



**CANDY EVANS** has a first look at the new Sterling Eccles Sport 586 – one of the Swift Group's caravans for 2012 and a replacement for the Sterling Europa 565

# A Sterling effort

## 1 Sleek new lines

The most obvious thing about the new Eccles Sport is its aerodynamic Continental-style front panel. According to its manufacturer, it's the same shape as the current 2011 Eccles and Elite ranges but the clean lines are more obvious because they don't have the side and roof mouldings of the higher specification units.

I was able to take a look at the family-friendly 586 model before the Sport caravans were released to Sterling dealerships.

This 586 has the distinctive panoramic front sunroof that has become familiar on recent high-end Swift Group caravans, though it's an option on this lower-priced unit. It makes the 586 feel wonderfully bright inside – even on a rainy day on a factory forecourt near Hull.

## 2 Ready for a family

The layout of the 586 is probably my favourite for a family caravan. The rear of the unit has a couple of bunks plus a dinette that can transform into another set of bunks at night. The whole area can be divided off as a separate space for youngsters day or night, with the washroom conveniently positioned between the two sleeping areas.

There's always a conflict between space for people and storage for their stuff in a unit for six, but the 586 has four quite shallow eye-level cupboards (one per child perhaps?) and storage beneath the beds. There's also a cabinet between the beds with a TV aerial point and 12V and 230V sockets, ready for those all-important gadget chargers. All the occupants of this end of the caravan have their own reading light, except the one who uses the lower bunk on the nearside.

The base of the lower fixed bunk can be lifted and fastened out of the way so you can store larger items, such as bikes, while you're travelling.

## 3 Keeping clean

The washroom may be compact but it still boasts a proper shower cubicle, with a high lip to keep the water away from the rest of the room, along with a swivel-bowl toilet, basin and space for toiletries.

## 4 Feeding the family

The kitchen area includes a hob with three gas rings and an electric hotplate, a grill and separate oven. There's a cutlery drawer and further cupboard with a pull-out shelving unit beneath the sink and a microwave above, between more cupboards. Add this to the

107-litre fridge and a 230V socket and you're ready to cook some substantial family meals.

## 5 Lounging in comfort

It's slightly counter-intuitive, but the swept front panel gives more space inside than you'd find in a similar 2011 Europa caravan. You can lounge comfortably in the front corner seat without the curtain brushing your head, for example.

The cushions in the front seating area – which makes into a good-sized double – include a couple of side cushions that are softer than usual, adding to the comfy feel.

Storage is provided by eye-level cupboards and a central chest of drawers. One minor quibble I have is that the single-piece large doors to the under-seat storage are a little difficult to manhandle.

However, the designers have thought about the positioning of the central heating controls. The thermostat is at the front of the caravan – easily accessible even when the front bed is made up.

## 6 And there's more...

Following the Swift Group's normal format, the Sterling Eccles Sport range is duplicated in Swift Challenger Sport caravans, which replace this year's Swift Charisma units. The Challenger Sport format has a warmer cherry-style wood finish on the cupboard doors and alternative fabrics for the upholstery, but the layouts and specifications are otherwise similar. It's obviously a matter of personal preference but I would probably choose the warmth of the Challenger Sport wood finish over the lighter Eccles Sport, though the size of the flowers on the upholstery may not suit everyone.

at a glance

### Sterling Eccles Sport 586

Price as tested £TBC\*

Berths Six

Length x width x height  
7.48m x 2.25m x 2.65m

Mass in Running Order  
1,371kg

Maximum Technically  
Permissible Laden Mass  
1,547kg

User payload 176kg

BE licence required Yes

Manufacturer Swift Group

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**Verdict:** Sleek new lines bring the Eccles range right up to date with the bonus of extra space inside.

\*Prices for this model were unavailable at the time of going to press

