

# And now for something completely different



Want a caravan that's truly gorgeous AND cheap on fuel? We compare three amazing, unconventional tourers which you can tow with a tricycle (well, almost)

TEST PHIL STEPHENS | ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN NOBLE

**ASTONISHED** faces greeted me on the Caravan Club site as I towed in three of the quirkiest caravans known to man. These are the John Cleese, Jeremy Hardy and Rowan Atkinson of caravans (in no particular order)

and are about as ordinary as liquorice sandwiches. Inside and out they break a mould, which was a bit mouldy anyway.

I'll draw some conclusions right here. All three are utterly fantastic, which is why

we've brought them together. So when the T@B logs a low score for its washroom, it's simply how this caravan's supposed to be - for people who will use site shower blocks.

Adria Action 361 LH  
£10,066

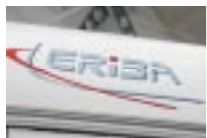
T@B 320 £7990

Eriba Pontos 660 GT  
£16,000



**OUR CRITERIA:** three tiny, unusual caravans which will stop people in their tracks when they see them on site. Prices vary wildly because there are very different caravans - great examples of what's out there whatever your budget.





Conservative design compared to its rivals



## ERIBA TOURING PONTOS 660 GT

PRICE **£16,000**

**TOWMATCH C**

### LAYOUT 7/10

The Eriba will have you sat on parallel seats (not settees) so there's little chance of you sitting next to your nearest and dearest.

At least the lounge is in the front window, which affords a semi decent view. Central space is easily the best here.

The pop-top provides enough height and has you forgetting this headroom is only temporary. This matchbox crams in a large island bed and is the longest one on test here, but it's the only one of the three in which you can't sprawl to watch TV; the opposing single dinette seats aren't for that kind of lounging.

### STYLING/COMFORT 7/10

Without doubt the Eriba is the most conservative-looking of these three caravans. But in this company conservative still equates to slightly wacky. Two-tone coachwork, topped with wrap-over GRP roof, is set off by the front panel clad in vertical sheet alloy. With pop-top down it looks as well built. The built-in exterior step is excellent but the door's low height takes some getting used to.

The Eriba's interior is the most conventional in appearance. View the interior alone and you'd be hard pressed to tell it apart from more mainstream caravan interiors; that's no bad thing.

### TOWING 7/10

The Eriba's steel girder-like frame unsurprisingly adds weight. Whilst 890kg MRO may seem light, it's bordering on the downright heavy for its size. That's the penalty for something with more girders than the Irv Bru factory. And with a maximum laden weight of 1300kg (with a massive 410kg payload) you could fit that factory in too.

At least the swept-back front flanks and relatively small surface area should offer little wind resistance on the road.

### KITCHEN 8/10

The Eriba's kitchen is much like its washroom and achieves about 70 per cent of what you'd expect from a conventional caravan. You'll get a three-burner hob, and manual gas/electric fridge with 64 litres of useful capacity. But you won't get an oven/grill.

### WASHROOM 5/10

The Eriba, as tested, has hot and cold water courtesy of Truma's small but effective five-litre boiler. Both the Eriba's two water containers need hauling aboard and sit under the kitchen and washroom sinks. There's a bench loo with Thetford's highest capacity waste tank. There's enough room to comfortably wash hands and face. The washroom looks good too, so it's a shame it won't be used often.

### SLEEPING 10/10

The small dimensions of the Pontos don't mean that everything inside shrinks to doll

house proportions. The island bed measures a king size 1.95m by 1.30m. There's ample access along each side. It's difficult to understand how the 2.10m body width achieves this.

Those generous wardrobes and overhead lockers form a cosy, enclosed bed head. But of course this is a true three-berth so that front dinette also morphs into an adult-sized bed. It's the most luxurious here (and should be, given the price) with the entire rear end having that true permanent bedroom feel.

### STORAGE 9/10

The Eriba's island bed means it isn't going to struggle with loading capacity. The problem is that if you're planning to tow with a small car you'll have to resist piling the rear-mounted skip with heavy junk. With his/her wardrobes either side of the bed and large cupboards below, rear end loading needs careful monitoring.

Sound negative? It shouldn't. The Eriba Pontos has more storage capability than a caravan this size ever deserves to have. The rear panel's drop down hatch to the depths of that island double also deserves a mention.

### BUILD QUALITY 8/10

The Eriba is a French-built, German-owned product. No offence intended to the French, but the German build influence is clearly evident. All Eribas sit on the conventional AL-KO chassis and use equally conventional running gear from the same supplier. It's a modular, light, self-supporting, steel tube frame, clad with a stove-enamelled alloy skin.

The caravan shell is anything but common. The roof lifts on two huge pincer-like springs leaving you in no doubt as to the strength engineered into the design.

Faults, if any? For something so fantastically built, add-ons such as the cheap-looking plastic awning light and truly nasty front grab handles don't deserve to be stuck on any Eriba's armour-like body.

### EQUIPMENT 4/10

Whichever way you look at it, this Eriba is sparsely specced. Yes, you can add bits onto your order form but this test is judged on what this Pontos offers for the money.

The built-in step and excellent loading hatch on the rear panel are hugely beneficial whilst the five-litre water boiler and small fridge are about adequate for the Eriba's intended use. Cooker and shower, though, remain firmly on the options list

### VALUE FOR MONEY 7/10

In a period that sees dominance of the euro over sterling, pricing set by importers is difficult. Whatever its build quality, uniqueness or other advantages, you'd be a fool if you didn't realise it's expensive. There are Eriba buyers who wouldn't be seen dead in a conventional timber and alloy skinned white box, but £16,000 (and more with on the road charges included) is a big ask.



No oven, but the compact kitchen is good otherwise



Single dinette seats aren't built with lounging in mind. Sprawling to watch television isn't possible here



This is where the Pontos 660 GT beats the others hands down - an island bed



A loading bay and a payload of 410kg. You could almost get the T@B in here



No shower in here, but a practical loo and sink



Water container lives under the washroom sink



Easy access to the cavernous under-bed storage





## ADRIA ACTION 361 LH

PRICE **£10,066**

TOW/MATCH **A**



Table forms the bed base, but slats do the same job



Rear bows outwards, accommodating the kitchen



On-board tank makes for a well-equipped tourer



Moulded panel makes door feel more substantial



The appealing design outside is continued inside

### LAYOUT 8/10

All struggle here in varying degrees; that's down to their purpose, not poor performance. But without doubt it's the Adria that's the most practical in nearly all areas aboard this off-the-wall Slovenian. You can stretch out and watch the box, you can shower, use the loo, and it still has room for bags of loading. It even has a large onboard water tank that's fed from outside.

The Adria is the one for those who want to give up the least - the one that gets closest of all to pampering its occupants.

### STYLING/COMFORT 9/10

In many respects the Adria's interior can be labelled conventional, whilst in others it simply shreds the rulebook. For example, the layout is nothing new. It has two large parallel front settees with end kitchen and unitary washroom alongside.

But climb aboard and you'll see that the cabinetry mimics the curves, swirls and swoops of the exterior, whilst windows (tick shape in the front panel and manically bowed kitchen window) certainly aren't seen anywhere else.

It's a fairly wide body so it feels spacious too. The simple blues (upholstery), chromes (decorative addenda) and light beech cabinetry make sure everything remains modern looking.

Is it as flippant with the rules of interior caravan design as the exterior? No, but it's almost as appealing.

The view out the front window is fine if you bagged the offside seat but forget it if you not. And there seems little point to the massive table. If it were thrown hard enough it could sink the Ark Royal. It nicks a huge amount of space and can't be stowed anywhere. It's not even needed as a bed base; pull-out slats take care of that. For dining, the pull-out bed chest forms a table top. With fuel prices rising, burn the table at the earliest opportunity for a hugely comfortable interior and even lighter caravan.

### TOWING 9/10

The Adria arrives at 800kg and tops out at 1000kg. With extended A-frame, shock absorbers and AL-KO's AKS 1300/2004 stabiliser the Action shouldn't see too much 'reaction' when towing. It's extremely aerodynamically efficient, particularly beneficial if you're towing with smaller capacity engines.

The Adria is the tallest of the three by some margin. Indeed, it's no smaller internally or externally than Adria's other more recognisable caravans.

### KITCHEN 8/10

Here you'll find storage space both (upper and lower) geared to the amount of culinary craft you'd probably expect to take place. For the sake of comparison, the Adria is 10 per cent more generous with storage and prep space than the other vans on test here.

### WASHROOM 10/10

The Adria's height allows for the best washroom of the three. Choose the Action if getting clean in your own personal space is of paramount importance to you. Clearly the Adria's quite small, so why does it have the cheek to pack one of the largest unitary washrooms in the business? There's an electric flush swivel loo, a sink you can stand at and wash over without feeling and looking as if you're playing Twister, and shower space that would be even better had the curtain been routed differently.

### SLEEPING 9/10

The Adria claims to be a three-berth with the bed forming such a large double. And in fairness it's true. Like lighting the barbecue with petrol, it's possible but not a good idea.

The bed makes up from that drop-down table, but if you've already thrown it out, you can use the pull-out slats instead.

### STORAGE 9/10

The Adria's exterior hatches (both sides) give access to a garage-like U-shaped space accessible through seat bases or bed box flap inside. Size is well judged too; it's large enough to surprise without going overboard and compromising interior functionality.

Upper storage is enough for two whilst the wardrobe is as big as the majority of mainstream touring caravans.

### BUILD QUALITY 8/10

With mainstream Adrias, you know you'll get a well-built tourer whatever you pay, but the Action isn't mainstream; many components are bespoke. You won't see those windows anywhere else, and how much did that rear panel and acutely curved window cost them? The external shell is superbly built and immensely tough. Inside there are a few budget components, such as the awkward pull-down roller blind.

### EQUIPMENT 9/10

If you're attracted to any of these three but really can't do without some luxuries then your choice is simple: the Adria is the only washroom here that's equipped to the standard level. Elsewhere, the water tank, garage lights and AL-KO goodies such as shock absorbers all add up to a well-specified tourer... well, in this company at least.

### VALUE FOR MONEY 9/10

The Adria's sticker price of £10,066 seems perfectly reasonable for something that can be bothered to be so radically different. But that's also its Achilles heel. Are there enough people out there interested in it on the used forecourt to keep the Action's residuals respectable? The thing is, there are now so many similarly priced mainstream caravans about (even other Adrias) with twice the kit that they make this Adria look expensive. But, they're just sheep whilst you'll be the sheep dog.



The gas bottle will balance nicely in here



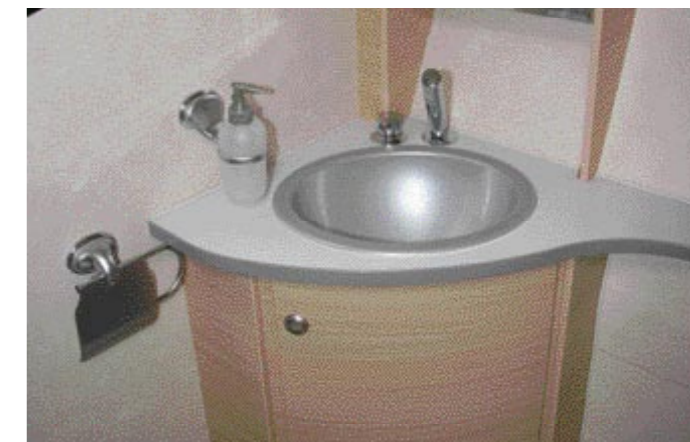
Kitchen is generous with storage and prep space



Take the unnecessarily large and heavy table out and you'll find yourself with loads of daytime living space

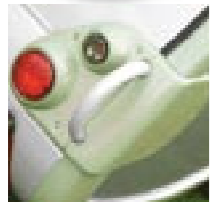


It's more of a garage than a locker, but doesn't compromise the interior design



If your own washroom facilities are important to you, this is the one for you





Walk in the door into a one-box caravan



The smallest caravan on test has the largest lounge, lightest interior and best view out. Bold and bright - who'd have thought lime green could look this good?



Kitchens don't get more contemporary than this. The fridge is a cost option



This triple bed is every bit as wide as the bed in the wider-bodied Adria Action



Lifting the seat back reveals large storage cavern



Starting to feel there's storage behind every surface



Colour kit is a £340 cost option for resale potential



Two of these levers are all it takes to make the bed



The 12v pack is a necessary cost option at £710

T@B 320

PRICE £7,990

TOWMATCH A

LAYOUT 10/10

The T@B is one of the few single box designs available to man. You walk in the door and that's it. There's no hidden side washroom, walk-in wardrobe or second lounge tucked away at the rear.

The T@B's teardrop shape dictates that the kitchen sits at the front, where the most headroom is located. The offside door opens onto the kitchen area whilst that generous lounge falls away to the left, looking much larger and more inviting than it deserves to for the size.

STYLING/COMFORT 10/10

The coldness often associated with some German interiors is absent in the T@B, where the design is actually rather British, and a touch feminine. Lime green, suede seat bases act as a perfect foil for the bold flower petal print on the seat backs that form the U-shaped seating area.

The lounge sits in the rear/middle of the T@B leaving the front for the kitchen. This, the smallest caravan here, has the largest lounge, the lightest interior and best view out. Brilliant!

TOWING 10/10

It's hard to believe, but this caravan weighs in at less than the gross weight of some Halford's trailers. An MRO of just 555kg (including gas and water onboard) means it really can be towed by most cars. And with a payload of 320kg (that's more than most twin-axle caravans), the MTPLM of 880kg looks like a figure you're never likely to reach.

Unsurprisingly, a hitch head stabiliser is optional, though remarkably you get shock absorbers.

KITCHEN 8/10

Both the Adria and T@B have two-burner hobs and small sinks, though both of these are larger in the Adria, and are therefore easier to use. The T@B does have space for a fridge to be added in, but you'll find that the Dometic 40-litre version is a £660 cost option. Ouch.

Without doubt the Adria and T@B have the more stylish and contemporary kitchen spaces, much like their outward appearance would suggest.

WASHROOM 3/10

The T@B's washroom is... absent. And if it weren't, the sort of people who buy the T@B would demand to know why. It's not an oversight, not the manufacturer scrimping on price or weight, it's simply not supposed to have one. The assumption is that you'll use site facilities or none at all.

It gets three points because you can spec in a Porta Potti (for emergencies, as it were) which tucks away out of sight in one of the cupboards when not in use. After a night out and a couple of gallons of local grog, it's an option worth a second thought.

SLEEPING 10/10

In this category, the T@B doesn't trip up on size; the double bed is every bit as wide as the bed in the wider-bodied Adria, and it makes up in under 15 seconds. Two sturdy metal catches drop the back of the bench seat down, drop the table and arrange the cushions - simple. And if the Adria can claim to have a bed big enough for three people then so can the it'sy bitsy T@B. Without a doubt, the size of the T@B's bed belies its on-the-road footprint.

STORAGE 9/10

The T@B's rear bench seat lifts to provide the van's biggest loading space. If you've specified the £110 spare wheel you'll lose a bit of this space but it's neither here nor there. Parallel settee bases are also empty and provide further loading capacity for all that outdoor gear.

There are three upper lockers along the rear, whilst two netted shelves along the length of the van's interior not only serve as handy holders, but look quite trendy too.

Whichever way you look at it, it's a high score in a category that could easily have been a write-off when you consider the size of this tourer.

BUILD QUALITY 8/10

The T@B looks like a ball. And if you dropped it, it would probably bounce back up and smack you on the jaw. All usual German traits are here, with over engineered mechanical bits such as the bed dropping and gas locker hinge arrangement.

In such a small area and with fewer windows, water ingress seems as likely as Gordon Brown auditioning for the X-Factor, whilst interior joinery doesn't feel flimsy in use despite its light weight.

EQUIPMENT 7/10

With no shower or loo onboard, there's precious little need for a water boiler - so there isn't one, understandably. Neither is there a battery, nor 12v pack (it's a £710 cost option on this test model).

With a gas locker that's only big enough to store the gas bottle, the junk you would probably want to chuck in the front shed if it were larger will have to join you inside the caravan... although it's hard to imagine that your typical T@B owner will haul much surplus kit anyway.

VALUE FOR MONEY 9/10

Here's the message: keep your T@B basic, after all that's the point of the thing. At the basic level it presents itself as superb value for money. Go over the top with add-ons and you'll see the T@B move up into the next price category along.

For maximum resale value spec in blinds (£220), colour kit naked (£340), box for Porta Potti (£110) and the costly but necessary 12v pack (£710); everything else will be sheer indulgence.



## ► SCORES

	<b>Eriba Pontos 660 GT</b>	<b>Adria Action 361 LH</b>	<b>T@B 320</b>
	<b>£16,000</b>	<b>£10,066</b>	<b>£7990</b>
Layout	7	8	10
Styling/Comfort	7	9	10
Towing	7	9	10
Kitchen	8	8	8
Washroom	5	10	3
Sleeping	10	9	10
Storage	9	9	9
Build Quality	8	8	8
Equipment	4	9	7
Value	7	9	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>84</b>

**ERIBA TOURING PONTOS 660 GT** **72/100**

**ADRIA ACTION 361 LH** **88/100**

**T@B 320** **84/100**

## ► SPECIFICATION

### ► ERIBA TOURING PONTOS 660 GT

**Price:** £16,000  
**Axles:** 1  
**Berths:** 3  
**Internal length:** 4.86m (15ft 9in)  
**Overall length:** 5.96m (19ft 5in)  
**MRO:** 890kg  
**MTPLM:** 1300kg  
**Payload:** 410kg  
**Width:** 2.10m (6ft 8in)  
**Height:** 2.20m (7ft 3in)  
**Headroom:** 1.87m (6ft 1in)

**Bed size:** rear double: 1.95m x 1.30m (6ft 5in x 4ft 3in); front single: 1.95m x 0.68m (6ft 5in x 2ft 2in)

**Manufacturer:** Hymer  
[www.hymer.com](http://www.hymer.com)

**Contact:** Lowdham Leisureworld  
[www.lowdhams.com](http://www.lowdhams.com)

**FOR & AGAINST** **PROS** ► Terrific island bed ► Body's tubular construction ► Size **CONS** ► Expensive ► Token lounge

### ► ADRIA ACTION 361 LH

**Price:** £10,066  
**Axles:** 1  
**Berths:** 2  
**Internal length:** 3.61m (11ft 10in)  
**Overall length:** 5.20m (20ft 6in)  
**MRO:** 770kg  
**MTPLM:** 1000kg  
**Payload:** 230kg  
**Width:** 2.23m (17ft 1in)  
**Height:** 2.61m (8ft 5in)  
**Headroom:** 1.95m (6ft 5in)

**Bed size:** front double: 6ft 7in x 6ft 7in (2.01m x 2.01m); front singles 6ft 7in x 2ft 5in (2.01m x 0.74m)

**Manufacturer:** Adria Mobil

**Importer:** Adria Concessionaires Limited  
[www.adriaconcessionaires.co.uk](http://www.adriaconcessionaires.co.uk)

**FOR & AGAINST** **PROS** ► Refreshing design ► Still practical ► Washroom ability **CONS** ► Heavy table ► Some won't 'get it'

### ► T@B 320

**Price:** £7990  
**Axles:** 1  
**Berths:** 2  
**Internal length:** 3.12m (10ft 3in)  
**Overall length:** 4.77m (15ft 5in)  
**MRO:** 550kg  
**MTPLM:** 880kg  
**Payload:** 330kg  
**Width:** 1.99m (6ft 4in)  
**Height:** 2.28m (7ft 6in)  
**Headroom:** n/a

**Bed size:** 1.75m x 2.00m (5ft 9in x 6ft 7in)

**Manufacturer:** Knaus-Tabbert  
[www.tabme.de](http://www.tabme.de)

**Contact:** Blackmore Vale Leisure  
[www.bmvcaravans.com](http://www.bmvcaravans.com)

**FOR & AGAINST** **PROS** ► Weight/size ► Looks inside/out ► Surprisingly practical **CONS** ► No washroom ► The stares

## ► VERDICT

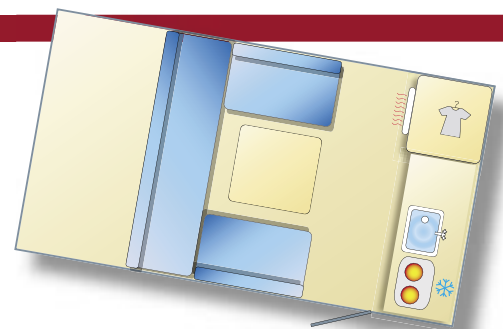
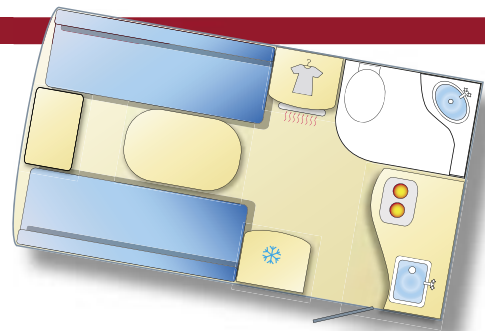
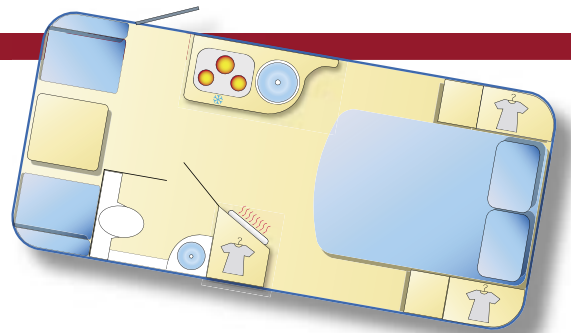
Take these final scores with a pinch of salt. How can the T@B score a dismal three in the washroom category when it was never supposed to have one? What appears to be an AWOL washroom is actually a bonus to a T@B buyer, who values the extra living space.

Only the T@B and Adria have lounges you'd be happy to lounge in. The Eriba's dinette is comfortable enough for eating but then you'll want to be either lying on that immense bed or out in the awning; this is not caravan for daytime living.

All three have massive storage capability. All three can be considered light. They have large

payloads and are built to a high standard. The beds are so big they embarrass caravans three times the size. In fact, when you look at it, you'll see that they only fall down on such things as missing loos, showers or ovens. And quite rightly; the people buying these caravans will call a luxury what others might consider an essential item.

So which to choose? It's the Eriba for sleeping (and by some margin). It's the Adria for being so radical, but at the same time getting closest to real world comfort and practicality. It's the T@B for its looks, inside and out; it's so cute you'll probably want to give it a name. ■



**YOU'LL FIND MORE INFORMATION IN OUR COMPREHENSIVE CARAVAN GUIDE ON PAGE 72**

Towergate Bakers Insurance Quotation

[www.towergatebakers.co.uk](http://www.towergatebakers.co.uk)

**Adria Action £231.89**

**Eriba Pontos 660 GT - £272.79**

**T & B 320 - £187.85**

Include of IPT. The quotes include 3 years discount. Standard discounts for security, Age and 3 years NCC. For more information contact 0870 206 0100