

REVIEW



STERLING Continental 530

One of three new layouts in the flagship Continental range for 2015, the 530 has an offside dining area

Offside dining area layouts are in every manufacturer's ranges and are well represented on the used market, too, because this proven arrangement has established its popularity over several years.

None, though, look anything like this one. Swift has created its new Sterling Continental range to be a trendsetter in styling and right at the top of the game in terms of level of equipment.

Styling relies on darkest browns, whites in various textures and subtle patterns, and palest, shiny fawn-cream. It's those white textures and patterns, in particular, that define the 530. As you step inside, the recess where you find two coat hooks features a white panel, textured in an abstract grooved horizontal pattern. It's a brilliant and refreshing culture shock in a caravan, a style feature that's rather IKEA-ish in its simplicity. It's a pity, though, that more use isn't made of this style feature; a second panel, on the offside forward wall of the shower room, would further enhance the 530's appeal.

Elsewhere the stunning domestic-look style involves white kitchen and table surfaces with a tiny, subtly

abstract lacy pattern that's fine in detail. Shiny tactile raised vertical lines define panels in the seatbacks. More shine is on curtains and cushions, this time pale fawn. And yet more shine is on high gloss, dark brown lower locker edges. This combination of darkest brown, cream and white gives the Continental 530 a showhouse feel. And, perhaps more than other layouts in the range, the white surfaces with fine-detail miniscule pattern make a major contribution to the styling, simply because there are a lot of surfaces in this layout. Not just front pull-out table and side dining table, but slim dresser forward of the table and also two large shelves on the fore end of the kitchen.

Before we even get into the detail of each section of the 530, we feel guilty of allowing the styling of this caravan to dominate this review. But then it does dominate the caravan. Even the door to the shower room is worthy of words...

Showering

A fawn panel with a textured pattern that catches the light, bordered by shiny metal, runs down the centre of the pale fawn, almost white,

TESTED BY

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This overall view of the caravan shows just how spacious it is



The biggest caravan towel rail yet!



The breakfast room, perhaps



The sink is neatly recessed into the worktop with no rim to detract from the simple styling



The unit alongside the cooker makes an extra kitchen surface or a shelf; however you use it, this is a practical feature

domestic-style shower room door. Inside, the style story revolves around big metal handles and a chunky, shiny metal radiator. That's your first clue to the fact that Continentals have the Alde heating system, hidden from view within furniture and barely in evidence except here and by means of its touch-screen control panel alongside the door.

The basin is large, and with a good amount of surface around it. It's centrally-placed, with a mirror flanked by strips of light. And, above this vanity area, two speakers, part of the Blaupunkt sound system, are set into a panel, facing forwards. So if you want your caravan to have surround-sound, you leave the shower room door open!

The wardrobe has 73cm of hanging width, plus shelving and drawers. More shelving is below the cabinet that houses the table, forward of the shower. And there's a

clever design feature here. This shelving can be accessed from the cabinet and also via the cupboard on the outside of the shower room. We think this is the perfect place for shoes, rather than leaving them in the doorway.

It was while examining this doorway feature, though, that we noticed there is no power point by the mirror. It's the natural place to use a hairdryer but you'd have to stretch a cable across the doorway to a socket in the kitchen; an extra socket here would be requested by most buyers, we believe.

Sleeping

The sleeping arrangements of the 530 are key to its appeal to both couples and families with young children. For just two, there are single beds (2.03m long) or a double; the centre section is a slatted base that draws out from under the two drawers at the front.

WHAT WE LIKE

- ▶ The onboard water tank
- ▶ The long-pile rug
- ▶ The use of strongly contrasting dark and pale colours
- ▶ The textured white panel by the door

WHAT WE DON'T LIKE

- ▶ Extending the chest-of-drawers top for dining is rather clunky
- ▶ An extra power point by the mirror near the door would be welcomed by most buyers

Children love bunk beds and the 530's dining room answers that need. The top-bunk mattress folds into sections; the wardrobe shelf is the ideal dimension for storing it.

Storage

Most clothing storage is catered for in the shower room wardrobe unit. When you add in seven head-height lockers and two more, smaller ones, at the front, the 530's capacity for hiding stuff is generous.

Full-length hatches give access to the storage areas under the lounge seats. There are front-opening hatches into the spaces under the dining area seating, too; that's quite unusual and makes the task of pulling and pushing sleeping bags in and out of here much easier than having to raise seat bases.

Dining

To extend the chest of drawers top when you turn it into a dining table,



White and dark brown, a combination of shiny and matt surfaces, and with a long-pile rug; this is stunning styling



More white cabinetry in the shower room



A towel rail hinges down from the roof of the shower cubicle

BUY THIS IF...

You want a side dining area and an onboard water tank

ALSO CONSIDER...

Swift Elegance 530; same layout with different styling, also new for 2015

OUR VERDICT

Big on style and spec and hi-tech construction, and a versatile layout appealing to both families and couples, the new 530 is set to find a strong following among buyers, we believe.

With equipment including an onboard water tank, Alde heating, an extractor fan and an alarm system, it has all that the year-round caravanner needs.

And styling? Simply awesome!



The washbasin has plenty of surface around it

you have to take items off, and slightly raise the top, on its hinge mechanism. You then draw out the extension. It's not the easiest table extension we've seen (simply because you have to remove items) but it does give you a nice big table area, measuring 64cm wide and 72cm long. And if we bought this caravan we'd quickly get used to the routine. Call it the breakfast table, perhaps, for there's space for serving lunch at the larger (side dining area) table. And dinner time is your cue for the large table to emerge from its slot in the shower room. The 530 caters amply for all mealtimes!

Lounge

If there's one feature which defines Continental lounges it's the rug, a long-pile, sumptuous, highest quality affair made of fabric of three different colours and three different textures that combine to catch the

light. It's closely woven, with long strands, so creates a lovely cosy feel. And it's one more way in which Continentals are closer to houses than most caravans.

Kitchen

Total kitchen length is 1.73cm. There are surfaces to the left of the sink and to the right of the cooker. This latter area has a shelf of the same size, 22cm below it; the two areas are linked by a metal pole. We love the acrylic splashback, with hidden lighting along each edge, and an abstract geometric pattern in white along its top sector. Style and practicality are rolled into one here.

We also love the large capacity of the top cabinet (48cm deep, and 82cm wide). Big, chrome handles with press-release positive catches again mix style and practicality; these handles are on the top lockers elsewhere in the 530, too.

TOW MATCH

We recommend towing a caravan no more than 85% of the kerbweight of your car

Not sure what your car's kerbweight is? Check it out at

CaravanTOWMATCH
outandaboutlive.co.uk

A cutlery drawer pulls out above the fridge. A narrow cabinet between the fridge and the cooker gives you a drawer plus two shelves. The main lower storage area is the cabinet on the fore end of the kitchen, with a drawer above it. Overall, kitchen storage capacity is good, especially when you factor in the cabinet in the dresser that divides the dining area from the lounge.

Towing

We haven't yet towed a 2015 530; our review caravan hadn't been released from the factory. Indeed, some finishing touches had yet to arrive, including a wheel trim, which is why we photographed only the nearside, avoiding the offside wheel!

With AL-KO's electronic stability control present (as you'd expect of a caravan of this calibre), we're confident towing the 530 would be a joy and we look forward to an opportunity to prove it.