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Luxury looks and luxuriously equipped (note the deep pile carpet)... but the cookies are extra!

# Compass Camino 554

The interior of this transverse island bed caravan looks superbly stylish, yet it's arguably eclipsed by the glistening blue sides of the outside. It's a truly eye-catching model

**C**ompass, made by the Explorer Group, has completely changed for 2017, with three new ranges, all with names of Spanish origin, Capiro, Camino and Casita.

The Camino, the highest-spec of the three ranges, is the most spectacular, with distinctive blue sides, which glisten and sparkle in the sunshine.

The range has a choice of four layouts – two of which are on single axles and two on twin axles.

We chose the single-axle, transverse island bed Camino 554 to review, because its layout is right now at the top of the popularity poll; a best-seller in all manufacturers' ranges

Named after a pilgrim's trail through northern Spain, Caminos have Alde heating, extractor fans, 'Skyscape' top-front windows, and a long (1.3m), slender 'Stargazer' (Explorer's name) roof light, which floods the lounge with natural light.

#### TESTED BY

Val Chapman

#### PHOTOGRAPHY

John Chapman

All Caminos have 40-litre water tanks, which makes them ideal for year-round caravanning. They're also equipped with the Alde load monitor system, which switches off the heating when you use an appliance such as a hairdryer, to prevent you from tripping out the electricity supply to your pitch. And they have a nice touch of practicality: an LCD display control panel, which monitors both battery and water levels.

There is an attribute of Caminos

that you can't see: the seating upholstery is treated with Aquaclean fabric, designed to resist stains and, if you spill anything, you can wipe it off with just a damp cloth.

The feature which most visibly distinguishes Caminos, though, is the blue metallic-effect sides that sparkle in the sunshine. We've long been advocates of departures from white for caravans, and applaud the silvery greys and pale fawns that identify some caravan marques (among them Buccaneer's classy grey and Crusader's Champagne-shade). But blue? That's a first. And a very attractive first.

Blue features prominently inside, too. This time, there's a tinge of turquoise in the colour that borders and ties the curtains, and which provides a band across the centre of each settee back.

The four, big cushions are in a design called Anastasia, a slightly

#### TECHNICAL STUFF

**BERTHS** 4

**LENGTH BODY** 5.7M

**OVERALL** 7.32M

**WIDTH** 2.3M

**HEADROOM** 1.95M

**WEIGHT** 1397KG MIRO

1550KG MTPLM



exotic mix of rich blues with a fawn design that suggests eastern Mediterranean influence.

The Camino 554's layout also gives a full-width shower room.

#### SHOWERING

With a 76cm depth of floor space, the shower room isn't massive, but it is large enough to be practical. Importantly, there's a heated towel rail here.

The little room is all very stylish, with an oval, bowl-style washbasin, a tall, elegant swan-neck tap, a back-lit mirror and a surround of LEDs to the black mount for the shower.

The window (on the offside) is opaque; we're never sure why a washroom window should be opaque, given that you can block out all visibility with the pale grey, solid pleated blind, or lower the pleated gauze section, for partial obscurity.

There's an attractive touch of styling here; the window is dressed with a folded blind, in the same gorgeous, blue-shaded, patterned fabric that is used for the four cushions.

#### SLEEPING

The window dressing in the bedroom has a style factor, too. This time, it's eyeleted curtains on a chrome café rod.

It's perhaps in the bedroom that you most notice the Camino's woodwork shade, simply because there's a whole wall of it, incorporating the sliding shower room door. It's a sort of subdued cappuccino colour, called Salinas Ash, which is named after a valley close to the California coast, known for its perfect climate for growing flowers, grapes and salad crops. A hint of California to add to the Spanish name reinforces



The Camino's lavishly upholstered cushions add a stylish touch to the interior décor



Lighting under the edge of the surface enhances the pale woodwork



The microwave is low enough to suit most statures



Awesome style in the shower; the black panel culminates in a brightly illuminated ceiling section



A kitchen full of style and with good storage capacity



The bed is 1.9m long in its extended, night-time mode

the sunny-holiday image of the Compass Camino.

Any which way you think of the names, the 554 has a lovely, cosy bedroom, with a big mirror to enhance the sense of space. The mirror is stylishly framed in broad white bands, which are highlighted with chrome.

The larger of the two wardrobes provides 42cm of hanging width; the smaller one 28cm. Each has drawers below (three on one side and two, plus a drop-down-hatch cupboard, on the other).

Each wardrobe unit also has a brilliant, yet simple feature. It's a pull-out table, the same width as the drawers, and ideal for coffee mugs and a plate of toast. Breakfast in bed, Camino 554-style, would be so easy that it could swiftly become the norm rather than just an occasional holiday treat!

### STORAGE

While we were exploring the bedroom, we opened up the 554's greatest storage element. Even though the bed base retracts to give you extra corridor space (a generous 70cm) there is still almost 1.4m of storage length under the bed. The 40-litre water tank sits here, too, but there's still ample space for lots of items under the bed. There's also an exterior hatch, ideal for loading folding chairs and a table.

Two lockers over the bed and two more over the lounge, plus (if you need it) space under the settees (with full-length front hatches) complete what has to be regarded as generous storage.

### DINING

The four-person table stores away against the aft wall of the larger wardrobe.

For minor meals for two, though, the front-central pull-out table will be sufficient, with a 75cm depth

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### WHAT WE LIKE

- ▶ The blue sides!
- ▶ The 40-litre onboard water tank
- ▶ The Alde heating
- ▶ The long 'Stargazer' roof light

### WHAT WE DON'T LIKE

- ▶ The opaque washroom window seems unnecessary

Buyers can opt for a wrap-around style lounge



and a width, even at its narrowest point, of 64m.

### LOUNGING

The 554's lounge is definitely for four, rather than six. But, for an extra £210, you can seat more, by opting for additional upholstery, so that you can transform your 554's lounge into a U-shape. If you go for this option, you keep the chest of drawers. So, for holidays when you want more storage space, and the pull-out table, the chest of drawers comes along. For holidays when you might want to entertain, you leave the drawers at home and enjoy big-lounge comfort. We did the transformation on our review model and have to say that the U-shape lounge is the format we'd prefer, were we to buy a 554, because this creates enhanced corner-relaxing comfort as well as a more open-aspect look. It's a stunning lounge.

### KITCHEN

Plenty of upper storage is provided by a 70cm wide central cabinet, plus two more, each half that width; the forward one has a clear front and has holders for six goblets and a bottle.

Lower storage comes in the form of four drawers, varying in depth; they're 26cm wide except the shallowest, at the top, which is slightly narrower. There's another drawer in the dresser, plus a top cabinet above the microwave and a lower two-shelf cabinet. Although some space here is taken up by the wheelarch, there's still a good amount of capacity, with a width of 44cm. So, overall, we'd say kitchen storage space is more than adequate. And it's good

to see that the microwave is at a height that's ideal for people of a shorter stature.

### TOWING

The electronic-braking stability control system (ATC) is standard on Caminos. It's good to have the reassurance that there's an automatic buffer against wind influence caused, in particular, by overtaking and being overtaken; the system activates, by applying the caravan brakes to bring it back into line when it detects even the slightest sway out of alignment.

With a modest MTPLM of 1550kg, the 554 is an ideal partner for a wide variety of cars, and certainly doesn't need a towcar as heavy as our SsangYong Rexton, with which we do all the review tow tests.

### ALSO CONSIDER...

*Elddis Crusader Mistral: same weight, same price and same layout but very different styling*

### OPTIONS TO GO FOR...

*Extra upholstery to create a U-shaped lounge, at £210*

### OUR VERDICT

*Style, quality and spec are in good supply, as are mains sockets (six) in the 554. Those are important factors when you're wading your way through the data and looks of all the transverse bed caravans on the market to select the one that's perfect for you. Your decision may be heavily influenced by colours, and the 554's sunny-hue turquoise fabric is sure to engage you instantly. And, remember, the Camino version of this hugely popular layout is the only one that has glistening blue sides, so this is one for caravanners who want to be noticed!*

THE CAMINO VERSION OF THIS HUGELY POPULAR LAYOUT IS THE ONLY ONE THAT HAS BLUE SIDES!

