 4

Not everyone's cup of tea, but the innovative Stealth has a lavishly appointed end washroom with power shower and four-berth flexibility in the side dinette.



INSURANCE QUOTE

Bailey Pegasus 2 Genoa £13,395
From only £166.65 per annum

Coachman Amara 450/2 £15,800
From only £198.76 per annum

4-years claim free caravanning.
New for old cover with caravan stored on a CaSSOA Silver site

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shieldtotalinsurance.co.uk

Final scores



BAILEY PEGASUS 2 GENOA

Practicality 8/10

Despite having only two berths, Lesley didn't feel the Bailey was in any way a step-down from their own Avondale, and in some ways felt more roomy, especially in the lounge.

Value For Money 8/10

Despite being 'down-specced' for 2011, the Pegasus S2 is £400 cheaper than the Amara and still packs in a lot of standard kit – including AL-KO ATC.

Caravan
OUR RATING 78/100

COACHMAN AMARA CROWN 450/2

Practicality 8/10

That bed mechanism is an outstanding piece of innovation and, while the washroom isn't as large as the Genoa's, it's probably better thought out.

Value for money 7/10

The Crown special edition has a couple extras over the standard Amara – such as posher upholstery and that neat Pioneer entertainment system – but it still doesn't feel as upmarket as the Pegasus.

Caravan
OUR RATING 74/100

OUR TESTERS' CONCLUSIONS

In some ways, the Amara is the smarter of the two vans here as it manages to achieve the same facilities, but on a significantly smaller footprint. The Amara's underpinnings are driven by intelligent use of space, weight-saving and self-sufficiency. Its shorter and narrower bodyshell will fit on more driveways than the Bailey's and, although it's a few kilos heavier than the Genoa, by Coachman standards, the Amara is real lightweight tourer.

Despite their reservations about some aspects of the washroom layout and finish and the impracticality of the wraparound lounge, Mick and Lesley still concluded that the Genoa was

pretty much ideal for their needs. It's much lighter to tow than their Avondale, which should improve the horrendous fuel consumption they get from their large and thirsty towcar.

They both thought the sleeping accommodation was ample for their needs and, if they did take their two grand children with them on occasion, they could sleep in that huge double bed, while Lesley and Mick slept in the awning. With a great kitchen, plenty of usable storage space and a generous level of standard equipment – including AL-KO ATC, neither Mick or Lesley viewed the Genoa as a significant step down from their Osprey in terms of luxury.



WE CHOSE

Bailey Pegasus 2

It was pretty much love at first sight: Mick and Lesley felt immediately at home in the Genoa and, after an hour or so, it proved quite difficult to prise them away from it. While saying that the Amara had the better build and finish, when it came to the crunch, Mick and Lesley said the Amara felt like a much smaller van.

NEXT MONTH We put the Adria 300 DS against a Bailey Orion 440/4