



Eddis Xplore 540 £13,249



This is the lowest-priced fixed-bed, end-shower-room caravan to be built in Britain. It's light and bright in every way – and there's no rubbish bin on the door!

When Eddis added a fixed-bed, end shower room model to its budget-priced Xplore range the manufacturer suddenly brought this popular layout within range of £13,000 budgets. It's also within range of mid-sized cars, at 1400kg MPTLM.

Its layout is identical to many others – but the Xplore 540 has a character all of its own. First impressions are of a light, bright lounge. That's because the window is a single unit, rather than three, so it lets in more light. In this layout, this big window more than makes up for lack of window in the door. But there's something very positive about this windowless door. Instead of the usual rubbish bin, this one has a magazine rack attached to it. That's far more appropriate to the lounge than a smelly bin. Would that every caravan manufacturer followed Eddis Xplore's example!

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Simply cushions at the end of the settees – but it's quite cosy



Three-burner hob...

The hob has only three burners but, to put this into perspective, so do caravans in Eddis's Buccaneer range – and they reach well over £25,000.

Wardrobe compromise...

The wardrobe, on the left here, has only one door, so reaching the clothes at the left hand side would necessitate taking out some of those on the right. It's an economy measure that's easy to tolerate considering the light weight and light price achievement of this caravan.

Under-bed access...

This bed rises high enough on its gas-filled struts for you to crawl inside to reach items at the far end if you need to; and that's important because there's no exterior hatch to gain entry to the under-bed storage space.

Awkward junction...

We noticed that the front corner of the bed lacked a little finesse; a small piece of beading would have hidden an awkward junction in the woodwork. But this is a very minor point.

Clip-on drainer that works!

We love the practicality of the huge circular sink, with a quality brushed steel look and a robust plastic drainer that really does clip on its edge firmly and stay in place.



Lockers with finesse...

The overhead locker doors have a craftsmanship look, with shaped hardwood edging – they look anything but budget category!

One big window...

One-piece windows are the preserve of economy-class caravans, but we think they're more of a virtue than a means of saving cost, because they look great and let in loads of light.

Five power points...

The 540 has five power points. One is near the dresser with the TV points, one's by the front chest of drawers, two are in the kitchen and the fifth is adjacent to the dressing area, alongside the bed. Even at this price, hairdryer users are catered for, which is more than can be said of many caravans costing a lot more money!

A slim cupboard...

The central cupboard between fridge and cooker provides only a slim cutlery drawer (enough space for just a few utensils here) but there's a drawer above the Truma heater unit in the dresser opposite to contain table cutlery.

With the kitchen extension hinged up, the surface is adequate



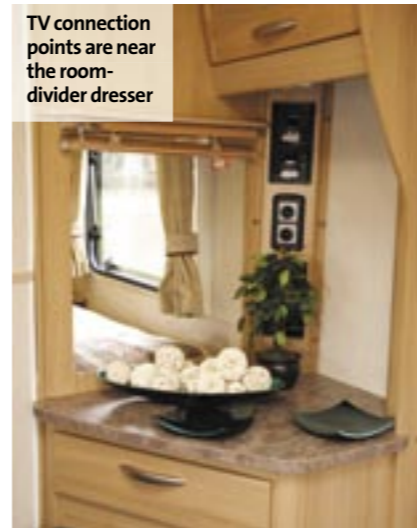
All you need is here – and the towel loop's in a sensible position, high up on the wall



Comfortable bed with a quality mattress



TV connection points are near the room-divider dresser



Go caravan says ...

The single strip of carpet may compromise foot cosiness but there's nothing economy-standard about the 540's mattress. Its thickness and firmness is everything you'd expect from a good quality domestic bed. Elddis's designers have shaved cost and weight where they could but they've got the basics right. This caravan's main points are its bed and roomy full-end shower room.

The Xplore 540 won the title Best Caravan for Couples in its price bracket in the Go Caravan Awards because it gives us a luxury layout in a price bracket far below many with which it can be compared. Enjoy the big front window, forget there's only one wardrobe door. All you need is here. Best of all, this caravan is at a price that will persuade you to buy new when otherwise you might have had to settle for something used.

There are lots of ways in which the Elddis design team has saved weight and cost to bring us the opportunity to achieve the luxury layout of a permanent bed at a budget price. One of them is by the absence of drop-down hatches to gain entry to under-settee bedding lockers; you get in by raising the top. And the hinges aren't designed to hold up the base while you grovel inside. But at this money, few are going to object to propping up a settee base.

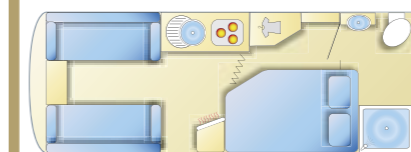
One economy measure is set, we think, to divide opinion. It's under your feet. The Xplore 540 has a single, central strip of carpet, rather like a long rug, running from the front end of the bed to the front end of the lounge. The upside is that this strip is easy to take outside to shake off any bits and, all around it, the bamboo-effect vinyl floor covering is visible and makes a positive contribution to the décor. The downside is that the vinyl is much colder under your toes than carpet. Whether this matters to you depends if you intend to use the caravan in cold weather. Our test week involved temperatures of between four and six degrees and we missed the carpet a lot, especially in the shower room. The cure? Buy a small bathroom mat so that you step onto something warm when you come out of the shower!

Put a doormat on your shopping list, too, for the mat that's built into the 540 is too narrow to be of any sole-scrubbing use and certainly too small to place a couple of pairs of shoes as you take them off on your way in.

Far more important than lack of carpet is that this layout gives you the luxury of a separate shower, although the bi-fold plastic door lacked rigidity and the turn-clip that secures it open is fitted a fraction too close to the top of the door. The result is that you have to gently ease the clip upwards to put the door into place. The caravan we tested is a member of Elddis's exhibition fleet; we weren't surprised to find that someone at one of the NEC shows had failed to notice that you have to raise this plastic catch and the result was a big crack in the shower door. Message: if you buy an Xplore 540 remember to ease the catch up every time you move the shower door!

Elddis Xplore 540

- Price: £13,249
- Lengths: 5.59m Body 7.34m Overall
- Width: 2.14m
- Headroom: 1.90m
- Weight: 1222kg (MRO) 1400kg (MTPLM)



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