

# Sterling Eccles Sport 544

£15,815



If you can't decide whether to buy a caravan with a fixed double bed or an extra dining area, how about one that gives you the best of both worlds? And this one has ATC, too...

**T**he Sport 544 is one of a new breed of lighter caravans from the Swift Group for 2012 – but its layout is already a proven success.

Swift last year launched a derivative of a caravan with an end shower room – replacing the bed in a Charisma 550 with a U-shaped dining area that converts to a double bed. They called it the Charisma 545. Instantly, this converted the classic fixed bed, end-washroom layout from a caravan which would chiefly appeal to couples, to a true family caravan with flexibility. The best of both worlds, surely.

Now Swift's design team has built on this concept by producing the Eccles Sport 544 – with a more sporty image than the Charisma, and 50kg lighter. The get-up-and-tow appeal is enhanced by an important item of specification, new to Swift for 2012 – the ATC stability control system.

The result is far from a Swift Charisma by another name. This is a Sterling brand, as distinct from a Swift – and its woodwork is



### Speakers in the roof...

Speakers are mounted into the roof on either side of the sunroof and five white lights are in a frosted plastic casing above it. It's another coolly modern feature that helps to give the Eccles Sport its intensely modern look.

### A great option...

Sports get Swift's gorgeous sunroof design as optional extras. Our test example was equipped with this lovely feature, prompting thoughts that anyone contemplating buying this model would want to pay the extra to have it fitted. We'll pass on details of the price on our website [www.outandaboutlive.com](http://www.outandaboutlive.com) when they're announced.

### Top kitchen looks...

The microwave is here in the centre of the cabinet-run. Its surround is pale grey, and the side-hinged cupboards that flank it have broad bands of plain matt cream. Very classy.

### Extra surface...

There's a hinge-up section of surface to the left of the kitchen to give you a little extra surface – but even with this in place, you'd have to be superbly organised while cooking in this kitchen.

### You can't have it all...

Kitchen storage is restricted to a cupboard between the fridge and the oven, containing two pull-out wire basket shelves and a small cutlery tray. You can't have it all in a caravan of only 5.6m, we know – and the small amount of working surface means that you'll probably use the table as well as the kitchen when you're putting food on plates.

### GET IN TOUCH

SWIFT GROUP  
Tel: 01482 847332  
Web: [www.swiftgroup.co.uk](http://www.swiftgroup.co.uk)



The spacious wrap-around dining area that converts to a double bed



**Plenty of storage...**

Storage for clothes is generous – there are three large overhead lockers in the dining area (although only two of them have shelves), and a wardrobe that easily provides enough hanging space for the needs of four people.

**Fiddly – but worth it...**

You make the mattress up from the upholstery pieces of the dining area, plus an additional square piece that you'd keep in a bedding locker. It's a bit of a fiddle – but well worth it if you are one of the many caravanners who think fixed beds take up too much living space.

**TVs of any size...**

Weight has been saved compared with its 2011 Charisma predecessor by removing the drop-down TV housing from the divider. Clever though this feature was, we think few will mourn its demise because it was only suitable for TVs of a certain size. Much better to pop your TV of any size on the dresser...

**Under the settees.....**

Storage under this U-shaped seating area is not as easy to access as that under the front settees. But there is a bonus in the dining room – an exterior access hatch. It's the same size as a toilet cassette hatch, so not large enough to put in big items, but perfect for small things.



A hinged section augments the kitchen surface when you need it



A separate shower, plus ample shelving make this a practical washroom



With the blind down, the bedroom-dining area feels very separate from the lounge

**TEST LOCATION**

BURTON CONSTABLE CARAVAN PARK  
Sproatley, East Yorkshire  
Tel: 01964 562508  
Web: www.burtonconstable.co.uk

the pale shade of the Sterling range, making it feel far more spacious than its 5.6m length.

We love the 544's central dining area. It creates not just a space for eating. The seating has big rounded corners – so it's a place to relax in and get cosy.

When you convert the dining area to a double bed, the 544 looks identical to a fixed double bed model. You can leave the bed in position all day, if you wish – but it's a pity not to take advantage of that lovely dining area.

We'd have liked to see an additional power point in the dining room. There is, though, a socket thoughtfully positioned next to the mirror and shelf that's in a recess to the rear of the wardrobe. Perfect for a hairdryer.

But this little alcove is far from perfect, to our eyes. The whole wall area below the shelf is occupied by the table for the lounge, which clips onto a slightly crude-looking wooden frame when it's not in use. And when it's removed for use, you are left looking at that crude-looking frame. It looks out of kilter with the refined look of the rest of the caravan.

The wardrobe doors hinge back almost flat to the exterior, so people can still walk among the corridor when the wardrobe doors are open. Two usefully deep shelves hide on the right-hand side of the wardrobe, although these would be difficult to access if the rail is fully occupied by clothes. Below the hanging area is a shelf, with a large space for shoes. We know weight-saving has been a keynote in the design of this range, but a shelf in this area would have doubled its capacity, creating enough space for eight pairs of shoes instead of four.

The shower room is larger than you'd expect in a caravan of this size. The shower is rectangular and the floor space in the toilet-basin areas is more than sufficient for dressing. Two cupboards and quantities of shelving take care of the shampoo-type necessities amply.

*Go caravansays ...*

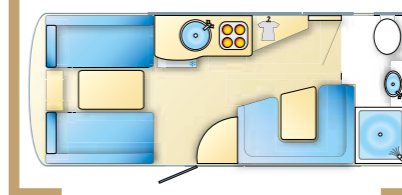
We love the looks. And the washroom. And the useful small exterior hatch for the under-settee dining area storage department. Most of all we love the layout's flexibility; leave the bed made up or put it away – your choice...

The 544 was predictably easy to handle on the road and we appreciate the reassurance of the ATC stability control system.

Just one thing takes the gloss off this fantastic, lightweight caravan. It's the utilitarian-looking mounting points for the table on the wall under the mirror. Our advice? Ignore that, if you can, and enjoy the flexibility of this layout.

**Sterling Eccles Sport 544**

Price	£15,815
Lengths	Body 5.60m Overall 7.25m
Width	2.25m
Headroom:	1.95m
Weight	1282kg (MRO) 1435kg (MTPLM)



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