

Exploring value

It may be the Explorer Group's budget range but it has a surprising amount to offer, as **Andy Jenkinson** discovers

SPECIFICATION

Price: £10,995
 Berths: 6
 Internal length: 5.46m (17ft 11in)
 Overall length: 6.92m (22ft 8in)
 Overall height: 2.73m (8ft 12in)
 Headroom: 1.91m (6ft 3in)
 Width: 2.20m (7ft 3in)
 MRO: 1109kg
 MTPLM: 1335kg
 Bed sizes: Front double 6ft 6in x 4ft 6in Rear bunks 6ft 8in x 2ft 0in 5ft 11in x 1ft 9in
 Side dinette/bunk above 5ft 5in x 1ft 10in

TOWMATCH B

FOR & AGAINST

PROS

- Value for money
- Lightweight
- Excellent finish

CONS

- No mains lighting

ALTERNATIVES

- **BAILEY RANGER 556/6**
£11,250
- **SPRITE MAJOR 6**
£10,750
- **AVONDALE DART 556/6**
£11,495



1. The spacious front dinette offers a large double bed or two singles 2. Lighting, both natural and artificial is plentiful 3. A pull-out flap enhances the kitchen worktop area 4. Six people might struggle when sharing this space

THE Explorer Group has launched its attack on the budget tourer market with the lightweight and well-specified Xplore range, set to rival the Bailey, Sprite and Lunar equivalents. The new 546 is a six-berth that'll really appeal to a growing family. It's competitively priced and lightweight, with a stylish interior that makes a refreshing change to what's currently available on the market.

The exterior is smart but simple, with modern graphics

and stainless steel grab handles. The sturdy and classy appearance gives off an expensive air.

The smooth side panels and quality moulded GRP front end are first class and all neatly put together. There's good access to the front locker, made possible with a decent-sized lid so you won't need to strain yourself getting items in and out. The battery locker is on the nearside along with the access point for the mains lead.

If I had one reservation on the exterior styling it would be

the unfinished look of the rear panel; a one-piece panel would have improved the look no end.

It would have been easy for the Explorer Group to have fitted cheaply finished furniture and less substantial seating in this budget tourer, but no, the design actually has an up-market appeal. Light finished woodwork mixes with contemporary soft furnishings to give a classy look. The plug sockets are finished off in black instead of cream, which is a nice touch, and it's really only the



Side washroom has basic essentials and remains practical



Side dinette offers dining facilities as well as beds

strip of carpet running down the middle of the tourer that doesn't look great – it seems to be a half-hearted attempt at a loose-fit carpet.

At the front, the dinette is roomy and the decent sized roof lockers above add good storage. Two handy corner shelves are fitted for small items. With the large front window, modern light and smartly patterned upholstery the lounge feels bright and airy.

Lighting is courtesy of 12-volt spots and ceiling lights – all

satisfactory – but two mains lights would've been an improvement. Two blown-air heating outlets and mains sockets sit beneath the centrally placed chest of drawers. The lounge area feels so cosy and comfortable, it's here that you feel as though the 546 should actually be another £500 dearer.

The kitchen is on the offside and comes with oven, grill, three-burner hob and 108-litre Thetford fridge. Storage is limited to the roof lockers while worktop is virtually nil. Panic not, Xplore designers have added a very neat and helpful fold-out flap to help out here. Opposite a side cupboard offers more worktop, storage and also sockets for the TV and heater controls, all neatly together. The nearside dinette offers extra seating and a fold-up bunk, plus



Kitchen comes well equipped

roof locker storage above and twin spots for night use positioned underneath.

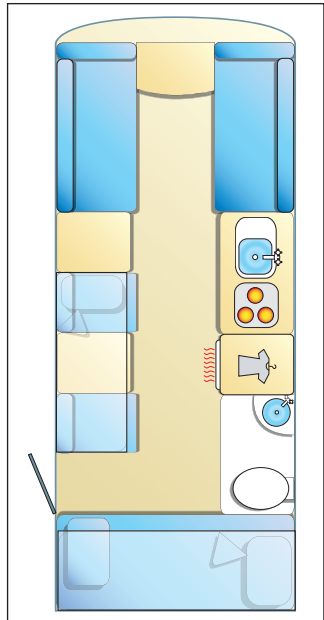
The side wardrobe offers some general storage but six could find it tight on space. The Truma heater lives here too. Adjoining the wardrobe is the washroom. A superb full length mirror sits near the doorway – a nice touch in a tourer of this level. The washroom may be a bit basic for some, with little storage apart from above the sink unit. But it's all very practical and most owners will probably choose to use the site facilities anyway, so this isn't a major criticism.

There's a thoughtful roof vent towards the rear of the 546. The rear bunks look sturdy and have their own lights, so the kids can read or play their handheld video games without having the main ceiling light on. ■



Twin bunks at the rear and roof vent allowing light in

OUR VERDICT
 ★★★★★★
 The Xplore has a huge task ahead of it – to get established in an area where the Ranger, Sprite and Dart reign supreme. The good news is that it has a very good chance of succeeding. It offers super value for money, with all the bits you expect and need attached. The finish and general feeling of quality gives it the edge on the Ranger; its light weight gives it the edge on the Sprite; and its equipment level gives it the edge on the Dart. Give the Xplore a chance and you might find you get more than you bargained for.



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