

Six appeal



Successfully fitting living, dining and sleeping space for six people into a 27m³ box is a complex task, says **Phil Stephens**

BAILEY PAGEANT BRETAGNE v STERLING EUROPA 650 v LUNAR DELTA TL

THERE'S no more practical caravan layout than a six-berth. You don't have to find six tenants if you don't want, just keep dinettes as dinettes or second lounges as second lounges and enjoy that alternative living space. If you do suddenly need to find six pillow spaces then you've still got them.

This month we couldn't help but cover the six-berth subject again because there's a new kid on the block. Welcome the Pageant Series 7 Bretagne. Bretagne? Yes, but not as we know it.

Gone are the fixed bunks along the rear panel as the Bretagne takes the top-end Senator Carolina layout with its side mounted fixed triple bunks, and teleports it into the new Series 7. It also mirrors the Ranger 540/6 but it truly is much more up market.

Suddenly not only is it more accessible in price, but stuck on a single-axle (Carolina is on a twin) so more of us and our towcars get a

shot at it. It's yours for £13,480 on-the-road.

To see how it stacks up we've brought along two other six-berths, both on twin-axes and employing Pullman bunks in their rear lounges to make up the six berths. They sit north of the Bailey in terms of price.

The new-for-2008 Lunar Delta TL is the luxury option at £18,790. Somewhat out on its own in terms of company as few six-berths occupy this luxury sector, most lurking within starter to medium price bands. It's £5310 more than the Bailey – ouch – but does it display that much more talent?

In at £15,690 is the identically laid out and new 2009 Sterling Europa 650. Whilst it lacks much of the Lunar's kit, you won't lose the ability of this spacious layout.

This is no head-to-head, but some comparisons are inevitable, and you'll see three great ways to accommodate six inhabitants in fine comfort, not in a crate.

EXTERNAL STYLING

Bailey Pag'nt Bretagne ★★★★★★★★
Sterling Europa 650 ★★★★★★★★
Lunar Delta TL ★★★★★★★★

The Series 7 Pageant takes a giant leap forward in terms of outward appeal, and in one swoop deletes any remaining traditional attire that has clung on despite many successful evolutionary updates. From mock alloy clad A-frame tip backwards, it's all change in terms of styling.

The Bretagne arrives with handsome (and standard) new alloys, and shod with some seriously deep rubber wheels. The front panel is all-new and, whilst an improvement over the Series 6, it's still a tad fussy with its slashes and indentations. Both front and rear panels are full height and give an evenly proportioned pose.

We don't normally dwell on graphics, but the change here is... graphic! Although the

creamy toned sides stay, the rather twee Pageant graphics of yesteryear have been skipped. Fresh out of the box is the more apt and appealing ribbon design that's almost Dethleffs-ish in execution, and without doubt more continental in theme than home grown.

The Sterling Europa's low to medium position in the market benefits it here. Shorn of wet lockers, barbecue points and all other eyesores often seen clad to caravan, the result is simple, stylish, clean-cut sides. A full-height rear panel and new simplified raked front panel sandwich a pair of smooth joint-free sidewalls. Frankly I believe this Europa 650 batters the recently tested and identically laid out Ace Jubilee Prestige in terms of drive-by street cred with that full-height rear, light clusters and wheel spat styling to thank.

The Lunar sits menacingly alongside the Sterling and Bailey. The Dutch-made almost reflective black Polyplastic windows reveal

nothing but your own image. Shame then the inset, rather weedy looking wheels, look like Darth Vader has come out in his flip flops. Happily, for the most part, the appeal remains undiminished with full-height front and rear panels toning down the Lunar's board-effect alloy haunches.

TOWING WEIGHT/DYNAMICS

Bailey Pag'nt Bretagne ★★★★★★★★
Sterling Europa 650 ★★★★★★★★
Lunar Delta TL ★★★★★★★★

All three sit on AL-KO chassis and given their size happily arrive with AKS3004 hitch head stabilisers. The Lunar's luxury status also bags you *Which Caravan's* Accessory of the Year – AL-KO's Active Trailer Control or ATC. It's a brilliant addition.

But what's this? £5310 down the food chain, sat on the nose (and axle) of Bailey's Pageant

are the letters ATC – a fantastic and unbelievable addition in the sector. And the Sterling and Bailey AL-KO chassis all arrive with shock absorber-clad wheels.

The Sterling doesn't have ATC but you wouldn't expect it on the entry-level Europa. That said, the current Swift line is that shock absorbers do an equally good job so the system isn't needed. I'm not convinced.

And weights? Well the Lunar, even with the advantage of its slightly narrower body and questionable decision to deny this expensive tourer a spare wheel (more about attractive weights than meanness), still looks good, deserving praise with numbers like 1470kg/1790kg (MRO/MPTLM). It's all the more impressive when you take into account kit plus sturdy internal timber work.

The Sterling isn't bad either and although down on luxury spec, the mucky bits like the under-slung water tank, spare wheel and wider

SPECIFICATION

Price: £13,380 (inc. del)
 Berths: 6
 Warranty: 3 years
 MRO: 1258kg (24.8cwt)
 MPTLM: 1483kg (29.2cwt)
 Payload: 224kg (4.4cwt)
 Internal length: 5.60m (18ft 5in)
 Overall length: 7.19m (23ft 7in)
 Overall width: 2.28m (7ft 6in)
 Internal height: 1.90m (6ft 3in)
 Overall height: 2.58m (8ft 6in)
 Bed Sizes: Front double: 6ft 10in x 4ft 4in. Two singles 5ft 8in x 2ft 3in (x2). Triple bunks 6ft 1in x 1ft 11in (x3). Rear single 5ft 7in x 2ft 6in

TOWMATCH D

MANUFACTURER

BAILEY CARAVANS LIMITED
 Tel: 0117 305 2939
 Web: www.bailey-caravans.co.uk



Adequate wardrobe tops off storage



The lounge will seat six but you won't all be able to see the telly



First, second or ground floor?

body all add weight. With that in mind, 1440kg/1710kg isn't far behind the Lunar.

Obviously the single-axle Bailey is more accessible in terms of towcars. But you can't ignore the fact it's 60kg more portly than the out-going Bretagne. The changes are so wide-ranging in my opinion, it shouldn't even be compared to the Series 6 Pageant Bretagne. For the maths, you're looking at 1258kg/1483kg (MRO/MPTLM); that's lighter than the lower spec, narrower bodied Elddis Avanté Club 556 from the Explorer Group.

INTERIOR STYLING/COMFORT

Bailey Pag'nt Bretagne ★★★★★★
Sterling Europa 650 ★★★★★★
Lunar Delta TL ★★★★★★

Lunar takes the more conservative route with the Delta TL. Whilst never in danger of being described as traditional, its leanings aren't as far forward as the Bailey or the Sterling. Lunar sticks with framed cabinets, and here the increasingly rarefied art of actually forming them from real hunks of lumber. Chocolate brown toned cabinetry is matched to the

equally dark patterning of soft furnishings and a clear poke in the eye at the many light timber work/fabric mixes more commonly seen.

Central width, so often a problem with layouts placing busy areas such as kitchens opposite washrooms, causes no problem here, and it gains several inches in corridor space over the equally wide-bodied Sterling. Attempts are made to come over all modern inside the Lunar with the addition of Dometic's stylish Series 8 fridge, but sadly the silk black-fronted modern masterpiece looks comically odd stuck below grandma's glass-fronted drinks cabinet.

If the Bailey's exterior hinted at change, then the inside can only be described as a revolution. Darker teak wood veneer from cabinet maker Tecnoform, together with both soft furnishing options, is a success.

Cabinet doors are larger but fewer in number, creating a cleaner line around the interior. The darker tone is highlighted further by a chrome strip carried through the lower quarter of the locker doors, something you'd never have seen in the Series 6 Pageant. Maybe these cracking curved lockers deserve a flush-fit microwave instead of the protruding

Daewoo? But, sat under the twinkling LED lights strung either side of the lounge on a summer's evening, it doesn't seem to matter.

This Sterling's strength against its rivals in terms of decorative appeal is strong. Yes I know we've seen it before, bright modern, plenty of chrome and beech-toned units galore, but it's more IKEA than no idea. Light cabinetry versus the darker Lunar units makes the Sterling feel much larger inside, though in reality the central area is the narrowest. The rear lounge isn't as large as the Lunar's, which is a surprise as the Lunar also has a larger washroom. But the point in all this is for an entry-level marque, the Sterling feels a lot more special than it should.

PRACTICALITY/FLEXIBILITY

Bailey Pag'nt Bretagne ★★★★★★
Sterling Europa 650 ★★★★★★
Lunar Delta TL ★★★★★★

Some people will buy the Lunar and Sterling just for the pure luxury of having two full-on lounges, but this test is about their ability to function as advertised, and that's as six-berths.

Bailey Pageant Bretagne Series 7



Darker wood and modern interior are main features of new Series 7 Pageant



And this is what it's all about – it's practically a kids' bedroom



Kitchen built to cater for six



Top spec loo and further storage above, essential for six people



ATC's box of tricks for a safer tow



Raised battery hatch no problem. All service gear neatly together

FOR & AGAINST

- PROS**
- Fit for purpose
 - Thoughtful layout
 - On-road safety features
- CONS**
- Very little

It, too, has the unhelpful central kitchen opposite the washroom, but it manages even wider central width here than the already generous Lunar. The practicality of having three ready-made bunks that don't need erecting speaks for itself whilst the final single bed is a doddle to build.

Truth is it'll probably never get used, leaving it as a three-person dinette. So whilst talking flexibility and practicality we see the Bretagne also benefits from the choice of two lounges for those rainy days aboard and six people to seat. From fridge size to kit count, layout usability to a design fit for purpose, the new Bretagne takes some beating in this category.

STORAGE SPACE

Bailey Pag'nt Bretagne ★★★★★★
Sterling Europa 650 ★★★★★★
Lunar Delta TL ★★★★★★

The Bailey makes use of the space below the rear triple dinette and, happily, it's free from invasion by any of the caravan's utility services. Although space is lost in the front lounge with the water heater and consumer unit sat under

the seats, with three lots of bedding already sat on the bunks and not clogging up the show, you're unlikely to miss the space. Upper lockers are left with a central shelf. Sensibly a couple are tall for larger items.

With their twin lounges, you'd think Lunar and Sterling were always going to do well here. But with four people's bedding under the Lunar's rear lounge, in truth there's little room for anything else; the bulky on-board water tank has beaten you to it. It's a similar story in the front with water heater, consumer unit and wet locker all eating up this main storage area. But the Lunar's wardrobe is more than up to the task, as are the multitude of upper lockers (front and rear), not to mention the twin bed boxes keeping guard at either end.

Whilst the Sterling lacks the ultimate locker space provided in the Lunar, it manages to stow larger kit more easily under seat benches. Essentially, for a six-berth, it also packs in a super large floor-to-ceiling double door wardrobe. And with the Truma heater banished elsewhere there's room for two large shelves below, both easily capable of taking sleeping bags and pillows.

SPECIFICATION

Price: £15,470 (inc. del)
 Berths: 6
 Warranty: 3 years
 MRO: 1481kg (29.2cwt)
 MTPLM: 1755kg (34.5cwt)
 Payload: 274kg (5.3cwt)
 Internal length: 6.27m (20ft 7in)
 Overall length: 7.96m (26ft 1in)
 Overall width: 2.29m (7ft 6in)
 Internal height: 1.95 (6ft 5in)
 Overall height: 2.70m (6ft 10in)
 Bed sizes: Front double 7ft 0in x 6ft 3in. Front singles 6ft 3in x 2ft 4in (x2). Rear singles 6ft 3in/5ft 10in x 2ft 2in. Rear bunks 5ft 11in/5ft 7in x 1ft 11in

TOWMATCH E

MANUFACTURER

STERLING CARAVANS,
 SWIFT GROUP
 Tel: 01482 847332
 Web: www.swiftleisure.co.uk



Large shelves take place of drawers



The most contemporary interior here with exceptional light levels



Great... when they're eventually set up

THE CAR

VW TIGUAN SE 2.0TDI 4MOTION £21,770



Joining the raft of new mini SUVs appearing on our roads is VW's new Tiguan. Looking a much like a Touareg accidentally thrown in the hot wash, this mini mud-plugger is what VW hopes will win enough favour to catapult it into significant volume sales. Why not too? It has been done before with the Nissan X-Trail and Honda's CRV; why shouldn't something slightly smaller than these common tin boxes become as popular?

There are advantages to be had too. Whilst retaining a higher driving position and four-wheel drive (both great for towing) the Tiguan is lighter than most mid range 4x4s and occupies a footprint more comparable to a small hatchback than your average Mondeo, Vectra or Laguna. Most impressive here though is VW's new common rail diesel engine solving at a stroke the powerful but peaky unrefined nature of VW's out going unit. Smooth even when pushed hard or towing, the engine is a delight.

One niggle was the short first gear that has you snatching at second in what seems like milliseconds. Undoubtedly helpful when we were towing, but for everyday use it was a pain. Lose a gear ratio in the Tiguan, spice up its look a bit and you have a good alternative to the Passat. That's the same new 140bhp engine, weight and - believe it or not - boot space. You'll still be higher up and, with its length, have less trouble parking.

WASHROOM

Bailey Pag'nt Bretagne ★★★★★★
 Sterling Europa 650 ★★★★★★
 Lunar Delta TL ★★★★★★

Both Sterling and Lunar fit central offside washrooms, complete with the luxury of a separate shower. It's the Lunar with its hefty price premium that's the largest by a good foot and gives comfortable access to the sink and, in particular, the loo. It's that bit more luxurious, with plenty of space for dressing and a clear mini Heki rooflight. The downside? In my opinion, the visual appeal doesn't really reflect the extra money you've paid. It's superior to the lower-rung Europa, but I don't think the difference is significant enough.

All three get Thetford's excellent (and larger seat) C250 loo with large capacity, wheeled cassette tank - essential in a six-berth, I'd say. This more costly unit is impressive for appearing here in the Bailey.

Bailey also packs a central, offside washroom. It's good to look at, sharing as it does the same cabinets as the rest of the caravan. It's surprisingly good to use, too, since

Sterling Europa 650



Look at all that space! And this is just the rear lounge



You'd have no problem hosting a family gathering here



Masses of prep space in this kitchen



There's a big shower in a washroom that's smaller than Lunar's



Improved access here as the locker door now lifts higher



New for 2009: a full set of shock absorbers all round

FOR & AGAINST

- PROS**
- Daytime flexibility
 - Improved component quality
 - Improved spec
- CONS**
- Night-time flexibility
 - Weight creeping up

it initially looks far too narrow for taking a rinse within in the confines of a sticky curtain. The truth is that there's plenty of space for a comfortable lathering up.

All three manage to offer sufficient space for toiletries, towels and tissues for six, though the Lunar's extra washroom length means it does it with space to spare.

The Sterling Europa's washroom has been updated for 2009 with thicker doors, heftier door furniture and fully lined showers.

SLEEPING

Bailey Pag'nt Bretagne ★★★★★★
 Sterling Europa 650 ★★★★★★
 Lunar Delta TL ★★★★★★

So why does the Bailey deserve 10 marks out of 10? Well because the editor said I can't give it 11. Anyone who has tried making up four bunks in a confined space with many tired bodies about, is lying if they say it's easy. Shifting long, cumbersome bench cushions and finding somewhere to put them, before even tugging out the Pullman bunk and laying the bedding is a flipping pain. What's more,

the space that was either a useful dinette or second lounge is no more. But now there's an answer: the Bretagne, with three permanent, offside rear bunks accessed by an unobtrusive, fixed ladder. Each then gets its own dedicated viewing window and bed light to boot. Even if you've four kids to bed down for the night, the fourth bed is easily made up from the adjacent dinette with no surplus upholstery.

Most people will probably leave the superb, three-person breakfast dinette as it is, ready and waiting for the early morning arrival of the triple bunks' occupants. As an adult, the lowest bunk looks hard to access; children, even teenagers, can get in with ease.

Maybe I should have walked into the Bailey's bedroom last - it makes the Lunar and Swift seem hard work. The only advantage I can see is the benefit of having a second large lounge during the day. But doesn't the Bailey have one of those too?

One mirrors the other, with parallel bench seating combined with built-in Pullman bunks. You'll have to remove the long base cushions and back rests (four each) to roll out the bunks, before putting them back on for the

bed base. The Lunar's extra money buys you a second large rooflight (necessary to counteract with the dark cabinetry) and auxiliary connection point for CD/DVD/MP3 player, plus TV aerial. But fair play to the cheaper Europa as it also provides for TV and aerial.

KITCHEN

Bailey Pag'nt Bretagne ★★★★★★
 Sterling Europa 650 ★★★★★★
 Lunar Delta TL ★★★★★★

With its neon blue interior light looking like a tanning booth, Dometic's 8 Series fridge looks cool. In the Bailey it's the 111-litre useful capacity RM8550 with manual controls, whilst in the Lunar it's the RM8551 fully auto and digital controls. Better? No, not really. You see it's still exactly the same capacity as the £5310 cheaper Bailey but with posher knobs. That's fine in fixed bed Deltas, but a family six-berth deserves a bigger fridge, especially at this price.

With the Bailey's central width being the widest here, its kitchen is the best to work in while avoiding human traffic passing through the caravan. It's logically set out, with east/west

SPECIFICATION

Price: £18,790 (inc. del)
 Berths: 9
 Warranty: 3 years
 MRO: 1470kg (28.9cwt)
 MTPLM: 1760kg (34.6cwt)
 Payload: 290kg (5.7cwt)
 Internal length: 6.37m (20ft 10in)
 Overall length: 7.93m (26ft 0in)
 Overall width: 2.28m (7ft 4in)
 Internal height: 1.96m (6ft 5in)
 Overall height: 2.66m (8ft 8in)
 Bed sizes: N/A

TOWMATCH E

MANUFACTURER

LUNAR CARAVANS
 Tel: 01772 337628
 Web: www.lunarcaravans.com



Lunar Delta TL



Here you'll find real wood and lots of it, and great central width



Luxury washroom easily better than the Europa but costs over £3k more



Easy access but narrow. A spare wheel is £79 extra



Through view, but the tank hinders the storage space



Wardrobe is more than up to the task



Spot the difference between this rear lounge and the front



Shared layout and flaws with the Europa



This is perhaps more suited to staying as a spacious lounge than beds for six



New fridge and old cocktail cabinet jar

FOR & AGAINST

PROS

- Washroom size
- Daytime flexibility

CONS

- Night-time flexibility
- Expensive

sink and four-burner hob sat either end of this kitchen space. The worktop is about as large as you could reasonably expect in here, and the entire feel and appearance of this culinary area has leapt forward a generation.

I like the styling of the Lunar's kitchen with the marbled underside of the upper storage lockers and microwave. The bowed upper timber light plinth also blends cohesively into the overall kitchen design. Ample work surface and lower storage, as well as the option of a 800w hotplate on your hob add up to a well-performing and quality-feeling kitchen space.

The Sterling's kitchen is neater, brighter and unapologetically more contemporary than the Lunar. Even so, it's clear it lacks the weight in drawers and cupboards to match the heavy feeling of the Lunar's wood. But the worktop is better throughout. Sticking the oven/hob on the extreme edge with sink alongside, there's no small and unusable timber edging, leaving just one huge worktop stretching out the other way. The microwave also looks the most cohesive of the three, like it's supposed to be there and not just slung in a hole. At the price Swift seems to have won again.

BUILD QUALITY

Bailey Pag'nt Bretagne ★★★★★★
 Sterling Europa 650 ★★★★★★
 Lunar Delta TL ★★★★★★

There's no doubting the constant progress being made in caravan construction. Construction is one thing, and component supply is another. Other than the ability to store six bodies overnight, these three have little in common. Yet amongst the three there's a huge array of technology that even as recently as five years ago we'd never have believed would be possible.

ATC and shock absorbers on a mid-range Bailey, under-slung and insulated space saving water tank on a lowly Europa, as well as single piece sidewalls.

Although needing to progress further on technological development, Lunar's build quality continues to improve. Bailey's decision to fit higher grade components throughout its ranges, despite external financial pressures, continues to impress. But the best built caravan here – to my probing screwdriver, pin hammer and touch – was the Sterling.

VALUE FOR MONEY

Bailey Pag'nt Bretagne ★★★★★★
 Sterling Europa 650 ★★★★★★
 Lunar Delta TL ★★★★★★

Bailey's Bretagne has improved beyond any reasonable recognition, yet the price increases by just £100. With severe pressure from the euro on at least one third of the caravan's component parts that increase is outstanding.

With improved kit levels and component quality, the Sterling is keeping up with the game, whilst pricing is around what you'd expect for the Europa. But with the Europa looking like a tourer from the class above you shouldn't have any problems selling it on.

Look at the Lunar's spec sheet and you'll see that it's all there (spare wheel aside). The price reflects this, placing the Delta TL in direct competition with the likes of... well nothing actually. Of the established brands, the Bailey Senator Carolina is the only other luxury twin-axle six-berth. But that's a totally different animal and undercuts the Lunar by around £1500, whilst weighing about the same.

CONCLUSION.

Bailey Pageant Bretagne 90/100
 Sterling Europa 650 83/100
 Lunar Delta TL 76/100

It's an entirely personal view, but of all six-berth layouts available, the 'rear lounge by day and Pullman bunks by night' interpretation is the least successful of all. But that's when sticking rigidly to the rules of using them as advertised. Spin it around and buy the layout simply for its second lounge and the argument for ownership holds more weight.

But when compared to six-berth layouts such as the twin-axle Sprite Quattro or Coachman Amara 640/6, the rear lounge here in the Lunar and Sterling proves no match for those layouts either. Look elsewhere in the

Lunar or Sterling ranges for something more practical for six sleepy heads.

Never looking entry-level, the Sterling is a modern, stylish caravan and generously kitted out for the money. The 2009 updates make it even more desirable but ultimately no amount of tinkering can change a flawed layout.

The Lunar's a strange one. I think its posher interior will appeal to people searching for two spacious lounges and not families wanting a luxurious six-berth. The ambience of the Lunar, whilst not unappealing, doesn't seem to beckon to the age group that you'd expect to have four kids or grandkids.

But alas it's not kit, price or decor that wounds it as a six-berth, but like the Sterling, it's the layout.

Look out, it's the Bailey, with its swanky all-new interior and exterior,

with its high spec including ATC and shock absorbers. But what really floors the current opposition is the layout. Little, if any, bed making, a dinette that seats three in comfort not just two as is the norm, a large kitchen equipped with reasonable sized fridge for six plus microwave, complete with the widest central passageway here.

Viewed entirely as fit for purpose – which means housing, feeding, but most importantly sleeping six people comfortably – I can see no reason for buying a more expensive, longer and heavier caravan when the Series 7 Bailey Pageant Bretagne does the job brilliantly. Meet the new king of six-berths and surely a future award-winner. For now at least, there's no better six-berth touring caravan to be had for the money.

Club Care Insurance Quotation			www.clubcareinsurance.co.uk		
Sterling Europa 650	£371.16	Bailey Pageant Bretagne Series 7	£300.26	Lunar Delta TL	£314.60
Quotations for storing the caravan at home with 4 Star Cover and 6 years No Claims Discount, including discounts for standard factory fitted safety and security devices where applicable.					