

# Twin beds

## The hottest layout around

Caravans for couples need not be fixed-double-bed or traditional two-berth layouts. Have you thought of buying a caravan with twin single beds instead?

TEST PHIL STEPHENS

**GREAT** news, apparently I'm quids in. I've just bought a 1970s' stone-clad bungalow with all the aesthetic appeal of my two-year-old's paintings. But that's good, they say. We have an aging population they say - and apparently a bungalow is what that ageing population will soon want. What's the connection with caravans? Just as with houses (or bungalows), there are fashion trends in caravan layouts. And without a doubt the layout that's hot for

the future is one with fixed single beds. And if a home is an investment in money terms, a caravan is surely just as sound an investment in terms of enjoyment. If fixed singles are what you want, you'll have something that's got rarity value. That is, until the concept catches on and every range gets a twin-bed model.

On test this month: three fixed-single-bed models, all different, all desirable, all good value in their different ways.



**LUNAR LEXON SB £15,067**

**HOBBY PRESTIGE 540 UL £13,200**

**ADRIA ADORA 542 DL £12,244**

**OUR CRITERIA:** Three fixed-single bed models all on single axles. Each is of a different layout. And they're in three different price ranges... something here for everyone





The Lunar's light cluster is eye-catching



**LUNAR LEXON SB**

PRICE **£15,067**

**TOWMATCH C**

**LAYOUT 9/10**

The Lexon SB layout is a rare beast. It's not unusual to have a central washroom and separate shower opposite, but that's usually in company with an island bed. The lounge is plenty big enough for two to sit and eat but not long enough to enjoy feet-up comfort on the settee. The kitchen sits on the offside opposite the door - and there's plenty of space in this busy area.

The biggest surprise is the width of the long aisle connecting the caravan front to back. At no point does this Lunar feel squeezed; that's some achievement considering this layout's central washroom and shower stand like sentries on each sides of the caravan's centre area.

**STYLING/COMFORT 9/10**

I don't usually comment on upholstery, curtains and equally fluffy things. They're personal to the individual's eye. But this model is different and can't escape comment. Lunar has, in the Lexon, managed to combine separate elements such as cabinet colour with a successful decorative theme. There's a light aspect about this model that's important to its appeal, too. Lunar has worked hard to improve its 2009 Lexon models - and particularly this SB which was a bit dim in that hard-to-illuminate central area. The result is a massive improvement, with huge Heki rooflights front and back, larger windows and subtly-placed mirrors that reflect light.

**TOWING 8/10**

You won't get the narrow body seen on lesser Lunar models with this Lexon SB. It's a full fat 2.28m. But you will get a lower slung shell than most, which will cut through the air with less effort than taller outfits. The 1210kg MRO is an appealing starting weight and the 1413kg top weight places the SB firmly into Mondeo-Passat class.

A very reasonable £399 extra gets you AL-KOs ATC Trailer Control system.

**KITCHEN 7/10**

Here's a kitchen that recognises the potential demands on it and gives you nothing more than it needs to do. Lunar's marketing men/women may badge the model as a four-berth to demonstrate flexibility but the boffins know that they're building the SB for two. Which is why the kitchen, at first glance, looks devoid of any meaningful storage space. But when you investigate more closely, it's perfectly adequate for the demands of just two. The same goes for food preparation space.

**WASHROOM 8/10**

Washroom? En-suite is a more accurate term. Fully opening the washroom door and locking it back across the gangway, instantly divides bedroom/shower/washroom from the rest of the caravan. You step out of the shower into the bedroom, or across the corridor into the

spacious washroom with sensibly-angled sink for ease of use. Just why there's a window in the washroom I don't know; there's a clear Heki above and superb lighting, too.

**SLEEPING 8/10**

This latest SB now goes head to head with the competition and gains sprung mattresses. The bed is lower to the ground than those of the Hobby and Adria (and probably most others) in line with the slightly lower headroom available in all Lunars. A real boon is the proper chest of drawers. Proper because it's robust, large and the drawers aren't obstructed when bedding is in place. Even finer, too, are the upper lockers on the rear panel. While depth maybe a problem for lockers on many narrow Lunars, these are big deep affairs - really capacious.

**STORAGE 8/10**

With all bedding living permanently on your equally permanent bed, there's plenty of space for other gear for two under the beds. Unless you're a complete hoarder I struggle to think that you'd come anywhere near close to filling the Lunar's large under-bed lockers. Awning? No, it's too far to the back for correct balance. Folding chairs? Folding table, perhaps?

Best of all, those bed bases and the front bench seats all have full-length, drop-down flaps, making finding whatever you've buried in there easy.

Faults? None, really. Overall, storage is not massive - but it's not needed. Job done, then.

**BUILD QUALITY 8/10**

It's amazing what's possible when a company is released from the shackles and bean counters of big corporate ownership. Let's be clear. Lunars still have some way to go. But, in build quality terms, there's been a lot of progress in the short length of time since Lunar became a wholly British-owned independent company again.

**EQUIPMENT 8/10**

Quality kit amounts to Thetford's C250 loo, some well-made timber joinery, good sprung mattresses and three Heki rooflights. Not so hot is the fridge which, while OK at 105 litres, lags behind digitally-controlled, larger-capacity units in other competitors' similarly-priced caravans.

But the SB - and, indeed, entire Lexon range - is where it needs to be when trying to mirror competitors' spec levels.

**VALUE FOR MONEY 9/10**

Fixed single beds are far from a common thing in UK caravan ranges - and are even less so with the sad demise of a couple of well-known makers. Which makes putting a price on the SB's head all the more difficult. If a manufacturer gets greedy, buyers will stick with conventional layouts - it takes attractive pricing to tempt them. I've been Lunar's fiercest critic over pricing up to now but, to me, this SB layout seems worth every penny. ➤



A kitchen with ample food preparation space



Full length settees give plenty of lounging space



Shower eventually becomes part of en-suite to bedroom



Lower storage tighter here in the Lunar...



This lovely, cosy bedroom is what makes the Lunar top for single beds



And this is only half of the en suite arrangement



Twin struts keeps braces door nicely





## HOBBY PRESTIGE 540 UL

PRICE £13,200

### LAYOUT 8/10

This layout has you sleeping in the fixed beds up in the nose; your lounge/living area is at the back. I'm in the minority, but that's just where I prefer it.

The kitchen sits centrally; a thick bulkhead separates kitchen from bedroom. Within it is a swiveling partition that takes a television (viewable from both sides), with a drinks cabinet on the reverse. Opposite is the outer wall of the washroom which, together with the bulkhead, creates an almost entirely separate bedroom feel to the layout.

### STYLING/COMFORT 9/10

Some caravans rely on kit alone to create any impression of whether a caravan is special or not. Fact is in the Hobby you could strip it bare of electrical goodies and you'd still have an interior that feels instantly expensive. The furniture looks like wood - because it is. Sadly - and incredibly - some caravan manufacturers manage to make the real thing look like plastic.

The big U-shape lounge is dominated by the two huge corner back rests and even larger table. If I were to use the Hobby as a two-berth I'd feed this monster table to my wood burner and buy a cheaper lighter occasional table. Result? Even more space here and a half-tonne less on the MRO.

### TOWING 8/10

Why do these continental caravans always surprise us with their weights? Is it because outwardly they look chunky so we assume they must be fatter than a sacked banker's pension? Either way, the Hobby sits right up there with UK competitors and shouldn't ever be discounted when it comes to weighing up those all-important kilos for the road. Like the Adria, it has shock absorbers (par for the course in Germany) and standard-fit stabiliser; it's the Winterhoff WS3000 unit.

### KITCHEN 9/10

I simply wouldn't care if this kitchen isn't capable of toasting eggs, grilling beans or indeed whatever these kitchen things are supposed to do, as this Hobby galley is just fabulous looking. To my finicky eye, this has to be one of the most contemporary, yet elegant, kitchens available in a towed white box. In an era where modern/contemporary often translates to minimalist starkness, Hobby manages to combine both worlds.

The combination of fridge, cooker and drawers look simply lush below the granite-effect work top. Add in the chrome and you realise the reasons why it's simply stunning. Oven? Check. Grill? Check. Three burner hob? Check. With sufficient workspace too, it's probably only a microwave that can be marked down as absent at this money.

### WASHROOM 6/10

The washroom's plastic mouldings alternate between the usual white and unusual beige sections. There's no doubt the approach

adds interest to this otherwise difficult little place. Nonetheless, plastic polished wood-effect cabinet knobs are a step too far. That mass of shaped plastic contains no less than six separate cupboards and eight shelves. .

### SLEEPING 9/10

Following the theme of the Hobby's interior construction, the mattress and bed bases feel a cut above the rest. Mattresses are sprung and, talking of springs, you should see the size of the ones that lift the beds! A comfortable and special place to sleep - what's more, you have the option of turning these singles into a double bed.

### STORAGE 7/10

While upper locker space will never match UK rivals, this Hobby will undoubtedly be used as a two-berth and, in that respect, there's plenty of storage space. Lower loading space, though, matches the capacity that we'd expect from manufacturers this side of the Channel but access, particularly under the seats in the lounge, can be awkward. The shallow shelf below the lockers surrounding the lounge is particularly handy. It's large enough for small display ornaments, too.

### BUILD QUALITY 9/10

This should really be nine and a half. Not perfect, but very nearly. Interior joinery not only looks the part but has precision in design, purpose and operation. The dimpled exterior isn't to everyone's taste but will look fresher and last longer than smooth-sided caravans.

Complaints? The gas locker door feels floppy and if that Winterhoff stabiliser whacks my knuckles again I'll sue! Neither of which I'm sure will bother Hobby at all.

### EQUIPMENT 8/10

The fridge and oven are all top notch affairs as is the pair of wind-up Dometic roof lights. The on-board water tank is almost like a reservoir and must hold at least 80 litres. Exterior mains, satellite socket, nose-weight gauge, stabiliser and top-end BPW running gear are all things to brag about. Add to that the high quality of less obvious things such as lighting, windows and high standard of joinery throughout and you know you have a great caravan.

### VALUE FOR MONEY 8/10

How you assess value depends what's important to you. If money is everything and you can live with second-rate fittings and build you'll think the Hobby an expensive buy. Point is, it's not.

Before our bankers got their maths a bit skew-whiff and a pound sterling could still buy you a Twix in Calais, these caravans were way ahead of UK offerings in terms of value to build ratio. As with Adrias, all that's happened now is that it's more of a level playing field. In terms of what you get, the Hobby is certainly not an expensive purchase.



Great access but narrower than the Adria's



Nothing gets near the Hobby's interior quality here



Lockers are well made - and there are enough for two



The control panel by the door is easy to operate



The buttress-style rear end looks distinctive



The water heater is small - just five litres



It's contemporary from roof light pod to floor



Using it as a two berth? Dump the table and buy a lighter one



The bedroom's out on its own and very bright



Hmmm... some may like the décor here





Wet locker, with barbecue point and mains power inlet



Cool blue lighting and cream upholstery combine perfectly to create a stylish environment



A panoramic window here would help to let in more light



Utterly brilliant wall-mounted twin wardrobes



The washroom is narrow but space is used wisely



Plenty of storage space under the beds



The gas locker gives you easy access



You'll need the table top for extra workspace



This blue cabinet is refreshingly different

## ADRIA ADORA 542 DL

PRICE **£12,224**

**TOWMATCH D**

### LAYOUT 8/10

The Adria is unusual. It gives you fixed sleeping accommodation - in the form of twin beds. And, although it's the shortest model here, it still makes room for a full-width rear washroom. Predictably, that means a very short kitchen and lounge space. Adria has cleverly ditched the wardrobe from this central space, leaving the area free of this cumbersome monument to garment storage. But Adria owners aren't necessarily ardent naturists so still need a place to hang their garments. Adria's solution is his-and-hers mini wardrobes, each hung over the foot of the beds.

### STYLING/COMFORT 8/10

The U-shaped lounge isn't as big as you'd hope. But it is comfortable and certainly doesn't miss a central chest of drawers. Understandably a small lounge dictates a small lounge window on the offside but unfortunately the nearside misses out altogether. This contemporary-styled living space doesn't deserve to be so dim and those units with cream lower lip and cabinet LED lighting need to be shown off.

### TOWING 8/10

Shorter and with less equipment than the Lunar, the Adria arrives much lighter, at just 1150kg. Not bad considering it's taller and has marginal extra width. It will carry more, too, with a top weight of 1500kg, giving 350kgs of payload. To me that's questionable marketing. Most people look at that top figure and think that's what their caravan will end up weighing when loaded and buy their tow-car accordingly. Or worse, avoid the caravan altogether.

### KITCHEN 7/10

Unless the lounge table is out of its cupboard and set up you might be forgiven for thinking there is absolutely nowhere to prepare any food. But there is a small pull-out flap under the drainer. Using the lower unit's top behind you proves useful, too.

Incredibly, kitchen storage betters (by some distance) that of the larger kitchen space in the Lunar. Lockers above have almost twice the storage capacity. And, below, the drawer system is more practical in use than the Lunar. Of course lack of a microwave is part of that extra loading room but, even so, storage is marginally better.

### WASHROOM 7/10

Practicalities first. The sink isn't nice to use. It's set too far back beneath the vanity cabinet. And the shower's window and blind mechanism (there's another on the offside), like the Lunar is not only pointless. Worse, the one in the shower will get soaked. Rid the room of the horrid white plastic towel holder and you should then leave the door open as, from the main living area, this timber part of the washroom looks rather classy and stylish.

### SLEEPING 7/10

These are simply the widest singles you'd imagine in a caravan. They're of domestic proportions. And the nearside bed is longer than the beds in the other two models tested here. Mattresses aren't sprung, though the bases are. Even so the one I thumped, thudded, squeezed and prodded seemed to be built for longevity and a decent night's sleep. A midi Heki rooflight and two good-sized windows which would be better employed in the lounge keep this bedroom space bright.

### STORAGE 9/10

In this section it's the bedroom storage solutions that dominate. I've said the beds are the biggest here and so are the voids beneath. There's nothing in either that interrupts their ability to take whatever you want to throw underneath them. Then there are those twin, wall-hung his/hers wardrobes. ("His/hers" because no doubt "his" will be the one with the fuse box in it and therefore smaller.) It's a brilliant feature for fixed singles. This would otherwise be wasted space at the foot of the beds, so why not free up the lounge and put wardrobes here? As with the other two caravans tested, you get an exterior hatch under one of the beds.

### BUILD QUALITY 8/10

Adria bodies remain some of the best in the business. Two high gloss polyester side walls and roof, all tipped with ABS panels front and back. The finish under the chassis, in the gas locker and shell bracing all demonstrates that out of sight isn't out of mind with the Slovenians. Cabinet build is very good, although twin grub screws through hinges to timber is a method largely phased out on most UK caravans.

### EQUIPMENT 7/10

From outside two things hit you. One: how smart the shaped dark tinted windows look. And two, how un-smart the wheels look with those yucky covers. It's rather like an Armani suit worn with Adidas trainers. At least there's a spare wheel snuggled in the corner of the gas locker and barbecue point on the nearside. The blue LED lighting in the cabin's cupboard is a worthy addition but I'm guessing it will be loved or loathed in equal measure. A fridge, oven and hob which match all the big players are all present; only a microwave is missing - now regarded as taken for granted at this money.

### VALUE FOR MONEY 7/10

I could say that Adria used to exist purely on the foundations of great build and great value. Great build is certainly still in evidence and, although currently challenged by a strong euro, so is the value. You have to remember that Adrias were once cheap for what they were. Now they're simply on the same playing field. And that turn of events



## ► SCORES

	Lunar Lexon SB £15,067	Hobby Prestige 540UL £13,200	Adria Adora 542 DL £12,244
Layout	9	8	8
Styling/comfort	9	9	8
Towing	8	8	8
Kitchen	7	9	7
Washroom	8	6	7
Sleeping	8	9	7
Storage	8	7	9
Build	8	9	8
Equipment	8	8	7
Value for money	9	8	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>76</b>

**LUNAR LEXON SB** 82/100

**HOBBY PRESTIGE 540 UL** 81/100

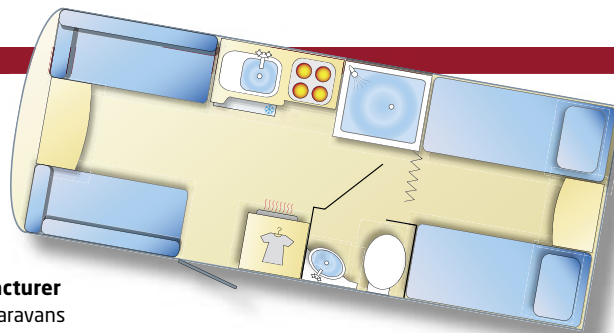
**ADRIA ADORA 542 DL** 76/100

## ► SPECIFICATION

### ► LUNAR LEXON SB

**Price** £15,067  
**Axles** 1 | **Berths** 4  
**MRO** 1210kg  
**MTPLM** 1413kg  
**Width** 2.28m  
**Internal length** 5.79m  
**Overall height** 2.60m  
**Bed sizes** Rear singles: 1.99m x 0.71m and 1.86m x 0.71m  
 Front double 2.13m x 1.53m  
 or 2 singles @ 1.52m x 0.71m

**Manufacturer**  
 Lunar Caravans  
**Tel** 01772 337628  
**Web** www.lunarcaravans.com

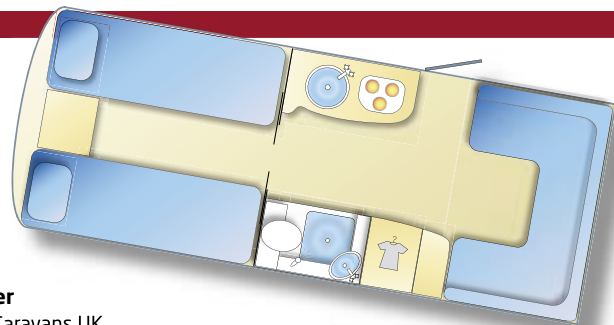


**FOR & AGAINST** **PROS** ► En-suite arrangement ► Sensible pricing ► Cohesive cabin. **CONS** ► Exterior look

### ► HOBBY PRESTIGE 540 UL

**Price** £13,200  
**Axles** 1 | **Berths** 4  
**MRO** 1308kg  
**MTPLM** 1600kg  
**Width** 2.30m  
**Internal length** 5.89m  
**Overall height** 2.56m  
**Bed sizes** Front singles 2 @ 1.92m x 0.83m  
 Rear double 1.95m x 1.30m

**Importer**  
 Hobby Caravans UK  
**Tel** 01773 853900  
**Web** www.hobbycaravansuk.co.uk

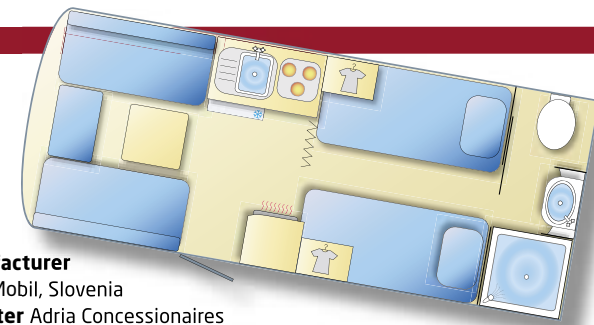


**FOR & AGAINST** **PROS** ► Cracking bedroom ► Superb décor throughout ► **CONS** ► Staid washroom

### ► ADRIA ADORA 542 DL

**Price** £12,244  
**Axles** 1 | **Berths** 4  
**MRO** 1150kg  
**MTPLM** 1500kg  
**Width** 2.30m  
**Internal length** 5.36m  
**Overall height** 2.58m  
**Bed sizes** Rear singles 2 @ 1.92m x 0.85m  
 Front double 2.10m x 1.20m

**Manufacturer**  
 Adria Mobil, Slovenia  
**Importer** Adria Concessionaires  
**Tel** 0870 7740007 **Web** www.adriaconcessionaires.co.uk



**FOR & AGAINST** **PROS** ► Value for money ► Fixed beds size **CONS** ► Lacks natural light in the lounge

## ► VERDICT

It may not be a common layout but these three prove you can still have a choice of layouts for your twin beds.

All do the "bed bit" well. The Adria's beds are the largest but miss out on the others' sprung mattresses. If you are one of the few purchasers who will use these layouts as a four-berth, it's the Hobby that will attract you because it has the largest lounge-come-double bed. The kitchen is a marvel, proving caravan kitchens don't have to look like err... caravan kitchens.

The Hobby displayed the better build quality, though Lunar is fast catching up and Adria is, as usual, not far off a podium

finish. Prices are around what you'd expect, though the Lunar's price is particularly pleasing.

And the one that does the twin-bed bit best? To me, it's the Lunar. The others are very successful in their price categories and represent truly great for the money.

But ultimately the Lunar Lexon SB has the better design solutions to the problems presented by having those fixed single beds. It isn't perfect, and it's soundly beaten in some areas. But the SB - it stands for Single Beds, of course - is closer to forming the more complete twin-bed package than the other two models. ■

## ► THE CAR



### MAZDA 6 ESTATE 2.2 TDI

**From** £18,149

I love diesel engines with a bit of zing as well as the traditional pulling guts we need as caravan towers. Yes, most of them have more torque than Jonathan Ross, but not many are happy to rev like their petrol counterparts. This Mazda's engine (also found in Freelanders, Citroens Peugeots and Mondeos) is a product of a Ford and Peugeot tie-up.

This unit, although clattery at idle, settles down and becomes one of the quietest diesel units I've driven. The chassis was taut enough to cope with the Hobby on motorway and Peak District roads. Only the notchy gear change spoiled the fun of frequent gear changes that kept the 161-bhp unit boiling. Wide rear haunches and high waistline make the Mazda 6 Estate more attractive than its predecessor and what's hidden under the bonnet is even more impressive than its looks.

Not enough power? They'll do you a 182-bhp unit if you prefer. Though when you put that power through front wheels made slightly light by the weight of a caravan on the hook you could well find you've a less rewarding drive than the engine we tested.

YOU'LL FIND MORE INFORMATION IN OUR COMPREHENSIVE CARAVAN GUIDE ON PAGE 78