

Help us to buy...

... a six-berth family van for £15k

Lunar Quasar 556
£14,995

1

Bailey Olympus 546
£14,695

2



ON TEST

Lunar Quasar 556

Price £14,995

Berths 6

A new layout to the Quasar portfolio, this flexible six-berth layout adapts over time as the family grows

Bailey Olympus 546

Price £14,695

Berths 6

Triple fixed bunks and a rear dinette make a great kids' area, and Grade 3 insulation keeps energy costs down



OUR EXPERT

Andrew Ditton has been caravanning since he was in nappies and has been touring the country in his own caravan for many years. As a result, his critical eye is very much appreciated by readers and manufacturers alike

THIS MONTH WE HELP

The Strover family from Ashford in Kent

CARAVANNING HISTORY

As a child, Philippa enjoyed caravanning with her parents, although remembers that their Eccles Topaz was 'too small'. After marrying Andrew they borrowed Andrew's parents' two-berth 'van. Since the three girls came along, their only touring has been in a motorhome around New Zealand.

LOOKING FOR AND WHY

Now their youngest daughter is nearly three, the Strovers want their own tourer that is roomy enough for everyone. Their preferred sites are informal CL-type sites, so a decent washroom is key.



Caravan TOW TEST

This month we towed these caravans with a... **Honda CR-V** See page 38

1

LUNAR QUASAR 556



Compact forward lounge is just about large enough for a family of six



Front and rear, there's room enough for six at either end



Folding partition door separates the rear area at night

CARAVAN SPEC

PRICE

£14,995 (includes 17.5% VAT, excludes £495 delivery charge)

CONTACT

Lunar Caravans Ltd, Sherdley Road, Preston PR5 5JF

t 01772 337628

w lunarcaravans.com

BERTHS

6

DIMENSIONS

Internal length 5.79m

Overall width 2.16m

Shipping length 7.34m

WEIGHTS

MIRO 1289kg

MTPLM 1499kg

USER PAYLOAD

210kg

BED SIZES

Front double: 6ft 7in x 4ft

3in/201cm x 130cm

Two rear singles: 6ft 1in x 2ft

1in/185cm x 63cm

Two Pullman bunks: 5ft

7in/170cm x 1ft 11in/58cm

WARRANTY

Six years ingress, three years component

HEATING

Truma mains and gas space heater with blown air, Grade 2 insulation

Andrew says

WE LIKE

Versatile and flexible layout, separate shower cubicle, great for dining, exterior socket and barbecue point

WE DISLIKE

Putting up bunks, bunk beds quite small, lack of storage

EXTERIOR

While it doesn't have the Alu-Tech construction, ten-year ingress warranty, and ATC electronic stability of the Olympus, the Quasar is still a very well specified caravan when it comes to the exterior. An AKS hitch comes as standard. Over and above the Bailey, the Lunar boasts a wet locker, an exterior mains socket and a barbecue point. Perhaps most useful of all is that both rear beds offer exterior hatches to allow for the easy storage of larger items. Andrew liked the gas locker, which he commented looked 'more integrated' than that on the Bailey, and liked the fact that he could store the Aquaroll handle without disassembling it first.

8/10

LOUNGING

Despite the fact that the front lounge is comparable in size to that in the Bailey, Philippa liked the fact that the entry door is between the lounge and the kitchen, which in her opinion, makes the Lunar feel a little less claustrophobic. Up front, the seats are 5ft 6in long, so they are just about large enough to stretch out on or squeeze in the family for a game of cards. To the rear is a spacious dinette, which is a full 6ft 1in long, so there's plenty of room for the family to spread out. Television addicts will be delighted to discover no fewer than three television points, allowing the box to be placed on chest units front and rear, or alternatively, fixed on a bracket by the kitchen.

8/10

DINING

Dining decadence is the name of the Quasar game. Two freestanding tables are provided and both front and rear chest units have pull-out tops. If it rains on the day of a child's birthday party, we reckoned that you could squeeze in six adults around the front table and ten children around the rear, which is no mean feat in a single axle caravan! Andrew remarked that he would probably leave one of the bunks made up all day, and as such, the rear table would need erecting if the three girls were to have an early tea ahead of the adults. In this case, Andrew and Philippa would then not need to put up a table at the front where the tablette would probably be more than sufficient.

9/10

NIGHT TIME

Having huffed and puffed to put up one of the Pullman bunks at the rear of the caravan, Andrew decided that the bunk would stay erected for the duration of any holiday. Naturally, the girls all wanted to climb over the bunk, and we were surprised at how sturdy it was. What a pity, then, that the lower occupant is left without a reading light. Many people do not like the flimsy concertina-style screen, but this was a hit with the Strovers as the girls felt less isolated and alone when tucked up in bed. Up front, Philippa and Andrew's only option is to make up the double bed, which is narrower than the one in the Bailey, thanks to the imposing chest unit in the van.

7/10

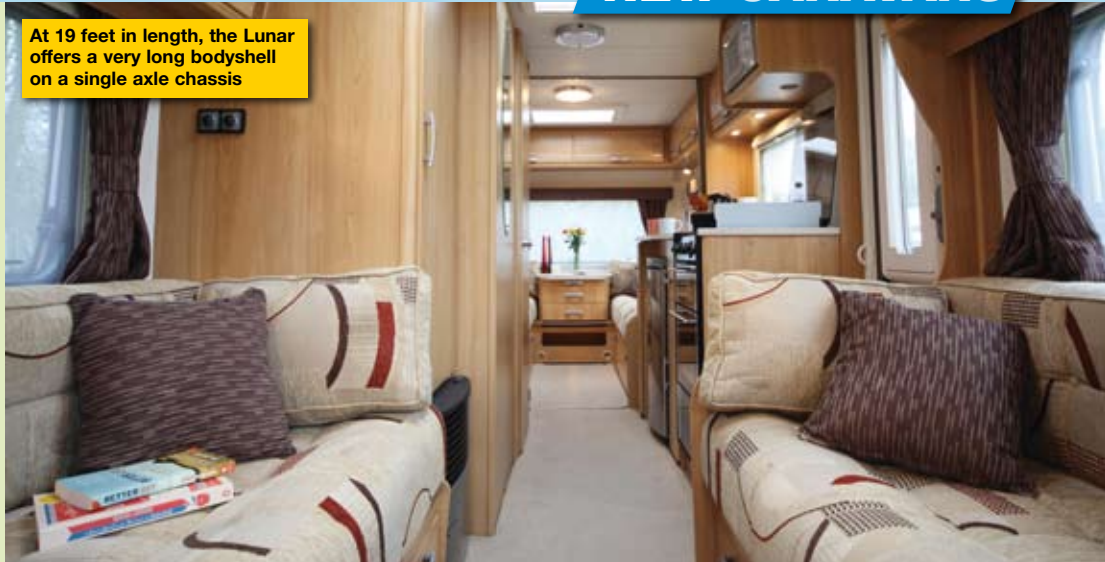
SCORES

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

NEW CARAVANS



Bunks have to be erected every night, but the Strovers chose to leave theirs made up all day



At 19 feet in length, the Lunar offers a very long bodyshell on a single axle chassis



Lack of cover to the sink lends a low-budget feel to the kitchen area



Separate shower sealed the Lunar's favour with the CL-loving Strovers



STORAGE

As mentioned previously, it was a real delight to find that the Quasar offers so much versatile exterior storage. Inside, the picture is a little less rosy. We loved the drop-down fronts to the seat lockers, but be aware that bunk cushions take up space during the day and spare backrest cushions replace them at night. No hooks are provided to hang coats, and the wardrobe is way too small to handle the needs of six people. Roof lockers abound and these are a decent size, but some are very large, yet have no shelves or dividers, resulting in wasted space. Philippa also lamented the fact that there are no shelves or hooks in order to keep everyday items readily to hand.

6/10

KITCHEN

Equipment levels in the Lunar's kitchen are high, especially the super electronic Thetford fridge and the three-burner hob to the full cooker. Philippa was at a bit of a loss though about where exactly, she would prepare the meals and dish up. 'There is simply no space,' she commented. What does not help is that the sink and drainer unit is an all-in-one affair, yet this comes without any kind of lid or cover. Storage space is also pretty poor, limited to one narrow cupboard, the pan store under the oven, and a roof locker above. Still, it must be said in the Lunar's favour that at least the cupboard does not need to be opened in order to gain access to the cutlery drawer.

7/10

WASHROOM

As fans of CL-type sites without facilities, the Stroker family was delighted to find a high-spec washroom in the Quasar. Both Andrew and Philippa loved the separate shower cubicle, although everyone found the sink to be a little on the small side. A mini-Heki roof light is a neat touch, letting the daylight in and the steam out. A common theme throughout the 'van, storage here is once again very tight. There is insufficient room to put spare towels in the cupboard under the sink, and as usual, no consideration whatsoever has been given as to where a family may hang six damp towels to dry. Outside, a large mirror takes care of Philippa's hair drying requirements.

8/10

FINISH AND BUILD

Three energetic girls quickly put a 'van through its durability pace, and the Lunar stood up well to being bounced about in. We were delighted to see that proper aluminium-framed sprung slats had superseded yesterday's low-budget wooden seat locker tops. Quality soft furnishings have been used throughout. Very little disappointed, but we did find a few reasons to gripe. A couple of moans were about flimsy drawers that would collapse if carrying more than a single magazine, and the weedy base to the gas locker with easily-broken vents. In the bed lockers, the backs of the electrical sockets remain unprotected and easily damaged.

8/10

2

BAILEY OLYMPUS 546



Front chest is an optional extra, but without it there is more room for the family to spread out



Dining table is disappointingly small



The Stroker girls didn't like the door separating them from Mum and Dad

CARAVAN SPEC

PRICE

£14,695 (includes 17.5% VAT, excludes £495 delivery charge)

CONTACT

Bailey Caravans, South Liberty Lane, Bristol BS3 2SS

t 0117 3052939

w bailey-caravans.co.uk

BERTHS

6

DIMENSIONS

Internal length 5.53m

Overall width 2.19m

Shipping length 7.10m

WEIGHTS

MIRO 1222kg

MTPLM 1457kg

USER PAYLOAD

235kg

BED SIZES

Two front singles: 5ft 8in x 2ft 3in/173cm x 69cm

OR front double: 6ft 6in x 5ft 8in/199cm x 173cm

Rear single: 5ft 7in x 2ft 4in/171cm x 71cm

Three fixed bunks: 6ft 0in x 1ft 11in/182cm x 59cm

WARRANTY

Ten years ingress, three-year component

HEATING

Truma mains and gas space heater, Grade 3 insulation

Andrew says

WE LIKE

ATC stability, far lighter than the Lunar, roof lockers, Grade 3 insulation, LED lighting

WE DISLIKE

Small dining table, no exterior socket or barbecue point, manual fridge and heater

EXTERIOR

Anyone who has picked up a caravanning magazine over the past six months will know all about the Alu-Tech construction technique that offers warm insulation qualities and a ten-year warranty against ingress. Drivers of some saloon cars have reported being distracted by the bright LED lighting set into the front grab handles, and the jury is still out over that black carbon fibre-effect gas locker. Segmenting the front locker into three is great for organisation, but means that you'll need to break down your Aquaroll handle for storage. ATC stability and an AKS hitch are standard, making for great towing, but there's no barbecue point, nor is there an exterior socket.

8/10

LOUNGING

Despite being a couple of inches longer than the sofas in the Lunar, and the bodyshell a few millimetres wider, Philippa remarked that the lounge area in the Olympus felt a little squashed, and this was without the optional chest unit in place. Our upgraded upholstery was chunky, firm, and comfortable. Paying the upgrade sees the provision of two armrest bolster cushions without which, watching telly on the front shelf would be awkward and uncomfortable. To the rear, the girls loved their little three-seater dinette, where a second television point is provided. However, if the set is not mounted on a wall bracket, wires will dangle from the high aerial outlet.

8/10

DINING

One very unwelcome trait that the Olympus has inherited from its classically constructed cousin is the diminutive size of the freestanding dining table. This table is adequate for a four-berth model because, quite simply, four diners is all it can comfortably accommodate. No provision has been made to up-size the table to make it suitable for a six-berth caravan. As such, the girls had their supper and breakfast at their own table in the rear bedroom, but this meant clearing away books, toys, and DVDs at every meal time. And surely, going caravanning as a family is supposed to be about spending time together, which certainly includes eating together?

4/10

NIGHT TIME

Philippa was very keen to see how the girls took to sleeping in a triple fixed bunk arrangement. After spending a weekend in the Olympus, the verdict was 'OK, but not really ideal for us'. Andrew was very impressed to see that each bunk has its own window, blind, and reading light, giving the girls some independence. The bunk beds are longer than those in the Lunar. Parents of older children will delight at the solid wooden partition door, but the young Strovers did not like the feeling of separation from Mum and Dad that this caused. Up front, the lack of front chest meant that Philippa and Andrew enjoyed a huge double bed but only after quite a bit of cushion-turning.

8/10

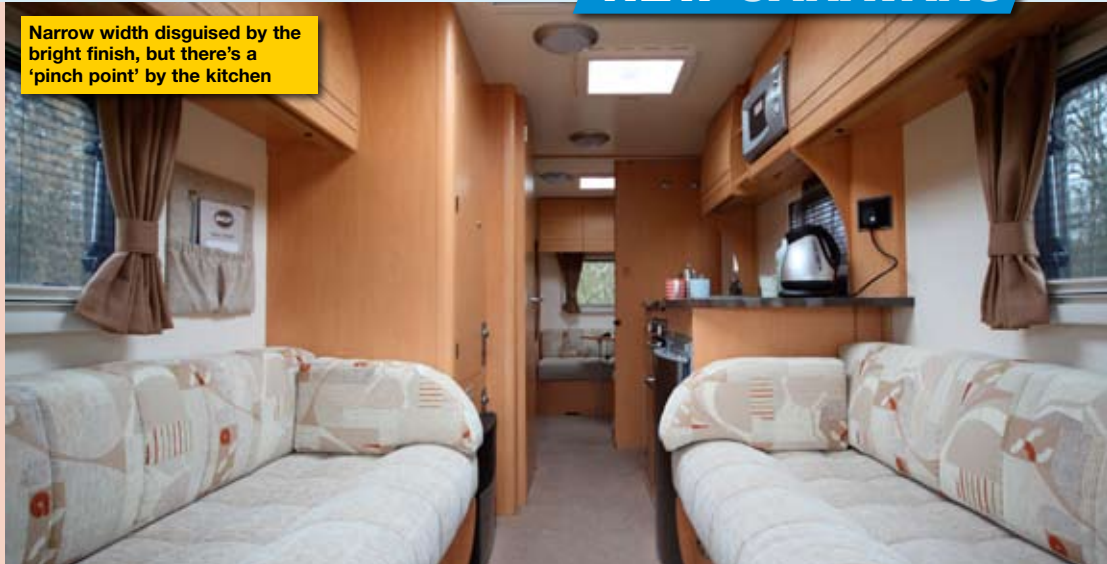
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NEW CARAVANS



Fixed bunks each offer a window and reading light



Narrow width disguised by the bright finish, but there's a 'pinch point' by the kitchen



Great kitchen offers all mod cons, but be aware of limited workspace



Small washroom would better suit families who prefer to use site facilities



STORAGE

Exterior storage is not as good as that offered by the Lunar. There are two small side lockers to supplement the gas locker and that's it. Inside, however, it's a different story. Although the Bailey Olympus does not have drop-down fronts to the seats as in the Lunar, storage space on offer is superior in volume and in the way it is organised. To state the obvious, bedding may be left on fixed bunks, thereby liberating the space under the seats for the far more serious task of toy storage. Lockers are deep and capacious, and organised with dividers and shelves to make the most of the space within. We liked the coat hooks and shelf that was over the door.

7/10

KITCHEN

Another compact kitchen where a forlorn Philippa looked on and wondered how on earth she was going to be able to dish up five meals. At least the Olympus offers a much larger sink than in the Quasar, and the removable drainer does free up a modicum of workspace. There are four burners to the hob, including a large, high-speed version. However, the fridge is a lower-grade model without the flashy silver door and without the electronic ignition. Philippa also found it a real fuff to have to open the cupboard every time she wanted to grab something small like a teaspoon from the cutlery drawer. Storage is very slightly superior to that in the Lunar, but still rather tight.

7/10

WASHROOM

The Strovers found it hard to conceal their thorough displeasure at having to use a washroom without a 'proper' shower cubicle. 'I felt like I was showering in a duvet cover,' complained Philippa. Needless to say, one of the girls needed to use the loo straight after Mum had finished in the shower, and managed to get her socks wet in the shower tray. At least a nice mini-Heki takes care of getting rid of the steam. Our test family also felt that the washbasin was too small for their needs. Outside, there is no mirror provided for Philippa when using a hairdryer, which was a problem. By this point, it was easy to guess which caravan the family would prefer!

6/10

FINISH AND BUILD

Andrew raised a very good point regarding the GRP finish to the interior walls of the Alu-Tech constructed body, wondering whether or not the white finish would turn yellow over the course of time. Another consideration to make before taking on such a caravan is the extra expense associated with having the joints re-tensioned as part of the annual service. Still, the Grade 3 insulation was as efficient as ever, the only complaint being that the caravan arrived with a gas leak behind the cooker, rendering it unusable until it had been rectified.

8/10

NEW CARAVANS

OTHERS TO CONSIDER

ELDDIS AVANTE 556

Price £14,599

Berths 6

Very popular family tourer, thanks to its contemporary styling and high level of comfort. Over 100kg heavier than the Bailey, yet a similar size and layout.

STERLING

EUROPA 565

Price £14,554

Berths 6

Another great looker for the style-seekers, this one has triple bunks and a wet room like the Bailey.

COACHMAN

AMARA 570/6

Price £16,085

Berths 6

High in price, high in weight, but high in style and high in quality. Double bunks and a separate shower compare with the Lunar.

SPRITE MAJOR 6

DIAMOND PACK

Price £12,829

Berths 6

Don't overlook the fabulous new Sprite. Luxury touches you'd never expect (it has a better fridge and heater than the Olympus) at a price you won't believe.



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INSURANCE QUOTE

Lunar Quasar 556 £14,995
from only £177.39

Bailey Olympus 546 £14,695
from only £173.60

New for old cover.

Wide range of premium discounts available – up to 60%!

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We'd like to thank Ken and Lyn and their team at the Ferry Meadows Caravan Club Site in Peterborough. Thanks also to Pioneer Caravans of Eye near Peterborough for their prompt attention and rectification of the technical issues encountered during the test.

Final scores

1



LUNAR QUASAR 556

Practicality 8/10

Easy to live with layout and may be adapted to a family's needs as it grows.

Value for money 8/10

One of the best value Lunars we've seen. Shame about the cheap kitchen sink.

Caravan
Our rating

77/100

2



BAILEY OLYMPUS 546

Practicality 8/10

A little more cramped inside, but almost 70kg lighter in weight so easier to tow.

Value for money 8/10

Fairly good value, but luxuries such as ATC are balanced by shortcomings.

Caravan
Our rating

72/100

OUR TESTERS' CONCLUSIONS

It comes as a bit of a shock to conduct a test where the Lunar is not simply the heavier of the two caravans, but is heavier by a whopping 67kg. However, take a peek inside and you see that these are two very different caravans. For a start, the Lunar feels far roomier inside, which it should do, given that its bodyshell is one foot longer than that of the Bailey. There are also two chest units provided in the Lunar (specifying the optional chest in the Bailey will start to close the weight gap), as well as the additional weight associated with a decent shower cubicle and wiring to a third television point.

One great advantage of the Lunar's new layout is that it can evolve with a family. The two six-foot long sofas are large enough to cope with children turning into teenagers, although

be mindful of the short bunks. The Bailey, however, has longer bunks but these are a little on the narrow and shallow side to satisfying the needs of those over the age of about 12. And the Bailey's sixth berth is rather short.

When there are five bodies in a caravan, life needs to be as stress-free as possible, and small irritations such as the washroom door in the Bailey that could not be fully opened because it hit the cooker opposite, are the kind of things that a family could do without. Neither manufacturer provides simple yet essential towel rails for a family, and Lunar has omitted to fit coat hooks. Either way, choosing between these two family tourers depends more on the individual needs of the family rather than differences in detail between the caravans.

WE CHOSE

Lunar Quasar 556

We were glad to try out the triple bunks in the Bailey, but would prefer the more flexible arrangement in the Quasar where we would probably leave the fifth berth made up anyway. The decent shower in the washroom decided it for us. We very much prefer the Lunar and are glad that our Galaxy can tow it.



NEXT MONTH We test the Bailey Olympus 525 against the Swift Charisma 565

Caravan TOW TEST

A great tower, full of surprises.
Andrew salutes the Honda CR-V



Honda CR-V 2.2 i-DTEC EX

Price £30,145

Kerbweight 1773kg

Towing limit 1500kg

Noseweight 100kg

Maximum power 148bhp @ 4000rpm

Torque 350Nm@2000rpm

CO₂ rating 195g/km

How did it tow?

Towing with the Honda is full of pleasant surprises. The 13-pin electrical socket is easy to reach without getting down on your hands and knees, and the car performs with a caravan in tow.

I was a little apprehensive about towing the Lunar, having a body length of 19ft yet riding on a single axle chassis. Our test 'van was fitted with an AL-KO noseweight gauge on the jockey wheel, but when checked against my calibrated Milenco model it was inaccurate by over 10kg.

Despite breezy conditions during our road test, my worries about stability were totally unfounded. The Honda held such a stable line that most of the time the slight corkscrew movements of the caravans, while they could be seen in the rear view mirror, could not be felt through the chassis. It felt like Honda's rear axle was running on rails.

When needing to pull away sharply at roundabouts and junctions, there was no dithering present from the auto gearbox, and acceleration was strong yet smooth. Cruising at 60mph presents no problem at all for the 2.2 i-DTEC engine, which has plenty more energy to go faster if conditions and local laws allow. Consumption when towing was a slightly below average at 20mpg, but we did nail it somewhat. After all, there was no reason to hang around with such confidence-inspiring stability and handling on tap.



What's the solo drive like?

A warm feeling permeates knowing that the car you're driving is built in Britain – or is that just the heated front seats? Honda has really tidied up its act. The flashing, buzzing, distracting, plastic space-ship fascias of yesteryear have given way to a sleek, smart, understatedly stylish assembly.

Despite a modest increase in power from the latest incarnation of the smooth 2.2 engine, the power and acceleration feel 'really good' but still short of 'great'. There's no hanging about when you need to nip out of a junction quickly, but the g-force won't be pinning you to the seat, either. Still, given the combination of smooth power delivery throughout the (automatic) gears, the adequate power to see you overtake a lorry if need be, and the better-than-expected fuel economy of 40mpg, we could very happily live with this mix. It is the handling of the car that exceeds expectations. Steering is a little on the light side, but by no means does this detract from the fact that the car simply goes where you point it, without fuss. On a practical note, the rear seat splits into the three when folding.

WHAT ELSE CAN I TOW?

Given that it is lower than the 85 per cent figure, the maximum tow weight of 1500kg must be rigidly adhered to. Two-berth vans within reach are the Buccaneer Elan and the Swift Conqueror 480. Fixed-bed vans include the Stealth X53 and the Adria Adora 612DP.



We like the sleek interior