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New interiors wouldn't look out of place in a swanky London flat

IDEAL FOR watching weight



Swift launch

Stripping weight and getting stylish, the Yorkshire-based caravan king steps up its game with brand new ranges

Recession? What recession? Britain's biggest and most bullish caravan manufacturer, Swift, announced dozens of new-for-2012 caravans to its customers this summer.

The new vans make the bee's knees look decidedly average, and Swift promises that chassis-up redesigns across the various ranges make these the most stylish, practical, comfortable and best-value-for-money caravans in the UK.

For starters, the company has said farewell to the Swift Charisma and Sterling Europa ranges, replacing them with the lightweight Eccles Sport and Challenger Sport ranges, featuring eight models each.

These lightweight Sport models are designed to increase fuel economy, ease of driving and, perhaps most importantly, the range of cars that are able to tow them. With car makers slashing the kerb weights of their vehicles, the number of vans that can be towed by a standard family car (under the 85% rule) is diminishing quickly. Across all ranges Swift has lopped between 35kg and 170kg off the weight of its vans.

As well as losing weight, the 2012 lot have had impressive facelifts, boasting streamlined

GRP front panels and eye-catching front sunroofs, that look oh so contemporary from the outside and flood the interiors with light.

The quality isn't only skin-deep. Innovative construction techniques using specially-treated redwood framing and marine-grade aluminium give improved strength and rigidity, and look better too. Part of this is due to the semi-recessed awning rails on both sides, increasing flexibility without spoiling the vans' smooth lines.

Along with low-energy LED lights and four 230V plug sockets, AL-KO's ATC stability system also becomes standard across all ranges except the budget Sprite models. Added worktop space increases practicality, with extensions available in some models.

Despite rocketing parts, Swift has managed to absorb much of the effect to ensure its vans sell with only a small premium over last year's models.

Here at Caravan magazine we admire Swift's confidence, both in terms of the market potential and the new contemporary look it has developed for its caravans. Here's hoping for a year of strong sales in 2012.



Stylish storage in practical places? Perfect!



Our vampire snapper loves shooting mirrors



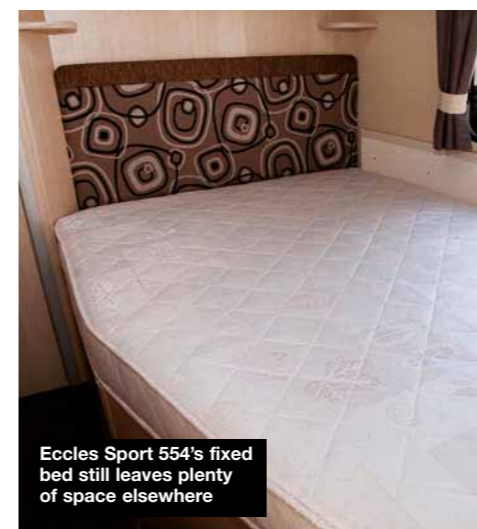
Spacious bunks make banging your head a thing of the past



All-new body shells feature semi-recessed body colour awning rails on both sides



Not a typical white or cream colour scheme in sight



Eccles Sport 554's fixed bed still leaves plenty of space elsewhere



Who'd have thought that brown could look this good?

THE SWIFT RANGE

(Prices not yet available)

CHALLENGER SPORT 382 ECCLES SPORT 382

AXLES 1 BERTH 2 MPTLM 1143kg

LAYOUT Front parallel seating, end kitchen

CHALLENGER SPORT 442 ECCLES SPORT 442

AXLES 1 BERTH 2 MPTLM 1235kg

LAYOUT Front parallel seating, end washroom

CHALLENGER SPORT 514 ECCLES SPORT 514

AXLES 1 BERTH 4 MPTLM 1380kg

LAYOUT Front parallel seating, open plan fixed-bed

CHALLENGER SPORT 524 ECCLES SPORT 524

AXLES 1 BERTH 4 MPTLM 1405kg

LAYOUT Front parallel seating, side dinette, end washroom

CHALLENGER SPORT 544 ECCLES SPORT 544

AXLES 1 BERTH 4 MPTLM 1435kg

LAYOUT Front parallel seating, side wrap-around dinette, end washroom

CHALLENGER SPORT 554 ECCLES SPORT 554

AXLES 1 BERTH 4 MPTLM 1430kg

LAYOUT Front parallel seating, fixed bed, end washroom

CHALLENGER SPORT 586 ECCLES SPORT 586

AXLES 1 BERTH 6 MPTLM 1547kg

LAYOUT Front parallel seating, rear double bunk, rear dinette with additional bunk

CHALLENGER SPORT 636 ECCLES SPORT 636

AXLS 2 BERTH 6 MPTLM 1650kg

LAYOUT Front parallel seating, side dinette, triple rear bunk

More details on the new Swifts are on our website, including an interview with the head designer. Visit outandaboutlive.co.uk

NEW Layout

NEW Layout

A QUICK WORD WITH... Chris Milburn, head of design for caravans and motorhomes at Swift

Chris Milburn When you add up all the projects we have to undertake each year, there's a lot of work to get through. That means we have to start early in the year, almost as soon as the current range is launched.

Caravan Do you 'platform-share' like the car manufacturers are increasingly doing?

CM We do have platform sharing, but we have to optimise the product for any particular range. For example, the Eccles Sport and Challenger Sport ranges are both lightweight, therefore they can't share the same base as the Eccles and

Challenger ranges because those are much more luxurious products and the requirements are slightly different. So, yes, we do share components where we can, but we also have to optimise them for specific characteristics.

Caravan Aerodynamics seems to be the new big thing. How do they make such a difference?

CM For those that tow caravans, you can feel the difference. It struck me that a lot of effort goes in to getting the aerodynamics right on the car, but you need to take that airflow and manage it as much as you can over the front of the caravan.

The compromise is that you have to create a spacious box, so you can't make it too small at the front. It's always a balance and depends on the car that's towing the caravan, which varies.

Caravan Will caravans be designed to suit specific cars in future?

CM I think the front needs to be tuned to suit specific cars, whether that's a saloon car, an estate car or an off-roader. But tuning it for say, different off-roaders gets more difficult.

• For more of this interview, log on to outandaboutlive.co.uk