



La Mancelle Liberty 490 SA

Candy Evans takes a trip down memory lane in a thoroughly modern caravan from across the Channel

I first saw a Liberty caravan at the Caravan Salon in Düsseldorf in 2016 and immediately fell in love with its distinctive profile. It was brand new at the time, though I later discovered the manufacturer La Mancelle has been making caravans at its base in Le Mans, France since 1960.

La Mancelle is now part of the Trigano Group and one of its fellow group members, Marquis Leisure, is bringing the unusual caravans into the UK for the 2023 camping season.

Marquis is selling two versions of the Liberty. The 490 SA we saw at Wolverley Club Site in Worcestershire has an island bed at the back and a centre washroom, while

the other – the 440 PC – has a corner bed and washroom. It's also 30cm-or-so shorter and £2,000 cheaper.

Sleep tight

At the back of the caravan is a spacious bedroom with a bed that's 1.5m by 1.9m, or nearly 5ft wide in old money. The corners of the bed are cut off to allow you to get around it, though it's still a bit of a squeeze.

Nevertheless, there's lots of practical storage space here with a wardrobe on each side and eye-level cupboards above the head of the bed.

Each occupant gets their own reading light and a small cubby-hole to store night-time essentials, which also has a

couple of USB charging points and 230V socket.

The back panel of the caravan is curved and the bed headboard slopes to accommodate this, giving an attractive and unusual feel to this area.

At the foot of the bed is a large wardrobe with a mirror and chrome swirl decoration – just one of the touches dotted around this caravan with a French feel. Another neat feature is the array of coat hooks on the bedroom wall. Why don't we see more of these in caravans?

Cooking up a storm

The kitchen is in the centre of the caravan and has a full cooker with a three-burner hob, grill and oven. It's not quite the

chef's paradise of some British designs because there's not much workspace, but a pull-up section opens across the door and there are lots of drawers and cupboards along with a tall fridge freezer. Soft-close drawers add to the feeling of luxury in here.

Ablutions

Opposite the kitchen is the washroom with a clever moving wall – a style occasionally seen in motorhomes but not so often in caravans. Move the wall to the right and you have a shower cubicle, close it and the toilet is revealed with the basin and large mirror fixed to the wall itself.

Storage space is at a premium in such a design,

See Candy's video review of this caravan online at myccc.co.uk/videos or in the magazine app

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WE LOVE:
The unusual shape of the living area



▲ Clockwise from top left: The front living space makes the most of the unusual shape of the caravan's nose; the U-shaped seating makes into a large double bed; there is very little work space if the hob is in use; a large wardrobe at the foot of the bed in the rear bedroom adds to the storage space here; the wall in the washroom moves to reveal a shower or the toilet

but there is a neat triangular cupboard on the wall along with some practical shelving above the toilet.

Living aboard

My favourite part of this caravan is the front seating area. Its stylish U-shaped seating makes the most of the distinctive front with a triangular rooflight window that opens

above the seats. This space will turn into a second large double bed if you need it, with the table forming part of the bed base. As in the bedroom, it can be a bit challenging to get around the table into the seats, but you can move the table top out of the way to give better access.

I enjoyed spending a little more time inside the Liberty as I had the chance to notice

some of the extras inside. Things like the white surfaces in the kitchen, washroom and under the seats that look plain at first glance. When the sunlight catches them, however, embossed patterns appear. Sadly, the Worcestershire spring weather wasn't good enough for us to need the air conditioning unit, but it is a standard feature.

At a glance

Prices from £40,990

Berths Four

Length x width x height
6.71m x 2.25m x 2.58m

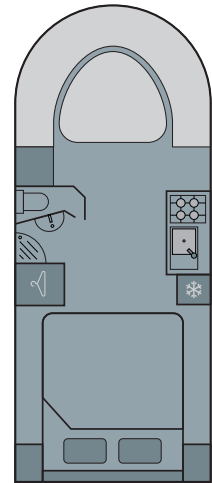
Maximum Technically
Permissible Laden Mass

1,800kg

User payload 365kg

For more information

lamancelle.co.uk



Alternatives

If you're looking for something a little smaller, slightly cheaper and with a rather more conventional exterior - but still some French flair - the two Fantasy caravan models from La Mancelle might fit the bill.

But the top-of-the-range Liberty will set you back a little over £40,000 and has a maximum mass of 1,800kg. It's ready for UK roads with an AL-KO stabiliser and under-slung spare wheel included.

Verdict

I guess most people will see this as a luxury two-berth caravan, but it's practical for four and it will be great for anyone who likes a caravan that stands out. Especially those with a secret desire to re-create 1970s sci-fi series in their spare time. **FX**