

Inside, the Ranger S6 380/2 is comfortable and surprisingly spacious



Baby Bailey

The Bailey Ranger Series 6 380/2 is small in size but big on space. Pat and Rocky Hudson try it out

With more people shunning foreign climes to holiday at home, caravanning is more popular than ever.

However, for those new to the hobby, the thought of buying and towing a heavy caravan can be daunting.

Bailey has responded to the needs of these growing numbers of newcomers with its Series 6 Rangers. These lightweight vans are a tempting choice for first-time caravanners, thanks to a good level of basic equipment and a competitive price.

The 380/2, the baby of the Ranger family, has been

reintroduced for 2009. The two-berth, end-kitchen layout is the shortest and lightest van in the Series 6 range. At just over five metres long and with an MTPLM of only 997kg it won't need a



Bold graphics are eye-catching

super-sized tug to tow it. This will be welcome news for those couples seeking a starter van but who don't want the expense of changing their car.

Pat and Rocky Hudson are not new to caravanning. However, they have recently returned to it after a couple of years' break and are keen to see what is available on the market. Will they be tempted to choose a Ranger for their next tourer? They spent a weekend in the 380/2 to decide.

Around the outside

Before unloading their gear from the car the couple have a wander around the Ranger's exterior. Pat

likes the bold blue graphics and smart appearance of the rear. "The blue ties in nicely with the Bailey badge. However, the bold colour is slightly overpowering on such a small van."

Rocky goes to plug in the mains and is impressed by the easy-opening locker door. He is also pleased to spot the new-style Truma Crystal 2 water pump while setting up the Aquaroll. "I have heard about these but this is the first time I have seen one. It feels secure and is a doddle to connect."

With Pat keen to start loading the van, Rocky gets to grips with the steadies. "These are easy enough to reach, but I'm not a fan of the folding winders that Bailey supplies. They take some getting used to and, for me, make the job more difficult."

Front locker is large enough for spare wheel



Eventually, with all four steadies down, Rocky pops the winder back in the front locker.

Considering the van's size he is pleasantly surprised with the amount of space in the front locker and is happy to see that the spare wheel is located here, too.

"It is more convenient to get to if needed. Although there is the issue of the extra noseweight. You'd have to be careful about what else you loaded in there."

It's the first opportunity that Pat and Rocky have had to try 13-pin electrics and it proves a bit of a

novelty. "Our outfit still relies on the old system so it's good to get to grips with 13-pin for when we do need to change," says Rocky.

Pointing out the rest of the Ranger's standard exterior kit, neither the button handbrake nor lack of stabiliser cause Rocky concern. "They are not an issue really. It is what I'd expect on this level of van, although first-timers might like a stabiliser."

With the outside almost set up, Rocky is pleased to discover features such as the step-up A-frame and wheeled cassette

LIVE-IN Test

With the Practical Caravan Enthusiast Team



Bailey Ranger S6 380/2

Berths 2 Price £10,495 MTPLM 997kg

Tested by

Pat and Rocky Hudson

Pat and Rocky have been caravanning since the 1960s when they had a Sprite Major, which they towed with a Ford Cortina 1500. Vans were a little different then: they had gas-mantle lights, a two-burner

hob, no oven, fridge, pumped water or mains electrics and a 'bucket and chuck it' Elsan chemical toilet! Since then they have enjoyed touring the UK and Europe in a variety of caravans, a canal cruiser, a motorhome and finally back to a caravan.

Their current van is a 2008 Swift Challenger 480.



Practical Caravan Enthusiast Team

Practical Caravan's Enthusiast Team have been picked for their experience and passion for caravans and caravanning

toilet. "These are good practical touches," he says.

Heading inside to join Pat, the control panel is the first thing to catch Rocky's eye. "It's at the entrance, just where it should be. It's also clearly labelled and easy to follow. That is all you need. I much prefer the manual models to those fancy digital panels."

With the unpacking almost done Pat cannot fault the van's storage. "I know it's a cliché but this van really is like a Tardis," she says. "Outside it looks so small but inside the use of space is clever."

Pat praises the wardrobe for its full-length hanging space, ideal for her long skirts. The generous number of lockers gets the thumbs up for providing plenty of room for their clothes and bedding.

Kitchen preferences

With the hard work out of the way the couple are in need of refreshment. While Rocky puts his feet up in the lounge, Pat goes to the other end of the van to make a bite to eat and have a good poke round the kitchen.

"I like the fact that the hob isn't directly over the oven. This allows for a good amount of worktop between the sink and hob. Also, the tap is neatly tucked in the corner so it doesn't get in the way."

However, Pat did spot one or two failings with the hob. "The knobs are at an awkward angle and you cannot see the markings to know which one to use. It's also quite difficult to get your hands in there. Rocky does 90% of our cooking when we're away and

Bailey Ranger S6 380/2 What the Hudsons say

👍 "There is a surprising amount of living space and the storage available is excellent for a small van. It has been really well thought out. The lounge is comfortable and spacious and the large rooflight lets in lots of light. The overall build quality is very impressive, as is the price and weight. We would consider this van for our next purchase."

👎 "The washroom is the most compromised area in space terms, so you would need to rely on good site facilities. The kitchen is where most flaws lie. The position of the oven knobs is impractical and the lack of ignition is a shame. Bending down to light the oven would be a struggle, especially for those who are getting on a bit."



Pat is pleased with the amount of hanging space in the wardrobe, but Rocky finds the washroom basin too low to use comfortably



his hands just wouldn't fit. If the panel was flat, it wouldn't occupy any more space and the knobs would be more visible."

Pat also insists that the hob should have an electric hotplate. "This would make use of the site's electricity, which we already pay for, and is ideal if the gas bottle runs out." And the hob's lack of ignition is, according to Pat, "simply ridiculous".

The lack of light also came in for criticism. "Just having strip lighting wouldn't be adequate on a dull day. It's a shame the door doesn't have a window to allow some extra light through," says Pat.

Away from the hob area the comments are more positive. Pat is impressed with the raised



Hob knobs are awkwardly placed



Opposite the kitchen, the extra worktop is a good height

worktop opposite the kitchen. "I like that it is at the same height as the other worktop so I can use it safely. It's a great additional space. The only downside is that it could do with an extra power point as both the TV and kettle would need to sit here. But it's not a major problem."

Housed under the additional worktop is the 107-litre fridge, which Pat says is plenty big enough for two people's groceries.

The rest of the kitchen storage is also praised. The two cupboards either side of the oven have shelves and wire racks and there are two overhead lockers and



No centre chest but standalone table is small and light, so easy to set up

Rocky points out that the table is small and light so wouldn't be "too much trouble". He also adds that the small fold-away table is a "good compromise" and would be "just fine for resting a cuppa".

As they tucked into their baguettes the couple both comment on how comfy and spacious the seats are. "You could comfortably seat four in this lounge and even use the seats as two single beds, as we often do."

The large roof light wins approval, as does the one-piece window, which Rocky prefers as they are "less fussy".

Pat is a fan of the "easy on the eye" beige-and-brown upholstery. "I could happily live with this. The pattern is good because it wouldn't show up dirt easily. I also like that the curtains can be put to use rather than just being for show."

a couple of open cubby holes. Pat is impressed.

"There is a bundle of space for tins, sauces and all of our crockery and utensils. This means we wouldn't have to compromise or leave items at home. That's a real bonus."

Sitting pretty

With lunch prepared Pat joins Rocky in the lounge. Placing the plates on the dining table Pat notices the lack of centre chest. "With just the two of us we would normally use the chest for dining. It saves the hassle of pulling out the table all the time."

As Pat clears the plates Rocky takes the opportunity to have a play with the concealed-latch lockers. "Having no handles is a novelty but the doors are very secure. I would trust them to stay closed while in transit," he says.

Pat chips in that there are plenty of them, which would allow her to bring away a few extra outfits.

Continuing to poke around the lounge area, Rocky is pleased to discover both the heating controls and fuse box are easily accessed. "The access flap for the fuse box is always welcome. It's also well labelled so you know what you're looking at."

Single or double?

Setting up the double bed is something Pat and Rocky tend to avoid, preferring the easier arrangement of two singles. However, they were impressed

with the size of the double once it was put together, although the variety of cushions needed made assembling it a bit of a jigsaw.

Testing it for comfort Rocky seemed converted. "We may try this from now on. It's a good size so we could spread out. It's also really comfortable."

Pat agrees but points out that the lack of spotlights at one end means one of them would not be able to read in bed.

"That's true," agrees Rocky, "but it wouldn't be a major problem as we could always leave the corner lights on."

Scrubbing space

In a small van there is always going to be one area where space is compromised. In this instance it is the offside corner washroom.

A domestic-style door leads into the space and Pat is



The 107-litre fridge is plenty big enough for the couple's groceries



Lounge is illuminated at night by corner lights and spotlights

Where they stayed

Ferry Meadows Caravan Club Site
Ham Lane, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE2 5UU
Tel 01733 233 526
Web www.caravanclub.co.uk
Open All year



Pat and Rocky have stayed at Ferry Meadows on many occasions during their time as caravanners.

Situated at the heart of a country park, the site is an ideal base to try out a variety of sporting activities. There is a watersports centre for sailing and windsurfing. For the more laid-back caravanner there are plenty of walking and cycle trails.

The level and open pitches have electric hook-up and there is a choice of grass or hardstanding. On-site facilities include a family room, washblock, laundrette, children's play area and Wi-Fi access.



The amount of storage options is excellent for such a small caravan

impressed with the brushed-metal handles that she says "give a high quality feel".

The couple are also pleasantly surprised to spot the latest Thetford C-250 toilet. "That's a nice touch. You wouldn't always expect that in this level of van," says Rocky. Pat also points out the hooks and towel ring as other "nice touches".

The washroom also features a large mirror with strip lighting over the basin and storage below it.

Rocky, who is six foot tall, finds the basin is set quite low, which could make using it uncomfortable. He also notices that the surround isn't very wide and wouldn't hold much more than toothbrushes.

"It's a shame they haven't fitted an extra shelf or cabinet on the wall. It's a blank space that could be put to good use," he says.

"I agree," says Pat, "although you wouldn't want too much crammed into this small space. It's ideal for brushing teeth or night-time loo visits. You could always use the site facilities for anything more."

Final thoughts

With their weekend drawing to a close, Pat and Rocky take time

to reflect on the Ranger 380/2 while packing their gear away.

"If we were in the market for a small two-berth we would certainly consider this van. The build quality is excellent and far superior to that of more expensive models we have seen," says Rocky.

Pat agrees, adding, "As I said before, this van is like a Tardis. From the outside, you would never think it had so much space. The design is well thought out, the storage is more than adequate and the double bed is huge.

"The lounge seats are plenty long enough when used as single beds to take tall sleepers like us comfortably. The area can also quite easily seat four people without a struggle."

Rocky was pleased by some of the "practical touches", such as the step-up A-frame and location of the spare wheel. He was also impressed to see the latest Thetford toilet and Truma water pump fitted.

Pat summarizes their thoughts: "Our only major gripe is the oven knobs and lack of ignition. This is the one reason we might hesitate to buy it. However, these are simple flaws that could easily be rectified by the manufacturer."



Huge double bed is comfortable, but Pat would like more spotlights

LIVE-IN Data £10,495

Bailey Ranger Series 6 380/2



Berths	2	Internal height	1.90m
Shipping length	5.34m	Awning size	814cm
Shipping width	2.19m	MiRO	827kg
Shipping height	2.58m	MTPLM	997kg
Internal length	3.67m	User payload	170kg

EQUIPMENT

External equipment

AL-Ko chassis. Button handbrake. 13-pin electrics. Truma Crystal 2 water pump. Two-piece entrance door. Awning light.

Heating

Truma dual-fuel, blown-air space heater. Truma dual-fuel water heater.

Lounge

Flyscreens, blinds and curtains on all windows. Heki rooflight. 230V TV point. Drop-in carpets. Status directional aerial.

Kitchen

107-litre Thetford fridge. Four-burner hob. Sink with removable drainer. Separate oven and grill.

Washroom

Domestic-style door handle. Thetford C-250 swivel toilet.

Security

CRIS identity number on windows and chassis. Single key operation for exterior doors.

OTHER FEATURES

Options

Spare wheel and tyre (£105). Chest of drawers (£250). Al-Ko ATC Trailer Control System (£450 - factory fit).

Warranty

6 years body. 3 years parts.

The Perfect Match
FORD FOCUS 1.6 TDCI ZETEC 5DR

Price	£17,272
Noseweight	75kg
Kerbweight	1357kg



Our favourite Ford Focus is the 2.0 TDCi model, but with such a light van (even fully laden, the Bailey Ranger 380/2 weighs less than a tonne) there is no need to splash out on the top-specification diesel. The 108bhp 1.6-litre should be more than up to the job. What's more, it will cost less to buy and fuel: driven solo, official figures promise 62.7mpg on the combined cycle.

Whichever engine is under the bonnet, we love towing with the Focus. Many small cars feel slightly nervous with a caravan behind them, but the Focus is always secure and stable. For a small family car, there's lots of room for passengers, and enough luggage space for a couple's holiday gear.