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# Caravan

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# Our Vans CARAVELAIR ANTARES 485

**Caravan's digital editor, Will Hawkins, decides his days of tent camping are over after taking a Caravelair Antares 485 to a family festival**

Words Will Hawkins



Picture the scene. It's mid-summer and the sun is blazing by 7am. By 8am, the heat is rising and your tent is like a furnace. By 9am, you're desperately seeking any shade so you don't suffer from heat stroke within the hour.

The question racing through your mind is 'How am I going to survive the weekend when there is no swimming pool in which to cool off?'

This is how we might have felt when my wife and I organised a mini-festival for my daughter's 21st birthday this summer. We'd have felt like this if we'd been under canvas, that is.

Our festival plans for the weekend weren't quite on the Glastonbury scale, but we still had family and friends converging on The Secret Garden Touring Park near Wisbech in Cambridgeshire. It's a great site.

We had booked five pitches for the group in the 'Meadow' area. The site owners don't mow the middle of the meadow, where wild flowers create a dazzling display, and the campsite feels as though you are wild camping. Visitors camp around the edge of the field. It's all very relaxed and secluded.

Our party soon arrived with their family tents, and we had borrowed a big bell tent for the young 'uns to use. But, Penny, my wife, and I had something much better than a tent for the weekend. We were testing a Caravelair Antares 485 caravan. And, were we glad of it? You bet.

Caravelair for our festival was its protection from the sun. When the golden orb rose early each morning, we didn't notice it. With the blinds down, we felt no direct effect at all.

Compare that to life in a tent when by 6am, you can already feel the sun's radiation beating down on you as the cockerels begin to crow. A tent can be stiflingly hot early in the morning. It's hardly a relaxing start to the day.

In the Caravelair, Penny and I were cool and comfortable on the double bed, so we slept well. It was certainly a lot more luxurious than two nights on a blow-up mattress, and, my back didn't ache in the morning. These days a night in a tent leaves me feeling as supple as the Tin Man from *The Wizard of Oz*.

Later in the morning, the 485 still provided a comfortable, shady place to sit out of the sun. With the windows open at the side and on the roof there was a good draught, so it was fresh inside, too.

#### COOKING BENEFITS

For much of our festival weekend, we cooked outside on barbecues near to a fire pit that we'd placed as our focal point.

But having the Caravelair, with its brilliant oven, was perfect. It ensured we could cope with the number of mouths to feed, and we had somewhere to keep food cool before we cooked, and warm after we'd incinerated it on the grill! The work surface in the 485's kitchen is good, too.

#### PROTECTION FROM THE SUN

Firstly, the most basic benefit of staying in the

 THE OUTFIT

CARAVAN Caravelair Antares 485  
TOWCAR Peugeot 308SW

Cutting up leaves and greens for salads is so much easier on a flat surface which isn't balanced on your knee (how we normally do it when camping).

When we weren't boiling water in the kettle on the hob, we pulled down the glass hob cover, and flipped out the surface extension on the left-hand side of the kitchen. This gave a whopping great area for preparing food.

With the scorching weather, keeping food and drinks cool was important. We had our cool boxes, yes, which we had packed with ice cubes. But, the ice melted quickly and couldn't cope with the heat.

Once again, the Caravelair Antarès 485 came to the rescue with its 85-litre fridge, which kept our milk, butter, fruit and vegetables fresh and appetisingly edible.

#### MAKE IT FEEL LIKE A FESTIVAL

I've only been to one festival, WOMAD, and it was great fun. Fortunately, it was dry so there

#### LEFT PAGE

With the windows, roof and doors open, the caravan stayed cool throughout the day

#### BELOW

The essential three Bs for a DIY festival: barbecue, bunting, and blow-up toys

was no wading through mud to see a band or pick up a mung bean burger from a trendy stall.

We wanted to recreate that same relaxed festival vibe, without the dirt and discomfort (I've moved on from all that!).

My daughter, son, their cousins and friends decorated our bit of the campsite with plenty of bunting and fairy lights (not just for Christmas, apparently). Our pitches looked great. When the sun finally dipped in the evening, it was time to turn on the lights.

And where better to plug them in? The Caravelair, of course.

#### NIGHT-TIME ROUTINE

Another simple benefit of taking a caravan to a festival is lighting. To get off to sleep, I like to read for half an hour at night. It helps me to relax.

Yet, when you sleep in a tent, one of the trickiest aspects of reading in the dark is getting light onto your book or Kindle. I usually balance a torch or lamp on my pillow. One small movement, however, >>

A tent can be stifingly hot early in the morning. It's hardly a relaxing start to the day. In the Caravelair we were cool and comfortable



## Our Vans - Festivals



and the light slips off. It then takes me a minute to retrieve the torch and reset it in the same place.

I could hang the lamp from a string on the tent. But, that would mean the light is in my face and not on my book.

There's none of this faffing about in a caravan. The Caravelair Antarès 485 has reading lamps on the wall behind its double bed. The LED lights are on adjustable stalks so you can direct them to exactly where you need them to point.

Another big difference to festival tent camping, is how you can keep your 'stuff' organised. In a tent, you usually live out of a bag or a rucksack.

Unless you are as disciplined as a soldier on operations with packing your stuff away, you'll soon have your clothing, wash kit, shoes, sunblock and gadgets strewn all over the place.

With a caravan, you can keep organised, so you don't look like you've slept in all your clothes at once! There's storage space everywhere, especially in the Caravelair. It has a plethora of lockers: next to your head, above the bed, above the lounge seats, under the seats, next to the fridge, next to the bed. If you can't keep your stuff tidy and organised in a 485, then you must like living like Stig of the Dump!

### KEEPING CLEAN AT A FESTIVAL

Even at my daughter's mini-festival, with the fire pit in the evenings, the heat and the dust, it was a challenge to keep clean and smell fresh.

The campsite has good showers, but when you

are sharing the loos and showers with other people, you're bound to feel grubbier than washing in your own private bathroom.

The 485 has a big washroom. The large shower is on the nearside, with a good-sized sink next to it. On the offside is the loo. What greater luxury could there be at a festival than your very own shower and toilet? No sharing with stinky campers. No empty toilet rolls. No overflowing bowls. You don't have to worry if you are going to catch a verruca in the shared showers. You can do all your ablutions in the comfort and privacy of your own caravan.

You'll certainly appreciate the washroom on the 485 at a hot and busy festival.

### TOWING FACTOR

Towing the Caravelair Antarès 485 across the bumpy back roads of Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire was a breeze. It weighs 1317kg and I towed it easily with my Peugeot 308 SW.

Manoeuvring it onto our pitch was easy, too. Being a single-axle caravan means it is a cinch to reverse into place. It was also light enough for me to adjust its position by hand once I'd unhitched from the car.

Plus, for this mini-festival, the ground was baked hard, so there was no need to ask the local farmer for a tow out of the quagmire.

### A FINE CARAVAN FOR A FESTIVAL

The Caravelair Antarès 485 is a good caravan to consider if you want to go to a festival with family or friends. It's a place where you can escape the heat and hubbub of the event, sleep well and be fresh for another day of fun. (It's pretty much perfect for any other sort of caravanning, too!)

You'll like the ability to lock it up when you're out enjoying the festival to keep valuables secure. Plus, you can live well in the caravan after you've gone wild at the concerts. The Antarès 485 is a bit of luxury for those who want to enjoy a festival without feeling like it's a health and hygiene battle.

At under £19,000 for the 2018 model, and under £16,000 for a used version, it's great value for a spacious festival bolt hole.

● See our Caravelair Antarès 480 (with transverse bed) review, at [caravan.ma/2018-antares480](http://caravan.ma/2018-antares480) <<

**TOP LEFT**  
Caravan or canvas? We know where we'd rather sleep

**ABOVE**  
The Secret Garden Touring Park, near Wisbech in Cambridgeshire

**BELOW LEFT**  
Fire pit and fairy lights... recreate the festival vibe wherever you stay

**BELOW RIGHT**  
Woodstock or Wisbech? Be sure to wear some flowers in your hair

