

Elddis Avanté 646

► PRICE £15,999 ► www.elddis.co.uk



AT A GLANCE: A lower-specification, almost identical layout to the Crusader Tempest with its wide dining area - and £4450 cheaper!

TEST VAL CHAPMAN | PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN CHAPMAN

TOWMATCH E

IN the middle of 2009 Elddis took the caravan world by storm with the launch of its Crusader Tempest, a big family caravan of unique layout, brimming with specification.

The *Which Caravan* team was impressed with its clever packaging of a triple bunk stack out of the way in a corner and its four-seater dining area amidships. So impressed, in fact, that we suggested to the Elddis designers that the same layout in the lower specification - and therefore lower-priced - Avanté range would go down a storm, too.

Elddis took up our suggestion - hence the Avanté 646, lighter on spec, lighter in weight, lighter on price (by more than £4000!) - and lighter in another way...

There was only one thing we didn't like about the Tempest. That was the privacy windows which impart a gloomy look to what is otherwise an utterly splendid caravan - and we know we're not alone among caravanners in liking true, bright daylight. The Avanté equivalent has plain windows, letting the light flood in onto white swirls on grey background and plain fawn - a combination that creates a beautifully modern furnishing look. Dark brown curtains that gleam in the sunlight and a (wonderfully practical) dark brown carpet complete the look. Avantés may be two layers lower in spec terms than Crusaders, but there's no evidence of economy in the furnishings...

So, that's your first impression taken care of. Now for the detail of the five under-10s, all related to our caravan tester team, whose opinion we sought, is a cool bedroom.

The other aspect that sets this layout apart from everything else is the central dining area. That's because it can seat four.

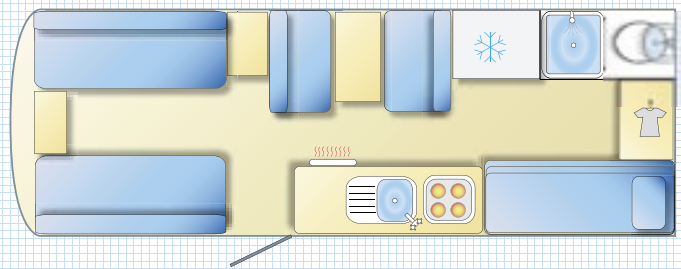
Kitchen storage excels, in the form of a double-doored cupboard with three shelves, plus two drawers within the cupboard. You also get two more, larger drawers, to the right of the kitchen. The 646 has the largest fridge you'll find anywhere in caravans, with a separate freezer above it. That's opposite the kitchen, unobtrusively sited just behind the dining area. And above it is yet another cavernous cupboard.

This big Avanté packs in so many outstandingly practical layout features that it's almost praise all the way. But not quite. As ever in caravans, you can't always have your cake and eat it. Or, in this instance, you



► LAYOUT IN A NUTSHELL

- Triple bunks in the nearside rear corner
- Offside four-seater dining area
- Unitary washroom with tip-up sink



can't have your shower and use it without wiping the tray dry each time...

The way the 646 packs everything in doesn't leave room for a separate shower. That's because it is narrower than the Tempest, which does have a separate shower. The shower area gets a curtain to pull around it, so that you don't have to dry the loo and basin as well as the shower tray. The message here, though, is clear - and completely understandable. If you have six on board you can't all have showers consecutively because the water heater won't re-heat fast enough. So some of you have to go to the campsite's showers. So all of you might as well go there.

Although this is a lesser-spec'd model than the Tempest, the equipment count is high. This is one great family caravan. So great that one dealer has given it more spec and a new name - see our test of the Elddis Rambler 21/6. ■



The triple bunk stack in the nearside rear corner



Elddis even puts style on the kitchen tap with the tip-up sink



Ceiling lights are plain and circular and give out plenty of light



Swirly patterns on cushions and seat backs in white on a pale background



Tip-up sink and small shelf above - not much room to place wash stuff

► FOR & AGAINST

PROS:

- Bunks are out of the way
- Excellent kitchen storage
- Central dining area seats four

CONS:

- Shower room is small
- Tip-up sink not everyone's favourite

► SPECIFICATION

Axles: 2
Berths: 6
MRO: 1517kg
MTPLM: 1735kg
Width: 2.23m
Overall length: 7.89m
Headroom: 1.90m



The four-seater dining area and corner bunk stack

► OUR VERDICT

Provided you are not looking for a caravan with a shower that's separate from the toilet area, and you don't mind the space-saving tip-up washbasin, this 646 lacks nothing. It has two clear advantages over its higher-specification Tempest cousin. One is that it's more than £4000 cheaper and the other is that it has no darkened privacy windows, so it's a light, bright caravan.