

Adria Altea 542 DT

► PRICE. £10,500 ► www.adria-caravans.com

AT A GLANCE: Bunks made for adults, a large shower and a central dining area - all for under £11,000

TEST PHIL STEPHENS | PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN CHAPMAN

AS you might expect from a company who gave us the Adria Action, those Slovenians do like to do things differently.

So whilst every man/woman and his/her dog/bitch start to churn out rear triple bunk tourers with handy dinettes alongside, Adria, well, doesn't.

Adria's approach with the Altea 542 DT is to keep the bunks in the rear corner (best for overall packaging). And, instead of partitioning away that area as a bedroom/dinette, it takes the more open option by sticking the dining area in the middle of the caravan. Simple! What's more, those beds are adult-sized and, although still limited, it's to a generous 75kg.

Size impresses again in the washroom. Although it's a unitary design combining loo, shower and sink along its back wall, the shower is huge and is really capable of meeting the needs of two adults and four mucky kids. Ok, so it still has a curtain but it's the largest curtain-clad example I've set eyes on. The sink is sensibly placed so as to be easily used, yet unobtrusive to other washroom operations and, for a basic tourer, looks good. At last, a unitary-washroom that can actually do the job intended for a six-berth.

In the offside central kitchen you'll find disappointment. The 81-litre fridge is insufficient in size in this layout (and people numbers) - and that's regardless of price. There's no microwave, but that's in line with competition from Bailey and Sprite.

I'm becoming convinced this Altea is designed to be a summer-only caravan, where the barbeque will take the burden leaving the kitchen for emergencies only. Just take along a plug-in freezer box for the awning, if you can; it will make a world of difference to your culinary organisation.

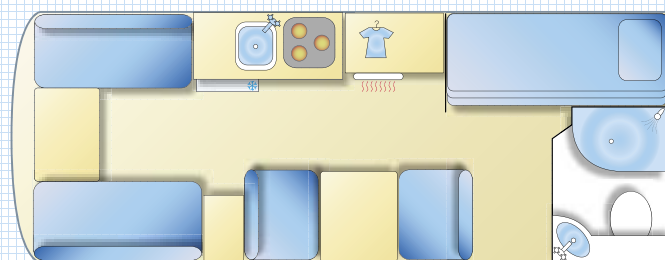
On a much more positive note, the wide body shell on the 542 DT allows for a broad central dinette that will see four young children happily sitting eating breakfast in comfort. With several elbows and bodies stretched over the table top, it's refreshing to see a sturdy supporting leg looking capable of withstanding some child-induced stick.

One of Adria's knacks is to give the occupants the feeling of upper space. That means designing unobtrusive eye-level lockers that don't dominate that upper space. Their options and ability are plentiful but their presence anonymous until needed. The three units set above the dinette will see the most use, so easy access, positive catches and splitter central shelving are all welcome here. In the lounge, simplicity demands there is to be no chest of drawers



► LAYOUT IN A NUTSHELL

- Bunks with adult dimensions
- Wide open interior
- Unitary washroom but very decent shower



- an omission most tradition Adria buyers won't miss. The TV sits on a nearside unit set between lounge and dinette. Its reduced size allows for a longer lounge than normal and easy access to the nearside settee, but in doing so its attributes as a really useful piece of furniture are somewhat diminished.

Like so many of Adria's layouts this one has little to be compared with. It fights in the same bracket as Sprites but looks nothing like any of them. And nowhere will you find this much living space for six under £11,000.

We understand times are hard and stripping kit to keep prices competitive is a necessary evil. But putting a smaller fridge in a four berth isn't as bad as doing the same in a six. I just feel for such a potentially capable tourer, there has been a little too much removed. That said, the amount of space for the price in this Altea puts it ahead of most of its competitors. ■



Three bunks stacked neatly into a corner



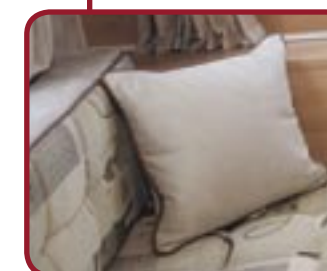
TOWMATCH C



Two useful shelves interrupt the unobtrusive locker run - and the lockers have positive catches



The television table between lounge and side dining table is small - but the space is gained in the lounge



No settee-end bolster in this model but you do get scatter cushions to help keep you comfortable



The washroom may be a unitary design but it's up to the job of providing enough washing space

► FOR & AGAINST

PROS:

- Price
- Build quality
- Bunk size

CONS

- Small fridge for six people

► SPECIFICATION

Price: £10,999
Axles: 1
Berths: 6
MRO: 1085kg
MTPLM: 1300kg
Width: 2.29m
Overall length: 7.23m
Headroom: 1.95m



The offside dining area - enough space for four children to sit here

► OUR VERDICT

Overall, an interesting six-berth layout for those who don't like to follow the crowd and, with that panoramic front window mated to a clutter-free interior, it's one of the brightest and most open layouts around at the minute. And - did we mention those superb weights (1300kg all-up) for 5.36 metres of touring space? Its fridge is small for storing food for six, so if this model is for you, a portable fridge box for the awning would be useful.