

Lion or mouse?

Doug King casts his eye over this dealer special from Stewart Longton to find out if it's king of the jungle

Photos by **Andy Jenkinson**

SPECIFICATION

Price: £13,000
Berths: 4
Internal length: 6.27m (20ft 7in)
Overall length: 7.95m (26ft 1in)
Overall height: 2.70m (8ft 10in)
Headroom: 1.95m (6ft 5in)
Width: 2.29m (7ft 6in)
MRO: 1450kg
MTPLM: 1700kg
Bed sizes: Front double 6ft 12in x 5ft 3in or 2 singles 5ft 6in/6ft 3in x 2ft 4in Rear double 6ft 3in x 4ft 3in

TOWMATCH?

FOR & AGAINST

PROS

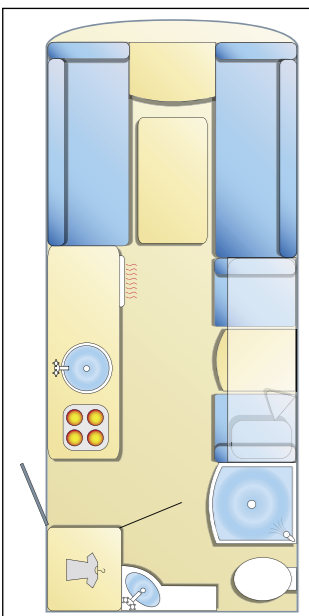
- Equipment upgrades
- Up-market appearance
- Value for money

CONS

- All depots are in the North
- Clear washroom window

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1. The Safari has plenty of roof lockers 2. More worktop space than you'll find in many larger caravans 3. Fabrics are unique to Stewart Longton 4. The dinette is only capable of accommodating children in its bunks

LIKE Bessacarr, Safari was one of the top caravan brands during the 1970s but sad to say it fell by the wayside during the first half of the 1980s. Then in the mid-1990s, Stewart Longton got together with the Swift Group to bring out a dealer special bearing the Safari name.

The Safari 520, which we saw on Longton's stand at the NEC in February, is based on the popular Abbey Vogue 520 and is in fact, the middle one of the seven models in the Safari range. Selling at £13,000 plus a delivery charge of £495 it is

available from the company's four depots at Chorley, Boulton-le-Sands, Standish, and Blackpool.

The caravan is a single-axle four-berth with an MTPLM of 1440kg compared to the Vogue 520's MTPLM of 1425kg. However, the overall difference between the tourers' MROs and their MTPLMs is only 1kg – the Safari's being 204kg and the Vogue's 203kg.

The Safari has its door to the rear of the axle. At the nearside front corner is an external locker incorporating a mains socket.



Forward of the locker is a barbecue point. On the offside, just to the rear of the front corner, is the Whale water socket followed by the battery compartment. Further down the offside – just to the rear of the axle are the waste outlets.

I wasn't too pleased to note that the washroom window in the rear panel was clear glazed.

As you enter the caravan the door to the washroom is at an angle on your right whilst the nearside centre kitchen is immediately on the left.

Opposite the kitchen is a two-seat dinette which also has a wall-mounted lift up bunk so that at night the dinette converts into two single beds. The front lounge layout comprises a bench seat down each side with a chest of drawers between them at the front end – nothing if not bog standard including the fact that the top of the chest unfolds to make an occasional table. Where the caravan does differ from the equivalent Vogue is in its soft furnishings which combine a number of patterned browns and fawn fabrics. In addition to the seat cushions the 520 also has



Spacious and well-appointed corner washroom

sculptured armrests and corner blocks as well as a number of scatter cushions – all of which I felt gave a real touch of luxury. The carpets are removable – something which can be a boon if you stay on sites at the seaside or rally fields.

The two bench seats can be used as single beds although with overall lengths of 1.90m and 1.80m (6ft 3in and 5ft 11in) I think many people would find them on the short side. As a result it's best to consider them as a double bed measuring 2.08m x 1.80m (6ft 10in x 5ft 11in).

Similarly, at 1.80m x 0.70m (5ft 11in x 2ft 4in), and 1.76m x 0.59m (5ft 9in x 1ft 11in) respectively, the lower and upper singles in the dinette can really only be described as being suitable for children and young teenagers. Hence, I'm sure that although designated a four-berth, the 520 will appeal to couples who like to have a bit more space than is found in the two-berth Safari 460 for example.

I was very impressed with the large amount of worktop space in the kitchen; it's much more than can be found in many larger caravans. I also liked the fact that it had been extended beyond the 107-litre Thetford fridge and an adjoining drawer unit to the front nearside seat. The gap between the underside of the worktop and the top of the drawer unit has been turned into further storage space because the



The dinette has a wall-mounted lift up bunk above to create two beds here



Kitchen has acres of worksurface

worktop is supported on a pillar which seems a much better idea than simply fitting a second drawer above the first one. The Truma Ultraheat blown air space heater is fitted on the panel below the drawer.

If I have one minor criticism of the kitchen it is that the oven unit is mounted immediately next to the door and despite it having a wind guard, past experience suggests that this could lead to the hob burners being blown out by draughts if the door is left open when cooking. However it is also worth mentioning that the hob is dual fuel, having three gas burners and one 800watt hotplate. At high level above the cooker is a microwave in a dedicated roof locker but once again I have to say that I don't like this arrangement because of the possibility of someone being scalded when taking hot food out of it. However, it is also worth stating that the microwave is part of the Safari specification – as is the radio/CD mounted at the front nearside corner of the lounge area. Next to the microwave compartment are three large roof lockers with

more than enough space for storing crockery and other items, whilst between the fridge and the cooker is a narrow cupboard with a cutlery drawer, wire basket and the dedicated storage for the drainer and the cutting board. In the ceiling is an Omnivent two-way, three-speed extractor.

The end washroom is certainly one of the best aspects of the Safari 520 because not only does it have the usual accoutrements such as a corner quadrant shower unit, Thetford cassette toilet – with electric flush – and a good size washbasin with toiletry storage in the double door cupboard below it, the wardrobe is also sited in the compartment so that you have all your clothes to hand when washing and showering. Although the wardrobe is comparatively narrow so restricting the hanging space, the problem has to a large extent been overcome by the inclusion of a second hanging rail at a lower level. This is a simple solution to a problem which affects the wardrobes in many caravans. Also sited in the wardrobe is the mast for the Status 530 directional TV/FM aerial.

There are two mains lights in the lounge area plus halogen ceiling lights both there and in the washroom whilst the kitchen area is lit by a fluorescent light. There are two sets of TV and coax aerial sockets together with two mains sockets. But it would have been nice to see a couple of extra mains sockets. We did however like the fact that the Ultraheat and Ultrastore controls have been mounted on a pillar above the kitchen worktop rather than on the front of one of the seats where they are easily accessible to little hands not to mention being rubbed against by passing pets. ■

OUR VERDICT

Anyone who remembers the original Safari caravans will confirm that this Safari range is not in the same league. But that said, neither is it in the same price league that you would have had to pay if the original equivalent van was around today. Stewart Longton's can take pride for two things: maintaining the name of what to many caravanners was one of the all-time great names in the industry, and for giving value for money. The one downside is that the company's four depots are all in the north and hence for anyone living in the south it's a long way to go to buy and then have to return it to be serviced.

The difference in price between the Vogue 520 at £12,430 and the Safari 520 at £13,000 is only £570 but included in the Safari is the microwave and radio/CD plus a gas barbecue point, electric toilet flush, and a passive infra-red alarm system, not to mention the fabric upholstery upgrade and the Safari graphics which will keep owners ahead of the Joneses.

Certainly, given the fact that the range has been around for something like 13 years, it must mean that owners are more than satisfied with the quality of these dealer specials not to mention the service they get from Stewart Longton.

OTHER SAFARIS

- **SAFARI 460**
Two-berth with end washroom
Internal length: 4.67m (15ft 4in)
MRO: 1132kg **MTPLM:** 1310kg.
- **SAFARI 470**
Four-berth with fixed bed
Internal length: 4.74m (15ft 7in)
MRO: 1123kg **MTPLM:** 1322kg
- **SAFARI 495**
Four-berth with fixed bed
Internal length: 5.50m (18ft 1in)
MRO: 1265kg **MTPLM:** 1472kg
- **SAFARI 530**
Five-berth with lounge area at both ends
Internal length: 5.60m (18ft 4in)
MRO: 1283kg **MTPLM:** of 1500kg
- **SAFARI 540**
Single-axle six-berth with end rear end bunks and nearside dinette.
Internal length: 5.50m (18ft 1in)
MRO: 1274kg **MTPLM:** 1500kg
- **SAFARI 640**
Twin-axle four-berth with fixed bed and end washroom.
Internal length: 6.27m (20ft 7in)
MRO: 1450kg **MTPLM:** 1700kg