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TEST

THE PORTAFOLD FOLDING CARAVAN

OUR TEST THIS MONTH is not of a trailer in the true sense but a folding caravan.

The manufacturers of the Portafold have taken full advantage of modern materials and used moulded glass fibre for the body, together with a steel chassis. This has greatly reduced the costs of maintenance as glass fibre is impervious to rot, rust and other common forms of decay. The steel chassis is continued forward and the towing equipment attached includes a 50mm coupling with automatic lock, self-operating over-run brakes and ratchet type parking lever. The chassis is also fitted with independent "Flexitor" suspension units and shock absorbers, 520 x 10 tyres, 7in x 1 in brakes and chrome hub caps. Four screw-type jacks are bolted at the corners of the base.

The Portafold is erected in one minute by one person (however, a helping hand when lifting the sections is appreciated). Opening up the Portafold is comparable to opening up a box having a roof, two ends and two sides. The roof automatically locks into position on end sections and, once erected, the sides are held rigid by strategically placed chrome-plated catches, one in each corner and one in the middle above the window on either side. Inside the erected caravan is a headroom of 6ft 2in, which is found in most ordinary caravans.

Cream and white are the choice of colours for the exterior. The interior walls are lined above shelf level with blue or gold washable quilting. Whichever colour you choose, there are matching curtains and contrasting upholstery. The whole effect is both bright and smart. The interior walls being washable means only a quick wipe to erase finger marks. Inside, on either side of the door, are two recesses curtained off giving wardrobe space. Two 6ft long cushions on each side give ample seating accommodation. The standard cushions are 3in deep, but we also tried the 4in cushions (extra cost) and found them to be far more comfortable.

Underneath the seats there is over 30 cubic feet of storage space and beneath one of them is a 2 pin plug and socket enabling lights to be run off the battery while the car is still connected to the caravan. The kitchen unit (which with a lid converts into an upper bunk) has a sink with a waste pipe, draining board and cooking space. Although the Portafold will sleep four or five people, with this number using the caravan we personally would consider cooking only breakfasts and light snacks. However, cooking for two or three would be fine. For larger families we consider the annexe, although an extra, a must. The cooking unit is easily mounted on legs and soon removed to the annexe.

The dining table has a heat resistant top and is easily stowed away when not in use.

The roof inside is flock-lined to reduce the risk of condensation and there is a ventilation point at each corner.

Apart from the obvious advantage of being able to stow this caravan at the back of the garage when not in use, the saving in fares by taking the Portafold abroad against a conventional caravan is quite considerable. Just think of it as a tent trailer for towing but when stopping all the amenities and comforts of a caravan are there.

The Portafold can also be towed erected but I towed it folded behind my 1200cc Beetle for some 150 miles. There was very little difference in the fuel consumption and even going up hills I am sure my car forgot that it was towing as there wasn't even a murmur.

For keen boatmen the roof is shaped so that it will carry a small dinghy with ease.

Specification

IN ADDITION to the equipment already mentioned, the following is supplied as standard:

Floor carpet, four pairs of window curtains, two pairs of wardrobe curtains. Two foam mattresses (moquette covered, 6ft x 2ft 3in approx), six foam cushions (similar covering, 2ft x 2ft approx), all 3in deep. These make up four adult berths: one extra cushion, size 2ft x 2ft, is needed to make berths for three adults and two children.

Seven pin socket and plug for lighting. Flashing indicators. Stop and tail lights. 50mm tow ball. Jack handle brace.

The cooker is not supplied but can be ordered through Portafold. An annexe is also available as an extra.

Dimensions

Overall length including towbar 10ft 11in. Body length 8ft 8in folded, 9ft 6in erected. Width 5ft 4in folded, 6ft 4in erected. Height 3ft 8in folded, 7ft 2in erected. Interior headroom 6ft 2in.

Ground clearance 10in. Base of 50mm towball 16in from ground. Noseweight, unladen, 50lb approx. Unladen weight 7cwt approx. Laden weight should not exceed 12cwt.

Bunk lengths: Top 5ft 8in, lower 6ft 2in approx.

Price £345. ~~£399~~

Supplied for test by Plastics (Fareham) Ltd, Broadcut, Wallington, Fareham, Hampshire.

PORTAFOLD TEST



Photographs 1-5 show the erection procedure.
1. After unhitching, the first job is to lower the four caravan type corner jacks.



2. One end of the roof is lifted, ready for the end wall to be raised. Being of glass fibre construction, the weight is not great.



3. The end wall is raised and the roof locked into position, at right angles to the wall.



4. With the two ends and the roof locked together, you are now ready to lift the inner walls.



5. Portafold fully erected. Now you have to go inside and put catches in position to hold the walls rigid.



6. This mock-up shows sleeping arrangements for four people. Normally, the two transverse bunks are supported by the walls of the van.



7. The kitchen unit in position across the end of the van. Sink is standard; the cooker is an extra.



8. Portafold with its optional extra annex which gives a useful amount of extra room.



9. Included just to prove that the roof will take its share of weight!

We liked: Excellent towing performance
Large storage areas
Curtains & matching upholstery
The easy erection

We would have liked: A splash guard round the cooking area
Larger dining table
A small cupboard or drawer

ALL OFFERS ARE WITHOUT ENGAGEMENT

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