

# Six pack

Squeezing six bodies into a caravan at bedtime is always a challenge.

**Phil Stephens** finds that triple fixed bunks pass the test



## FLEETWOOD SONATA CONCERTO V BAILEY RANGER GT60 540/6 V LUNAR QUASAR 546

**T**RIPLE fixed bunks are becoming increasingly popular with buyers, and *Which Caravan* is quite a fan too – the new Series 7 Bailey Pageant Bretagne walked off with the title of Caravan of the Year 2009 at the *Which Caravan* awards.

Three kids? That's three less beds to construct, break up and pack away each morning and night. "Waste of space!" the opposing argument goes. Not a bit of it. Those bunks are superb dens for their occupants to romp about in and a dinette nearby, with a partition, to close practically gives you an extra room.

We've chosen the Bailey Ranger GT60 540/6 for what appears to be value for money at £12,990. But is it? Then we have the Fleetwood Sonata Concerto at £14,990. It costs two grand more but is it two grand better? Finally, there's the Lunar Quasar 546 at £14,690. It's close in terms of price to the Fleetwood, but it's a totally different layout. It still has triple bunks in the rear offside corner but the washroom's in the rear too, not central like the others. It's almost continental in design.

We know Bailey has kept weights low but has Lunar done the same with its new 546?

And will that chunky-looking wide-bodied Fleetwood turn out to be too heavy?

### EXTERNAL STYLING

**Fleetwood Sonata Concerto ★★★★★★**  
**Bailey Ranger GT60 540/6 ★★★★★★**  
**Lunar Quasar 546 ★★★★★★**

Strip the graphics from this Series 6 Bailey Ranger and you could be looking at a Ranger from any Series; it's modern and attractive at this budget price. The Lunar is more restrained and less appealing for it. The Fleetwood looks nothing like its snout-nosed,

Suffolk-based sisters; it owes its looks to the Slovenian Adria design. And this is no bad thing. You get tough, one-piece polyester sidewalls and roof with that unmistakable Adria arc front panel, all garnished with tinted windows.

Bailey's new Series 6 Ranger manages to exude fun, style and appeal in what is essentially an inexpensive caravan. The full height front and rear panels and Blake's 7 graphics give it a more continental feel than the Fleetwood, although it lacks its solid stance.

The Lunar hides the fact that it's a triple bunker with a brace of offside rear windows,

whilst the others stack three windows here. It's handsome enough, particularly around that full height rear panel. Those green graphics could do with jazzing up next time around.

### TOWING WEIGHT/DYNAMICS

**Fleetwood Sonata Concerto ★★★★★★**  
**Bailey Ranger GT60 540/6 ★★★★★★**  
**Lunar Quasar 546 ★★★★★★**

Prepare for a shock: the widest van here, at a full 7ft 6in width, is also the lightest by some margin. The 7.23m long Fleetwood weighs in at a barely believable 1085kg MRO (1300kg

MTPLM). Next up is the shorter and narrower-bodied 7ft 2in Bailey at 1124kg MRO (MTPLM 1326kg), which is still an attractive weight for a six-berth.

It's important to remember that the Quasar operates in a class and spec above the Fleetwood and Bailey here so it's bound to weigh more, but this means that the self-proclaimed champion of lightweights is the heaviest van here at 1204kg MRO and 1420kg MTPLM.

Having said that, it's difficult to pinpoint where the extra spec has added any significant weight over the others. To put it



## SPECIFICATION

Price: £14,990 (inc. del)  
 Berths: 6  
 Warranty: 3 years  
 MRO: 1085kg  
 MTPLM: 1300kg  
 Payload: 215kg  
 Internal length: 5.36m (17ft 1in)  
 Overall length: 7.23m (23ft 1in)  
 Overall width: 2.29m (7ft 6in)  
 Internal height: 1.94 (6ft 5in)  
 Overall height: 2.72m (8ft 11in)  
 Bed sizes: Front double: 6ft 11in x 4ft 5in  
 Side single: 6ft 0in x 2ft 2in  
 Rear bunks: 6ft 0in x 1ft 11in (x3)

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## MANUFACTURER

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Love the design of these lockers



This interior is brighter and wider than the others



The kitchen struggles in comparison

in perspective, the Bailey Pageant Bretagne (which sits more comfortably in the Quasar's class) packs more kit than Arsenal's changing room, has the full body width and tips the scales at just 54kg more. Other mainstream full-width six-berths with similar kit levels pay a 60-95kg penalty. I suspect the majority of the extra weight comes from the Lunar's superb kitchen – more on that later.

I don't mean to sound negative. These are all very large tourers at very reasonable weights, it's just that Lunar's lightweight trumpet blowing doesn't live up to the fanfare.

AL-KO's AKS 3004 stabiliser sits on all three hitch heads, whilst the Bailey commendably adds shock absorbers too.

## INTERIOR STYLING/COMFORT

**Fleetwood Sonata Concerto ★★★★★★**  
**Bailey Ranger GT60 540/6 ★★★★★★**  
**Lunar Quasar 546 ★★★★★★**

Bailey and Lunar set their triple bunks alongside a three-seat dinette, effectively creating a separate room when the sliding door

is closed – ideal for shutting away messy clobber, kids or both. And you'll get a very large bed from those dinette seats. The downside is that creating a separate room in an already small space makes the remaining space feel even smaller, which is probably why Fleetwood has taken another approach.

The Fleetwood avoids partitioning altogether; apart from the washroom, the caravan is one open living space. You'll immediately see the benefits in the lighting levels, as one centrally mounted rooflight floods the caravan. The airy feel created with the open dinette opposite the kitchen makes this Fleetwood feel far larger inside than the other two. The disadvantages are that the triple bunk is always on show and the dinette could become a slave to the kitchen, used as extra worktop rather than as an area for the kids. And with only two seats it's not as large as the other rear dinettes that can seat three or four.

The Bailey has a very long lounge for maximum family comfort. The Lunar's more traditional lounge complete with central chest is shorter by some margin and cramped with

any more than four people. That's no accident. Lunar chose to make the kitchen longer (therefore better – more later) probably thinking that six bodies will rarely chill out in this space anyway, and rightly so.

Overall it feels smaller in here than the Bailey. The large central kitchen size is one reason, and the noticeably narrower body is the other. At least light levels are good with two Seitz Midi Hekis (one each end) keeping the tone bright.

Decoratively, the Fleetwood is the more modern of the three. The contemporary and tasteful beech coloured lockers with cream, curved lower valances and chrome addenda are superb. Better still, their shape ensures maximum storage ability to go with the good looks. The lounge isn't as long as the Bailey's, but its U-shape and wider width that it gives you just as much space.

The Bailey's new-look locker doors are a quantum leap over the Series 5, but timberwork around the wardrobe and washroom looks a hotchpotch of angular panels and joints. It has a DIY look about it, but that's not reflected in the quality.

## Fleetwood Sonata Concerto



The full 7ft 6in width can be seen clearly here



No separate shower but this is a huge unit



Big windows mean big views



The Fleetwood seems to have the most sturdy exterior build quality



Bunks are semi-concealed

## FOR &amp; AGAINST

## PROS

- Bunk sizes
- Very light overall
- Bright open interior

## CONS

- Kitchen
- Lunar/Bailey layout works better

## PRACTICALITY/FLEXIBILITY

**Fleetwood Sonata Concerto ★★★★★★**  
**Bailey Ranger GT60 540/6 ★★★★★★**  
**Lunar Quasar 546 ★★★★★★**

The very presence of those triple bunks makes the task of living with this design much easier than for any other six-berth solution on offer – past or present. In this respect alone, it's top marks all round for practicality.

Personally, I prefer the Lunar/Bailey design even though the central corridor space through the Fleetwood is so generously wide. The Bailey loses a few marks with no blown air heating to the rear and has just two vents; one serves the washroom and the other is just three feet from the heater itself. Yes, it's the budget van here but most people would do without the built-in radio in exchange for efficient heating in this caravan's heart.

The Fleetwood and Lunar's extra outlay will get you helpful goodies such as barbecue points, wet lockers and blown air heating that doesn't get lost on its way to the back, whilst all benefit from three 230v mains sockets. The TV shelf in the Bailey compromises its lounge

area the most as the flip-down shelf covers part of it. The others have dedicated tabletops for the goggle box.

## STORAGE SPACE

**Fleetwood Sonata Concerto ★★★★★★**  
**Bailey Ranger GT60 540/6 ★★★★★★**  
**Lunar Quasar 546 ★★★★★★**

A clear star here is the Lunar. The area inside the rear dinette seat bases is totally free and commendably has access via drop-down flaps. This is common in front lounges (it has these too) but not at the rear. It gets better at the back with some clever built-in flexibility to the lower bunk; remove the mattress, lightly tug the bed base and a false floor gracefully rises on two gas struts to form a huge enclosed storage cupboard where the bunk was seconds before.

It not only has an interior access door, but an exterior hatch too. It's simple and it's brilliant. The only reservation is the weight issue in this supposedly lightweight tourer. Upper locker space about equals the Bailey, which excels here, but the wardrobe capacity in the Lunar outstrips it by some distance.

The Fleetwood's upper lockers are fewer in number than the Lunar and Bailey but they are deeper and appear more practical in use. Whilst the Fleetwood has the smallest wardrobe, it does have stacked storage shelves in a separate unit alongside, although these are narrow thanks to accommodating the table here too.

## WASHROOM

**Fleetwood Sonata Concerto ★★★★★★**  
**Bailey Ranger GT60 540/6 ★★★★★★**  
**Lunar Quasar 546 ★★★★★★**

Whilst all these vans position their triple bunks in the same place, the washroom locations and designs differ. Lunar and Bailey use central offside compartments with the Lunar enjoying the luxury of a separate shower. Fleetwood has put one of the largest units I've ever seen into its Concerto. You still have to deal with the clingy shower curtain (ditto Bailey) but room within is so enormous I'd draw it across the door and leave it at that.

Lunar and Bailey fit the latest Thetford C250 loos whilst the Fleetwood makes do with the smaller C200CW. Even so that still



## SPECIFICATION

Price: £12,990 (inc. del)  
 Berths: 6  
 Warranty: 3 years  
 MRO: 1124kg  
 MTPLM 1350kg  
 Payload: 226kg  
 Internal length: 5.50m (18ft 1in)  
 Overall length: 7.17m (23ft 7in)  
 Overall width: 2.19m (7ft 2in)  
 Internal height: 1.90m (6ft 3in)  
 Overall height: 2.58m (8ft 6in)  
 Bed Sizes: Front double: 6ft 6in x 5ft 5in or two front singles: 5ft 5in x 2ft 3in and 5ft 10in x 2ft 3in  
 Triple bunks: 6ft 0in x 1ft 11in (x3)  
 Rear single: 5ft 7in x 2ft 5in



## MANUFACTURER

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 BS3 2SS  
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 Web: [www.bailey-caravans.co.uk](http://www.bailey-caravans.co.uk)



Somewhere for your telly to sit



There's more shower space here than it seems



Long lounge for maximum comfort

## THE CAR

### CITROËN C5 2.7HDI V6 EXCLUSIVE FROM £25,300



This beauty gets the same 2.7-litre V6 diesel engine as the truck-like Discovery but, wait for it, with an extra turbocharger.

Not only does this engine have almost one tonne less bodyweight to haul around but it's blessed with twin bellows for that extra wallop of internal combustion. No wonder it's fitted in many top Jags.

While it has power in abundance, its weight means it'll never safely tow what a Disco could. Even so, with a kerbweight of 1766kg there's much you can tow. Add a

wife, two kids, an awning and all your holiday gear in the boot and you'll easily tip the scales at 2 tonnes.

Any experienced tower could safely consider tourers weighing in at around 1550kg under those circumstances, and that covers all three six-berths here. And the estate is even heavier.

But remember a lot of this car's weight is this wonderful 208bhp (325lb ft torque) engine, drop down to the four cylinder 2.2Hdi and the car becomes substantially lighter.

There are so many toys on this Exclusive model that the equivalent BMW, Audi or Mercedes-Benz would cost you six or seven grand more. Vive la France!

bags you electric flush and separate flush tank, but it's a smaller loo and there are no wheels on your waste cassette.

Six people means loads of toiletries, even if they do get bagged and dragged to the shower block. Bailey helps by building in superb washroom storage with a choice of two units. The Fleetwood's single unit is sufficient but needs a central splitter shelf to improve the unit's payload. Unfortunately the Lunar simply doesn't have enough for the needs of six – daft that, as it's the one with a dedicated shower and it's therefore likely to get the most use.

None are particularly attractive. The Bailey's simple, crisp white looks clean and fresh; the Lunar's carpeted floor the more cosy and inviting; and the Fleetwood the lightest and least claustrophobic.

## SLEEPING

**Fleetwood Sonata Concerto** ★★★★★★  
**Bailey Ranger GT60 540/6** ★★★★★★  
**Lunar Quasar 546** ★★★★★★

This is arguably the most important factor in these triple bunk designs. With the bunks in

# Bailey Ranger GT60 540/6



Triple bunks are practically in their own room in the rear



Just enough worktop for the job in hand



Neat and tidy, don't you think?



An average sized locker but with fairly good access



Even with three to choose from there will still be fights

## FOR & AGAINST

### PROS

- Well executed layout
- Just enough of everything
- Price

### CONS

- No direct rear heating
- Little else

the offside corner of each van, the Lunar and Bailey have adjacent dinettes which form a separate room when the partition (solid in the Lunar and a flexible concertina in the Bailey) is pulled across. The Bailey design has a larger permanent partition between the rooms making this rear bedroom/dinette look and feel like another room all of the time. In the Lunar, unless you pull the partition across, that rear section remains part of the main body of the caravan. Ultimately, this flexibility gives it the privacy of the Bailey design but the ability to open up the caravan's interior in terms of space.

The Fleetwood's layout means it faces no such problem. It just hangs a curtain over its triple bunks for privacy. But the Fleetwood's triple bunk is by far the best; it's the widest, longest and has the deepest mattress here. It's the only one genuinely suited to adults.

The caravan's internal height plays a part in triple bunks; the taller the caravan, the more allowance each bunk gives before you bash your head. The Fleetwood's mammoth bunks again provide the most headroom,

which is an achievement given the depth of those mattresses. Each of the Fleetwood's bunks get a huge dedicated window, double the size of those on the Bailey and Lunar.

You wouldn't stick around to enjoy the view in the Lunar's basement bunk as you don't get a window at all. However, the practical storage arrangement that prevents it having a window is of far more importance in a six-berth.

All bunks get dedicated reading lights but none have shelves for drinks and toys. Only the Lunar has you faffing about with a removable bunk ladder, as the Bailey and Fleetwood have sturdy ladders built-in to the bunk construction.

Bailey and Fleetwood's U-shaped lounges mean large, hassle-free front doubles but the Lunar has one of those pesky front chests, which is great in a two-berth but robs valuable space here. The Fleetwood's sixth berth makes up from the central dinette. It's huge and makes what I'd call a 'super' single. In any other company it would trounce the opposition. But here that single has to compete with what are almost three-quarter beds built

from those rear three/four seat dinettes making even it look small.

## KITCHEN

**Fleetwood Sonata Concerto** ★★★★★★  
**Bailey Ranger GT60 540/6** ★★★★★★  
**Lunar Quasar 546** ★★★★★★

A decent fridge is essential for any family caravan, not just a six-berth. You may only ever use four or five of the van's beds, but if it's built as a six-berth then it's important that it's equipped as such. All three of these get Thetford fridges; Bailey and Lunar fit a decent N112 unit (with smart frameless doors) giving 107 litres of useful capacity. The Lunar boasts digital controls/ignition (the Bailey, manual) but here size matters and the cheaper Bailey does well in matching the pricier Lunar chill box for size.

The Fleetwood's fridge is poor, with just 88 litres useful capacity. The model fitted is specially built with a large chunk out the back enabling it to fit over a caravan's wheel arch. Fair enough... except it's not fitted over a wheel arch. There are no excuses for this in a



## SPECIFICATION

Price £14,690 (inc. del)  
 Berths 6  
 Warranty 3 years  
 MRO 1204kg  
 MTPLM 1420kg  
 Payload 216kg  
 Internal length 5.79m (18ft 11in)  
 Overall length 7.35m (24ft 0in)  
 Overall width 2.16m (7ft 1in)  
 Internal height 1.90m (6ft 3in)  
 Overall height 2.60m (8ft 6in)  
 Bed sizes: Front double: 6ft 7in x 5ft 0in or two front singles: 5ft 0in x 2ft 3in Triple bunks: 5ft 0in x 2ft 1in (x2) and 5ft 10in x 2ft 0in  
 Rear single: 6ft 0in x 2ft 5in

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## MANUFACTURER

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A restrained and less appealing exterior



Now that's what I call a kitchen built for six



A separate shower is a Lunar luxury

£15k family six-berth. You'll also search in vain for a microwave of which both the Lunar and Bailey are proud custodians. You'll have guessed that the Fleetwood's kitchen is not its strong point and, with little worktop space, preparing a family feast looks quite impossible. In fairness, the central dinette (if not in use) can be pressed into service for food preparation, and it does have one of the largest and most practical upper kitchen storage spaces I've seen.

If it's usability you're after then the Lunar has it in spades: vast amounts of worktop space (more than the Bailey and Fleetwood combined) and yet more if you site the TV on the front chest. Storage (up and down) is designed with its multi-berth status in mind and easily trumps the next best in this category, the Bailey.

The Bailey isn't too far behind though. And considering the price differential, it matches the Lunar on kit and only loses out on overall practicality. That's because Bailey has opted for a longer lounge and shorter kitchen, and Lunar a full-on kitchen but

restricted lounge. Prospective buyers should decide which suits their caravanning lifestyle the better and choose their van accordingly.

Again, as with the washrooms, none is particularly contemporary or even remotely swish. But practicality is the only goal in a six-berth kitchen and that's the sole criteria on which they're judged here.

## BUILD QUALITY

**Fleetwood Sonata Concerto** ★★★★★★  
**Bailey Ranger GT60 540/6** ★★★★★★  
**Lunar Quasar 546** ★★★★★★

The Fleetwood has one-piece polyester body, which feels and looks tough, and from some angles has a slightly matt finish. The gas lockers accessibility and construction (locking, bracing and opening) are all more substantial than on the other two caravans.

The Bailey Ranger's cabinets are a vast improvement in looks and build to previous incarnations. It's the same with the Lunar's joinery internals. The cabinet shop at Lostock Hall is kicking out some well-built units and

the carcasses that support and hold them together are much improved.

But for me, it's the Fleetwood/Adria body that feels the best built here, which is odd because it's the largest but also easily the lightest here. But for build integrity of the internals it has to be the Lunar and Bailey.

## VALUE FOR MONEY

**Fleetwood Sonata Concerto** ★★★★★★  
**Bailey Ranger GT60 540/6** ★★★★★★  
**Lunar Quasar 546** ★★★★★★

You'll struggle to find much missing in the Bailey. But when you do, notable absentees, such as high grade handbrake/jockey wheel mounting or blown air heating to the rear, are offset by kit such as a microwave, radio/CD/MP3 player and shock absorbers not usually seen in caravans at this price. Whichever way you look at it, the Bristol based outfit must be a pain in the proverbial to its competitors. I risk boring myself now with the same old conclusion that the Bailey Ranger is indeed huge value for money. What's more, with its

## Lunar Quasar 546



It's a tighter central area than in the Bailey, but it's much brighter



The large kitchen comes at the expense of the smaller lounge



Lunar's wardrobe is biggest of the bunch



Bottom bunk for sleeping...



...becomes bottom bunk for storage

## FOR &amp; AGAINST

## PROS

- Great kitchen
- Separate shower
- Inventive bottom bunk storage

## CONS

- Not as light as hoped

## CONCLUSION

**Fleetwood Sonata Concerto** 79/100  
**Bailey Ranger GT60 540/6** 84/100  
**Lunar Quasar 546** 79/100

It all comes down to two things really, and funnily enough it's not the beds because they're all brilliant! It's simply that rear dinette as a separate room and whether you want or need it.

If not, then Fleetwood offers a magnificent triple bunker whose size and comfort is the best here. It has weight figures so impressive that I phoned a man in Slovenia just to check them. The entire internal caravan space is also the lightest here with the feeling that six people will have plenty of space to spread out. Apart from the kitchen, which I felt was a let-down, and a price that struggles against spec levels of direct competitors, the Sonata Concerto remains a very capable six-berth.

But I'd guess many will find the ultra flexible and extremely practical (both sleeping and daytime) end bunks and dinette arrangement such a compelling case in how to house six people, this layout will be where family buyers flock.

The Lunar's open rear feel over the Bailey is somewhat undone by the tight central area and shorter lounge, but the clever lower bunk storage mechanism will win many buyers over.

You simply need to identify your priorities. Cooking capability and a separate shower? Then it's the Lunar. If not, then the Bailey edges it slightly thanks to wider dimensions providing more room where and when it's needed. There's also superb pricing whilst keeping kit at an acceptable level.

That said, if the Lunar had anything to go directly head-to-head with on price and spec (and it doesn't, yet) it would still be a formidable contestant.