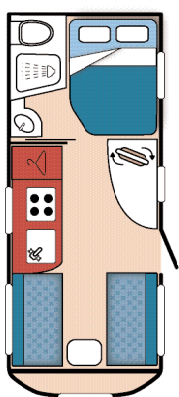




THE BAILEY INDIANA WAS SO NEW IT WASN'T IN SERIES PRODUCTION WHEN **ROB MCCABE** AND FAMILY TRIED IT OUT



“DON'T SUPPOSE you fancy a swap, do you?” I'd only just arrived at the Club's splendid Hawthorn Farm site, but already Bailey's new Series 6 Senator Indiana had made enough of an impression on our Senator Series 5-owning neighbour for him to want to chop in his own new-ish caravan (which he likes very much), for the even newer one (which he's sure he'd like even more).

His already high opinion of it soared further on hearing of the built-in TV and stereo DVD/CD player and the high-tech security tracking device included in the Senator Series 6 deal. They're formidable additions to a spec that, in Series 5 guise, is already not short of goodies.

Our Indiana is a four-berth, permanent-bed model, with the bedroom on the nearside and the corner loo/shower opposite. It's a layout tailor-made for couples, so we were interested (as I hope you will be, too) to see how it handled the four-strong Clan McCabe, who turned up mob-handed on the Lincolnshire coast for this first-ever test of the new Bailey.

CONSTRUCTION

So quick off the mark were we in bagging an Indiana for appraisal, it was a pre-production model, but there was no sign of a rush job. Here's hoping they'll all be as well-made as this one. The panel fit between the roof, the two-section aluminium sidewalls

and the full-height plastic panels at the front and rear is exemplary, with all the sealing finished off neatly.

The vertically-stacked light clusters on the window-less rear panel drew admiring comments, including from me – they do look smart. So, too, do the seven-spoke alloy wheels. The A-frame has a pair of rubber footsteps, a nice touch that allows easier window cleaning.

The quality of the woodwork inside displays the same attention to detail, as befits the Senator's range-topping status. Overhead locker doors aren't solid wood (they're ply-infilled), but they're all secured with a pair of sturdy metal stays – good news for longevity.

TOWABILITY

The Indiana has a MTPLM of 1500kg, which yet again leads us towards a select few vehicles capable of handling that level of mass (giving a 7% guide of 105kg noseweight).

However, it's hard to imagine that a couple using this caravan would ever load it to more than 1400kg (7% = 98kg noseweight), which widens the choice a little. It's mid-size (and above) 4x4 territory, really.

All Senators will be fitted with the brand-new Al-Ko ATC trailer control system, although our pre-production example didn't have it. This is an electronic device that works in a similar manner to a car's ESP (electronic stability control) system: it applies the caravan's brakes automatically in the event of any instability, allowing the driver to carry on in full control. It sounds like a worthwhile contribution to caravan safety.

USABILITY

Flatscreen LCD technology in TVs has big benefits for caravanners, for whom space is always at a premium. Being no more than a couple of inches thick, these TVs take up virtually no more space than the size of the screen itself.

In the Indiana, the set has an unobtrusive home high up on the dividing wall between front quarters and bedroom. A sliding latch locks its swivelling base into place; unlock it and it turns to face either lounge or bedroom. On the underside of the set, a trio of AV cables lead eventually (through the ceiling) to the DVD player, which lives in an overhead locker in the front lounge. This unit doubles as the in-house stereo radio/CD player. When you watch TV, the sound comes from the set's own speakers; in DVD mode, the caravan's stereo speakers in the front corners come into play.

It's great to have all this entertainment on board, and I do so hate to be a damp squib. But the picture quality from the unbranded LCD screen isn't great and the sound is a little thin. That, and the low-rent remote control, leads me to suspect that Bailey hasn't spent an awful lot of money on it.

We encountered another shortcoming in four-berth mode. We gave Angus and Sol permission to watch kids' TV if they woke up before us, and they duly took advantage of our generous offer. But even with the sound turned down low, the unit's positioning meant the soundtrack to *Watch My Chops* and *Mona the Vampire* filled the bedroom – not the gentle wake-up call we'd have chosen. Were the telly portable, we'd have moved it to the front chest the night before so that they could watch it with minimum disturbance to those enjoying that sumptuously comfortable double bed.



But if that particular aspect was disappointing, we were impressed by the obvious steps taken elsewhere by Bailey's designers to remove some of caravanning's little irritants. Bed locker access, for instance, can often be a right kerfuffle, but not here – the nearside one is accessed by a huge, slide-out drawer that's simple to use and capable of accommodating a lot of bedding. Excellent.

So, too, is the hinged flap on the same seatbase that pulls open to reveal the RCD/circuit breaker. There's another opposite that gives you direct access to the various taps and levers needed to drain and/or close off the water heater and inboard water tank. You'll be set up with electricity and water in the blink of an eye, with not a single piece of upholstery disturbed.

The eye-level control panel by the entrance door controls 12V switching and water pump, as well as a battery health-check indicator. The awning light rather cleverly illuminates the inside of the caravan as well, so that when you come back to the caravan in the dark it won't be dark – if you get my drift.

The wide, sweeping plateau of storage space under the double bed is easily accessible thanks to the chunky hydraulic supporting strut. There's an exterior access hatch here, too, the immediate interior of

which is enclosed by a deep plastic compartment. This even has a drain plug in the corner, so you can chuck sodden swimwear, wetsuits or waterproofs in here and avoid the risk of a pool of water forming. Oh, and while we're outside, better squeeze in a mention for the gas barbecue point.

The concertina blinds on the side windows look really smart, but that's outgunned by the inconvenience of not being able to use these and the flyscreens at the same time. You can with the three-section front window, but you don't get the welcome through-breeze that you do with the side windows – the difference between a bearable Mediterranean night or not.

The carpeting is loose-fit, giving you a fighting chance of keeping it in good nick.

LIVING AND SLEEPING

Eight-year-old Sol needs and likes his early nights, so he was tucked up in his sleeping bag on the big double bed while the rest of us relaxed for the evening. At our bedtime, we scooped him up, sleeping bag and all, and deposited him on one of the front singles, with Angus ensconced on the other.

It worked well – little hassle on our part, no disturbance to him (he'll sleep through anything) and a nice, firm, comfy bed in both locations. The front singles are fine for

OPPOSITE PAGE: New Series 6 is high on convenience, with stable door, waste bin that works and directional TV antenna

ABOVE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Occasional front table is solid for two; shower room features new, enlarged Thetford toilet; hinged panel keeps loo dry when showering; comfy lounge has independent front flyscreens; DVD and microwave good, LCD telly less so; kitchen and dresser will please

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Technical	
RRP	£15,175 on the road
Internal length	5.61m (18ft 5in)
Shipping length	7.19m (23ft 7in)
Overall width	2.28m (7ft 6in)
Overall height	2.58m (8ft 6in)
Internal headroom	1.90m (6ft 3in)
MIRO	1264kg (24.9cwt)
MTPLM	1500kg (29.5cwt)
User payload	236kg (4.6cwt)
Berths	4



Bailey Senator

VERDICT

Construction	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Towability	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Usability	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Living and sleeping	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Kitchen	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Washroom	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Lighting and electrics	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
VERDICT	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

utilise the big expanse of surface on the low-level dresser opposite if you need to marshal reinforcements. Storage is good, the highlight being the capacious steel racks that line the pull-out cupboard.

The in-built microwave is a boon. It'll be worth its weight in gold if you get caught short and run out of gas but, even as it is, we used it several times over a long weekend and would have missed it if someone took it away from us. Can't think of anybody cruel enough actually to do that, but anyway...

WASHROOM

This looks refreshingly 21st century, with a dapper new Thetford loo that, among other tweaks, features "a larger seating area for greater comfort". My guess is that this is Thetford's polite way of saying: "People are generally lardier than they used to be, so we've made our seats bigger so they can fit." A sign of the times indeed.

It is also very proud of its "larger capacity waste tank for heavy use". Caravanning doesn't get much sexier than that.

The shower compartment sits just in front of the loo (why not behind, so that both facilities could be used at once?) and looks to be well-sealed against the risk of water ingress from 'heavy use', as Thetford's copywriters might have put it. The wash-hand basin/vanity unit is in its usual position in the front corner of the bedroom.

LIGHTING AND ELECTRICS

Wow – how many ways of lighting a caravan do you need? Probably not as many as in the Indiana. In the lounge, you can leave the ceiling lights off and use just the front, wall-mounted pair; or use just the four downlighters; or maybe have just two of the downlighters on, and two of the four sunken lights that surround the sunroof... even Carol Vorderman would have her work cut out to compile all the options.

The bedroom, vanity unit and washroom are all well catered-for on the lighting front – it's just the kitchen that's crying out for a bit of extra help.

There's an exterior mains socket to add to the three inside – a plentiful supply – and all the main controls are sensibly located for maximum ease of use.

VERDICT

A handsome, well-made, comfortable and spectacularly-equipped caravan that's ideal for two but which, with the compromises highlighted, can be used by a family of four, too. However, I'd have been happier if Bailey had included the DVD player and all the wiring/socketry, but knocked a few quid off and left it to me to choose my own LCD TV. ■

"...the double bed up back is lovely, boasting a quality mattress that's delightfully supportive"



ABOVE: Outer berth occupant in fixed bed, as usual, will have to dangle a leg over the side; huge drawer under front sofa is a great convenience

kids and, at just under 5ft 11in, I reckon I could pretty much get away with it. The front dinette does, of course, make up easily into a roomy double bed as well.

As I hinted earlier, the double bed up back is lovely, boasting a quality mattress that's delightfully supportive. If you're lying on the right-hand side, you need to train yourself to sleep at a slight angle due to the prominent cutaway of the mattress; your feet will dangle off the edge otherwise.

There's plenty of storage in this room, including two little overhead shelves for coffee mugs, paperbacks or such like. The concertina blind on the window provides an almost total blackout; in the morning, just roll back the blind on the sunroof to let light flood in while maintaining privacy.

Just one drawback: the inevitable 5.30am visit to the loo from one of the little darlings. This involves the cacophony of the sliding door that closes off the bedroom being opened (at that time of morning, it might as well be a Harrier roaring past at 100ft),

followed by the full sound effects from within the little room, right next to my ear.

During waking hours, the lounge is a great place to be. The upholstery, supported on sprung-slatted bases, is cossetting and there's plenty of legroom in this 7ft 6in bodyshell. In the evening, there's a lighting option to suit every mood (more lights than moods, probably).

KITCHEN

Very little to complain about here. Just the usual, in fact – a lack of effective lighting. Otherwise, there's a lot to like. The four-burner hob, grill and oven are all spark-ignited, an overhead Omnivent extractor removes cooking smells (or moves air about) and the fridge includes a roomy freezer compartment.

There's a reasonable amount of work surface, too, especially with the plastic drainer stowed away on its wall-mounted holder, which neatly doubles up as a kitchen roll dispenser. You can always

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