

2005 MODELS: RETREAT

In retreat

When will someone 'bite the bullet' and do something really new which is going to appeal to the new and younger holiday-home owner? That has been the question hanging in the air for some years. And now someone has: Retreat Homes Ltd. **Janet Lumb** reports...

Conceived as a retreat from urban life, the Retreat is a brand-new leisure home which completely redefines the term 'caravan'. Wood-clad, with a variety of finishes available, it looks from the outside like a designer apartment bound for a prime location. Step inside and you experience the sense of space and the uncluttered feel of a loft apartment.

Given its appearance, you simply would not guess that this is a caravan. Nonetheless it is. And in case you think it must be a concept rather than a reality, be assured. You can order one now: construction will start early next year.

What is so good about the Retreat?

Firstly, its appearance. Put one in a woodland setting and the Retreat blends in so well, you wouldn't see it, especially if you chose the natural finish.

Secondly, and this is the most innovative feature, it is in an H shape. How is that possible, you may wonder, given that, legally, caravan holiday homes have to be

capable of being transported in no more than two sections...

Answer: on delivery, the crossbar of the H slides out of the side of one of the sections, just like some American RV's (Recreational Vehicles - motorhomes).

On the road a Retreat is transportable as a 40ft by 12ft load. On arrival, it divides into two halves, the uprights of the H, as it were. The joining piece then slides across from one upright of the H to meet the other upright.

It shows what can be done with a good imagination - which is what designer/director Matt Yeoman, and his fellow directors, Michael Shaw and Richard Buckley, obviously have.

That H-shape provides an open porch area at the back and, at the front, a lovely decked patio, providing the privacy which is so often lacking on holiday parks. It is even possible, as an optional extra, to have a roll-back canopy over this area. That enables you to sit outside in most weathers and close it off completely at night if you like. This area is the real genius of the Retreat.

Those two uprights of the H contain the living and sleeping areas respectively.

The living part consists of an open plan lounge (it included a wood-burner stove in the show model) containing an L-shape formation of luxury suede sofas. There is electric underfloor heating. Behind the seating area is the dining table with four chairs; and behind that, a modern, user-friendly kitchen. Included in the price are an integrated stainless steel combination oven/microwave, two-ring induction hob and fridge-freezer, all by Bosch.

Each of these living area sections merges naturally into the next and borrows from it, creating a sense of space. Emphasising that, all the colours in the optional furnishing pack I saw in the showhome were neutrals.

The architects behind the Retreat like to think that people will personalise their own space with furniture and accessories they choose. I am sure that some will indeed do that. Equally, others will like the whole thing as it is, designed with furniture



A holiday-home with a difference - well, several differences actually



ABOVE Imaginative wood shelving



LEFT The decked patio at the front

RIGHT The modern, user-friendly kitchen

2005 MODELS: RETREAT



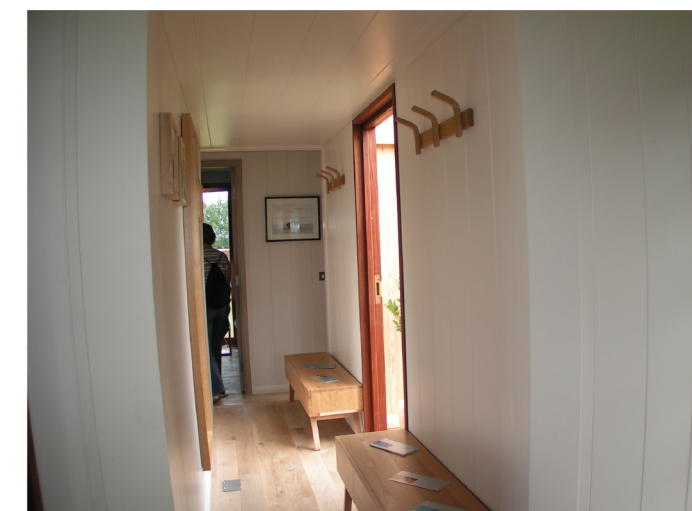
ABOVE The fabulous wood-burning stove

RIGHT The dining area

FAR RIGHT Inside the crossbar of the 'H'

INTERESTED?

Retreat Homes Ltd
 Studio 5.04
 The Tea Building
 Shoreditch High St
 London E1 6JJ
Tel: 020 7033 9913
Fax: 020 7033 9914
Email:
 mail@retreathomes.co.uk
Website:
 www.retreathomes.co.uk



which fits in every sense of the word.

The sleeping part (the other 'upright' in the H) consists of two bedrooms and a bathroom.

The bathroom as standard is just that - it contains a bath (plus toilet of course) but no shower. One can of course be added, but I do wonder whether the urban executive on holiday might simply prefer to luxuriate in her (or his) own proper bath. It is a deep-pressed steel version with teak hardwood surround. The washbasin is recessed into a

teak-topped vanity unit pedestal and has a polished stainless steel swivel-spout mixer tap.

For sleeping, there is a double and a twin bedded room. The floor-to-ceiling window in the twin is cleverly placed between the beds, bringing in plenty of light. The double, at the front of the home, has glass galore: two single width windows to the front and a large glass area with sliding door on to the terrace. There are no wardrobes in the bedrooms but a storage area is normally included in the crossbar of the H,

along with the possibility of a washer and dryer on top.

As standard, the Retreat comes with oak flooring in the living area and carpet in the sleeping area. But the show model I inspected had oak planked flooring throughout. Wow! It had already been sold - destination: a site in Devon - and that was the purchaser's choice.

I think I would do the same. You can always add feature rugs if you will.

The oak flooring is beautiful and complements the rest of the home, which features wood throughout: in

shelves and worktops and everywhere else you can think of. In fact, as the makers say, there is nothing 'faux' about this holiday home. 'Where there is wood, it is solid timber, where there are windows, they are floor to ceiling glass.' Walls are white-painted vertical planking. And all the wood is from renewable sources.

As for the technical specification read on...

Within the timber-clad exterior walls is 70mm mineral wool insulation. Together with the external and internal cladding and