

special pre-launch test

The Xplore 302 is Eddis' new baby tourer. Andy

Jenkinson hitched it to the Kia Cee'd-2 and took it for a pre-launch test.



Note the large side window on the offside of the 302.

Model	Eddis Xplore 302
Price	£9,999 (inc VAT @ 17.5%)
Berths	2
Length	3.2m
Width	2.14 m
MIRO	796 kg
MTPLM	950 kg

IT seems that the small tourer is about to make a comeback in 2010. Swift have launched the 220 Charisma and an equivalent Europa, while a new Sprite has yet to be unveiled. But Eddis appear to have gone one better. Past masters of small caravan design (readers may remember such gems as the Wisp 300/2, the Elf, the Compass Echo and the Lynx), Eddis have turned their skills to their entry-level range and popped the new 302 up-front with the Xplore badge attached.

STOP PRESS

Eddis pull another trick out of the hat with the new, single-axled Avante 526/6:

Eddis have just added a new Avante - the 526. The layout comprises fixed side double, corner washroom, side single dinette with bunk above, and front double dinette. Offering a super-sized six-berth without the added weight of a second axle, the 526 has 1546 kg MTPLM and will cost a value-busting £14,599. We didn't test it, but we hope to take a closer look in a later issue. From first glance, it would certainly seem as though Eddis have yet another winner on their hands!

Small is beautiful



With a keen eye on the new breed of small car owners, in particular the couple who want a compact tourer that's easily stored as well as pulled by the smaller car, Eddis have come up with this new, end-kitchen, two-berth model.

The Xplore's exterior is basically the same as its larger siblings, with a GRP-moulded front panel and one-piece front window, and a GRP-moulded light panel at the rear. The offside of the 302 comes with a large side window. On production models, a side wet locker will be fitted. Our test model had only just been completed just a few days before, and, overall, the exterior finish was well executed, with no signs of the usual prototype rough edges.

The Tardis-like interior of the little Xplore takes you by surprise. Designers have given the van an L-shaped front-end lounge, automatically giving the feeling of space. The seats can be used to stretch out on during the daytime, and the front base slides out to help make the front up as a double.

Above the dinette are roof lockers and two deep corner shelves, all finished off with quality workmanship - Eddis build their furniture themselves. Lighting is with one corner spot lamp, but another is definitely needed in the near-side corner.

You won't find the normal heater in the 302, because Eddis have fitted the new



L-shaped seating adds the feeling of space in the 302. Bed locker storage is ample, with some easy access flaps below.



Corner washroom is surprisingly big with manual flush loo and small vanity unit.

under-slung Whale unit. We found that it worked very well indeed in the 302.

The side wardrobe with twin doors hasn't got much in the way of hanging space, but it's large for the size of the van. When not in use, the free-standing table is stored here, clipping onto the side wall. Below the wardrobe is the 86-litre fridge, which frees up some of the kitchen area to allow excellent cupboard storage. Plenty of shelf and roof locker storage is included, and the worktop is first rate.

Elddis have also played a blinder with the washroom. It's far larger than you'd expect, with a small hand basin and vanity unit with storage. The swivel loo is manual flush, and the room is large enough to shower in with some degree of comfort.

A Heki roof vent is positioned mid-ships, so the kitchen doesn't get its own small separate unit - we reckon the 302 would be better with two.

All in all, the 302 is a clever little tourer. It's easy to set up and manoeuvre, and within minutes the caravan is ready to use. The layout offers lots of versatility, being compact but spacious. We liked the finish, and we noticed how comfortable the van felt. It really packs a punch, and shows just how good Elddis are at producing this type of caravan.

Already being ordered by dealers, the Elddis Xplore 302 will be launched at the NEC in February and should certainly attract some well-deserved attention. It seems that Elddis haven't lost their touch when it comes to this area of the market, and we reckon the 302 has a sure-fire success story ahead of it.



Rear-end larger than expected kitchen has three-burner hob with matching stainless steel sink. Brilliant worktop in this type of tourer.



Tow car	Kia Cee'd-2 CRD Tourer
Price	£14,195
Engine	1.6 diesel
Top speed	117 mph
BHP	113
MPG	70 extra urban
Kerbweight	1475 kg
Towing limit	1400 kg

THE recently face-lifted Kia Cee'd 2 was ideal for the little Elddis. The caravan rode level, even though our test tow seemed to take us on some of the muddiest roads in County Durham (both car and caravan were covered with it afterwards!) Because of its the size, the Xplore reacts quicker when reversing, so it takes a little getting used to, but we soon mastered it.

We pitched the Xplore at Manor Park, not far from the Elddis factory. With a mix of open spaces and trees, this small but cracking park is a real gem. It offers exclusive pitches, some hard-standing pitches, mains hook-up and a shower/loo block.

The Cee'd estate proved to us that Kia are definitely moving ahead of the game. At a reasonable cost, this model sported the excellent 1.6 CRD diesel that we had in the Kia Soul back in the summer. We were suitably impressed then, and with the Cee'd we remained so.

The Kia's 1.6 diesel is a gutsy engine with plenty of poke, yet over the test drive of 600 miles it returned 52 mpg. This dropped to around 38 mpg while towing,

but it was driven hard at the same time. Towing proved a class act with the Elddis, and the car also handled well solo, with the engine being smooth and willing.

Interior plastics are of good quality, although some plastic used on the doors looks a little cheap. Comfort was good, and the neat centre console offered all the controls close at hand. Build quality is better than Kias of some years ago - the Cee'd is the first real 'driver's car' the firm has produced.

The Kia's rear luggage space won't disappoint either. We loaded up the weekly shop plus a few large boxed items, and the boot swallowed everything up with ease.

After some long hauls, we were suitably impressed with the Cee'd. Its seven year warranty will be a big pull, but the car is a good vehicle and will sell on its own merits.



Controls are well laid out in this centre console. Radio/CD sound quality wasn't the best we had come across.

More information:
Elddis caravans www.elddiscaravans.co.uk
Kia cars www.kia.co.uk

Our chosen test venue: **Manor Park Caravan Park**, Broadmeadows, Castleside, Consett, County Durham DH8 9HD, telephone 01207 501000.