



**Bargain**

# BUYS

With more and more people looking after the pennies, our caravan test expert Rob McCabe hunts down three used models to suit differing budgets

**Make and model:** Abbey Domino 2  
**Year of manufacture:** 1996  
**Current price:** £2,995

Sixteen years seems like a long time ago, but a quick glance around this Abbey shows that, fundamentally, caravans haven't changed so very much in that time. The two-berth, end-kitchen layout is still popular and the onboard facilities of this Domino 2 are still pretty much what you'd look for in a far more modern model.

The Domino was an extremely well-specified model for the mid-1990s, which means you get a four-burner gas hob with separate oven and grill, all spark-ignited; dual-fuel hot water and space heating (including blown air); a shower; front mains wall lights; and all-round blinds and flyscreens. Unusually for the period, its sidewalls are glossy, impact-resistant GRP rather than the near-ubiquitous aluminium.

This is clearly a well-used caravan but it's pleasingly clean and tidy throughout, and has been treated to some thoughtful DIY upgrades. An extra mains socket and 12V aerial socket have been expertly and unobtrusively fitted by the front window

shelf (complementing the existing TV viewing point on the nearside dresser), and I like the idea of the hefty, domestic-style pull handle on the inside of the entrance door. An aftermarket stereo radio/CD player and two speakers are included.

The most urgent task facing the next owner is the complete replacement of the upholstery in the lounge. The covering is in fairly good condition but the filling is well past it, offering near-zero support. The fixed, fitted carpet has stood the passage of time much better, a tribute to its hard-wearing properties and probably to the conscientiousness of the previous owners.

The washroom is perhaps where the Domino most shows its age. Yes, there's a shower, but the head doubles up as the wash-hand basin tap, which has separate hot and cold water controls. Only when you've attempted to have a shower using separate H&C can you truly appreciate the luxury that is the single mixer tap.

The kitchen has been well cared-for, with the cooker passing the all-important cleanliness test and the surface bearing no dents or scratches. The fridge is fine for a couple, although it harks from an age when

the freezer compartment was nothing more than an ice-tray cubby box.

The only real disappointment outside is the cracked A-frame cowl: although purely cosmetic, it does look a bit tatty. ■

## VERDICT

A decent example of a popular caravan, which is light enough to be towed easily by most cars. The price is right at the top end of what you'd expect to pay – worth having a haggle, then, given that you'll probably want to have the seating re-upholstered.

## TECHNICAL

**Price when new:** £7,995

**Overall length:** 17ft 8in (5.38m)

**MRO:** 763kg (15.1cwt)

**MTPLM:** 1,000kg (19.7cwt)

**User payload:** 237kg (4.6cwt)

**Berths:** 2

**Warranty:** none – sold as seen

### All caravans reviewed at:

The Caravan Company, Irthlingborough Road, Finedon, Northamptonshire NN19 5EJ. Call 01933 682888 or see thecaravancompany.com

**Make and model:** Bürstner S-Class 520TL  
**Year of manufacture:** 2006  
**Current price:** £7,995

**N**ow, this is really something. This German-built four-berth end-washroom caravan is beautifully turned out and makes quite a first impression. There's a little blistering around the edges of the cooker where it butts up to the worktop and the stainless steel sink has lost some of its lustre – but in every other regard, it's like looking at a new caravan.

The fact that it's a Bürstner does get it off to a good start – in my experience, this marque brings with it a near-certain guarantee of exceptional build quality. That's certainly the case here: the woodwork is lustrous to look at and to touch, everything that's meant to open and close does so with precision and there's a great feeling of strength to it, inside and out.

Sometimes, continental-made caravans can be lacking in seat comfort: our near-neighbours often regard their caravans as little more than mobile bedrooms and couldn't care less whether it's nice to sit in or not. But the UK-market 520 is quite the opposite: the lounge is long and luxurious, offering sumptuously fine comfort either in sofa mode or as a bed. You can choose to have a vast double or two full-length singles. The upholstery feels as plump and firm as it probably did the day it left the factory.

The side dinette – with two full-size single seats – is where you'll find berths three and four. The clip-on table provides the base for the lower bed, with a cantilever overhead bunk opening out to make No 4. The ladder, clip-on bunk surround and mattress sections are all present and correct.

At the rear is the washroom – and what a stunner it is. It's spacious, wonderfully lit and boasts more storage options than I think I've ever seen in a caravan washroom. If the shower cubicle has ever been used, the previous owner has done a good job of disguising the fact. Curiously,



“...in every other regard, it's like looking at a new caravan”



So clean and tidy inside, it's difficult to tell that this Bürstner is six years old

though, there's no full-length mirror in here. The kitchen does its best not to be outdone by the excellence everywhere else. There's lots of work surface, lighting is well above average and there's an eye-catching 'secret' cupboard attached to the front of the fridge door. You'll have to be creative when it comes to choosing what you can fit in there (Bürstner calls it a 'spice cupboard', if that helps), but it ain't half clever.

Two wide-opening sunroofs, an opening window in the entrance door, a stereo radio/CD player, an external gas barbecue point and a hitch stabiliser just add to the sense of well-being that a tour around this marvellous caravan engenders. ■

### VERDICT

Glamour, practicality and great build in one desirable package that's almost as-new. I'd buy it in a flash.

## TECHNICAL

Price when new: £14,780

Overall length: 24ft 10in (7.56m)

MRO: 1,250kg (24.6cwt)

MTPLM: 1,500kg (29.5cwt)

User payload: 250kg (4.9cwt)

Berths: 4

Warranty: 6 months parts and labour



**Make and model:** Sterling Europa 495  
**Year of manufacture:** 2010  
**Current price:** £12,495



Clearly cared for by its previous owner, this Europa is light, airy, modern and immaculate inside

**T**he cheap and cheerful Abbey Domino and the extremely impressive Bürstner S-Class both offer compelling arguments to buy them. And this beauty, a two-year-old fixed-bed Sterling Europa, makes an equally strong case, aiming its sights squarely at those buyers who might otherwise buy new.

At twelve and a half grand, it's by far the most expensive of our used trio, but the nearest equivalent model in the current Sterling line-up, the Eccles Sport 514, is just a fiver under £3,600 more expensive by the time you've added on our good friend, the 'delivery charge'. Buying a second-hand caravan of any vintage liberates you from having to pay this added extra, which is £545 in the case of the new Eccles Sport.

'That's all well and good,' you may be thinking. 'But it's still a second-hand caravan, not a shiny, pristine new one.'

All I would say to that is – come and have a look at this one and tell me it's not new. I'd love to meet the previous owner and find out how often this has actually been lived in. Other than some road dust on the tyres, it bears no evidence of use whatsoever. The roasting tin in the truly immaculate oven still even has the 'care and use' sticker on it.

In all areas of the caravan – the loo, the shower cubicle, the en-suite wash-hand basin, the sumptuous mattress of the double bed, the sofas in the lounge – there's



“...there's a motorised mover in place on the axle; a fantastic added extra”



nothing to distinguish from new. The only clues that somebody else has owned it are both nice to find: there's a sticker on the A-frame to show it had an Approved Workshop service earlier this year and there's a Magic Mover motorised mover in place on the axle. That's a fantastic added extra, which would cost about £500 new.

Although nominally a four-berth, caravans bearing this layout almost always sell (in large numbers) to couples who want to enjoy fixed-bed, en-suite luxury. They'll get it here, with a beautifully-comfortable bed, a choice of two TV viewing locations, a stereo radio/CD player, a microwave oven and a big sunroof in the lounge.

This Europa also benefits from a year's parts and labour warranty, adding further weight to its 'why buy new?' status. ■

**VERDICT**

Looks like new, feels like new, is much cheaper than new and has a motorised mover. Arguably, that makes it better than new!

**TECHNICAL**

- Price when new: £12,685
- Overall length: 23ft 7in (7.19m)
- MRO: 1,269kg (25cwt)
- MTPLM: 1,480kg (29.1cwt)
- User payload: 211kg (4.1cwt)
- Berths: 4
- Warranty: 12 months parts and labour