



The van is compact but with two dinettes there is plenty of space for the family to spread out

EXCLUSIVE!

The return of the Musketeer

A famous name from the past makes a comeback, but will its small size suit a growing family?

SPRITE Musketeer TD

Price.....	£11,295
Berths.....	5
Overall length.....	6.40m
Width.....	2.23m
Overall height.....	2.70m
MiRO†.....	1052kg
MTPLM†.....	1281kg
User payload.....	229kg

† TERMS EXPLAINED ON PAGE 113



Immediate appeal

The Flowers are keen to get a close look at the Musketeer, which is waiting for inspection at Cherry Hinton Caravan Club Site, Cambridgeshire. The girls love the exterior's raised shiny gold graphics. Nick, who has hold of the

van's details, is just as impressed with the weight: "1281kg, that's not bad at all," he says. "This could be towed by a reasonable-sized family car, such as a Mondeo."

While Julie and the girls make a start on unloading the car, Nick winds down the steadies. "Access



TOP LEFT The Musketeer has been given smart, raised graphics in gold LEFT Winding down the steadies is pretty straight forward, says Nick ABOVE The large front locker will house two gas bottles and plenty more kit besides and the button-assisted handbrake is not an issue for Nick

to the steadies is good and they are straight forward to set," he notes as he finishes the last leg.

Nick places the winder back in the front locker, and is pleased to see the locker is a good size.

"There is plenty of space for all our kit as well as room for two gas bottles. We wouldn't struggle fitting it all in," he says.

As he closes the locker Nick notices the one-way assisted handbrake. Despite many tourers now boasting button-free handbrakes Nick didn't feel this was a problem: "It's little more effort with a button-type."

As Nick finishes setting up outside, Ellen and Laura dash inside the van with Mum to check out their sleeping area. They've been told about the Musketeer's unusual rear bedroom arrangement and can't wait to get a glimpse.

While they wait for Dad's help to set up the beds, Ellen and Laura unpack their bags and make themselves at home.

"We have a shelf and two lockers each for our stuff," says Laura, choosing the top shelf for her books and beanie toys.

Julie makes the girls a snack while they wait for Nick and joins them in the rear dinette. She is impressed with the amount of seating space. "There is plenty of room for the three of us to sit. At a push I would say all four of us could sit around here quite comfortably for a snack. It's also a great space for the girls to play - ideal for when we want to spread out," she says.

Ellen and Laura are very excited as Dad finally joins them inside. "I'm having the top bunk," shouts Laura as Nick gets to grips with the sleeping arrangements.

With a little practice...

The rear dinette can be converted into several different sleeping options: a lower double with an overhead bunk, two single bunks, one large double or just a single.

The girls sit patiently in the lounge as Nick attempts the double first. "It's a very ingenious design," he comments as he slides out the metal bars and pops over a wooden support panel. "It's like a giant jigsaw," observes Laura.

Setting up the base proves simple but Nick finds slotting in the cushions a little tricky.

"There are a lot of cushions to arrange" says Nick. "This could be a real pain every night, especially if you are tired," he adds.

"It's trial and error. After a few attempts I am sure it would become easier," says Julie. "I would probably label each cushion to make life easier," she adds.

The overhead bunk proves a lot simpler. Nick is just slotting in the last cushion as the girls clamour for their sleeping bags. Laura jumps into the top bunk, then realises she may have chosen the short straw.

"The lockers are really low, I would bump my head on those," she says. "I would have to sleep with my head at the other end."

Ellen is much more cosy as she stretches out underneath in the >>

This month's testers

THE FLOWER FAMILY

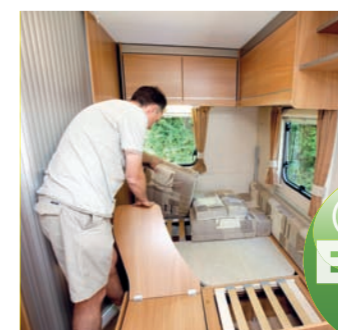


Nick, Julie and their daughters Ellen (9) and Laura (7) have been caravanning for seven years, starting when Ellen was two and Laura just a bump. They are now on their second caravan, a Bailey Pageant Series 6 Vendee. As well as touring throughout the UK, they have towed through France, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Belgium. Later this year they will be touring the French Alps.



Promise

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



TOP LEFT By day the rear dinette is a great space for the kids LEFT Turning the dinette into a sleeping area requires a knack for jigsaws as getting the cushions right is a challenge ABOVE A double with bunk is just one of several bed arrangements





The granite-effect circular sink and removable drainer save on workspace. The large locker for an optional microwave will take groceries, leaving other lockers to accommodate crockery. Julie likes the silver-effect fridge



At 107 litres, the fridge is only just adequate for a five-berth caravan



Julie likes the dedicated cutlery drawer and cupboard space below



No central chest allows more sleeping space. LEFT Underseat storage must take bedding from rear dinette, too, as bed cushions take up storage there



Washroom is compact with integral plastic tray floor and tambour door



There is good storage under basin for washbags, lotions and potions

double. "There is loads of space so if Laura wanted to, she could sleep with me," she says. "Although whoever sleeps on the inside wouldn't have a reading light so it might be a little dark," she adds.

Julie reminds the girls not to get too settled into their sleeping bags, as it isn't actually bedtime, but she is won over by the beds. "Apart from the cushions, which you would get used to assembling, it's a really good design. The top bunk is better suited to little ones but it is definitely an arrangement that is versatile enough to accommodate a growing family," she says.

The girls hop out of the beds and it's left to Nick to undo the jigsaw of cushions. "Putting it away is much easier," he chuckles. "However, most of the dinette storage is lost because you have to house so many cushions and parts, which is a shame," he adds.

No kitchen-sink dramas

Suddenly everyone is hungry so Julie offers to prepare lunch. Ellen heads to the kitchen to help Mum while Nick keeps Laura amused with a game or two of Connect 4.

"I really like the silver-effect fridge," says Julie as she reaches in for the butter. "And the 107-litre capacity is adequate for a few days' groceries for a family of four. The shelves also work well for tall bottles," she adds.

"The top shelf is just the right size for our Babybels and cheese strings," chips in Ellen.

Finishing off the ham rolls, Julie has a look around the rest of the kitchen. "The circular sink is a good idea; it doesn't take up so much space - I like the granite effect - and the removable drainer is helpful. I had plenty of room to prepare lunch."

Putting away the lunch items, Julie is also impressed with the storage. "This locker is enormous. I know it is a dedicated space for the optional microwave, but if you didn't need one then there's masses of space for groceries. That then leaves plenty of room for plates in the other locker with racks. The lower cupboard provides even more storage and a dedicated cutlery drawer is always useful," she says.

The Flowers settle into the front lounge's comfy seats and tuck into lunch. "There is loads of room for us to dine together," says Nick.



The front lounge is big enough for a family to dine together and the lightweight freestanding table is a good size, even without the centre chest

"The table is a decent size and nice and light, too."

"We don't miss a centre chest. In fact, it is better without one when you make up the bed because you get full use of the space," says Julie.

Julie also likes the new Tanganika walnut lockers and overall colour scheme. "The warm wood has a real quality look about it and the

upholstery is neutral enough not to be offensive," she says.

"The flush-fitting light between the lockers is also attractive," adds Nick. "It is a shame, though, there are only two spotlights at the far end, which means the person sitting or sleeping furthest away has little light to read by."

After lunch it is Mum and Dad's turn to see how their bed fares.

The girls head outside to enjoy the sunshine while Nick and Julie get to grips with the front double.

"Well, it is much less of a struggle than the rear one. I wouldn't mind doing that each evening," says Nick. "And, as Julie said, you get a great sized double because there is no chest. However, the table hinges are quite sharp so you

would have to be careful not to scratch yourself," he adds.

Putting the bed away proves just as easy. Nick is impressed to see there is front access to both seats. "That's a nice touch and it makes life much easier. The spring-assisted locker lids are also welcome," he says.

The girls come back inside to get cleaned up in the washroom after playing. "Cool door," says Laura, referring to the silver tambour door that has been fitted in place of a domestic-style one.

"It is a very clever design that opens up the space. Although I am not sure how long it would last," says Nick.

He peers inside the washroom and is disappointed to see that a plastic tray covers the entire floor.

"This is going to be constantly walked on so it will be more prone to cracking under the strain," he says. "I understand that this layout calls for it but I am not a fan of them I'm afraid."

While the girls are sorting themselves out, Julie comes to have a look at the washroom.

"It's surprisingly spacious in here. There is plenty of floor space for me to stand inside as well and help the girls," she says. "I love the deep shelf above the toilet, you could fit bundles of stuff on there. The storage under the basin is good, too. It is a shame there are



There are two spotlights in the lounge but it could do with more



Radio/CD/MP3 player is included in the optional Diamond Pack



Some lockers have shelves making it easier to keep clothing sorted

no toothbrush or cup holders, but there is plenty of space to rest them around the sink," Julie adds. "I like the big mirror," says Laura. "It's perfect for when we are doing our hair."

Neat solutions

Finding space for the Flowers' clothes, toys, books and other kit hasn't been a problem.

"The girls have two lockers each at the rear and the shelves are ideal

to leave out books and toys," says Julie. "We could all share the wardrobe. It's a decent size and the shelves are handy."

"And there is a big space at the bottom for our shoes," adds Ellen.

"The storage throughout is generally good," notes Nick. "The only space where we might struggle is the rear dinette, which is taken up with cushions. We would have to store most of the girls bedding in the front lockers with ours."

"That is true," agrees Julie. "But it wouldn't be too much bother and there is enough locker space in the rest of the lounge for our clothes."

"I am really impressed with the kitchen space," Julie continues. "There is loads of room for groceries and crockery. The fridge could be larger as it is a five-berth, but you would cope. The worktop opposite is also usable. Its shelves are ideal for DVDs or knick-knacks and it's nice to see a functional drawer over the heater."

"There is clever use of space in the washroom," says Nick. "We would comfortably fit our lotions and potions in there. The towel rail is a nice touch, although more hooks and a toothbrush holder would have been nice." >>>

We say



Stacie Pardoe says This a great starter van for families on a budget and those with a standard towcar. The layout is its unique selling point and it has decent storage and kit. It should be on the shortlist of all young families who are new to touring.

Live-in test: Compact family five-berth

Ellen and Laura round off the comments: "There is plenty of room for our Beanies and Hello Kitty teddies, so we are happy."

The girls get permission to explore the site, leaving Nick and Julie to gather their thoughts on the new Sprite Musketeer TD.

"For the size that it is, it is amazing what they have managed

to pack in," says Nick. "From the outside, the van looks quite small so I was pleasantly surprised when I stepped inside."

"There are many more positives than negatives with this van," adds Julie. "The only problem we have encountered is with fitting the cushions. But this could easily be solved by labelling each of them

and with practice you would get to know how they fit together.

"For a family with young children, this is a van where you could adapt the sleeping arrangements as the kids grow," she comments.

"The interior decor looks very high-end and specification-wise it is excellent value for money," says

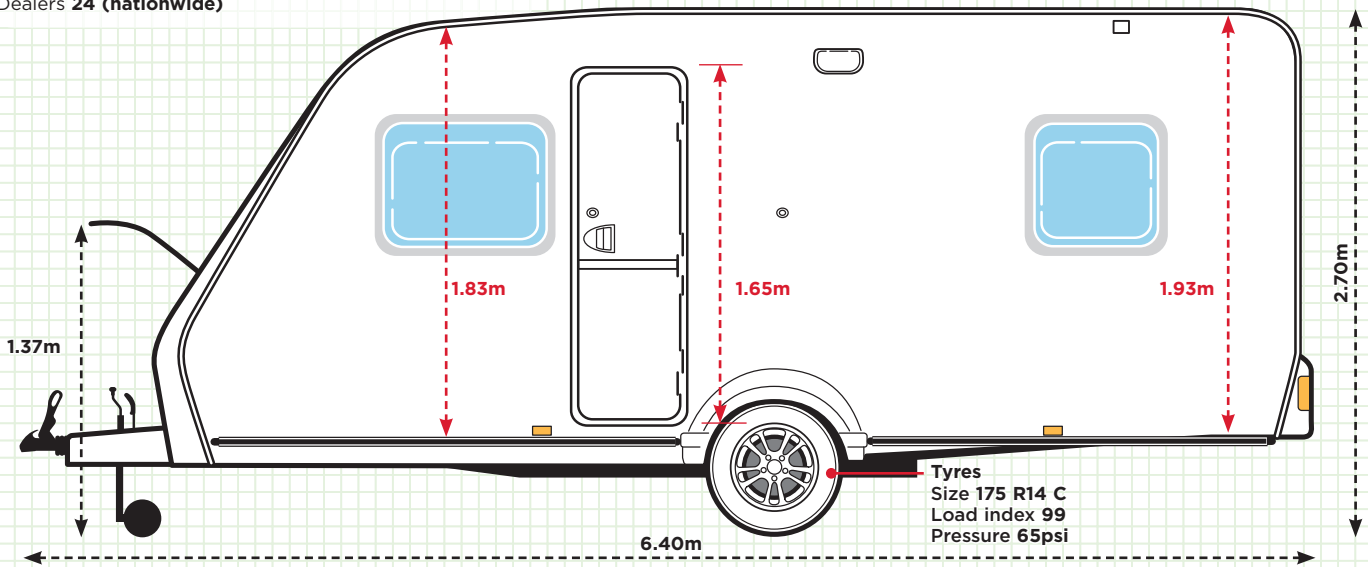
Nick. "The Diamond Pack gives it even more appeal and for a couple of hundred pounds most people wouldn't quibble about adding it."

"For young families new to touring I could see this being very popular. It is affordable, lightweight and attractive. If we were starting out again this van would definitely be on our shortlist."

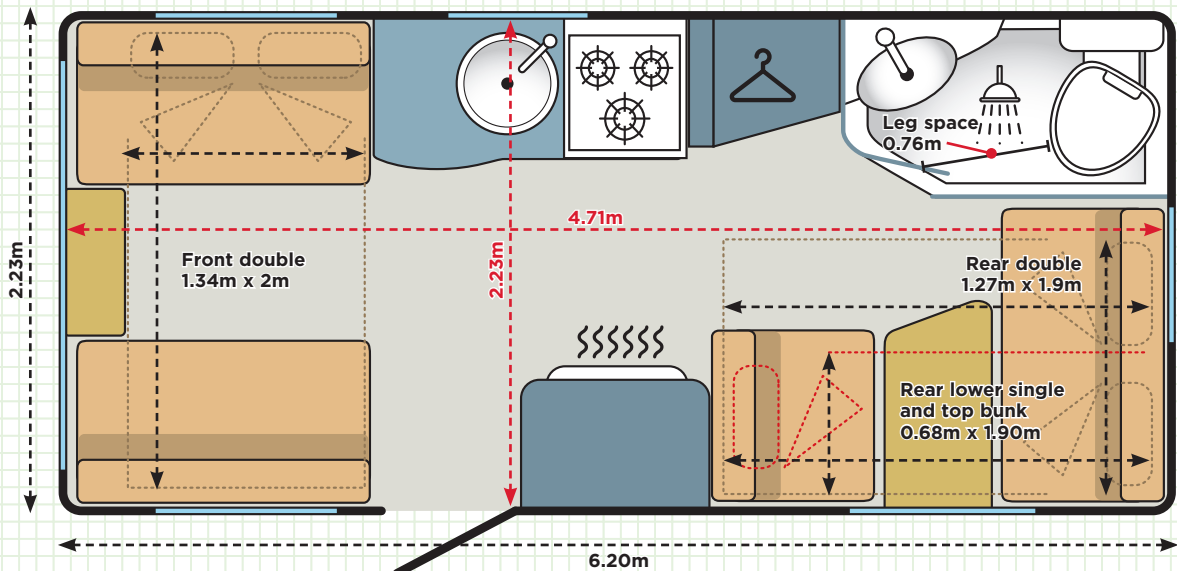
SPRITE Musketeer TD

Swift Group, Dunswell Road, Cottingham, East Yorkshire HU16 4JX
Tel 01482 847 332
Web www.swiftgroup.co.uk
Dealers 24 (nationwide)

VITAL STATS
Price £11,295
Berths 5
MiRO† 1052kg
MTPLM† 1281kg
User payload 229kg
Awning size 895cm



CARAVANGUARD INSURANCE QUOTE
£256*



STANDARD EQUIPMENT

- Construction** One-piece aluminium sides. GRP front panel. Al-Ko chassis.
- External equipment** Button-assisted handbrake. Two-piece entry door. Awning light.
- Heating** Truma dual-fuel, blown-air space heater. Truma dual-fuel water heater.
- Lounge** Drop-in carpets. Directional TV aerial.

Blinds on all windows.

- Kitchen** Thetford 107-litre digital fridge. Three-burner gas hob. Separate oven and grill. Removable drainer.
- Washroom** Tambour door. Thetford toilet with manual flush. Separate shower head.
- Security** CRIS identity number on windows and chassis. Security data chip. Single key for all locks.

Warranty 3 years parts, 6 years body OPTIONS

- Built-in microwave (tbc). Diamond Pack (£390) includes alloy wheels, Al-Ko Secure wheel lock receiver, Al-Ko stabiliser, spare wheel and carrier, door flyscreen, radio/CD/MP3 player and a pair of scatter cushions.