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Knaus StarClass 560

CANDY EVANS visits Teign Valley Club Site to test a new Knaus caravan, a German model designed for the UK market

KNAUS HAS MADE A BOLD MOVE in remodelling its StarClass specifically for the UK market. It boasts a number of changes, from the traditional Continental spec with perhaps the most obvious one being the door on the correct side for British roads, though there are several less blatant tweaks.

The furnishings are muted, which we're told is to UK-buyers' tastes. There's also a full cooker inside as part of the basic specification, along with a microwave, and the UK-favoured triple window at the front. In fact, it's quite a challenge to spot the German influence inside. Nevertheless, the 560 is built to traditional Knaus standards, including for the most severe conditions of northern Europe. Fortunately, we didn't experience these on our trip to Teign Valley Club Site in Devon, but it's reassuring to know it would cope if necessary.

It's wonderfully spacious inside with many practical touches. There's a variety of task and ambient lighting options but all are easily switched off at points by the rear bed or entrance door, so you don't have to tackle many switches before retiring or going out.

I love the contrasting black marble-effect surfaces and light-coloured wood furniture. The piano-black-fronted Dometic fridge adds to the overall stylish look and is usefully large inside.

Our 'van was plated at 1,600kg, which only leaves a 160kg payload, but if your tow car is suitable, as was the Mercedes GLS we used (more about it on page 67), you can have this upgraded to 1,800kg.

Overall, Knaus has successfully combined UK-specific features with Germanic style. Just one tiny point - perhaps the next generation could include a doormat to protect the carpet from the British campsite?

■ If you're concerned about servicing as there are relatively few dealers around, you can call on any member of the Mobile Caravan Engineers Association (MCEA) for support.

During the day:

There's plenty of light in the living area with the panoramic front skylight, the Heki rooflight and five other windows. I'd be tempted to leave a couple of the armrests at home to give a longer length to lounge on the sofas, but it's a very pleasant place to spend time.

If you prefer a U-shaped seating area, without the central chest of drawers, you can request this.



Preparing food:

The kitchen was excellent, with plenty of deep storage space including shelving, tall cupboards and a cutlery drawer alongside the Thetford cooker, with its gas rings and electric hotplate, and a microwave oven.

Working space was limited because the sink comes with a proper draining board, though the production models will have a black glass cover to make things easier. I'm also not a fan of the Knaus 230V socket covers as they can get in the way, sometimes making it impossible to plug in appliances with transformer plugs.

At night:

The rear fixed bed was supremely comfortable and measures a class-leading 2.03m x 1.36m. It's also practical because both the mattress and frame are split in two along its length, so you can lift just half the bed to reach the vast storage space underneath rather than fighting the whole double bed and mattress.

During the day:

The sturdy freestanding table is stored beneath the wall-side of the bed. It's challenging to remove this from the inside, though we didn't need it during our stay as the front foldout table was plenty big enough for two. However, it's also accessible from the outside so it could slide out easily into your awning. The front double bed is enormous - made up by removing the top part of the chest of drawers.

In the washroom:

The washroom was a little narrower than in some caravans, possibly because the substantial wardrobe and storage units are in the bedroom area rather than in here, but it was more than adequate. The shower cubicle is next to the basin, which has useful storage above and below it. There's a Dometic swivel-bowl toilet to complete the set.



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at a glance

Price as tested £26,994

Club Care insurance £749

Berths Four

Bed sizes Fixed double

2.03m x 1.36m; front double
1.98m x 1.45m

Kitchen Three-burner hob with electric hotplate; grill; oven; microwave

Electrics Seven 230V sockets; 12V socket with TV aerial point

Gas Mountings for two 11kg cylinders

Length x width x height
7.5m x 2.32m x 2.57m

Mass in Running Order
1,440kg

Maximum Technically

Permissible Laden Mass
1,600kg

User payload 160kg

BE licence required Yes

Warranty Two years; five years body integrity

Supplier Knaus UK

Web www.knaus-uk.co.uk

verdict

A good-quality, stylish caravan underpinned by German engineering.