



CLOSEUP: THE '72 COLEMAN

JAKE & GEN TURK

THE COLEMAN Company has been servicing the needs of campers for so many years that the company's entry into the tent trailer field seemed a natural. And since Coleman has so adequately filled the camper's needs in the past, it follows that its trailer would offer the convenience, quality, and practicality that have come to be associated with the name. This about sums up what a Coleman tent trailer is all about.

The Coleman trailer we tested recently was a standard 680 model, selected from a lot of rental units at Bernard's Camping Center in Libertyville, Illinois.

With a gross weight of 1530 lbs., and weighing 160 lbs. at the hitch, we gave the unit a rating of "excellent" in handling ability over the road. In basic handling—a 12-foot lane change in three seconds at 45 m.p.h.—we rated it "very good." The 48-inch height of the trailer made it possible for us to use the rear-view mirror inside our car to observe the road behind us. Our tow vehicle, incidentally, was the family's 1969 American Motors Rebel wagon, with a 232 cu. in., six-cylinder engine.

Arriving at our Wisconsin campground, we proceeded to set up the Coleman. The lift mechanism on the 680 is manual, with a crank, and the four built-in stabilizing jacks made quick work of leveling and raising the unit. Coleman's practicality revealed itself starting with the bunk supports. These are self-storing, and drop from bunk to body frame for use. The winged roof over the beds is supported by a bow and reinforced with a tubular support from the center of the bow to the roof—we finally found a place to hang our damp towels!

The trailer door drops down to form a sturdy, generous step. A combination door, stored in the roof, swings down and fits into the doorway, providing a full-sized door from floor to roof, complete with a one-piece frame. The only canvas that must be fitted to the body is located around the door frame, and attaches with a plastic bead that slides into a metal groove.

The trailer body rests on a frame



The Coleman 680 sets up quickly and easily, revealing generous space and eight big windows.

consisting of 2 x 3-inch tubular steel on 51-inch centers, with 1½ x 3-inch channels around the perimeter and three 1½ x 3-inch channels used as crossmembers. This provides a very substantial base.

Back inside, the flip-up galley reveals more Coleman-type common sense. The kitchen unit consists of a three-burner porcelain stove, 17½ x 20½ inches, with a cover that opens to provide a shield, and a porcelain sink, 15 x 10 x 5 inches, with a hand-operated water pump—but without a cover. A drop-leaf shelf next to the stove, measuring 17 x 11 inches, extends the work surface area. Two doors under the stove and sink give access to a 42 x 9 x 18-inch space that can be used when set up. The base provides permanent storage with two cabinets, each measuring 14 x 20 x 16 inches. A waste bottle, which is stored in the right cabinet, can be moved outside and includes a piece of hose for connecting the sink to the bottle through the floor. Also available in the base are three drawers, 15 x 10½ x 3 inches, between the two base compartments. A fine example of Coleman's planning is that all the drawers and doors stay closed. And if you like to hide unattractive bottles, there's a natty little 3½-inch shelf across the galley back.

Two base cabinets, 18 x 21 x 18 inches high, over the wheel housing

are another bonus. The wheel housing is rectangular, and doubles as a shelf 10 inches wide and 7 inches high. The tops of the cabinets add to the work surface area next to the stove and adjacent to the dinette. The ice chest is fixed, opposite the galley, to the right of the door. It is an 80-quart Coleman model with a plastic top that also serves as a work surface or a seat.

A free-standing, folding dinette table, 30 x 38 inches, makes living a little easier. It can be moved from side to side, adding room for the portly members of the crew, or for passage to the bunk; or it can be used outdoors. The dinette seats are unique in that the backs are hinged and flip over into place from an upright to a bed position. This eliminates the nuisance of shifting cushions. Two seat boxes each measure 22 x 39 x 13 inches high. The right-hand cushion is fixed on the seat, and access to the under-seat storage area is through two openings at the side. Inside these openings are two plastic storage bins which slide neatly into place, leaving still more room. The left seat box has access from the top; this space contains a 10-gallon water tank and a self-storing 25-foot power cord, leaving additional storage room.

THE BEDS are ample; they measure six full feet in length, and 50 inches

wide. The three-inch-thick mattresses are covered with scotchgard treated fabric on one side and vinyl on the other. The Coleman 680 was color coordinated throughout in a pleasant brown-and-gold combination; the drapes, in a brown-and-gold stripe, complemented the yellow-patterned vinyl floor. We considered the interior to have been tastefully done.

The feeling of living outdoors while evading the mosquitoes is handled well. There are eight large windows all around, two of which are covered with a protective, weather-resistant plastic. All of them are fully screened, with double zippers, thus allowing either end or the entire window to be opened. As much of the tent area as possible is devoted to screened windows, allowing maximum light and ventilation.

With all of the available light, there are problems when the sun goes down: There isn't a light in the entire trailer. A Bryant power converter, type BR, in the rear center wall, includes one 110 v. duplex outlet, but this is the extent of the power potential, either AC or DC.

A good tent trailer has to be covered with something substantial. Coleman



The kitchen unit has a covered stove, a sink, and a cabinet; a shelf extends work space.

has accomplished this with an insulated roof of one-piece construction made with ABS plastic. The telescoping corner posts sit well inside the roof corners, as do the sidewalls,

providing an overhang that sheds rain.

In all the trailers that we evaluate, we run across the little niceties that each one has to offer, as well as the nuisances. We noted that Coleman is fastidious, in that the company provides a canvas sock to cover the exposed ends of the telescoping posts inside the trailer. And, in addition to the door being mounted on the aforementioned rigid frame, it is half-screened and includes a screened vent and a lift bar to swing the door into place, which doubles as a most welcome towel bar. While looking over the rest of the Coleman fleet, we noted that it includes a very small trailer, the Calypso, which is a box with bunks only. There is also the model No. 681, which is the same as our test unit with the dinette, but without the kitchen. We mention this for the benefit of you do-it-yourselfers.

The Coleman literature indicates that the set-up time for the trailer averages five minutes or less. With a good half-dozen set-up and tear-down sessions to judge by, our nearest estimate was 15 minutes—though included in our average procedure was everything that had to be done before we could sit down and prop up our feet, including making the electrical and water connections, leveling, setting up the furnishings, and rearranging the cargo.

Despite the contradiction on the set-up time, we have no quarrel with Coleman. We found that the time and effort required to set up the tent trailer was minimal, and it went up with ease. We feel that Coleman has provided a well-constructed, functional unit that, to a greater degree than most, takes the practical needs of the camper into consideration. ✓



PRICES AND SPECIFICATIONS

COLEMAN 680 VALLEY FORGE

Made by the Coleman Company, Inc., 250 N. St. Francis Street, Wichita, KS 67201. Test unit equipped with the following standard features: torsion bar suspension, 5.30/4.50 x 12 tire size, safety chains (2) and 1 1/2" ball coupler, prepainted aluminum body, double-wall insulated polymer hard top, aluminum screen door with color-matched solid panel, LP gas bottle and regulator, tongue jack, 25-ft. power cord, city water hookup, 10-gal. water tank, hand water pump, doorstep, vinyl-cushioned floor, 76-qt. icebox, sink, 3-burner range, 110 v. outlet, 2 slide-out wing beds 51" wide x 72" long, vinyl-covered canvas over beds. Optional features include: canopy, cabana, 9000 BTU LP gas heater, privacy curtains, spare

tire, electric brakes, 110 and 12 v. light, electric brakes, Porta Potti, spare tire and wheel, spare tire mount, spare tire cover.

Dimensions: Total weight (not loaded), 1100 lbs.; hitch weight, 160 lbs.; axle capacity, 1500 lbs.; overall length, unit closed, 150"; width, 80"; height, 47"; overall length, unit open, 232"; width, 80"; headroom, 77"; interior living area, 124 sq. ft.; cabinet storage, 59 cu. ft.; sleeping capacity, 6 adults.

Handling: (12-ft. lane change made in 3 seconds at 45 m.p.h.) Very good. Price, standard model, approximately \$1595 plus taxes and license. For additional information, circle No. 101 on reader service card.