

Swift Sterling Eccles Europa 390

► PRICE: £12,360 ► www.swiftgroup.co.uk

AT A GLANCE: A caravan one person can easily manoeuvre by hand (on even ground!)

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TAKE a standard end-kitchen two-berth layout, give it a cleverly-designed kitchen worktop plus cool pale woodwork and you have something rather special.

It's the new Sterling Europa 390, the baby of the bunch of Europa newcomers for 2010.

And its outstanding feature is right where it matters - at the hub of caravan living. Instead of being a straight rectangle, the kitchen work surface protrudes in a slight triangular shape towards the door, giving you a greater amount of work surface while still providing plenty of space to stand in front of the cooker and sink.

And the sink deserves more than a passing mention. It's a beautiful grey granite effect, big and circular - and oh so stylish.

The style goes on... Woodwork is the pale hue similar to that which characterised the 2009 90th year of Eccles celebration editions throughout that range. It's teamed with a dark stripe running below the head lockers, giving just enough interest without detracting from the main point about this pale woodwork in that it makes the caravan very light and airy. Look more carefully and you see another style feature that contributes to this light aspect. It's the upholstery. The major colour is cream, with prominent slashes of peach and terracotta, that weave in among the creams and fawns. This feature fabric is complemented by hessian-look edges and bands on the cushions. The result: a stunning mixture that punches well above the weight of this caravan's price bracket.

The large roof light does its job so much better in a small caravan than in a bigger model one where it has a greater area to illuminate. We think that goes for the two large mains lights at the front corners, too. They're set into the curve between front and side lockers as we've seen in 2009 models - and their brilliance seems to shine even better in this little model.

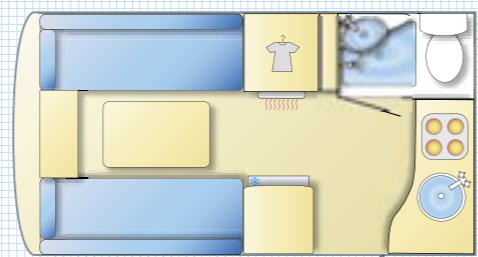
But back to that star kitchen, where it's not only the practicality of the worksurface shape that will impress you. The cupboard space beneath that triangular surface is cavernous, for such a small caravan. Two deep shelves on the right are plenty big enough for more tall cereal packets and mineral water bottles (always a good benchmark on which to assess cupboard space in caravan) than you'll ever want. In the centre of the kitchen is a second cupboard containing a cutlery drawer and a small basket shelf.

Cooking equipment is oven, grill, microwave, a mains hotplate and three



► LAYOUT IN A NUTSHELL

- End kitchen
- Washroom on the offside beside kitchen
- Single beds or a double



burners. The Thetford fridge with smart dark grey metallic-look bowed front is to the left of the door as you walk in, with the usual television connection to its top. There is a second television connection point at floor level near to the front chest of drawers - take your choice, you can relax and watch television with your feet up facing the front or the back of the caravan. Big comfortable armrests that are at the front can be moved to the back of the settee if you're propping your backs against the wardrobe and the fridge cabinet respectively... It's really cosy and it's complete.

The washroom gets an electric flush loo - and also what seems an incredible amount of showering space for such a small caravan. First glance impressions are of a straightforward shower area that's completely plastic, with a clear plastic door

to confine splashes. Now look more carefully, for there is a Tardis-like feature in this cleverly-designed washroom. The wall on which the washbasin is mounted swivels towards the toilet to form a complete barrier, meeting up with the two-piece plastic door. It's as perfect an end-kitchen layout washroom as we've seen anywhere. Well done, Swift!

In specification terms, all you need is here - spare wheel in carrier, aerial adjustable from the wardrobe... No compromises, nothing missing, nothing to dislike - except one minor thing. It's the cold light emitted by the basic strip light over the kitchen. Light level is great but style is lacking just here. A couple of modern stylish spotlights would have been more in-keeping with the excellence of style everywhere else in this caravan. Maybe we're expecting perfection... that strip light apart, the 390 comes pretty close to it. ■



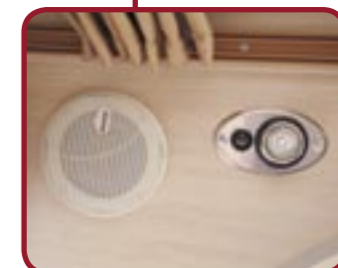
Chunky domestic-style washroom door handle - a Swift hallmark



A single socket and television connecting points at floor level



Pale wood with dark wood edging create a stunning look



Speakers and spotlight hidden under the front pelmet

► FOR & AGAINST

- PROS:**
- Swing-wall washroom
 - Cleverly shaped kitchen surface to maximise on space
- CONS:**
- Basic strip light in kitchen emitting a cold light

► SPECIFICATION

Axles: 1
Berths: 2
MRO: 1026kg
MTPLM: 1350kg
Overall length: 5.52m
Width: 2.23m
Headroom: 1.95m



Fridge top and curved kitchen surface give you enough space

► OUR VERDICT

One of the shortest caravans around is also one that packs in two great features. One is the swing-wall washroom, the other is the shape of the kitchen work surface. Style is here in no small measure. It's a light, bright caravan that will appeal to get-up-and-go couples who are looking for a caravan that's short on length but not short of style, specification and build quality.