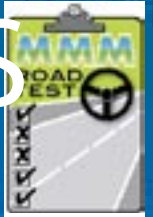


# A RAFT OF IMPROVEMENTS

Swift Kon-Tiki Vogue 660 on 2.8JTD Fiat Ducato Al-Ko

The 2006 season sees Swift's grand tourers fully loaded and ready for action. Dave Hurrell spent a week or so Kon-Tiki touring



A new caravan door adorns the 660, complete with two-point locking, waste bin and window. Forward of this is the access flap to capacious underfloor storage space.

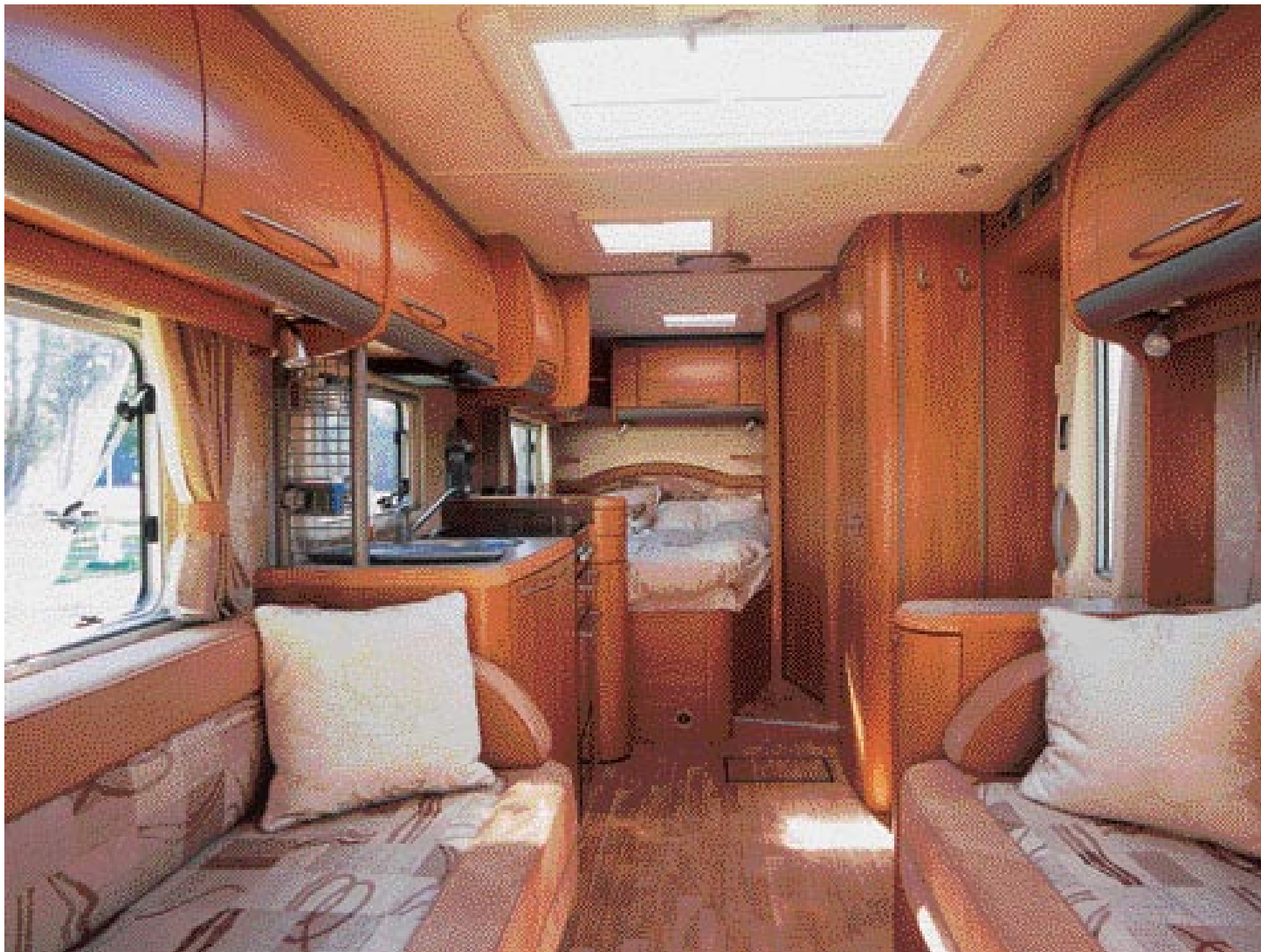
For the 2006 model year, all Kon-Tiki models are badged as Vogue; I assume to mark the fact that a host of desirable extras are now included as standard on models that remain much the same as last year. The range has got smaller, with only five models instead of last year's eight and only one low profile – this 660. Prices have risen, but this is more than made up for by the value of the 'extras' now fitted as standard. If you plan to become a Kon-Tiki owner in 2006, you'll get more for your hard earned, that's for sure. Although a four-berth, the 660 has no forward-facing travel seats in the rear and so seems ideal as a luxury grand tourer for two.

#### A VIEW IN VOGUE

Seven-and-a-half metres of Kon-Tiki 660 looks good from the outside, good enough not only to get your attention but also possibly to make you reach for your wallet. The finish is excellent, and features like the strong alloy skirts mean it's as good to touch as it is to look at.

The super-low Al-Ko rear chassis gives an overall sleek look that reduces the bulk of this undeniably large motorhome.

External features with sight-for-sore-eyes status include roof rack and ladder, alloy wheels,



Looking towards the 660's rear exposes an ideal grand touring layout with up-front lounge, centre kitchen, and rear fixed bed with washroom alongside.

neatly recessed awning, and colour-coded mirrors and bumpers. There's a new caravan door too, complete with window and two-point locking.

Enter through the door (via an electric external step) to discover a 'three-room' layout with twin-sofa lounge-diner up front, centre kitchen, and rear longitudinal double bed with separate-shower washroom alongside.

**VOGUE AT THE HELM**

Swift only produces motorhomes based on the Fiat Ducato, so it was no surprise to discover this most popular of base vehicles providing the 660's motor. Fiat's legendary 2.8-litre engine provides 127 horses of smooth, flexible power

that still cuts the mustard when put up against some of the newer competition. I was very pleased to see that driver's airbag and ABS antilock brakes are now fitted as standard, but a little disappointed to discover that the central locking is key operated.

Neatly, Swift has extended this system to include the caravan door and a remote system would have made it much easier to get the 660 locked-up tight. This would be even better when returning to the 'van at night, with no fiddling in the dark to get your key into the cab door lock. And the solution? I always have a good quality alarm fitted to my motorcaravans and, for a small charge, most alarm remotes can be made to operate the

central locking too. Voila! Your 660 is fully locked and alarmed with the press of the remote key.

**VOGUE ON THE ROAD**

Fiat claims the Ducato is car-like, but jump in the cab and you may experience a strange desire for checked shirts and chunky chocolate bars, such is the truckesque nature of the driving position.

However, that's where the similarities end, as steering, brakes and dash-mounted gearchange are light and positive. In fact, once you get used to the motorhome's bulk (old hands will know all about this) the 660 is very easy to drive. Susceptibility to crosswinds was low, due mainly, I think, to the shape of the low-profile body and

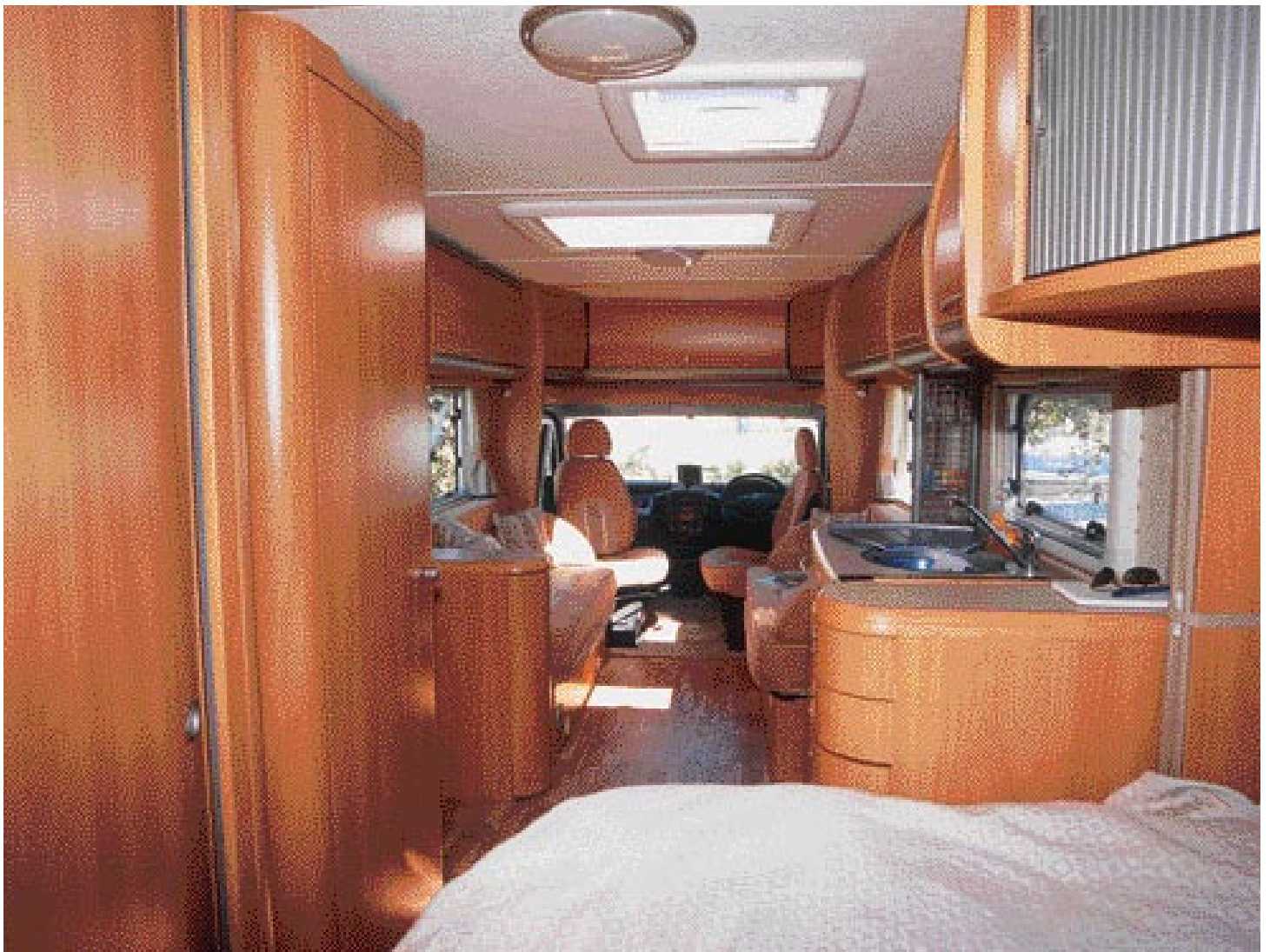


Important features in the cab include ABS, driver's airbag and reversing camera monitor.



With cab seats swivelled the lounge can easily accommodate six people.





The view forward from the rear double bed sees the washroom and wardrobe on the left and galley opposite. Up front the cab seats are swivelled to complete a great motorhome lounge.

the fact that the Al-Ko rear chassis sticks to the road like glue. We certainly had the opportunity to test under all conditions, as we were lucky enough to take the 660 to Europe's biggest motorhome show at Düsseldorf in Germany.

Autoroute, autobahn, plus many smaller roads and town centres in both Germany and France saw the Kon-Tiki prove its mettle, taking all in its stride. The Fiat's infamous high-ratio top gear has been found to be a tad too high in some large motorhomes, but pulling this body it seemed just right. Sure, its use was best confined to speeds over 60mph, but once engaged the 660 bowled along without complaint from the motor.

Conversion noise too was conspicuous by its absence.

There's no internal view to the rear, so door mirrors were vital to see behind, and, as ever, Fiat's dual-lens beauties did the job superbly well.

Reversing is always another matter with large coachbults, as small obstacles and those directly behind can be out of sight. Your copilot positioned at the rear (waving their arms to give reversing signals you don't understand) is the traditional way of reversing a motorhome. However, Swift has thought of this little bit of strife waiting to happen and has thoughtfully fitted a colour/infrared reversing camera to the rear and a monitor to the dashtop as standard. This is a great idea, and another addition to the Kon-Tiki that's both convenient and a positive contribution to safety.

#### THE VOGUE LOUNGE

With two pampered motorhomers aboard, the 660 lounge is superb. A sofa or a swivelled cab

seat each means flexible seating and plenty of room to lie about and read, doze or plan the next day's route. The sofa seats may be a tad high for some, although for the two of us (5ft 10in and 5ft 6in tall) they were fine. Swift offers a coffee table that mounts on a swivel arm as an option, and I'd definitely put one of these wine tables on my list of lounging essentials.

OK, so you're up in't Lakes in November... Look, you've just spent £46,595 (plus £120 for the wine table) on a fully-winterised luxury pad on wheels, so you're gonna use it all year round. Anyway, as I was saying, you are up in't Lakes in November and our great British weather is doing its 'bracing' thing. You know, blowing a gale and chucking it down. Anyway, reluctantly (of course), you've cancelled that climb up the Old Man of Utterthwaite or similar, so now what do you do?

Owners of more modest motorcaravans might be forced to sulk and watch the rain running down the windows; you, of course, have enough room for a party! Seriously though, the 660's lounge can easily accommodate six for a soiree - there's even room for a folding chair or two at the kitchen end if unexpected guests arrive. So, to sum up - the 660's lounge is a belter and we loved it.

#### IN-VOGUE EATS

The lounge also doubles as a diner, and does this courtesy of a freestanding table, that, like many, is stored in the wardrobe. Extracting the table from its lair and setting it up is easy, thanks mainly to the wardrobe's location - amidships and adjacent to the lounge.

Once in place between the sofas this table makes a decent dining surface for up to four



The freestanding table is easy to get at in the wardrobe.

people. It's only now that you realise the reason for the slightly high seating, as, unlike your average domestic lounge, at mealtimes the sofas have to double as dining chairs. A useful addition to this area is the bull-nosed storage unit that stands twixt the aft end of the nearside sofa and the





The lounge works well as a diner with room for four to eat.



A dedicated locker houses the microwave oven.



Slot-in cooker, AES fridge and removable drainer help make the 660's galley good to use.

◁ Slide-out unit offers a rubbish bag holder. The two small drawers above are the only examples to be found.

caravan door. Its top is narrow but still provides a useful buffet that can place dining table overspill within easy reach.

**VOGUE IN THE KITCHEN**

Sandwiched between the offside sofa and the foot of the fixed double bed, the 660's galley comes fully equipped. A full-sized slot-in cooker offers three gas burners and one gas-saving solid electric hotplate under its hinged glass lid. Above, in a locker with up-and-over door,

lurks a microwave oven. Separate grill and oven complete an electronically ignited package that's difficult to fault.

The microwave's another standard fitting for 2006 - very welcome in these days of frozen food and ready meals. Too tired to cook? As long as you're hooked up to the mains you'll be able to zap yourself a gourmet ready meal in seconds. The only downside of this unit is the fact that it's mounted at high level. You don't need a stepladder to use it, but you will need to be

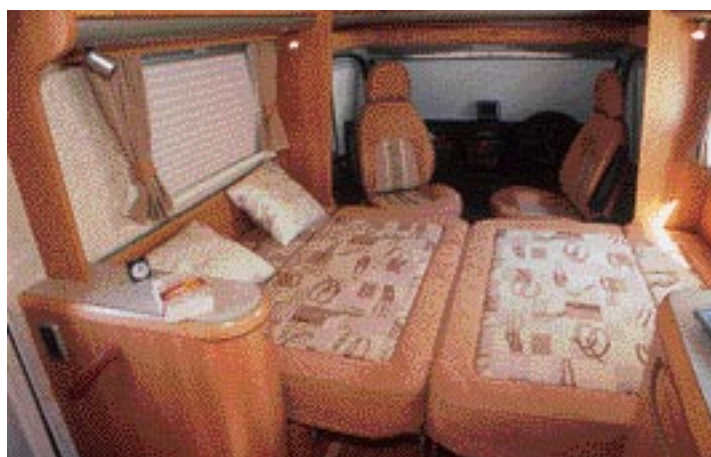
careful when extracting potentially boiling food from its interior.

The circular stainless steel sink gave us the opportunity to try out our new, metallic blue washing-up bowl, which, thankfully, is round too.

There's no drainer here, but that leaves a good slab of worktop to the left. It's this simple feature that helps make this kitchen a proper working proposition for the more ambitious motorhome cook, providing vital preparation area. Dish draining, however, has not been neglected as a separate



Next to the lounge, another slide-out hides bottle storage.



The lounge double bed is very easy to make and one of the best of its type.



plastic unit emerges from the cupboard below to sit on the worktop and dock with the sink.

The fridge is another new feature and incorporates AES (Automatic Energy Selection) function for turn-on-and-forget convenience.

Although not as capacious as the big fridge/freezers that seem to be the latest must-have item, the 93 litres of chilling space on offer here is still good. This unit's decor door helps give the kitchen a great look and was easy to use. It benefits from a positive, push-button lock so you don't end up with fish fingers and milk all over the floor after rounding the first bend.

Kitchen storage is modest but adequate, with two high-level lockers and a narrow cupboard and bull-nosed pullout larder unit below. The larder incorporates a frame-style rubbish bag holder - but if you don't like the idea of mixing rubbish with your groceries there's another bin on the inside of the caravan door.

Long and hard have we motorhome hacks banged on about the lack of rubbish bin provision in motorhomes; Swift, it seems, has got the message.

Drawers, or the lack, are another pet hate of mine and only two very small ones are present here in the top of the larder unit. However, as long as you have no desire to travel with a full canteen of cutlery there's room for knives, forks and spoons, plus a sensible selection of utensils within.

The previously mentioned bull-nosed unit adjacent to the nearside sofa also features a pull-out that reveals a bottle store and modest wire shelf.

The 660's galley worked very well during the test with features both stylish and useful. Aside from those diddy drawers it is very difficult to criticise.

#### VOGUE BATHING

Almost without exception, motorhomes with longitudinal fixed double beds aft have their washrooms alongside. The 660 is no exception and its bathing space is fully equipped with electric loo (built-in flush tank), vanity basin, and separate shower compartment.

The shower is the circular unit often seen in Swift products - it's popular because it's very good. Although it can't be described as big, showering in here is spot-on, with rigid door, seats for easy washing, and a good quality mixer/showerhead.

The basin too gets high marks with plenty of depth - and is set into a strong counter top. There's plenty of space to put things down with a handy shelf above the loo. Sensible storage above and below, good lighting, and mirrors, complete what should be an excellent washroom.

However, this room is let down big-time by a lack of floor space in front of the toilet and basin. We found it difficult to use either without leaving the door open - a less than perfect situation for us but possibly unacceptable to others. The flat washroom door slides, and it slides inside the washroom, exacerbating the already small amount of space available. This really is the 660's Achilles Heel and just about the only thing that I found somewhat disappointing.

#### SLEEP IN VOGUE

Billed as a four-berth, the 660 does indeed provide four, comfortable sleeping places in two double beds.

Aside from the rear fixed double, the lounge sofas convert into a second double bed. Sprung-slat bases pull easily together from beneath the sofas and backrests drop in to create a big, comfortable double bed. Twin sofas usually make the best lounge doubles, but this one was easily one of the best I've tried.

The rear berth almost speaks for itself, as



The washroom is well-equipped with good storage provision, but it lacked floor-space in vital areas.



With near-domestic proportions, the fixed rear double bed gave us good nights' rest throughout the test.







The tough plastic-lined skirt locker is the perfect place for leads and hoses.



The underbed locker is huge, swallowing our folding bikes and more besides through its external hatch.



The 660's double floor construction gives all-year round capability. The water pump is shown here, snug in its frost-free environment.

the type that offers almost the best motorhome sleeping there is. The 660's version is very good too; with a sprung-interior mattress on a sprung-slat alloy frame it is very comfortable. Near domestic dimensions mean that it'll suit most people and give them a very good night's sleep.

The rear area is enclosed by a neat concertina room divider that gives the fixed bed an en suite washroom - just close the blind on the single window in this area and you can shower and change at any time of day. This feature is also good for a sleepy-head who may want to lie in while their partner gets up and lets the day into the main living area.

**THE VOGUE ON STORAGE**

Overhead lockers and shelves above the lounge and rear bed, a big wardrobe, undersofa space, and a large locker over the cab provide lots of stowing space for everyday items inside.

Move outside, however, and the 660's storage story moves up a gear. A neat wet locker hides under a lift-up flap and is perfect for the inevitable menu of leads, hoses and wedges. This unit is moulded in tough rot-proof plastic and perfect for the purpose. Another flap just ahead of the caravan door reveals the 660's secret, as it not only gives access to the space under the sofa above but also to a slim storage area that extends across almost the full width of the vehicle.

There's no access hatch on the other side of the 'van so make sure you can retrieve what goes in. This space is perfect for long items such as outdoor furniture, windbreaks, even skis. On investigation (and purely for testing purposes, you understand) I can confirm that the six-bottle cases of wine found in many French supermarkets fit this space like a glove!

Last, but by no means least, is the big space under the fixed rear bed. This area is accessible

from both outside and in and is big enough to take bulky items with ease. We packed our two folding bikes here, along with barbecue, water container, and tools, and this still left space for more.

Storage space and carrying capacity should always be considered hand-in-hand and the 660 comes built on a 3850kg chassis offering 408kg of payload. Although this may be adequate (depending on your pattern of use), just £195 gets you the optional 4000kg chassis and a useful 150 kilo increase in payload. If you plan to carry heavy kit this could be money well spent.

**FULLY LOADED VOGUE**

The 660's kit list reads like a motorhomer's wish list. A clue to one of its most important features lies in the presence of that previously mentioned underfloor storage area.

The low Al-Ko rear chassis that's a feature of this motorhome allows the construction of a double floor, creating the cavity for all that lovely stowage space but also allowing tanks, plumbing and ducts to be enclosed in a frost-free environment.

The fitting of Truma's most powerful dual fuel Combi heater, complete with mains electric powered blown-air, further enhances the all-year-round status. This EH version is perfect for background heat as its low setting works quietly at night keeping winter chills at bay.

The Truma also provides hot water on a dual fuel basis and you can be sure of a decent shower without exhausting the water supply - the fresh tank holds 110 litres of aqua and is fed by a pressurising pump that gives good flow.

Blinds are of the pleated variety while the inclusion of blinds for the cab windows and windscreen as standard is a great idea.

Outside, the neat, recessed awning is a great feature, tucked away from potential damage by on-road obstacles - and looking good too.

Even the gas locker befits the status of a grand tourer as its tough, moulded plastic interior accepts two large cylinders.

**VOGUE OR VAGUE?**

The Kon-Tiki Vogue 660 performed almost faultlessly during our tenure and we thoroughly enjoyed living in and with it.

Although billed as a four-berth there are no belted travel seats in the rear, so luxury touring for two, it seems, is the 660's métier. As such it really is a great motorhome, providing three-room accommodation and a real feeling of space within. Winterisation, powerful heating, big tanks, and the capacity to carry lots of kit make it very suitable for that dreamed-of grand tour.

The only fault to rear its ugly head during the test was the washroom door's bottom slider bracket coming adrift - a problem easily cured.

Indeed, floor space in the washroom is the only reportable design problem I could find - a problem probably caused in part by Swift's decision to provide a bigger-than-many double bed alongside.

As mentioned, Swift's prices have increased for 2006 but this is more than offset by all the extra kit fitted as standard - with things like the recessed awning being impossible to replicate as a retrofitted accessory.

British motorhomes are often seen as being inadequate when compared to the Continental competition; here we see a 'van that's adopted lots of the Continentals' good ideas and yet includes features essential to British culture and climate.

The 660 ain't cheap but if you hanker after that dream grand tourer, give it a good close look. □



As befits a grand tourer, the gas locker accepts two large cylinders.




**IN BRIEF**

- **Base vehicle:** Fiat Ducato Al-Ko chassis cab
- **Engine type:** 2.8-litre common-rail turbocharged and intercooled diesel
- **Output:** 93.5 kW (127bhp) @ 3600rpm
- **Gearbox and drive:** Five-speed manual, front-wheel drive
- **Make and model:** Swift Kon-Tiki Vogue 660
- **Body type and construction:** GRP-skinned low profile coachbuilt with GRP overcab and rear panel. Alloy skirts
- **Conversion NCC badged as EN1646 compliant:** Yes
- **Electrical equipment:** Mains hook-up, RCD/MCBs feed charger and 110 amp hr leisure battery, fridge, heater, three 13A mains sockets
- **Lighting:** Two circular halogen ceiling lights in main living area. Six adjustable halogen reading lights, four in lounge, two above head of rear bed. Five halogen downlighters, two in kitchen, one in washroom, two in shower compartment. Awning light
- **Cooking facilities:** Stoves slot-in cooker with hinged glass lid, three gas burners, one solid electric hotplate, grill and oven (all electronic ignition). Sharp 800W microwave oven with touch control panel and digital display
- **Refrigerator:** Dometic RM7405 three-way, AES with full-width freezer compartment. Capacity 93 litres
- **Water heater:** Truma Combi C6002EH gas/230V boiler
- **Space heater:** Truma Combi C6002EH heater with 230V mains and gas-fired operation with blown-air
- **Fresh water tank:** 110 litres (24.2 gallons) inboard
- **Waste water tank:** 100 litres (22 gallons) inboard
- **Gas locker capacity:** Two 13kg cylinders
- **Rear restraints:** None fitted
- **Additional features:** TV locker with slide-out turntable and output sockets for DVD signal, Status 530 directional TV aerial with amplifier, blinds to windscreen and cab side windows, Dometic two-speed extractor hood in kitchen, removable draining board, sink with inset chopping board, wind-up Heki rooflight, swivel cab seats, reversing camera and monitor,

two-point centrally-locked caravan door with window and integral waste bin, inset wind-out awning, electric windows and mirrors, key-operated central locking, single CD/radio with additional speakers in lounge area, ABS, driver's airbag, colour-coded bumpers and door mirrors

**DIMENSIONS**

(\*data supplied by manufacturer)

- **Overall length:** 7.48m (24ft 6.5in)\*
- **Overall width (mirrors folded):** 2.34m (7ft 8in)\*
- **Overall height:** 2.89m (9ft 6in)\* add 120mm for TV aerial
- **Interior height:** 1.97m (6ft 5.5in)
- **Bed dimensions:** Fixed rear double: 1.93m x 1.38m (6ft 4in x 4ft 6in); lounge double: 2.14m x 1.40m (6ft 8.5in x 4ft 7in)
- **Maximum authorised weight:** 3850kg
- **Unladen mass:** 3442kg\* (includes 75kg driver, engine coolants, 90 per cent of fuel, water and gas capacity)
- **Load capacity:** 408kg

Note: If you are contemplating buying a motorhome with a maximum authorised weight of over 3500kg, then you must check that you are licensed to drive it. 3500kg weight restrictions apply to the driving licences of those who passed their car driving test after January 1st 1997 (who

need to pass a further test), and also to those of 70 years of age and over (where a more stringent medical is required to retain the right to drive vehicles over 3500kg). For more information ask for DVLA booklet D100 at your post office or log on to [www.dvla.gov.uk](http://www.dvla.gov.uk).

**PRICE (all prices include VAT)**

- **Standard model as tested:** £46,595 (on the road)
- **Warranty:** Base vehicle and conversion three years

**OPTIONAL EXTRAS**

- **Base vehicle options:** Chassis upgrade to 4000kg (£195), Lux pack - Fiat satnav, phone, cab air-conditioning and fog lamps (£2500), detachable towbar (£695), Blaupunkt Chicago satnav/CD/MP3/CD/RDS radio (£2165)
- **Caravan options:** Swivel-arm coffee table (£120)



Swift Kon-Tiki Vogue 660 kindly supplied for evaluation by: Swift Motorhomes, Dunswell Road, Cottingham, East Yorkshire HU16 4JX. (tel: 01482 8473322; web site: [www.swiftmotorhomes.co.uk](http://www.swiftmotorhomes.co.uk))

E&amp;OE

