

A head-turner with attitude!



That's **Andy Jenkinson's** verdict on the new **Sterling Eccles Amethyst**. Read on to find out more...

LAST autumn, we were impressed by the face-lift given to the Eccles and Swift ranges. In particular, we thought the Swift Conqueror 480 was a cracking tourer (see our report on page 18 of Issue 47). It was with anticipation, therefore, that we awaited a full live-in test of the new Sterling Eccles Amethyst.

Aesthetically, you can't fail to be impressed by the Amethyst's design with its superbly-styled graphics and alloy wheels. The Eccles is distinctive with its sweeping front end, and, on our test model, the optional sunroof. Swift make their own high standard GRP mouldings, and the exterior is one of solid build and perfect trim - you'll find no loose fit or gaps here.

The front locker is easy to access, offering good storage facilities for all your caravanning bits. The Eccles comes with barbecue and exterior mains points as well as an external locker. An on-board water tank is standard, along with the well-proven AKS hitch. There's no ATC, though - that's left to customer choice as an optional extra.



Large front locker has easy access.

Model:	Sterling Eccles Amethyst
Price:	£19,072 (plus £502 optional sunroof)
Length:	6.27 m
Width:	2.31 m
MIRO:	1624 kg
MTPLM:	1845 kg
Berths:	6

We like: Stunning profile, quality build, spacious, great front locker, good storage, kitchen work surface, sunroof (extra), good lighting, seven mains sockets, dual-fuel hob.

We don't like: Shortage of direct lighting in kitchen, wardrobe could be larger, no lightweight, front plastic window moulding, only one front single bed.



Smart side graphics add to the stylish looks.

The Amethyst's looks are head-turning. Our test model came with the optional sunroof, something we would definitely add to the extras list.

A few seasons ago, the interior of the Eccles was given a more modern look with Oregon pine lockers and a Continental finish. The plan includes a front double dinette, side single dinette with fold-up bunk, and a kitchen opposite. A large fixed bed, corner washroom, wardrobe and corner hand basin complete the layout.

The front lounge is a good place to eat meals, watch TV or just relax. It's a shame there isn't enough room for a small side cupboard between the side dinette and the lounge, which would be a handy place for the TV.

Seating is modern in design and comfortable to use, with excellent large front access flaps. One side makes up to a single bed - we feel that, if the kitchen wasn't so long, a few extra inches could have been gained for the other side, too.

The side roof lockers took all our bits and bobs, and the sunroof added a feeling of light airiness to the interior. Lighting is good, with internal lamps by the sunroof and low LED spots plus lighting behind the roof lockers. Personally, I would have preferred some ceiling lights as well.

The side kitchen comes with a 107-litre Thetford digital fridge/freezer, which we have found easy to use. Work surface is superb, and cupboard storage is a real plus, especially if you prefer to 'eat in'. We liked the new granite-effect sink, manufactured by Swift.

A quality microwave is fitted - a tad high for some, maybe, but it proved OK for us. Poor lighting was the kitchen's only negative point, and we'd like to see more downlighters. The side dinette opposite is useful for having breakfast or just lounging.



Front lounge is comfortable, though the small side windows restrict the view a little.



Side fixed bed proved comfortable. We liked the large side window and deep roof lockers above.

The side fixed bed has great storage beneath and proved very comfortable to use. Deep roof lockers are provided here. A large side window and a Heki roof vent allow good natural light into the bedroom area.



Wardrobe would prove tight for six, but for us it was just right.



Side single dinette comes with fold-up bunk and more roof locker storage. It was ideal for daytime use, too.

In the bedroom is a hand basin with a mirror and a small side window. Some storage is provided beneath. Night-time lighting levels here are well catered for.

During our week-long test, the wardrobe space proved fine for us, but it may prove a little tight for six. A Truma heater is fitted in the wardrobe's base. We feel the electric heating could struggle to keep this big tourer warm on very cold evenings. That said, there was some night frost during our test, and the Amethyst kept us all warm and cosy.



Washroom isn't very large, but it will be fine for most.

The corner shower and loo may be a compromise for some, but we found it to be an ideal design. For most owners, on a fully-serviced park such as Silverdale, it may be used for emergencies only.

We had a few niggles - the water system played up, and the loo flush didn't work - but these could easily be rectified on a pre-delivery dealer inspection. They didn't spoil our enjoyment of the Amethyst at all.



Note the good lighting levels in the dinette area; speakers for the radio/CD player are set above.



With acres of worktop and great storage, the side kitchen proved very practical.

Verdict

With its eye-catching style, the new Sterling Eccles Amethyst is going to make a big impact on dealers' forecourts. Looks alone will sell this tourer, but on a practical level it also scores well, with its big, useful kitchen and good storage.

For us, the Amethyst was a superbly spacious tourer. Even with a couple more people, it would still have felt big enough, and the comfort of the seating and the modern design won us over. I wasn't a big fan at first, but the interior has been tweaked following the 2009 re-vamped models.

This is a big chunk of a tourer, and proved itself to be a worthy model for a family. If you're in the market for a modern, well-made tourer that sleeps up to six, we reckon you should go and check it out.



Large cupboard beneath kitchen unit offers stacks of storage.

Where we stayed: We pitched our test van on Holgates' Silverdale site, where it served as our base over the Christmas and New Year period.

More information: Sterling Eccles Amethyst: www.swiftleisure.co.uk; Holgates Caravan Park, Silverdale: www.holgates.co.uk telephone 01524 701508.

Our thanks to Sterling Caravans for the test and to Holgates Caravan Park, Silverdale.