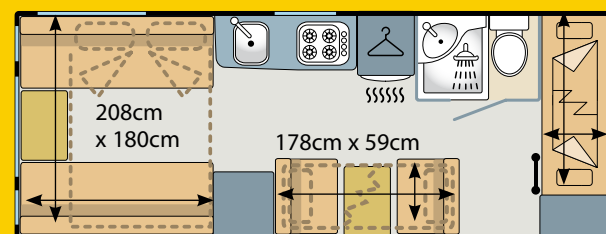




£11,985

Ace Jubilee Courier



Shipping length	7.18m	MiRO	1228kg
Shipping width	2.23m	MTPLM	1500kg
Shipping height	2.7m	User payload	262kg



£12,355

Bailey Pageant Series 6 Bretagne

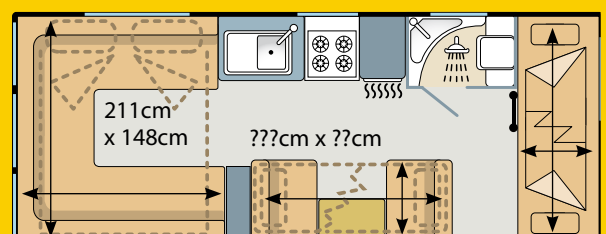


Shipping length	7.34m	MiRO	1195kg
Shipping width	2.19m	MTPLM	1420kg
Shipping height	2.58m	User payload	225kg



£11,995

Fleetwood Sonata Prelude



Shipping length	7.2m	MiRO	1165kg
Shipping width	2.29m	MTPLM	1400kg
Shipping height	2.72m	User payload	235kg



BIG CARAVAN TEST



Six-berth vans on a single axle squeeze a lot into a compact, comfy package

How do you squeeze a quart into a pint pot? That's the challenge caravan makers face when designing a six-berth, single-axle van. On the one hand, there has to be room for the whole family during the day, and enough berths for them to sleep in at night, not forgetting a kitchen big enough for family feasts and a usable washroom. Making everything fit on a compact single-axle is a tough task, but not impossible, as this trio proves.

The Ace Jubilee Courier is the most modern-looking contender here, with one-piece aluminium sides and subtle graphics. Does it have the substance to back up the style? There's strong competition from the Bailey Pageant Series 6 Bretagne. We've been impressed by the design and equipment levels of other Pageants we've tested. Finally, comes the Fleetwood Sonata Prelude. The Sonata Symphony was named Best Five- or Six-berth for 2007, so the Prelude has a lot to live up to.

With the rivalry set up, let the quart squeezing begin.

Pitching and setting up

Ace Jubilee Courier

👉👉👉👉

Bailey Pageant 6 Bretagne

👉👉👉👉

Fleetwood Sonata Prelude

👉👉👉👉

At the end of a long drive, when the whole family is tired, you don't want to spend an age dealing with awkward steadies and hard-to-find switches. Unfortunately, that's what you'll have to do with the Fleetwood. Winding down the rear steadies isn't too much hassle, but the front steadies are far under the van. Even with a long winder, they're a reach and the winder tends to slip off the nut.

You'll be pitched and level more quickly in the Ace or the Bailey,

with easier access to the front steady nuts, especially on the Ace.

In terms of hitch gear, there's little to distinguish between them. They all have AL-KO chassis and stabilisers. The Ace and Fleetwood have buttonless handbrakes, while Bailey's handbrake has a button.

The Fleetwood recovers lost ground with its cavernous front locker. It's by far the easiest to load and unload, thanks to a door that opens right out of the way on a gas strut. The lockers on the Ace and Bailey are roomy, though not as big as the Sonata's, and their doors open on struts, but don't lift as far and can get in the way.

Step inside the Bailey, where you'll find the important switches and controls quickly. The control panel – with the master, water pump, interior light and awning light switches – is just to 📺

Ace Jubilee Courier Bailey Pageant 6 Bretagne Fleetwood Sonata Prelude



Workspace by round sink is limited, but electric hotplate is welcome



Washroom is not as upmarket as the rest of this van

your left. The panel's attractive brushed metal finish is a bonus. The controls for the room and water heaters are at ankle height on the offside of the lounge, so you can adjust the temperature without leaving your seat.

In the Ace, most of the important switches are grouped on a control panel inside the

wardrobe, well out of children's reach. The room- and water-heater controls are by the TV point.

Fleetwood put its master and water-pump switches by the TV point on the nearside. Heater controls are on the wall between the washroom and the wardrobe, while the water heater controls are on the side of the bottom bunk under the bottom rung of the ladder. They're scattered, but it isn't too difficult to master.

However, the Sonata's drainage tap is in as awkward a location as its front steadies, deep under the bottom rear bunk. To open or close the tap you have to remove the bedding and reach around the wall of the washroom. You have to stretch, and you'll see little of what you are doing.

To open the Ace's drainage tap, you need to lift out the seat cushions on the nearside of the front dinette, but this arrangement is much easier than the Fleetwood's. The tap in the Bailey is reached through



Materials and build quality suggest it costs more

the drop-down door to the seat locker, without shifting cushions.

Changing a fuse in the Bailey fusebox is via the drop-down door to the seat locker on the other side of the van. You'll be wrestling cushions in the Jubilee and the Sonata to reach their fuseboxes.

The Bailey takes this round for its sensibly sited controls and easy access to the fuses and drainage tap. The Ace isn't far behind, but we can't ignore the Fleetwood's poorly located steadies and tap.

Lounge

Ace Jubilee Courier

👍👍👍👍👍

Bailey Pageant 6 Bretagne

👍👍👍👍👍

Fleetwood Sonata Prelude

👍👍👍👍👍

The Ace and Bailey have lounges that are much like those in many tourers. Fleetwood does things differently. Rather than parallel seating and a front chest the Fleetwood has a huge U-shaped lounge. It looks inviting and has

plenty of space for six. However, the cushions are overly firm and the backrests push you into an upright seating position.

There's a different approach to the main table, too. At 90cm x 78cm, it's huge, which is ideal for mealtimes or board games. The downside to its size and robust build, however, is there's nowhere to store it when you want to stretch out and relax.

Both the Ace and Bailey have more conventional tables which can be put away when they're not needed. The Ace's is marginally wider and longer than the Bailey's. It is also the same height as the front-chest extension to make one long table – perfect for the whole



Deep cupboards with big doors

family to eat together without resorting to the side dinette.

The Bailey's front chest extension is fractionally bigger than that in the Ace – easily large enough for mum's and dad's morning fry-up. But it's not at the same height as the main table, so it isn't as useful for family meals.

You'll find the longest seats in the Bailey, although the end cushion reduces the usable space. It's easy enough to store these in the seat locker to give the family more elbow room, however.

When it comes to comfort, it's the Ace's seats that take the prize. They're not too soft or too hard, but just right; Goldilocks would approve.

All three vans place the TV point on the nearside of the van between the lounge and the side dinette. Those sitting closest to it may find they are uncomfortably close to it. The television stand is far smaller in the Fleetwood than the other two vans, though. You'd struggle to find space for more than a small flat-screen model here.



Familiar cantilever arrangement of dinette bunk is easy to set up

All four vans offer a good choice of lighting. The Ace and Bailey have four directional spots, one in each corner of the lounge, and two uplighters at the front. The Fleetwood offers less choice with two directional spots. The view out isn't as good in the Fleetwood, whose windows are shallower than those in the other caravans.



Ace has the most comfortable dinette seats of the three caravans



Sofa cushions convert dinette into a flat and comfortable double bed



The rear bunks are too narrow for kids older than six or seven

great at first, but the tiny TV stand and the absence of anywhere to store the table count against it.

Kitchen

Ace Jubilee Courier

👍👍👍👍👍

Bailey Pageant 6 Bretagne

👍👍👍👍👍

Fleetwood Sonata Prelude

👍👍👍👍👍

Cramming in a usable kitchen and living space for six isn't easy. These tourers take different approaches to meet this challenge.

The most obvious difference in the Bailey is the position of the fridge. Instead of being in the main part of the kitchen, it's under the TV stand. This frees up useful storage space under the sink. There's a decent-sized plastic cutlery drawer which can be removed for cleaning, and two pull-out metal racks below this. Beneath these racks is space deep enough for cereal packets. Next to this space is a cupboard with two shelves and more space for tins, cans and other food 📺

Ace Jubilee Courier

Pros and cons...

You'll like...

- ✓ Comfortable lounge with best seats
- ✓ Stylish good looks
- ✓ Garage storage area

You won't like...

- ✗ The heaviest van on test
- ✗ Spare wheel costs extra
- ✗ Its small circular sink



Ace Jubilee Courier Bailey Pageant 6 Bretagne Fleetwood Sonata Prelude



Two work surfaces and plenty of storage make this the best kitchen



Fittings are high quality and the space is used well



Superb list of kit includes big fridge and microwave



Remove the end cushions and the dinette seats will take six easily



A breeze to make up, the double bed boasts a really flat mattress

stuffs. There are plate and mug racks in the overhead lockers.

The Ace also has plate and mug racks above its kitchen, with a larger locker above and to the right. There's a long but narrow cutlery drawer to the right of the fridge with a storage rack beneath it. On the opposite side of the van, where the Bailey has its fridge, is

a cupboard with two shelves, just the job for cereal packets.

The Fleetwood has mug racks in the locker above the sink, and a plate rack in the overhead locker to the left of the kitchen, which won't be as easy to reach as those in the other vans. Two small overhead lockers sit above the oven. The cupboard on the opposite side of the van is smaller than that in the Courier.

There's a 38cm-wide worktop in the Ace; it's adequate rather than ample. To the right is a round and rather small sink. The Bailey has a small work surface to the left of the sink and 30cm between the sink and the hob. In the Fleetwood

you'll need to close the cover over the combined sink and drainer, which gives 63cm of space for food preparation. This is supplemented by a pull-out extension, but it's too wobbly to be of much use.

The 77-litre fridge in the Fleetwood is meagre for a family of six. Those

in the Ace (107 litres) and Bailey (117 litres) put it to shame. All three have separate ovens and grills, and four-burner hobs. The Ace also has an electric hot plate, a useful feature if you run out of gas. The Bailey trumps its rivals by offering a microwave as standard.

For its superior storage, huge fridge and standard microwave oven, the Bailey takes this round. The Ace runs it close, while the modest storage and small fridge put the Fleetwood third.

Washroom

Ace Jubilee Courier

4.4/5

Bailey Pageant 6 Bretagne

4.4/5

Fleetwood Sonata Prelude

4.4/5

Big washrooms are not on offer here; the van makers assume that buyers will use site washblocks. But each manages to cram in a shower, decent storage space and a toilet.

The Fleetwood has the most showroom appeal, with eight

cupboards of white-and-blue, injected plastic. The washbasin is also moulded into the unit which, as with all the washrooms here, has a tap that pulls out to double as a shower head. Still, all those cupboards compromise space, making it difficult for an adult to shower there. Even sitting on the toilet is uncomfortable, with cupboards penning you in on both sides and from above.

The Sonata also feels less substantial than its rivals; some of the plastic bends easily. The walls lack the waterproof lining of the other two vans, so we might avoid showering in here every day. One plus point is the Thetford bench unit with cassette with the new

pull-out handle, so you can wheel the waste to a disposal point.

The Ace does a much better job with the available space with three large, more usable cupboards. Given the standard of the rest of the van, though, the washroom's plastic fittings look and feel cheap. You do get a domestic-quality door handle and a high-standard shower attachment. And despite the constraints, the space has been arranged successfully. Most users should find it very acceptable.

Bailey has clearly spent more money fitting out the Bretagne's washroom than have the other companies. It looks great, even upmarket. We like the generous cupboard space, as well as the towel rail on the back of the door, the shower tap and the other good-quality accessories on offer here. The large side window and cleverly positioned units liberate space. Also noteworthy is the moulded floor, the most substantial of those we tested; it will certainly prevent leaks and damp over the years.



Big overhead lockers and shelves



Side bunks need no infills and top rail is well crafted and light

Beds

Ace Jubilee Courier

4.4/5

Bailey Pageant 6 Bretagne

4.4/5

Fleetwood Sonata Prelude

4.4/5

Each tourer here does a good job of accommodating six, although each



Rear bunks lack rear door access but boast windows and curtains

has its particular strengths. It's in the rear bunk area that the Sonata scores the highest marks: its bunks are wide and easy to access. At the rear are two good-size windows and storage units at the end of the beds. A concertina divider works better than a curtain to isolate the bunks from the rest of the van.

The Bailey wins the battle of the front lounge as it's a brilliantly

spacious area that makes the best use of the Pageant's extended roofline. The front double is very easy to make up and the cushions form a very flat area that our testers definitely thought would give the best night's sleep. It's also well served by four reading lights and convenient bedside surfaces.

The cantilever arrangement in the Jubilee's side dinette is the best among the test tourers for making up bunks. It works with ease, and the cushions fit snugly. There's a reading light for the bottom bunk and a good-quality curtain that cuts off the area at night. At the rear, we like the fact that the bottom bunk can be folded up and that area accessed from an exterior locker door; the area can hold up to 70kg of kit.

On the downside, we deducted marks from the Fleetwood for its front double, which uses the dining table as the bed base. This leaves gaps that the ill-fitting cushions drop into. The bed isn't flat and it's fiddly to make up. There's also no obvious place to rest a TV for bedtime viewing.

Bailey Pageant Series 6 Bretagne

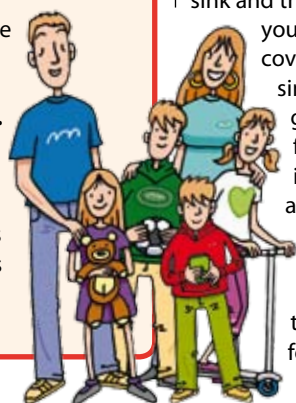
Pros and cons...

You'll like...

- ✓ The best kitchen
- ✓ Comprehensive standard equipment
- ✓ Garage storage area at rear

You won't like...

- ✗ Button-operated handbrake
- ✗ Lounge not as comfy as Ace's
- ✗ Smallest main table on test



Ace Jubilee Courier Bailey Pageant 6 Bretagne Fleetwood Sonata Prelude



Tiny fridge and wobbly pull-out worktop extension hurt the kitchen

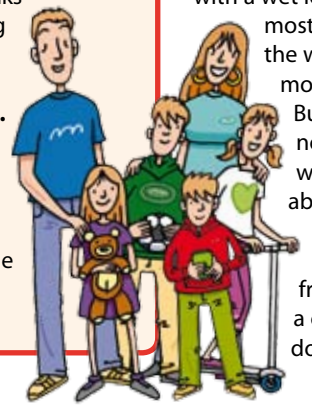


Lots of cupboards crowd the washroom

Access to the rear bunks in the Ace was poor and the restricted width means that they are only really suitable for children up to six or seven. The Bailey's bunks aren't as versatile as the Ace's, because it lacks a locker door and storage space is restricted.

Fleetwood Sonata Prelude Pros and cons...

- You'll like...**
- ✓ Lightweight so it's easy to tow
 - ✓ Huge rear bunks
 - ✓ Wide-opening front locker
- You won't like...**
- ✗ Nowhere to store main table
 - ✗ Poor storage
 - ✗ Uncomfortable double bed



Storage

Ace Jubilee Courier
Bailey Pageant 6 Bretagne
Fleetwood Sonata Prelude

Like the Ace, the Bailey's bottom bunk can be lifted out of the way to create a 'garage'. Large offside doors give external access to this useful space, but care must be taken not to place anything too heavy here to preserve stability. While the Fleetwood lacks anything similar, it is the only one with a wet locker. It also has the most storage space inside the washroom, perhaps more than you'd ever use. But its kitchen storage is not nearly as plentiful, with a small locker above the oven. Unlike its rivals, it lacks lockers above the front window and a central chest, cutting down storage options.

The Ace and Bailey can't match the Sonata's washroom storage, but they put space where it really counts. In the kitchen, the Bailey has the best variety of useful storage. There's lots of overhead storage in the lounges, too, with full-height lockers and shelves. All three have good-sized wardrobes. The Jubilee's is tallest, but the control panel for the electrics eats into the space. The Sonata's is the deepest and widest, but the Pageant's is close. Children fare better in the Ace and Bailey, which have plenty of room for kids' clothes in tall cupboards at the end of the rear bunk. The Ace has an open shelf at one end of the top bunk and an opening at the end of the bottom bunk so kids can reach inside the storage space. The top one in the Bailey has fabric pockets to stash books or computer games a nice touch. There's a curved shelf by the Fleetwood's top bunk which serves a similar purpose. With a good variety of storage and those handy garages, the Ace and Bailey are neck and neck.

Buying and owning

Ace Jubilee Courier
Bailey Pageant 6 Bretagne
Fleetwood Sonata Prelude

The Ace is the cheapest van here, but doesn't feel it. The materials and the build quality suggest a higher price tag than it carries. The Bailey can't quite match the feel of the Ace, despite costing more. However, it boasts a long list of standard kit: microwave oven, 117-litre fridge, alloy wheels, steel spare wheel, directional TV aerial and radio/CD player. Ace



Push-button lockers feel cheap

buyers will have to pay extra for the microwave (£115), alloy wheels (£99), spare wheel (£150), and radio/CD player (£140), all of which would make the Ace £134 more expensive than the Bailey. The Fleetwood is the second cheapest, just £10 more than the Ace. It comes with alloy wheels and a steel spare, but carpets like those fitted as standard by its rivals will cost £150. There's no radio/CD player or microwave, even on the options list. It feels durable, but the finish lags behind the upmarket feel of the Ace. All these vans have light-coloured upholstery that could mark easily. However, the dark carpets in the Ace and Bailey should hide dirt and, since they're removable, should be easy to clean. There's no issue with dirty carpets in the Fleetwood since it doesn't have any. As all three come from major manufacturers, you should have little trouble finding a dealership or service. They all have similar warranty cover. The Ace and Bailey have a three-year parts warranty,



You'll have to fetch additional cushions to make up side bunks

and a six-year body warranty. The Fleetwood also has three years' cover for parts, but five years' for the body. If weight is an issue, you'll be disappointed to learn the Ace is the heaviest van with an MTPLM of 1500kg. The Bailey weighs 1420kg, while the Fleetwood is the lightest at 1400kg.



The widest bunks on test benefit from large windows and storage

The Ace and Bailey tie this round. The Ace is the cheapest yet feels the most upmarket. On the other hand, the Bailey's superb list of standard kit make it better value than it at first appears. The Fleetwood trails once again.

Turn over page for full caravan specifications



The large, heavy dinette table turns into bed base ... with difficulty



The carpet is fixed, but its colour should hide the grime

Front double bed does not lie flat and is challenging to make up

Verdict

Ace Jubilee Courier
Bailey Pageant 6 Bretagne
Fleetwood Sonata Prelude

Choosing a winner here is tough. Giving the wooden spoon isn't: Fleetwood isn't afraid to do things differently with the Prelude, as with its U-shaped lounge. But this creates as many problems as it solves. Plus the fridge is small, the double bed is uncomfortable, and storage space is inadequate. The Ace and Bailey are evenly matched. The Jubilee has the most comfortable lounge, easy to assemble beds and showroom appeal that's hard to resist. The Bailey counters with the longest list of kit, the biggest fridge and the best laid out kitchen. We'd pick the Bailey. But you'll enjoy holidays in either van.

BIG CARAVAN TEST



**Ace
Jubilee Courier**



**Bailey
Pageant 6 Bretagne**



**Fleetwood
Sonata Prelude**

Price	£11,985	£12,355	£11,995
Berths	6	6	6
Shipping length	7.18m	7.34m	7.2m
Shipping width	2.23m	2.19m	2.29m
Shipping height	2.7m	2.58m	2.72m
Internal length	5.50m	5.61m	5.18m
Internal height	1.95m	1.90m	1.94m
MiRO	1238kg	1195kg	1165kg
MTPLM	1500kg	1420kg	1400kg
User payload	262kg	225kg	235kg
Awning size	9.71m	10.08m	9.8m



STANDARD EQUIPMENT

External equipment	AL-KO galvanised steel chassis with stabiliser. Buttonless handbrake. Status directional TV aerial.	AL-KO galvanised steel chassis with stabiliser. Button handbrake with gas strut. Status directional TV aerial.	AL-KO galvanised steel chassis with stabiliser and shock absorbers. Buttonless handbrake. Alloy wheels. Gas barbecue point. 230V connection.
Heating	Truma dual-fuel, blown-air heater. Truma dual-fuel water heater.	Truma dual-fuel, blown-air heater. Truma dual-fuel water heater.	Truma dual-fuel, blown-air heater. Truma dual-fuel water heater.
Lounge	Blinds and flyscreens on all windows. Removeable carpets. Heki sunroof.	Blinds and flyscreens on all windows. Removable carpets. Heki sunroof.	Blinds and flyscreens on all windows. Heki sunroof.
Kitchen	107-litre fridge. Dual-fuel hob with 3 gas burners and one electric hotplate. Oven with separate grill. Stainless steel sink. Drainer, chopping board.	117-litre fridge. Spinflo 4-burner gas hob. Spinflo oven with separate grill. Microwave oven. Stainless steel sink. Drainer, chopping board.	77-litre fridge. Spinflo 4-burner gas hob. Spinflo oven with separate grill. Combined sink and drainer.
Washroom	Thetford swivel cassette toilet with manual flush. Chrome-finished mixer tap and separate shower head.	Thetford swivel cassette toilet with manual flush. Chrome-finished mixer tap and separate shower head.	Thetford bench toilet with manual flush.
Security	CRiS identity number on windows, chassis. Hidden security tag.	CRiS identity number on windows, chassis. Hidden security tag. AL-KO Secure receiver.	CRiS identity number on windows and chassis. Hidden security tag. AL-KO Secure receiver.

OTHER FEATURES

Options	Alternative fabric (£50). Alarm system (£195). Alloy wheels (£99). Steel spare wheel on underslung carrier (£150). Built-in microwave oven (£115). Radio/CD/MP3 player (£140).	Alternative fabric (£110). Wraparound seating (£225).	Loose fit carpets with press stud fitting (£150). SE Pack – Thiefbeaters Theft Prevention System and carpets (£495).
Warranty	3 years parts; 6 years body.	3 years parts; 6 years body.	3 years parts; 5 years body.
Verdict	For A great-looking van with a comfortable lounge, good beds and a keen price. Against Not as well equipped as the Bailey and rather heavy. Verdict A fine family van that just misses out to the Bailey's great washroom and superior level of standard kit.	For This van has been well thought through. There's plenty of storage, especially in the kitchen, and lots of standard kit. Against Looks a little staid to some. It has a button-operated handbrake and the smallest main table. Verdict One of the best six-berth vans you can buy for £12,000, although the Ace runs it close.	For The U-shaped lounge is sociable and the front locker is huge. It's also the lightest van here. Against The double bed is uncomfortable, there's not enough storage, and the fridge is too small. Verdict An interesting van but one that falls short in too many areas.

