

On Test Swift Bolero 630EW on LWB 2.3TD Fiat Ducato



BOLERO BASH

MMM's Motorhome of the Year is put through its paces on a gruelling thousand-mile test



MMM's Motorcaravan of the Year for 2007.

AT A GLANCE

- **PRICE FROM:** £39,660 OTR
- **BERTHS:** 2
- **LAYOUT:** Front lounge ahead of offside L-shaped kitchen with caravan entrance and fridge opposite. Full-width rear washroom contains wardrobe
- **ECONOMY:** 25mpg



Last winter saw MMM's Motorhome of the Year square up to some of the worst weather for many a year. Howling gales and torrential rain were very much on the menu as we travelled almost the length and breadth of England, and Swift's Bolero 630EW had its mettle well and truly tested.

The Bolero range of low profiles represents a brave new world for the Swift Group as it meets the Continental competition head-on. The new Fiat Ducato's cutting-edge looks and special Camper chassis underpin four Bolero models that aim to offer the best of Continental style along with designs and features to suit British motorcaravanners - even the fixed bed model (680FB) has a twin-sofa lounge upfront.

Externally, the Bolero's styling is a match for anything coming from the European mainland. A low profile overcab cap blends well with the Ducato front end as it puts a stylish hat on the Fiat's jutting-chin and sloping-screen facade. Aft, roof rails, curved corners and silver sides do a good job of defusing the inevitable 'boxy' motorhome shape.

The test 'van also came equipped with a neatly flush, wind-out awning that's part of the Vogue Pack of accessories.

In short, the Bolero looks about as good as a low profile motorcaravan can, while the Fiat's new wider track axle helps make sure that the rear wheel arches are filled convincingly. Of course, as this is a British-built motorhome you'll not have to put up with a caravan entrance on the offside - the upmarket entrance door will deposit you easily onto the kerb when parked at the roadside.

LOVELY LAYOUT

The 630EW boasts an internal layout that - short of a fixed bed - probably offers the most comfortable accommodation for a motorhoming couple in a 'van of this size.

Fiat's new Camper chassis was designed to be lower than the standard frame and indeed no external step is needed to get you aboard.

Entering via the caravan door (which is half way down the nearside), you're greeted by a layout that partners a front end, twin-sofa-equipped lounge with central kitchen and palatial, across-the-rear washroom. Decor is best described as neutral; silver-trimmed, mid-tone joinery is partnered with beige and cream soft furnishings. All this is easy on the eye, but the more you look, the more you realise that there's no real colour in evidence.

Continental rivals such as Bürstner and Knaus splash a few 'interesting shades' around their 2007 interiors but the Bolero chooses the 'safe' route interior design-wise. Even so, the interior looked - and felt - good, even in the dark days of winter and will probably do the same trick in July. I like a bit of colour in my motorhome life, so I'd add some bright



Words & pictures by Dave Hurrell

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cushions and throws that would also keep the inevitable spilled red wine off the upholstery.

DUCATO DAZE

The Bolero's high-tech 2.3-litre derv drinker normally puts out 120 horsepower, but is 'chipped,' gaining an extra 10 horses, to help propel Fiat's Camper chassis cab convincingly. It also comes as standard with a six-speed gearbox.

As the first chassis imported were left-hand drive, I expected this demonstrator to have its steering wheel on the wrong side. However, I was very pleased to discover that the test 'van was right-hand drive. This was my first taste of the Ducato with the driving department so-handed and I looked forward to giving this most popular base vehicle a comprehensive test.

The new Fiat's cab ergonomics are very good and a world away from the old model.

Outstanding features are an excellent driving position, better heater (here with Fiat-fitted on-road living area heating) and super, fully adjustable seats. Even things like the pedals are improved - they're now bigger, and better spaced than those in the old model. In-cab storage is excellent too, and includes big door pockets and a laptop-sized compartment in the centre; opt for cab air-con and you get a cooled drinks compartment too.

Swift's contribution to the cab environment includes automotive-style mouldings around the cab cutaway that add a pair of eyeball spotlights.

Swift's Vogue Pack of optional extras adds DVD capability to the radio/CD and a drop-down screen above provides viewing of same and the included reversing camera. A Blaupunkt Lucca satellite navigation unit is also in the Vogue Pack and should prove very useful; however, an intermittent electrical fault made it impossible to test it properly. The camera's a very good idea as there's no internal rearward view.

Driving from home, high in the North Pennines, gave a good chance to test handling and ride comfort as the Bolero tackled steep gradients and twisting B roads. Ride quality is firm, and this generates a few rattles. However, handling proved to be excellent - helped, no doubt, by the front and rear anti-roll bars now standard on this chassis.

Performance demonstrated just how far modern, computer-controlled diesel engine design has come. Power delivery is smooth with little discernible turbo lag and there's plenty of it on tap. The gearbox - while not as slick as rivals - has six well-spaced ratios that are easy





to use. At last this cack-handed tester got to change gear with his left hand! Top gear is a high, overdrive-style ratio you would normally use for fast motorway work, but the surprising thing is that this motor will still pull it without fuss from around 45mph. Having quit the B roads, the Bolero hit the A1 to head south where it proved itself excellent at high-speed cruising - easily maintaining the legal limit with plenty of power to spare. At the end of a very long driving day,

we had covered nigh-on 350 miles, but emerged from the cab feeling good with none of the aches and pains associated with the old Ducato.

The only downside of this trip came when we experienced a serious loss of power in the outside lane of the A1 near Grantham. Limping into the town and parking up, I discovered an intercooler hose had detached itself. The problem turned out to be a faulty hose clip - just 99p for a replacement allowed me to break

- 1 A classic front-end lounge is well lit by over-cab sunroof and Midi Heki rooflight
- 2 To the rear, the L-shaped kitchen has its fridge opposite to the rear of the caravan door
- 3 High speed motorway travel was pure pleasure



I LIKED

- Smooth, willing engine
- Six-speed gearbox
- Good driving position
- Comfortable cab seats
- Value Vogue accessories pack
- Good-looking bodywork
- Comfortable lounge
- Full cooker
- Class-leading fridge
- Spacious washroom
- Easily made, comfy bed

I WOULD HAVE LIKED

- Better-organised kitchen storage
- Interior access hatch for the nearside sofa storage

I DISLIKED

- Exterior hatch on the only locker (under nearside sofa) suitable for bedding storage

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out the tool kit and do a repair. For the rest of the test the Ducato performed faultlessly.

FORWARD TO LOUNGE AND DINE

A wide cab and Fiat, factory-fitted swivels make it very easy to twist the seats and let them become part of the lounge. The lounge also has a floor raised from the rest of the living area. This means that the cab seats approach the lounge at the same (and ideal) height. The only disadvantage with this design is the fact that headroom is somewhat restricted. Above the cab is a big (non-opening) sunroof, which, with the adjacent Midi Heki, makes the area very light indeed. The nearside sofa is slightly shorter than its opposite number. While neither is huge they do offer good feet-up lounging for a couple and sociable seating for a foursome. The cab seats, of course, add two armchairs that are as comfy to use as they are when in cab mode. Mounted on the front end of the nearside seat box, a coffee table offers convenient parking for drinks and snacks, although its splined leg makes it difficult to adjust. Main meals are catered for by a large, freestanding table, emerging from its locker to the rear of the caravan door. This table is equipped with a fold-over leaf on one side, which makes it tricky to extract, as it's a tight fit. Once set up, the table offers a large surface with plenty of room for four to dine.

Unfortunately the table fitted in the test 'van was coated in what appeared to be brown overspray, giving the impression that it had been used as a stand for the painting of other items. I would not expect to see this kind of thing in any new motorhome - to provide a press demonstrator with a table in this condition is, if anything, even dafter! This merely demonstrates the need to check every inch of your new motorhome (whatever the make) before you accept it from a dealer.

Adjacent to the caravan door, a neat, moulded plastic TV niche stands ready to accept the flat screen TV of your choice. The niche is at the perfect viewing height and receives signals from a standard-fit directional aerial plus a Freeview digital TV tuner that's another feature of the Vogue Pack. Signals from the in-cab radio/CD/MP3/DVD player are fed here too, so you can watch your favourite discs.

Meanwhile, a pair of standard-fit rear speakers offers good sound quality in the lounge. There was no TV fitted in the test van's niche, but as the signal is also fed to the drop-down screen in the cab, we were able to watch some programs via the Freeview box. All

this is fine and dandy, but you will need to get yourself some transmitter information. This is because you'll need to know if the transmitter local to the site you're on is actually providing a Freeview service - terrestrial digital TV coverage is, at present, patchy.

Lovely lighting courtesy of four adjustable spots and two ceiling lights neatly incorporated into the frame of the Heki rooflight complete a lounge-diner that's well appointed and very comfortable.

GORGEOUS GALLEY

The Bolero's kitchen is a looker - both L-shaped and curvy, it has showroom appeal in spades. As with just about every other 2007 Swift kitchen, the centrepiece is a full-sized cooker. This provides hob, grill and oven just like those at home and also offers a gas-saving solid electric hotplate.

The other star of the show lives opposite the main kitchen area on the nearside. In these days of 'bigger is better' culture, the fridge keeps pace with fashion, offering a capacity (180 litres) that is not only class-leading, but even leaves my fridge at home looking embarrassed! Unlike rivals, there's just a single door to access the interior, but once there you

find loads of space for the chilled stuff plus a full-width freezer compartment.

Above this is the motorhome kitchen 'catwalk' item for 2007: a dedicated rack for your white wine.

Back in the main kitchen area style fights with substance - the former, it seems wins. The lovely curvy cupboards may leave you unbruised, but they don't represent the most effective use of space. The upper unit really needs some shelves, whilst the lower's carousel shelves had suffered a trauma. What I thought were two plastic shelves, were actually three - one had slid down the central support pole to jam against its mate below (poor preparation of the test vehicle rears its ugly head again?). The carousel's shelves include plastic troughs to accept cutlery and utensils, which is a good thing as the rest of the kitchen is drawerless. The troughs seemed strange at first, but proved to work well.

Above the cooker is a locker designed (with a mains socket) to take the optional microwave. However, I'd do without and kit this locker out to accept my batterie de cuisine, plus tins and packets. Kitchen lighting is good with a couple of downlighters above, plus task lighting under the high-level cupboards.



4 Lounge will entertain six guests and comes with a handy coffee table

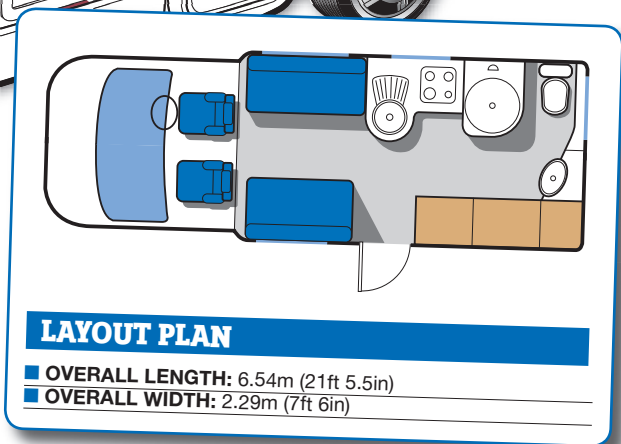
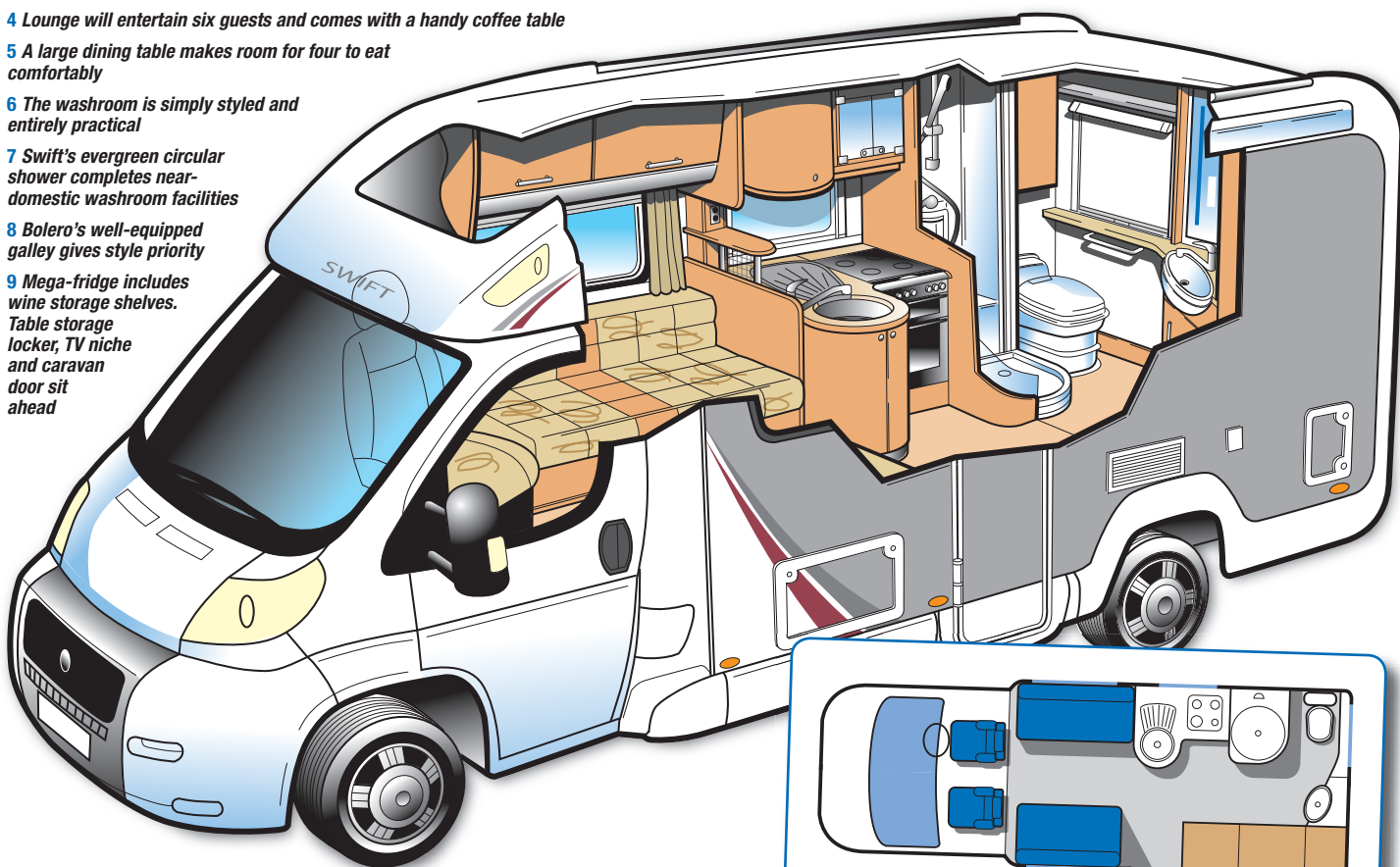
5 A large dining table makes room for four to eat comfortably

6 The washroom is simply styled and entirely practical

7 Swift's evergreen circular shower completes near-domestic washroom facilities

8 Bolero's well-equipped galley gives style priority

9 Mega-fridge includes wine storage shelves. Table storage locker, TV niche and caravan door sit ahead



BOLERO BATHING

If it's the Bolero's good-looking bodywork that attracts potential owners in the first place, it'll be the palatial washroom that'll sell them the 630EW.

There are no surprises as you walk through the domestic-style washroom door (unfortunately, sticking in the test vehicle) to discover a favourite layout.

The star feature in here is a simple one: space. There's simply lots of room to wash, use the loo, the shower and, thanks to the presence of the wardrobe, dress or get changed. Aside from the ubiquitous Thetford

and reasonable vanity basin, the shower is the strong and stylish circular unit used by Swift for many a year: if it ain't broke, don't fix it seems to be the conclusion.

That wardrobe also includes a twin access, cubby-shelf-equipped area for smalls 'n' shirts and pullout baskets in its base: shoes fit in here fine. Other storage is to be had under the basin and in a simple-but-spacious cupboard above the toilet. This type of washroom offers near-domestic convenience in a motorhome setting

and only the smaller-sized shower may fall short of perfection for those of larger frame.

A SWIFT NAP

Bed making is a doddle. Simply pull together the alloy-framed slatted sofa bases, drop in both backrests and jump in. Standard-fit cab blinds mean cab blackout is easy to achieve and very effective at keeping the dawn's early light at bay. You can put your alarm clock on the end of the kitchen unit and a tray on one of the swivel cab seats will make you a night table on that side. During a week of nights I swore not once while bed-making and slept like a very comfortable log - that was, until the satnav turned itself on in the middle of the night! As I said before, this Bolero suffered from a strange intermittent electrical fault that seemed to cause this to happen; either that or we had a motorhome ghost!

The presence of four, individually switched spotlights in the lounge means whichever way round you sleep you'll get your own reading lamp. However, the bed does narrow towards the nearside (the nearside sofa is shorter than its twin), so sleeping heads to the offside is best. All in all, a top-notch lounge-based bedroom: well designed and strongly constructed, using good quality materials.

BOLERO BOXED-UP

Loading up this Bolero with holiday kit for two should present no problems, as over half a tonne of usable payload is on offer. The 3500kg



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chassis also poses no problems licence-wise (if you passed your test after 1996 you can only drive vehicles up to 3500kg maximum authorised weight without taking another test).

Overhead lockers, providing general storage, number four - all above the lounge. They feature Swift's 'spaceframe' plastic carcass design - something that makes them lighter (helping to keep the conversion's weight down) and sees them all easily equipped with shelves. Other

space in the lounge is under the nearside sofa, here equipped with an outside-access locker door. As this is really the only place to store bedding, I'd prefer to see this door omitted and replaced with one on the inside to make duvet or sleeping bags easier to get at. Another externally accessed locker is provided at the rear, so there would still be somewhere to store lead, hoses, wedges and tools.

HEAT AND LIGHT

As the wind howled and rain lashed the Bolero, we were forced to sit tight for twenty-four hours. Black Horse Farm Caravan Club Site near Dover provided our refuge, while the radio told tales of falling trees, cancelled ferries and closed motorways. This, then, provided the ideal time to test life support systems in anger and the Bolero came up trumps (with one or two exceptions not the fault of its design). Truma's triumphant Combi EH heating system is a standard-fit item here and it proved to

be a star performer. Working on gas, mains electricity, or a combination of the two, it provided loads of heat and hot water to keep us cosy during terrible weather. The gas-fired blown-air heating warmed the interior very quickly when needed, while on mains electricity and low setting, the Truma kept night time chills at bay while generating little noise. This system worked superbly well and I compliment Swift on making it a standard fitting - one that's perfect for the needs of UK motorhomers, especially off-season.

Water tanks are of good sizes and are both underslung - the fresh tank is insulated to allow it to function in low temperatures. The control panel is mounted - as is often the case - above the caravan door and offers the usual control and display of all caravan functions. Unfortunately, this is where some trouble started, as an intermittent fault caused lighting and water pump to function, seemingly when they felt like it. The panel's display indicated

10 The bed is easy to make and proved very comfortable

11 The nearside sofa base is the only place to store bedding

12 Overhead lockers all have shelves

13 The wardrobe offers versatile storage



LIVE-IN TEST DATA

SWIFT BOLERO

TYPE

Low profile coachbuilt

PRICE

- From: £39,660 OTR
- As tested: £40,655 OTR

BASICS

- **Vehicle:** Fiat Ducato LWB Camper chassis cab
- **Berths:** 2
- **Three-point belted seats:** 2 (including driver)
- **Warranty:** 3 years base vehicle and conversion

CONSTRUCTION

Alloy-clad sandwich construction coachbuilt with moulded ABS/GRP panels and alloy skirts

DIMENSIONS

- **Length:** 6.54m (21ft 5.5in)*
- **Width:** 2.29m (7ft 6in), excluding mirrors
- **Height:** 2.79m (9ft 2in)*
- **Wheelbase:** 4.04m (13ft 3in)*
- **Rear overhang:** 1.57m (5ft 2in)
- **Maximum authorised weight:** 3500kg*
- **Payload:** 535kg* (After 75kg for driver, plus 90 per cent fuel, fresh water and gas)

INSIDE STORY

Front lounge ahead of offside L-shaped kitchen with caravan entrance and fridge opposite. Full-width rear washroom contains wardrobe

- **Insulation:** Floor 70mm, walls 32mm, roof 34mm
- **Interior height:** Lounge area: 1.83m (6ft 0in) minimum; kitchen/washroom 1.97m (6ft 5.5in) maximum

THE VEHICLE

- **Engine:** 2.3-litre turbo-diesel producing 95.5kW (130bhp) @ 3600rpm
- **Transmission:** Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive
- **Fuel consumption:** 25mpg overall
- **Brakes:** Servo-assisted discs all round
- **Suspension:** Front: Independent coil sprung. Rear: Leaf springs on rigid axle
- **Features:** ABS, driver's airbag, remote central-locking, electric windows, electrically-operated mirrors with integral radio aerial and indicator repeaters, height-adjustable cab seats with twin armrests, height-adjustable top seatbelt mounts, headlamp height adjustment, adjustable rake steering column, 12V socket, pop-up



map holder, lockable laptop storage bin, twin door bins, factory-fitted on-road living area heating, variable rate intermittent wiper control

LOUNGING & DINING

Swivel cab seats and twin inward-facing sofas. Freestanding table emerges from dedicated locker in kitchen to stand between sofas. Dogleg side table attaches to forward end of nearside sofa

KITCHEN

Offside main unit with two cupboards plus two pigeon hole shelves above, cupboard with carousel, pan storage locker beneath cooker, fridge opposite with lockers above and below

- **Sink:** Stainless steel round bowl, long-spout mixer tap, inset cutting board and removable plastic drainer
- **Cooker:** Stoves DF500DIT slot-in unit with hinged glass lid, three gas burners, one solid electric hotplate, grill and thermostatically-controlled oven, all with electronic ignition
- **Fridge:** Thetford C11 three-way unit (automatic energy selection), full-width freezer compartment, wine bottle storage in top and internal illumination. Capacity 180 litres

WASHROOM

Vanity basin with shelved cupboard below and mirror above, electric flush swivel-bowl cassette toilet with shelved storage cupboard above. Separate circular shower compartment with wooden duckboard on single outlet tray, mixer tap/riser rail/showerhead, rigid semi-circular shower screen

BEDS

Lounge double

- **Length:** 2.13m (7ft 0in)
- **Width:** 1.40m (4ft 7in) maximum, 1.22m (4ft 0in) minimum

STORAGE

Twin storage pockets above cab, four shelved overhead lockers above lounge, externally accessed space beneath nearside sofa, shallow compartment under lounge floor. Two-door wardrobe with auto illumination, side-to-side hanging rail, three pullout baskets below. Single door cupboard with three shelves, cosmetic

storage bins on inside of door with access to shelves also via wardrobe

LIFE SUPPORT

- **Fresh water:** Underslung. Capacity 90 litres (19.8 gallons)
- **Waste water:** Underslung. Capacity 68 litres (15 gallons)
- **Water heater:** Truma Combi EH gas/mains operation
- **Space heater:** Truma Combi EH blown-air, gas/mains operation
- **Leisure battery:** 110 amp hr
- **Gas:** 2 x 7kg cylinders
- **Lighting:** Cab: Two adjustable halogen reading lamps. Lounge: Four adjustable halogen spots, two fluorescent ceiling lamps, halogen downlighter adjacent to caravan door. Kitchen: Two halogen downlighters plus fluorescent task lighting. Washroom: Halogen downlighter above basin, fluorescent pelmet light above storage cupboard, filament lamp in shower compartment, auto illumination in wardrobe. Awning light
- **Sockets:** 230V: Four (in lounge, kitchen, microwave cupboard, TV niche), 12V: Two (in cab, TV niche)
- **Control panel:** Mounted above entrance door, digital display shows time, date, interior temperature, battery condition/charge, fresh/waste water levels, controls automatic operation of water/space heating, alarm function. Push-buttons control lighting, heating, water pump
- **Blinds/curtains:** Pleated blinds to windscreens and cab side windows, pull-down blinds/flyscreens to lounge, kitchen and washroom windows, cassette blinds/flyscreens to Heki rooflights and caravan door window
- **Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant:** Yes

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Fitted to test vehicle:

- **Base:** Blaupunkt Lucca satellite navigation system, Blaupunkt Las Vegas radio/DVD/CD/MP3 player, drop-down colour LCD monitor/reversing camera (as part of Vogue pack, see below)
- **Conversion:** Recessed awning, Freeview digital TV tuner (as part of Vogue pack, total £995)

Other options:

- **Base:** Cab air-conditioning (£POA), alloy wheels (£POA), detachable towbar (£395)
- **Conversion:** Built-in microwave (£115), roof crossbars and ladder (£325)

E&OE

that the leisure battery was healthy and the charger working but, even so, each evening became an 'electrical lottery' as we wondered if we'd win lights and pump, or be living with torch, kettle and water porter. Fortunately the fault did not extend to the heating so we kept snug. This fault seemed to be fundamental as the problem with the satnav appeared to be linked to the other faults. Subsequent investigations by Swift's Product Director, Steve Trossell, revealed that a relay on the Fiat side of the electrics was loose, causing a poor connection. It is worth noting that this arrangement is part of a new system, designed and installed by Fiat, to allow converters to simply 'plug in' the caravan component electrical connections and should, if anything, make electrical systems more reliable.

CONCLUSION

During a thousand miles of travel and a week of days and nights living in the Bolero 630EW, we had ample time to assess this new motorhome's strengths and weaknesses.

As a stylish living 'van for two it acquires itself very well indeed. A cosy lounge, well-equipped kitchen and palatial washroom all feel spacious, with a stylish, but comfortable ambience. Levels of equipment fitted as standard are impressive, while the £995 Vogue pack is a must have, such is its value for money quotient.

As a winner of MMM's Motorhome of the Year, this 'van represents not only itself but all the other models in the range, as the Swift Group really has entered a 'brave new world' of motorhome construction, upping its game

in many key areas. Design is better, materials are better quality and levels of equipment are up in standard form. It's competitive too: under £40k for a motorhome like this seems like very good value.

Aside from the gremlins (both Fiat and Swift) found in the test vehicle, criticisms are few, but better arranged kitchen storage and the presence of an exterior hatch in the only locker big enough to store bedding poke their noses over the parapet.

On the road, the new Fiat is excellent and, as this test proved, long distance and high speed travel is comfortable and rewarding for both driver and passenger. Still relatively rare amongst British-built 'vans, this genuinely low, low profile 'van now sits at the cutting edge of UK volume motorcaravan production. ■