



This side dining area layout has an appealing open-plan look

Swift Challenger 530

New floor, roof and upholstery construction, and now the option of Alde heating. Swift Challengers move up several gears for 2016...

Some layouts are specifically designed for couples, some for families. There's one, though, that has a foot in both camps. That's the side-dining area arrangement. Couples choose it because they get a permanent dining area; a dining kitchen, you might say. And families prefer this layout because of its flexibility – the dining area can be transformed into bunk beds.

There's a third group of buyers who consider this layout to be ideal: grandparents. They have the advantage of the permanent dining area and, when the grandkids join them, there's a neat little bed arrangement to make up. So, they get family accommodation when they need it, and an ideal couples' layout when touring on their own. The Swift Group has three caravans of this layout for 2016:

TESTED BY
Val Chapman
PHOTOGRAPHY
John Chapman

a Conqueror, an Eccles, and this one, in the Challenger range. For 2016, Swift has simplified its ranges, dropping the Challenger Sport and Eccles SE ranges, and changing the naming of some models. This model is based on the layout formerly called 524. There's much more than a number change to the side-dining-area Challenger. The method of construction is new. Called SMART

Plus, this moves Challenger closer to the higher-spec Conqueror and Sterling Elite ranges in appearance, with a new front line around the flush-fitting windows.

The floor construction now incorporates a honeycomb centre section, 44mm deep, and framed with polyurethane that's highly resistant to moisture.

Another element of SMART Plus construction is the introduction of a hail-resistant GRP for the roof.

Challenger gas bottle compartment doors are a new design, too; now with a more robust three-point locking system (operated by a single handle).

Changes for the new model year inside the 530 focus on fabrics, and the introduction of an attractive gloss finish for the upper locker doors.

There's a change in the 530's shower room, too.

TECHNICAL STUFF	
BERTHS	4
BODY	5.29M
OVERALL	7M
WIDTH	2.23M
HEADROOM	1.95M
WEIGHT	MIRO 1279KG MTPLM 1448KG



SHOWERING

A new air-inlet shower rose is introduced, with jets arranged in a circular shape, and an on-off button to enhance water-saving possibilities.

The 530's shower is nicely proportioned, at 84cm x 61cm. There's plenty of space in the washroom. Although it's slightly wedge-shaped, it's 94cm at its deepest point and there's still a good depth (80cm) as the shape narrows in front of the wardrobe; it's of a size that can comfortably be described as a dressing room.

The washbasin, at 48cm wide, is also a good size. The mirror above it is enormous, filling the washbasin recess area in width. But preening perfection isn't quite achieved here in the 530 because there is no mains socket within cable-stretch of either this mirror or the one alongside the

door. That would have been an ideal place for a mains socket for hairdryer use. Most caravan retailers are amenable to adding mains sockets where you require them, though.

The wardrobe gives you 30cm of hanging width, plus an array of shelving spaces of different sizes, perfectly designed for both fold-up clothing and shoes. Confining all items of this nature to the wardrobe would never be a problem in a 530, even with four aboard.

STORAGE

Storage possibilities elsewhere are well up to the task for four, too, with drop-down locker doors under the settees and, unusually, also front access to the spaces under the dining seating. Three top lockers over this area and four more over the lounge are the icing on a very good storage cake.



The turquoise shade in this lovely poppy design creates a sunny, holiday look



Big, bold design and two-section armrests for extra corner comfort



The super-big mirror fills the wall space above the wide basin



A new air-inlet shower rose is introduced, with jets arranged in a circular shape



The seats fold out, to half-depth, to make up the lower bunk mattress



This kitchen-diner layout offers lots of options in use

SLEEPING

You could make single beds in the lounge, provided you're not tall; you'd get beds that are 1.77cm long. You'd be more likely, though, to unfurl the slatted base from under the drawers, turn over the settee bases and convert the seating into a mattress. During our review it took us just a couple of minutes; these are lightweight seat units which are easy to lift. Their construction is another new feature for 2016. Called Swift AirWave, it's a foam construction which is designed to provide a firm mattress with a comfortably flat surface. Sleeping is not part of our review task, of course, so we can't vouch for comfort, but we can say it felt nicely firm when sat upon.

The bunk beds that you can create in the dining area are 1.78m long. The seating upholstery sections are made in two parts, so that you fold them out to make the mattress of the lower bunk. It's half the thickness of the upholstery when it's in seating mode; that's fine for lightweight occupants, though. The mattress for the upper bunk is stored separately, ideally under the front seating.

DINING

The 530 has three dining options: a table for two that extends from the chest of drawers at the front; the dining area opposite the kitchen and, when all four want to dine together, you can get the freestanding table out from its cabinet alongside the shower.

LOUNGING

Sit back, feel the comfort of the new foam-construction upholstery in the 530's ample-length lounge and take in the ambience created by the combination of turquoise, pale brown woodwork and gloss top lockers. It's a lovely look. The curtains and cushions, with big turquoise and grey poppies on a background that's almost white, first appeared in Challengers last year

ANNUAL PREMIUM

Insurance quote based on new for old cover with maximum discount.
0844 847 4490
shieldtotalinsurance.co.uk

£235.28



WHAT WE LIKE

- ▶ The Alde option
- ▶ The enhanced moisture resistance in the new floor construction
- ▶ The hail-damage-resistant roof
- ▶ The versatile layout

WHAT WE DON'T LIKE

- ▶ The lack of a power point near to the mirror



The kitchen surface stretches 1.31m forward from the dual-fuel hob

and was liked so much that it was picked by one retailer for a range of special editions of Sprite.

Challengers have Truma Combi blown-air heating as standard. For the first time, for 2016, though, buyers can opt for Alde heating, at an extra cost of £749. This option adds slightly to the caravan's weight, taking the MIRO up from 1279kg to 1323kg and adding 26kg to the MTPLM, making it 1474kg.

There's an option on fabrics, too; for an extra £295 you can get your Challenger with stain-resistant, wipe-clean SwiftShield material, of the type that's standard on the higher-priced Elegance range.

KITCHEN

The 530 is a star performer in the kitchen area, with a surface that stretches 1.31m forward from the (dual fuel) hob. A cavernous cabinet is on the fore end of the kitchen (it's 52cm wide and 60cm deep, with two shelf spaces). A smaller (18cm wide) cabinet is to the rear of the fridge; this one contains two pull-out shelves. Two more of these pull-out metal basket-style shelves are in a third cabinet, this time 29cm wide, that divides the lounge from the dining area. The kitchen has four drawers; one fitted for cutlery, another ideal for utensils, and two more, 52cm wide, above the cabinet on the fore end of the kitchen.

The microwave is set neatly flush within the triple top-locker run which has a matt linen-look surface; very smart, crisp and modern. And the wallboard adds to the attractive

styling; it's rather like wallpaper, pure white with a subtle swirling design.

TOWING

Challengers don't have ATC as standard; it's a £315 option. We'd go for that, to enhance stability and safety. On its brief tow test, though, the 530 felt reassuringly well balanced, and its mid-range length means that manoeuvring into pitches is pretty easy. It's not a heavyweight, even if you go for the Alde option, so if you do have to manually push your caravan to get it into a confined space, in your garden, perhaps, the 530 won't present too much of a challenge.

OPTIONS TO GO FOR...

Alde heating at £749 and ATC stability control at £315

OUR VERDICT

It could be easy to overlook Challenger, sitting between the great-value Sprite range that grabs a lot of attention, and the stunning décor, higher spec (and higher priced) Elegance and Continental offerings. But 2016 Challengers have a distinctive character of their own, with sunny-hues turquoise looks, enhanced anti-water ingress construction and the enticing option of Alde heating.

The 530, with a versatile layout that suits several needs, a weight that makes it suitable for a wide range of cars, and lovely interior looks, is a very appealing caravan.

CHALLENGERS HAVE A DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER, NEW CONSTRUCTION AND THE OPTION OF ALDE HEATING

