

Tourer of the Year

Sterling Eccles Sport 514SR

Price £15,295 Berths 4 MTPLM 1380kg Payload 150kg



Sterling brought cutting-edge design to the Eccles Sport range

When Swift Group launches such an extensive revamp of its mid-range products as it has for 2012, we suspect it will be in with a chance when we get our clipboards out and start the judging for the Tourer of the Year awards. Choosing 2012's winner was tougher than in recent years, due to a glut of all-new vans from the major manufacturers. That indicates how impressive the new range of 'Sport' tourers are — and the 514 is our favourite among them.

The former Sterling Europa range was replaced by the Eccles Sport, whose 514 replaces the compact,

fixed-bed Europa 470. The old 470 was a traditional offside, fixed-bed tourer, though with a wardrobe next to the entrance door. The 514, however, has a nearside fixed bed which gives the whole layout a very open aspect. Besides helping the 514 feel spacious, the layout permits enough room for the same kitchen that is fitted to the larger 554 model — and this is despite the 514's shorter bodysell.

The nearside fixed bed is also the same size as that in the 514's larger sibling, but it doesn't have the full-width end washroom. This will

please buyers who are more conscious than ever about the length and weight of their tourers. And we're glad to see that, despite the more modest size and MTPLM, the 514 and the entire Eccles Sport range have been treated to cutting-edge looks. The scene-stealing sunroof from 2011's Eccles models is a £300 option, but we can't imagine many being ordered without it.

To be honest, though, it was not a sunroof that sold us on the 514. It is a caravan of broad talents, one that is large, comfortable and well-equipped. Al-Ko's ATC makes

a belated arrival in the Sterling line-up. We didn't expect to find it included at this level in the market, but we are delighted it did.

The layout itself works very well. We won't argue with you if you feel the washroom is on the snug side — it definitely is. But if you are one of the many caravanners who make little use of onboard facilities other than for late-night convenience and toothbrushing, it hardly matters.

Of far more importance is the well-proportioned accommodation in the rest of the caravan. Stand in the doorway and the 514 feels larger



1 The optional sunroof and pale woodwork all contribute to a feeling of space in the comfortable lounge
 2 It's fair to describe the washroom as cramped, but caravanners who rely on site facilities will find the 514 has enough space for night-time convenience and toothbrushing

3 The fixed bed on the nearside and thoughtful interior design add to the sense of roominess throughout
 4 An upmarket microwave is included in the Sterling's generous kit list
 5 There's space for the same kitchen as that fitted to the Eccles Sport 554, the 514's longer sibling



"Stand in the doorway and the 514 feels larger than the tape measure suggests. In this, the interior treatment is vital"

than the tape measure suggests. In this, the Sterling's interior treatment is vital. The lighter decor opens the space up better than in the sister Swift version without making it feel cold or bleak.

Fans of fixed beds will appreciate that the 514 has the appearance of a more expensive tourer. It has sensible weights, plenty of kit and looks that won't date in the next decade. For these reasons, it is the one 2012 model on which to spend your money. The Sterling Eccles Sport 514 is a great caravan that will delight plenty of buyers this season.

