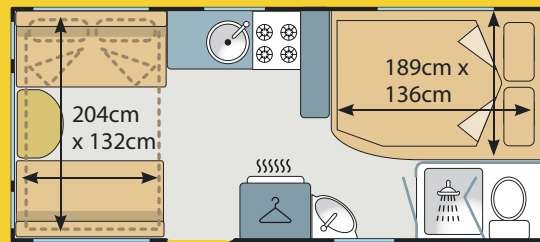


2007 MODEL



£11,870

Abbey Vogue 470



Shipping length	6.42m	MiRO	1090kg
Shipping width	2.23m	MTPLM	1300kg
Shipping height	2.70m	User payload	210kg

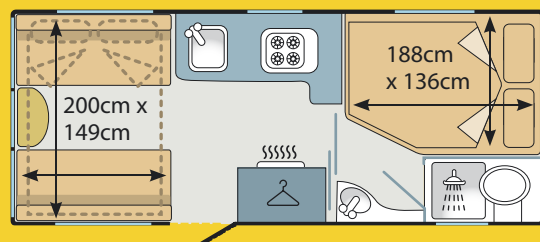


2007 MODEL



£11,520

Bailey Pageant 6 Bordeaux



Shipping length	6.56m	MiRO	1103kg
Shipping width	2.18m	MTPLM	1300kg
Shipping height	2.71m	User payload	197kg

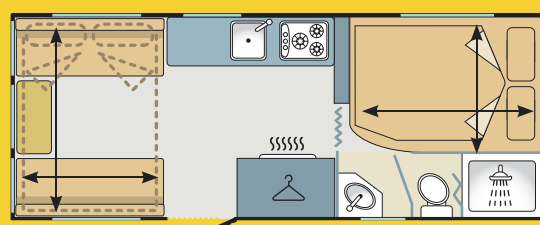


2007 MODEL



£11,065

Compass Corona 534



Shipping length	7.21m	MiRO	1225kg
Shipping width	2.28m	MTPLM	1441kg
Shipping height	2.73m	User payload	216kg



BIG CARAVAN TEST



Offside-fixed-bed tourers are ideal for couples with smaller cars and occasional guests

The trend for fixed-bed tourers started on the Continent, where caravans are often treated as a warmer alternative to a tent, with a bit more of an emphasis on comfort. But while tiny lounges and sparsely-equipped kitchens have never impressed British buyers, the idea of a proper bed has really taken off.

Over the past season the trend has been for nearside fixed beds. This layout creates lots of living space, but a long chassis is needed to fit the wardrobe and washroom on the same side. For this reason, sales of the more compact offside fixed bed vans remain strong. Putting the wardrobe by the door means a fixed bed can be squeezed into a smaller frame. Smaller caravans tend to be lighter, and also more manoeuvrable.

Here, we test three popular offside-fixed-beds. The Abbey Vogue wowed the crowds at its launch last summer, while the Bailey Pageant Series 6 was well received in late 2006. Compass's Corona has been around for a while but is popular with those who want a lot of van for their money.

Pitching and setting up

Abbey Vogue 470

★★★★

Bailey Pageant 6 Bordeaux

★★★★

Compass Corona 534

★★★★

Of the three vans, the Compass is the longest by some 65cm so, as you'd expect, it's also the heaviest. The Abbey and the Bailey have MTPLMs of 1300kg, making them an 85% match with an average family car such as a Ford Mondeo. The 1441kg Compass would make a 97% match with the same car.

When it comes to setting up, all three are pretty closely matched. The Abbey and the Compass both have button-free handbrakes, but the Bailey's button version is just as

easy to use. And while the Compass's BPW chassis and Winterhoff stabiliser might not be as familiar to most buyers as the AL-KO versions fitted on the Bailey and the Abbey, they are just as easy to operate. Abbey and Bailey boast receivers for the AL-KO Secure wheel lock, although in both cases, the lock itself must be bought separately for around £270.

Of the three vans, the Compass is the only one with locking rear steadies, to help deter thieves. All of the front steadies are easy to reach, but the Abbey's are set a bit further in than the others, making them slightly harder to access.

Both Abbey and Bailey place the fresh-water inlet and waste-water drains behind the offside wheel, but the Bailey's drains are recessed into the wall, making the hoses fiddly to attach. The Compass's

PHOTOS: MARTYN BARNWELL ILLUSTRATIONS ALAN ELDRIDGE & ANDY PETERS



The Abbey Vogue's bed-box tops lift up easily on sturdy, sprung hinges



Pale woodwork and great natural lighting enhance the sense of space



Kitchen workspace is boosted by a flap, but its use is limited due to the lack of a plug socket



Pronounced cushion kneerolls make a bumpy mattress for the front bed



The Abbey's cooker has three burners and a handy electric hotplate

drains are rear-mounted, and this makes it harder to attach water containers when you're on a slope. What's more, the Compass's water heater is in the front offside corner, and this will raise the noseweight if the heater is left full when on the road. Buyers should keep an eye on this when hitching up. Bailey and Abbey place their water heaters closer to the axle.

Bailey puts most off its switchgear just inside the door, but its water heater controls are recessed into the wall by the fixed bed, forcing owners to kneel in the narrowest part of the van to adjust them. Compass puts its unlabelled switches opposite the door on the kitchen wall, while Abbey puts its switches in the wardrobe.

For its poor labelling and the extra weight it carries, the Compass lags behind in third place in this round. The Abbey and Bailey are both free of major faults and are level-pegging in the lead.

Lounge

Abbey Vogue 470

4444444

Bailey Pageant 6 Bordeaux

4444444

Compass Corona 534

4444444

The Compass's extra width and length is most apparent in its spacious lounge. What's more, at 172cm, it's got the longest bench seats on test. Dark wood-effect

wallboards make the space feel quite enclosed, although the pale heavy-duty carpets brighten things up. Like all the vans on test, the carpets are removable. The TV point at the centre chest provides comfortable viewing for all, while a second TV point at the foot of the bed can also be viewed with ease, providing no one is in the kitchen.

The smaller lounges in the other two vans means the TV can only be viewed from the roof-level cabinet at the foot of the fixed bed. This is fine in the Bailey, but in the Abbey the view is partially obstructed by the microwave.

Abbey has managed to make the smallest lounge feel large. Its bench seats might be only 132cm long, but the lack of a wooden endstop on the nearside bench helps open up the seating area. Pale woodwork, neutral upholstery and lots of natural light are also helpful. The bed-slat storage unit at the front of the van encroaches more into the living area than in the Bailey, but there's still space for four people to sit at the table as is also the case in the other two vans. A small fold-out flap, meanwhile, can be used to rest a glass or cup.



The concertina-style bedroom partition lets through light

Décor is a matter of personal taste, but we found the Bailey's dark woodwork, carpet and upholstery rather overpowering. Bailey over-compensates with unnecessary lighting. Although there was a Remis rooflight on the pre-production model we tested, actual models will have a Heki rooflight, four halogen spotlights under the lockers, two more recessed into the rooflight, and a pair of mains-powered lights on the corner cabinets. The Compass



The switches are in the wardrobe, but they don't get in the way

and the Abbey are both quite adequately lit by two halogen spotlights, two mains uplighters and one roof-mounted light. The Bailey's 149cm-long bench seats are longer than the Abbey's, however. Both the Compass and the Abbey have two blown-air vents in this area, and the Bailey has just one.

Overall, the Compass's extra space takes it into the lead in this round, with the other two vans lagging just behind

Kitchen

Abbey Vogue 470

4444444

Bailey Pageant 6 Bordeaux

4444444

Compass Corona 534

4444444

To be able to prepare food in such a compact space, a very practical kitchen is required. All three vans boost workspace with removable drainers, and the Compass also has a chop-proof Chinchilla glass lid to its sink. A worktop extension flap opens out over the bed in all three tourers, but the Abbey's is least practical since there's no socket here for your kettle or toaster.

The Abbey doesn't fare well in terms of storage either. It's got a cavernous plate cupboard with wire racks above the cooker, but it has just one pull-out storage basket, as opposed to the two provided in the Compass and the Abbey. But despite being the smallest van, the Abbey does have a decent-sized fridge at 107 litres.

The Bailey's storage is the best; there's a big storage shelf under the cooker and a huge space

beneath for storing pots and pans. What's more, the fridge boasts a whopping 117-litre capacity.

The Compass fares well, with two cupboards above the sink, although this is due to its lack of a microwave. The Bailey and Abbey each use one of these cupboards for their standard microwaves, while the Compass doesn't even have one on its options list.

The Compass utilises its extra length by fitting a cupboard between the bed and the kitchen, but it's too narrow to be of any real use and it's so deep that items can shift out of reach. It's also a pity that the Compass, as the biggest van on test, has the fridge with the smallest capacity at 77 litres.

The Abbey's cooker is the best of the three. In addition to its three gas burners, it's also got an electric hotplate that is handy if you run out of gas. The Bailey puts four gas burners on its hob, but as is always the case it's hard to get four pans on here at the same time.

The Compass has three burners, of which one is a fast-burner for larger pans, such as woks. There's also a brushed-steel wall panel behind the hob, which will be easy



There's a useful locker above the toilet, and the mirrored basin area is bright and airy



Abbey Vogue 470 Pros and cons...

You'll like...

- ✓ Its fantastic, smart looks
- ✓ The great washroom
- ✓ The excellent spec given its small size

You won't like...

- ✗ The limited kitchen storage
- ✗ No externally accessed storage
- ✗ Scattered controls





The front bed box contains a plastic lined tray for storing muddy shoes



Dark woodwork and carpets make the Bailey seem smaller than it is



A removable drainer and a practical fold-out extension help boost workspace



The front bed isn't the biggest but its cushions fit and it's comfortable



The hob has four burners and there's a fridge with a 117-litre capacity

to wipe clean. The Compass is the only van of the three that lacks an extractor fan.

For having the biggest fridge and the best storage, Bailey wins this round. The Compass drops into second place because of its lack of an extractor fan and its tiny fridge – you'd expect more of such a big van. Abbey trails behind due to design flaws such as the lack of a socket by the worktop extension.

Compass has rearranged its washroom so that the toilet is now in front of the shower. In theory, this should mean you don't have to walk across a wet shower tray in bare feet if you get up to go to the loo in the night. But the only way to use the toilet is to swivel it so your feet rest in the shower tray. The Compass also lacks towel hooks. But it does have the roomiest shower cubicle of the three.

There's a shelf above the Abbey's toilet for storing towels and washbags. The Bailey places two hooks here, but if your towels are hung up to dry here you could easily knock them into the loo. And the Bailey's washbasin mixer tap is placed too low for easy use. A magnetic strip door on the

entrance to the shower/toilet area on the Abbey feels a bit flimsy, whereas the domestic-style door on the Compass felt much more solid. As is often the case with push-button door handles, Bailey's isn't easy to use.

All three vans position their washbasins outside the shower and toilet cubicle and in the bedroom area. The light and airy feel created by the window and two mirrors next to the Abbey's basin give it the lead on this front. The mirror is at just the right height for someone shaving or doing their hair.

The Abbey also has good under-sink storage although the best van in this respect is the Compass, which places storage lockers over the basin. The only thing that the Abbey loses marks for is not having a separate removable carpet near the shower/washing area. Bailey and Compass include a small section of carpet here that can be removed for easy drying.

The Abbey might lose points for having a non-removable carpet, but that's not enough to detract from its otherwise pleasant and



The solid wooden bedroom partition is the best of the three

practical washroom, which wins it four stars. The Bailey and Compass washrooms are also pretty good, but minor flaws nudge them into joint second place.

Beds

Abbey Vogue 470

👍👍👍👍

Bailey Pageant 6 Bordeaux

👍👍👍👍

Compass Corona 534

👍👍👍👍



The uncluttered wardrobe is a perfectly adequate size

Because of their compact size, offside fixed-bed vans tend mainly to be used by couples who have occasional guests. It's therefore important that the fixed beds are comfortable. The beds in the front are of secondary importance.

The biggest surprise in the fixed-bed department is the fact that the smallest van has the longest fixed bed. The Abbey's bed is some 3cm longer than the Compass's and it's also wider than the Compass's by 6cm. The Bailey

falls between the two, measuring in at 186cm x 136cm. Like the Bailey, the Abbey also has bedside shelving for watches, mugs and reading matter. The Compass has none. The Abbey also has five overhead lockers in the bedroom, compared to the Compass's four and the Bailey's three.

The Compass is also the only van that lacks ventilation boards. It does, however, have the thickest curtains made from a suedette fabric that will cut out light. Like the others, it has a well-padded headboard, although the Bailey's is best since it features a storage pouch. The Bailey also has a solid sliding partition to divide it off from the rest of the van. The others have flimsy concertina-style curtains that let through light.

As you would expect from the biggest van on the test, the Compass has the biggest front make-up bed, and, providing you haven't selected the option of wrap-around seating, there's handy bed-side storage in the shape of the centre chest. The cushions, however, do not fit tightly together and leave large gaps that make for an uncomfortable night's sleep.

The Bailey's front bed is smaller than the Compass's, but its cushions are a much better fit and make into a comfortably flat mattress. This is not the case with the Abbey, whose cushion's pronounced kneerolls make a rather uneven base.

It's virtually neck-and-neck at this stage, but the Bailey inches into pole position for having the best bedside shelving, and a solid sliding door. The Abbey loses marks for its uncomfortable front bed, and the Compass for its smaller fixed bed and poor bedside storage.

Storage

Abbey Vogue 470

👍👍👍👍

Bailey Pageant 6 Bordeaux

👍👍👍👍

Compass Corona 534

👍👍👍👍

In vans of this layout, your main storage area is under the fixed bed. The Compass has the smallest fixed bed so it follows that, area-wise, the space beneath it is also the smallest. Yet at least



Care will be needed to avoid knocking towels in the loo and the basin is too low for easy use



Washroom

Abbey Vogue 470

👍👍👍👍

Bailey Pageant 6 Bordeaux

👍👍👍👍

Compass Corona 534

👍👍👍👍

Bailey Pageant 6 Bordeaux Pros and cons...

You'll like...

- ✓ Its peerless specification
- ✓ Its comparatively low price
- ✓ Its well designed and equipped kitchen

You won't like...

- ✗ The rather fussy interior décor
- ✗ Its push-button washroom door
- ✗ Its dated off-white exterior





The fuses and cut-off switches at the front of the bed box impede access



The Corona's dark woodwork is offset by the pale carpet and fabrics

this space isn't compromised by electrical gear as is the case in the other two. Both Bailey and Abbey have their water heaters in this space, and the Abbey also puts its battery box here. It's all too easy to snag wiring or pipes when loading items into this space. Both Bailey and Compass have exterior access to the under-bed space, and the Bailey's includes a plastic tray for muddy shoes. All three bed-box tops lift open on gas struts.

The front bed boxes in the Abbey and the Bailey have single-piece front-access doors, which makes it easier to load large items than in the Compass, which has two small doors. The Abbey's bed-box tops lift easily on sprung hinges, while the Bailey's hinges are weaker and

need the cushions to be lifted off for the lid to stay up. The Compass's lids are held aloft on strong ratchets, but these need a strong upwards shove before they can be lowered and this involves removing the cushions.

In terms of front bed-box space, the Abbey's is excellent, with only the nearside bed box losing out slightly due to the location of the fuse box in here. Fuses and mains cut-out switches are at the front of the Bailey's nearside locker, which makes it hard to load this area, although the switches themselves are easy to reach. The Compass might have more free space under its fixed bed, but that's because it places its water heater and battery box in the front bed boxes. At least



The main controls are on the kitchen wall and a chop-proof sink lid and fold-out flap boost workspace



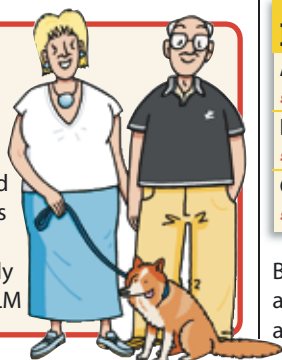
Compass Corona 534 Pros and cons...

You'll like...

- ✓ The excellent, spacious lounge
- ✓ The most flexible storage options
- ✓ Value for money

You won't like...

- ✗ Badly positioned waste-water drains
- ✗ Poor washroom
- ✗ It's comparatively high 1441kg MTPLM



Buying and owning

Abbey Vogue 470

👍👍👍👍👍

Bailey Pageant 6 Bordeaux

👍👍👍👍👍

Compass Corona 534

👍👍👍👍👍

Bailey, The Swift Group (Abbey) and the Explorer Group (Compass) are some of the biggest names in

it provides exterior access up front, unlike Abbey and Bailey.

There's a domestic-sized wardrobe in the Compass, with a tall, wide hanging space and a small cupboard beneath that could be used to store shoes. The smaller wardrobes in the Bailey and the Abbey are still quite adequate. There are plenty of lockers and cupboards for smaller items in all three tourers, although the Compass's overhead lockers are smaller than the other vans'.

The lack of external access to its storage spaces makes the Abbey the loser here. The Compass's extra space, and the Bailey's clever use of its available space, make these two level-pegging in this round.



The Compass has a concertina door and no bedside storage

the caravan industry. Each has an extensive UK-wide dealership network, so getting repairs done and sourcing spare parts for any of these vans won't be a problem.

All three tourers feel well built, although in terms of its build, the Compass had noticeably more badly finished parts than the other two. And while all have a three-year parts warranty, the Compass has a five-year water-ingress warranty, compared to the Abbey and Bailey's six-year water-ingress.



There's an enormous wardrobe with storage for shoes beneath

The Compass also has the palest carpet of the three, which would really show up dirt, although it is hardwearing and removable. It also has pale upholstery, but for another £50 you can opt for a darker alternative. Likewise, the Swift's pale coloured fabrics would stain very easily and could look tatty in time, but in comparison, the brightly patterned fabrics in the Bailey would hide stains well.

The Bailey's boxy front, and off-white body makes it look rather

dated in comparison to the sleek, white exteriors of its competitors here. Some will argue that this makes the van look old even before it leaves the forecourt, but others will argue that it's got a classic look that won't date.

For having by far the most practical interior, the Bailey takes the lead in this round, while the other two take joint second place.

Verdict

Abbey Vogue 470

👍👍👍👍👍

Bailey Pageant 6 Bordeaux

👍👍👍👍👍

Compass Corona 534

👍👍👍👍👍

The Compass's size initially had us thinking it could walk this test. But extra space is less important if you don't make the most of it. The Coachman's unforgivably small washroom is poor in terms of interior space, particularly given that the smaller Abbey and Bailey manage to provide washrooms that are the same size.

Abbey's Vogue has been a big success since its launch, and



Once made up there are gaps between the cushions on the large bed



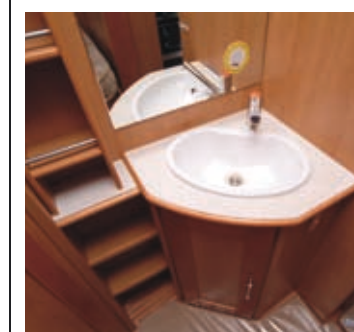
The three-burner hob has one fast burner for large pans, such as woks

despite being the smallest caravan on test it does really well. It looks good and makes sensible use of its available space. The fixed bed is no smaller than those in the bigger vans, it has the best washroom overall, and its high spec means that it doesn't lose out in comparison to its larger rivals. In the end though, the lack of externally-accessed storage and its limited kitchen storage count against it. These are small criticisms that illustrates the point that the degrees of separation between these three excellent caravans are very small.

Ultimately, the Bailey Pageant beats the Abbey and the Compass simply by having the fewest faults. It's not a run-away winner, but in terms of spec and usability, it pips the Abbey to the top spot. We find the interior décor a bit overpowering and are rather underwhelmed by its exterior appearance, but in every other way the Pageant does everything just right. None of these vans will disappoint, but the Bailey is our top choice.



You need to put your feet in the shower to use the loo, but there's a handy under-basin unit



Turn over page for full caravan specifications

BIG CARAVAN TEST



Abbey Vogue 470



Bailey Pageant 6 Bordeaux



Compass Corona 534



Holidays

Caravans

Towcars

Accessories

Advice

Price	£11,870	£11,520	£11,065
Berths	4	4	4
Shipping length	6.42m	6.56m	7.20m
Shipping width	2.23m	2.18m	2.29m
Shipping height	2.70m	2.71m	2.73m
Internal length	4.74m	4.83m	5.49m
Internal height	1.95m	1.90m	1.91m
MiRO	1090kg	1103kg	1225kg
MTPLM	1300kg	1300kg	1441kg
User payload	210kg	197kg	216kg
Awning size	895cm	930cm	973cm

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

External equipment	AL-KO AKS 3004 stabiliser. AL-KO gas-assisted handbrake. Status 530 directional aerial. Alloy wheels.	AL-KO AKS 3004 Stabiliser. AL-KO gas-assisted button handbrake. Status 530 directional aerial. Alloy wheels.	Winterhoff WS3000 stabiliser. Winterhoff gas-assisted handbrake. Status omni-directional aerial.
Heating	Truma blown-air heater. Truma dual-fuel water heater.	Truma blown-air heater. Truma dual-fuel water heater.	Truma blown-air heater. Truma dual-fuel water heater.
Lounge	Blinds and flyscreens to all windows. Seat and backrest ventilation boards. Two bolster cushions. Clock. Removable carpets. Large Heki panoramic tilting sunroof.	Remis blinds and flyscreens to all windows. Seat and backrest ventilation boards. Two bolster cushions. Clock. Removable carpets. Heki sunroof. Radio/CD/MP3-player.	Blinds and flyscreens to all windows. Seat and backrest ventilation boards. Two bolster cushions. Clock. Removable carpets. Large Heki panoramic tilting sunroof.
Kitchen	Stoves 3-gas-burner hob + elec hotplate. Stoves Thermostatic oven + grill. Omnivent fan. 107-litre Thetford fridge.	Spinflo 4-gas-burner hob. Omnivent extractor fan. Spinflo Thermostatic oven + grill. Dometic 117-litre fridge. Daewoo microwave.	Spinflo 3-gas-burner hob. Spinflo GM9 oven + grill. Omnivent 12V extractor fan. Thetford 81-litre fridge.
Washroom	Thetford swivel cassette toilet + manual flush. Multi-directional rooflight + flyscreen.	Thetford swivel cassette toilet + manual flush.	Thetford swivel cassette toilet + manual flush.
Security	Receiver for AL-KO Secure wheel lock. ID number etched on windows + chassis. Hidden security tag.	Receiver for AL-KO Secure wheel lock. Autowatch security alarm.	ID number etched on windows and chassis. Microtag security marking kit. Locking steadies. Hidden security tag.

OTHER FEATURES

Options	Radio and MP3 and DVD player (£140). Built-in microwave (£115).	AL-KO Secure wheel lock (£235). Alternative fabric (£110).	Alloy wheels (£99). Steel spare wheel (£150). Alternative fabric (£50). Radio/MP3/DVD player (£140). U-shaped seating in lieu of front chest (FOC).
Warranty	3 years parts; 6 years body.	3 years parts; 6 years body.	3 years parts; 5 years body.

Verdict	<p>For Despite being the smallest of the three, the Abbey makes great use of its space to create a roomy-feeling van.</p> <p>Against Its more expensive than the Bailey, yet it's less well specced.</p> <p>Verdict If you can live without the external storage, you'll get a compact van with a spacious feel.</p>	<p>For A well specced van at a competitive price that includes nice design touches.</p> <p>Against A flimsy washroom door and a dated exterior are the Bailey's main weaknesses.</p> <p>Verdict It's a close contest, but the Pageant just outpoints its rivals, thanks to its low price and generous spec.</p>	<p>For The biggest, cheapest van on test, with a vast array of storage options.</p> <p>Against The washroom is cramped and the bed is small – this represents a poor use of space.</p> <p>Verdict The Compass is great value, but doesn't manage to do anything any better than the two smaller vans.</p>
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