

Exclusive



The Sancerre's neat exterior belies the sense of space inside



Hilary likes the buttonless handbrake and Paul likes the new Thetford toilet

LIVE-IN Test

With the Practical Caravan Enthusiast Team



Bailey Pageant S7 Sancerre

Berths 4 Price £13,695 MTPLM 1435kg

Tested by
Paul and Hilary Harris



Paul and Hilary have been caravanning as a couple for nearly eight years and testing vans for nearly as long. Starting with a 1980 Eccles Topaz, the Harrises graduated to a Bailey Pageant Vendee,

liking its transverse fixed bed and L-shaped lounge. The couple are happy with their van, insisting they'll only change it if compelled to do so.

Practical Caravan
Enthusiast Team

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

Exploring space

Can you fit twin-axle comfort into single-axle space? To find out Paul and Hilary Harris try out the Bailey Pageant Series 7 Sancerre

The wealth of fixed-bed layouts now available from all the major manufacturers tells its own story – fixed beds are popular. Over the past few years sales of these layouts have greatly increased as couples looking for a more comfortable night's sleep and less cushion-juggling opt for a ready-made mattress. The trouble with fixed beds is that they eat up much of the interior space, compromising other parts of the living area.

Often single-axle vans have squashed front lounges and small corner washrooms. Twin-axle fixed-bed vans boast more interior space, but many caravanners are restricted from buying a twin-axle because of their towcar, budget or storage space on the driveway. Bailey has resolved these issues with its newly released Senator California. It combines a nearside fixed bed with a transverse end washroom, all on a single-axle. And based on the immediate success of this top-end tourer,

Bailey has brought the layout into its redesigned Pageant range. The result, the Sancerre, looks set to appeal to an even greater number of comfort-seeking couples. It is £2000 cheaper than the California at £13,695 and 60kg lighter with an MTPLM of 1435kg. One couple after room for two and "a little luxury these days" is Paul and Hilary Harris. As they approach the van they agree that it looks attractive but Paul is keen to get under its skin and heads for the front locker. "This has a nice



Paul is impressed with the large front locker but would like it lit

wide opening," he says, "and is huge inside. There's space for two gas bottles, an Aquaroll and a waste container, with room besides. But I would like a light. Last time we went away we arrived in the dark. A light in the locker would make getting sorted much easier."

Kit for the job
Paul likes having the latest towing gear, such as 13-pin electrics, but is more impressed by the addition of ATC here. "Anything that gives you more confidence on the road is a good thing, and having it as standard is great. The shock absorbers should help towing, too." There is a nearside wet locker, split entrance door and high-level brake lights at the rear. Paul notes that the steadies "aren't the heavy-duty ones," but concedes that they would probably just add unnecessary extra weight. "I am surprised that they don't have

plastic feet, though. These steadies would sink into wet ground. Fixed plastic feet would help, whether on grass or hardstanding pitches." On the offside, the waste water pipes are sensibly located behind the axle and Paul likes the wheeled Thetford cassette toilet. He is not so sure about the Whale water pump. "It's an in-board pump, which means the water pressure will be good, but the last one we used was loud inside the van." Hilary spots the buttonless handbrake and is keen to give it a try. "Oh yes, that's much easier to put on and off than ours." With the running gear receiving a thumbs up, they move inside, eager to check out the living space. First impressions are good. "I really like it," says Hilary. "It has everything that our Vendee does but with a few added extras." Paul agrees, stretching out on the wraparound seating.



No central chest but lounge is spacious and comfortable

Caravan cooking

Hilary, *Practical Caravan's* resident cook, is keen to get to grips with the kitchen so, after flicking on the kettle, she has a nose around.

"It has plenty of work surface and I like not having a recessed drainer. Having a removable one is not a problem here because it stows behind a clip, in the cupboard between the oven and fridge."

There is a four-burner hob, separate oven and grill, microwave oven, extractor fan and one mains socket. Hilary isn't convinced that the microwave is set at a good height, but otherwise is happy with the kitchen equipment.

Opening the big Dometic fridge she likes the blue light and the promise that you can remove the freezer compartment. However, Hilary hits a snag when she tries to take out the freezer section to fit a bottle of wine into the fridge. "It's very tight, you have to drop down the front part of the freezer tray to wiggle it out."

The location of the mains socket at the left-hand end of the work top does not worry Hilary and she feels there is enough cupboard space for food. "The two lockers over the kitchen have trays for glasses and crockery, and I like the fitted cutlery drawer." There is a

locker on the nearside, too, plus space below the oven and in the cupboard between the fridge and oven for pots and pans. "I tend to store jars and cans in the offside lounge lockers, so there's plenty of room in the kitchen for our groceries," says Hilary.

Entertaining space

With the food unpacked and lunch simmering away on the hob, Hilary joins Paul in the lounge for a longed-for cup of tea. Sitting back, Paul notices the big Heki roof light. "That gives plenty of natural light," he notes, "but I can't see many artificial lights. There are the corner lights and two spotlights on each side, but I've seen older Baileys that have spotlights around the roof light, too."

"There are the LED lights below the nearside and offside lockers," counters Hilary.

"Yes, but I don't know how strong they are," says Paul. "The colour of the light looks funny to me – they're a good idea for mood lighting, but I'd still like to see a few more bright lights dotted about. That's a bit of a worry in the kitchen, too – the only light there is from one strip of LEDs."



Drop-leaf table would easily seat five for dinner
LEFT Lack of inset drainer gives Hilary more work space



Reclining on the sofas it is clear that there is plenty of room for both to stretch out. "Our Vendee has L-shaped seating," says Hilary, "so we don't miss a centre chest. We'd rather have more lounging space like this and then just use a TV table for resting a cuppa."

Paul notices the concealed handles on the lockers. "Not having the locker handles on show is neat and adds to the sense of

space. But I'm not convinced that these locker handles will last." But they are a simple, clever design and once Paul knows they have been thoroughly tested by an independent body he is happy.

The water heating controls are on the offside wall and the blown-air heating controls are by the TV position. Both please Paul as "they're set at a nice accessible height. I like having a door to the fuse box, too, because it is easy to get at. But there should be front access to the under-seat storage."

Overall, the Harrises like the lounge. "I could see us spending time in here," says Hilary. "Little touches show an attention to detail, such as the plastic stoppers at the end of the curtain rails to stop the curtains falling off when they are drawn. I even like the upholstery." The floral 'Savoy' alternative is a £220 upgrade, but the Harrises are content without it. Hilary sums it up: "With all these cushions [four bolster and two scatter], it's a lovely, comfy area."

Sleep on it

"So is this end," says Paul, poking his head around the corner to the fixed bed. "We wouldn't be without a fixed bed now. Clambering over each other for a night-time loo trip is awkward, and this nearside bed doesn't solve that problem, but you get a much better night's sleep."

They both love the huge storage space below, which is accessed easily thanks to strong gas struts lifting the mattress. The Venetian blind at the foot of the bed means you can see the TV, which rests here by the aerial socket. And with two halogen spotlights and a padded headboard, both Paul and Hilary can sit up and read in comfort.

Opposite the foot of the bed is a large wardrobe. "I love all that hanging space," says Hilary. "And the shelves on the right-hand side are great for sectioning out your clothes and keeping them neat."

"It makes it a bit tight around the foot of the bed," says Paul, "but

it's worth it to have all of our clothes tucked away in one place."

Hilary likes the natural light flooding in through nearside and offside windows and a roof light. "It's nice having a little shelf under the window for ornaments. I'm surprised that there's only one shelf over the bed. Only one of you gets a place to put a glass of water."

Looking down, Hilary notes that "the drop-in carpets are good. In our Vendee the carpet is one big piece, which makes taking it out and cleaning it tricky. This carpet is split into three pieces, so it would be easier." They would prefer a wooden partition door to the fabric one, but accept that the weight saving is a bonus.

Up front the other two berths are made up using soft-wood slats that extend from under the base of the central seat. The section of wood that you pull out is larger than in most vans, so the bed base should be very supportive.

"With the cushions in place it makes a big double. But

Pageant S7 Sancerre What the Harrises say

👍 "We adore most parts of the caravan. But our favourite bits are the fixed bed and the clothes storage space opposite it. The kitchen has everything that any cook could need and the running gear is better than on many more expensive vans. But it's the sense of space and the layout itself that have really won us over."

👎 "We're not sure about the lighting. That is our biggest concern, as it feels a bit dark at night-time. The LEDs are attractive but it could do with more of them and there's not enough light in the kitchen. Towels slide off the washroom towel hooks too easily and we would like an extra shelf over the fixed bed. But otherwise we have no complaints."



Space under the bed is easily accessed thanks to strong gas struts. Halogen lights and padded headboard add to comfort of bed area



The large wardrobe has plenty of hanging and shelving space



End washroom is well lit with good storage and separate shower



Where they stayed

Newton Mill Camping and Caravanning Park

Newton Road, Bath BA2 9JF

Tel 01225 333 909

Web www.campinginbath.co.uk

Open All year

This charming little site is situated within walking distance of Bath city centre. Paul and Hilary chose it for its fantastic location. It also has good bus links into the city with a stop right outside the site.

The spacious hardstanding pitches are all within easy reach of water taps and the clean shower block. The showers have sensors to save water, so it only flows when you're under the shower.

Behind the level pitches a stream runs through the site, providing a relaxing soundtrack to a sound night's sleep. It's a great site for wildlife lovers, too – ducks wander among the pitches.



Deep cushions and wall boards make the front bed comfortable

people are buying this van for the fixed bed and that area works very well," says Paul.

Clean finish

The rear transverse washroom will attract many people to this layout. "I've seen other washrooms like this on the market and it's true that some are bigger," says Paul. "But by being smaller it keeps the van at a manoeuvrable size. It feels a bit tight on space, but it has everything in it that the others do."

You get a Thetford C250 toilet, basin with plenty of headroom above it and a separate shower. Hilary likes the shower, feeling that there's room to spread out. "It doesn't have anywhere to put your shower gel, but you can rest bottles on the floor easily enough."

Storage space elsewhere draws praise from Hilary. "The shelf over the window and the cupboard below the basin have plenty of room for our toiletries." But she isn't so complimentary about the towel hooks, which "don't work very well. They are not curved upwards enough, so towels slide off them easily. I like the huge mirror, though."

Paul likes the natural light provided by the window at the back of the van. "Perhaps it would be better if it were frosted, in case you forget to pull down the blind. But it lets in more light this way." A spotlight over the shelf and a

circular light on the roof meets with their approval, too.


Buying decision

The couple settle down at the big folding leaf table to enjoy lunch. "This table is excellent," says Hilary, impressed by the size and side extensions. "We could easily fit five people around this for dinner."

Looking back on what they've seen, Paul is very positive: "I've loved spending time in this van. It has everything we want, from the fixed bed down to a big living space up front. We don't use our washroom much, but I would with this extra space."

"Twin-axles are not an option for us as our 2002 Citroën C5 has a 1438kg kerbweight. So it's great to see a single-axle van with this layout. Considering the size and weight, the living space is superb."

Hilary agrees, chipping in: "We've been wanting to change our van for a while but will only do so once we find a layout that's really right for us. This just might be it. All of our concerns are minor issues that I'm sure we could live with. It's got a comfortable feel and all the kit that we crave – it's a great compromise between interior space and exterior size."

Paul seems convinced by what he has seen, declaring with an excited glint in his eye: "If we get a slightly heavier towcar then this could well be our next tourer." 

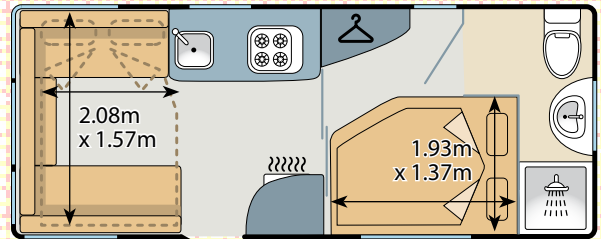


Hilary likes the upholstery. But removing the ice box proves fiddly



LIVE-IN Data £13,695

Bailey Pageant Series 7 Sancerre



Berths	4	Internal height	1.90m
Shipping length	7.19m	Awning size	1008cm
Shipping width	2.28m	MiRO	1215kg
Shipping height	2.58m	MTPLM	1435kg
Internal length	5.61m	User payload	220kg

EQUIPMENT

External equipment

Al-Ko chassis. Al-Ko ATC. Al-Ko AKS 3004 stabiliser. Al-Ko shock absorbers. Buttonless handbrake. 13-pin electrics. Two-piece entrance door. Awning light.

Heating

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

Lounge

Flyscreens, curtains and blinds on all windows. Heki roof light. Radio/CD/MP3 player and two speakers. Drop-in carpets. Status directional aerial. Two 230V sockets.

Kitchen

Dometic 115-litre fridge/freezer. Microwave oven. Four-burner hob. Separate oven and grill. Extractor fan. Sink with removable drainer.

Washroom

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

Security

CRIS security number on windows and chassis. Single-key operation for exterior doors. Al-Ko Secure wheel lock.

OTHER FEATURES

Options

'Savoy' upholstery (£220). Centre chest of drawers (£265). Tracker recovery system (£390). Tracker alarm (£88).

The Perfect Match CITROËN C5 2.0 HDI SX

Price	£17,995
Noseweight	73kg
Kerbweight	1683kg*



The C5 is one of the best cars Citroën has built in years. It is pretty handy when it comes to towing, too.

With a healthy 1683kg kerbweight, it's an 85% match for the Bailey. The 2.0-litre diesel is strong and smooth, and should comfortably haul the Sancerre up to the legal limit. It's economical as well. Official figures suggest 48.7mpg should be on the cards when driven solo.

The C5 is at its best on a long drive. It's quiet, comfortable and almost effortless to drive. The steering feels remote, and some rivals are more spacious in the back, but otherwise there's little to dislike.

*Includes 75kg for the driver and luggage not included in Citroën's published figure