



REVIEW

# COMPASS

## Omega 540

After an absence of four years the Compass name is back, with 12 new models; Omega is the mid-range...

**C**ompass Caravans are made by the Explorer Group, in County Durham. The iconic Compass name goes back many years, but disappeared four years ago. Now it's back, with three ranges, Corona (the lowest-spec range, Rallye (with the top-spec) – and the Omega, the mid-range spec. Compass caravans are on sale at 25 retailers all over Britain.

This range is the only one produced by Explorer to have AL-KO chassis; all the group's other ranges ride on BPW chassis.

Compass, like all other Explorer products, are made using the SoLiD construction method, developed by Explorer in conjunction with German bonding specialist company Henkel. SoLiD stands for Strong, Light and Dry; the bonding system is designed to eliminate the possibility of water entering the caravan structure. It's also designed to enhance rigidity and spread the stresses of towing evenly throughout the body.

Our test example of the Omega range was fresh from the production line, and not quite ready for sale at the time of our test, so we had to review it at the factory...

The layout is a familiar one, with a double bed and end shower room; statistically, this is among Britain's most popular layouts. In the Explorer portfolio it appears in the Affinity, Avanté, Xplore and Buccaneer ranges. It's also in the other two Compass ranges. Omegas, though, have their own character, as we discovered during our test...

Omegas have Alde central heating, with the new touch-screen control panel. They're also equipped with the AL-KO ATC sway detection and correction system that electronically applies the caravan brakes to control the first stages of a twitch out of alignment. Omegas have alarm systems, external barbecue points, and the Whale IC (intelligent controller) that cuts off the pump if your water should run out. They also have the new Avtex high-gain omni-directional aerial.

### Showering

The Omega's shower room has two distinguishing factors. It's slightly L-shaped, with the square shower in the nearside corner and with floor space that increases with the taper of

#### TESTED BY

Val Chapman

#### PHOTOGRAPHY

John Chapman



Pale cabinetry makes the best visual appeal of space

**IDEAL FOR** A couple looking for fixed-bed luxury in a mid-range caravan

**THE  
TOTAL PRICE  
£19,794**

The delivery charge to the retailer is £495; this is added to the cost of the caravan



## Compass ▶ Omega 540

Very firm armrests and good, big scatter cushions ensure you can get comfortable here in the lounge



*Omegas have alarm systems, external barbecue points, and the Whale IC (intelligent controller) that cuts off the pump if your water should run out*

the room towards the door from the bedroom. The second feature you notice immediately is that the rooflight is completely clear, rather than opaque, so lets in a good amount of light. The window, though, is opaque, for privacy, so you don't need to pull down the blind during the day.

The shower room has an unusual layout, in a world where most washbasins are placed centrally; the 540's basin is on the offside, next to the toilet. In the centre under the window, is a wide towel rail, usefully placed directly above the outlets for the warm air created by the Alde system. A towel hook is high up on the wall alongside the shower. There's a long mirror on the angled wall to the left of the door; you can see your whole image from head to toe, if you want to check up on immaculate clothing choices of the day! There's a second mirror, by the washbasin, with an LED cluster set into the ceiling above it.

### Sleeping

At 19cm deep the sprung mattress looks as if it would offer great comfort and a quick lie down during our test showed it to feel firmly supportive.

The bedroom area has a cohesive feel, with a dressing table, mirror and cabinet in the recess alongside the wardrobe. There's a socket here, ideally placed for charging phones and using a hairdryer.

You can watch your television in bed; there's a bracket on the aft wall of the dresser, together with connectivity.

When you need to make up a double bed in the lounge you draw out webbing-linked slats that sit on runners on the edges of the settees.

### Storage

Front access to the areas below the settees make getting items in and out easy. You can lift the top of the storage space if you need to do so; spring hinges are there to help support the weight when it's raised.

On the nearside there is exterior access to the settee storage area. The Alde heating unit is under the offside settee but there is still plenty of storage space here.

The double bed base rises on gas-filled hinges to give you a well-proportioned aperture. The metal edge of the base is easy to get hold of to raise and lower it. You can slide items in from the outside if you wish, too; the hatch is 78cm wide and 33cm deep, making it large enough for most folding chairs to go in this way.

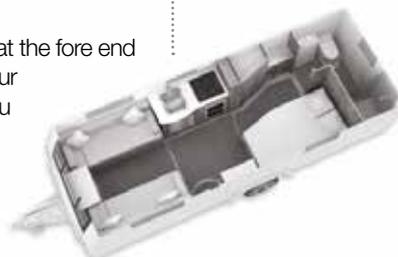
Top lockers, all with positive catches, are around all three sides of the lounge and there are three above the bed. The wardrobe is unusual in that it has three rails, running transversely; one is 34cm long and the two others are 50cm. The difference in lengths is accounted for by the wedge shape of the wardrobe to create a good, wide corridor alongside the bed. An L-shaped shelf, plus two other shelves, and a good floor area create innumerable opportunities to arrange footwear and small clothing items. It's a brilliant design. If we had an award for Best Wardrobe Design of the Year this would surely be a high contender!

### Dining

When you pull out the handle at the front of the chest of drawers between the settees a table for two emerges; the chest of drawers top drops down to create a level surface that's 81cm deep and 65cm wide. When you want dining space for four, you can extract the table from its own cabinet on the fore end of the kitchen.

### Lounging

With solid armrests at the fore end of the lounge and four scatter cushions, you can put your feet up and get cosy here. Four slim cylindrical spotlights offer directional light



#### WHAT WE LIKE

- ▶ The innovative and brilliantly capacious wardrobe design
- ▶ The large amount of kitchen storage space
- ▶ The ease with which the double bed can be raised – and the large aperture

#### WHAT WE DON'T LIKE

- ▶ To our tastes, the subtle tones of Omega fabrics need bright cushions as an accessory, but you might disagree!

#### TECHNICAL STUFF

**BERTHS** 4  
**LENGTH**  
 BODY 5.59M  
 OVERALL 7.24M  
**WIDTH** 2.27M  
**HEADROOM** 1.95M  
**WEIGHTS**  
 MIRO 1313KG  
 MTPLM 1465KG



The dresser is quite slim so there's plenty of floor space in the central area



Towel rails are ideally placed, above outlets for the heating system



The shower room has an unusual layout, with the basin on the offside, alongside the toilet



There's a bright spotlight set into the ceiling of the shower



A real dressing table!



Pale fawns are combined with bold cushions



Lighting is set above the shower room cabinet

and a thin striplight is set into the base of the front lockers. In addition, corner lights each have a vertical row of LED bulbs set within white opaque shades. The whole effect is very pleasing.

Omegas get subtle fabric tones. Plain pale brown for the seating and the same colour plus darker brown creates a stripey-check pattern on the scatter cushions. For our tastes this is rather too subtle; if we bought an Omega, we'd also buy a couple of bright cushions, to lift the look; an easy solution!

## Kitchen

Omegas have a mains hotplate in addition to three burners. The stone-effect kitchen surface is 68cm at its deepest point, curving out slightly towards the fore end. Alongside the sink the surface curves from 48cm to 34cm, giving you amply-sized work space.

Your first glance at the 540's kitchen might have you thinking it's short of lower storage space. But a closer look reveals quite the opposite. The kitchen actually spans the width of the caravan, in true galley style. The dresser on the nearside gives you a 54cm-wide top cabinet, a lower, shelved cabinet of the same width, plus a large cutlery drawer. In addition, alongside the oven there's a slim cabinet that's the perfect dimensions for containing tall fizzy drinks bottles.

The three side-hinged top cabinets give you ample space for lightweight items. The largest, central one is fitted for plates and mugs. There's a smaller cabinet to its right and the third one, on the front end of the kitchen, contains stylish opaque acrylic fitments for two bottles and five goblets.

When you take into account the dresser, the 540's kitchen has



Good surface space is the important feature of the 540's kitchen

## TOW MATCH

**Caravan weight  
MTPLM: 1465kg**

**To tow this caravan  
at 85% you need a  
car kerbweight of:  
1724kg**

*Never tow a caravan heavier  
than your car's kerbweight.  
We recommend towing a  
caravan no more than 85%  
of the kerbweight*

**Not sure what your  
car's kerbweight is?  
Check it out at**

**CaravanTOWMATCH**  
on  
[outandaboutlive.co.uk](http://outandaboutlive.co.uk)

excellent storage capability.

We also like the level of the microwave, mounted in the dresser. Its top edge is 1.56m from the floor, making it chest-height for a person of average stature, so lifting items in and out will be easy for the majority of prospective buyers. It's a Daewoo model, with a smart brushed steel frontage and auto-cook facilities; there are timer buttons specifically for bread, soup, baked potatoes and vegetables.

## Towing

We've towed the 7.24m overall length 540 model in various ranges previously and we know it behaves steadily and predictably. But we couldn't take the Omega 540 out for a tow because our review example was the prototype and our review took place at the Explorer factory, in between the caravan being needed for finishing-off tasks. Omeegas are equipped with ATC, so there's the reassurance that there's something intelligent and electronic in place to enhance safety.

## BUY THIS IF...

*You're after a double bed and also want a kitchen with good storage capacity*

## ALSO CONSIDER...

*Avanté 540 at £16,999 and Affinity 540 at £19,299; both are the same layout as the Omega 540*

## OPTIONS TO GO FOR...

*An extractor fan instead of a centre rooflight (£179); an AL-KO Secure wheel lock (£219)*

## OUR VERDICT

*The Omega 540 is a pleasing take on a tried-and-tested layout; a great option to consider carefully if you're in the market for a fixed-bed tourer for under £20,000. It has lots of plus-points, including a brilliantly-designed wardrobe and a lot of kitchen space.*

