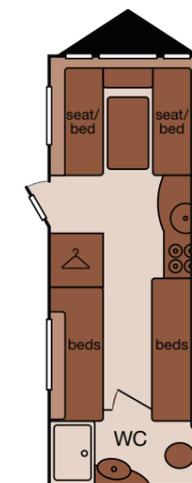




Clockwise from top left: A panoramic roof window keeps the living area light; fixed beds in the sleeping area; the gas barbecue point outside the 'van; the kitchen area; and the spacious washroom



at a glance
Swift Challenger SE 565

- Price** £20,625
- Club Care insurance** £241
- Berths** Four
- Bed sizes** Front double 2.02m x 1.56m; rear singles 1.92m x 0.68m and 1.83m x 0.73m
- Kitchen** Four-ring burner hob with electric hotplate; grill; oven; microwave
- Electrics** Seven 230V sockets (including one external); two 12V sockets with TV aerial points
- Gas** Mountings for two 6kg cylinders
- Length x width x height** 7.25m x 2.25m x 2.65m
- Mass in Running Order** 1,400kg
- Maximum Technically Permissible Laden Mass** 1,553kg
- User payload** 153kg
- BE licence required** Yes
- Warranty** Three years parts and labour; ten years water ingress
- Supplier** Swift
- Web** swiftgroup.co.uk
- Tel** 01482 847332
- With thanks to** Lyndon Top Caravan Park, Rutland Water, 01539 431222, lyndontop.com

What's new..?

Well, quite a lot actually when it comes to Swift's latest Challenger SE models. **SIMON McGRATH** put the 565 to the test

AN INTERESTING way to gauge reaction to a new model is to put it on a campsite and see what happens. I was pitched up in the new Swift Challenger SE 565 at a Northamptonshire District Association (DA) meet where Club members certainly thought it an eye-catching unit. Did the 'van create a buzz? Yes, I think it did.

Swift has launched new Challenger and Eccles SE models for the 2013 season, the SE denoting the high levels of equipment. An Alde radiator central heating and hot water system, which can be powered by gas or mains electricity and has variable power settings up to 3kW, comes as standard, as does a 20W roof-mounted solar panel to top up the leisure battery, and are among a number of other new features.

Swift has also used the lighter-weight body shell from the Challenger Sport and Eccles Sport ranges, which means weight savings of up to 125kg on equivalent 2012 models.

The Challenger SE 565 is a single-axle four-berth 'van with parallel seating at the front that turns into a double bed, two rear

fixed single beds and an end washroom.

All these improvements (including extra ambient lighting, luxury furnishings, an upgraded fridge, tracking system and more) come in at just a 4.3 per cent price increase over the 2012 version of the Challenger 565.

LIVING AREA

The living area was spacious enough for four, and very light thanks in part to the panoramic roof window. We found that early in the morning you could open the blind on this window and take in the views, in our case looking across Rutland Water, and not have to bend down or open the regular window curtains and compromise your privacy.

The foldaway table was a reasonable size but is stowed under one of the fixed beds. I found it relatively easy to remove and put away again but some may find it a bit more awkward to access.

BEDTIME

Twin fixed beds are not to everyone's liking so this 'van may appeal to those who want additional space without the added hassle of climbing over your partner in a fixed double bed should the call of nature be heard during the night.

As a family, we found the layout worked for us as my two sons had the twin beds while my wife and I used the front double. A concertina-style partition screens off the two sleeping areas, which is a big plus in my book as it means the adults can sit up a little longer before going to bed. However, my wife found the partition difficult to use and she wrestled with it on more than one occasion. She also didn't find the front bed that comfortable, though it is easy to make up.

THE WASHROOM

The end washroom was spacious enough and new features include LED backlights in the washroom mirrors – in fact new lighting featured in several other places too.

There's a heated towel rail and a fabric roller blind in all models, and plenty of storage space in this 565. Importantly, on this unit the door didn't squeak when using the loo once the children had settled down.

How many times have I got into trouble with my wife for that one?

DINNER TIME

The kitchen area is in the middle of the 'van and the workspace has been given a welcome boost by an additional lift-up extension on this model – a feature I particularly like when on washing-up duty.

There's an extra cutlery drawer above the new 110-litre Dometic fridge, and above that near the cooker is a new three-speed two-way roof fan.

Meanwhile, the bin on the inside of the entrance door was a larger size than I've often encountered!

ON THE OUTSIDE

There's no doubt the shape of the front of the unit and the panoramic roof window make this a striking 'van. And outside you'll also find a barbecue point and external 230V socket.

Verdict: The layout may not be your thing but the buzz of excitement among members of Northamptonshire DA speaks for itself.