

The members' magazine of The Motor Caravanners' Club

Motor caravanner

December 2013

£1.95 where sold

TRAVELOGUE

**A warm
Swedish
welcome**

RALLY REPORT

**Yorkshire's
golden
celebrations**



Live in test
MARQUIS LIFESTYLE
664 BY SWIFT



Plus Group News and Diaries, Special Rallies and Bazaar

Kavanagh Deville enjoys a late autumn break in the Lifestyle 664

Laid-back lifestyle

COOK'S TOUR

Any similarity between Swift's Escape 664 and the Marquis Lifestyle 664 is purely deliberate! The Lifestyle was built by Swift as an Escape only to a much higher spec as requested by Marquis - our largest multi-site motorcaravan retailer. They've loaded up the Lifestyle with useful kit and some exclusive features that don't appear on Swift's options list, so unless you go to Marquis, no amount of money will buy one! There's more...high sales volumes has given Marquis the leverage to obtain these at a bundled price meaning that the purchaser gets pin sharp VFM on an exclusive product. Not only does this get the 664 off to a flying start, the good news continues. Swift is our largest motorhome manufacturer

and is prepared to back their manufacturing with a ten-year bodyshell guarantee against damp ingress to add to their SuperSure three-year warranty.

We could have tested any model from the range but opted for what we feel will become a popular layout with club members, the 664. The entrance door and vestibule is centrally-placed on the nearside. A forward lounge is ahead of an amidships kitchen, with a permanent rear corner (French) bed with washroom alongside bringing up the rear.

OTR (ON-THE-ROAD)

Equipped with the very latest Euro V 130bhp unit which Fiat claim is 9% more economical and emits 7% less Carbon Di-Oxide than the

current Euro V 130 unit used in 2013 models, it ought to be good...and it was. Neither of the above claims can be verified in just a few days away, but I can categorically say that it was a pleasure to drive. A light clutch together with a precise and slick gearshift made cog swapping a doddle and Fiat provided a ratio for every occasion. Fiat's award-winning market-leading Comfortmatic automatic transmission (actually a robotised manual gearbox) is available for an extra one-off cost. 'One-off' because unlike those motorhomes using torque converter automatic gearboxes; Comfortmatic will be as economical (or more so) than the manual version. >>>



LIVE IN TEST

Cruise control was appreciated, air-con less so in the chilly days of late Autumn. That said, an unoccupied corner of the campsite was found in which we could objectively assess how quickly it would cool down the interior. It was so efficient that I had to prescribe myself a whisky to restore circulation.

For those unfamiliar with the Ducato's ride, I'd better just say that it is harder than that experienced in the Tranny and Merc Sprinter, but it does offer surefooted handling and minimal body roll – even when fully laden. Although the Lifestyle's kit count is commendably high at any price and especially so at this one: it is my opinion that there is a worrying omission. At the very least it should have been fitted with reversing sensors with an audible warning in the cab, though I would always opt for a rear vision camera with sound and a rear view mirror-style monitor.

MAIN SALON

Fiat's cab seats, each with two armrests and swivel bases are great anyway, add in the Marquis soft furnishing fabric and the embroidered logo just beneath the headrests and they turn into something that wouldn't look out of place in a van costing twenty grand more! The light-but-stable table didn't block the central aisle and will be spacious for two, adequate for three but not so good for four. When four-up, Billy No-Mates sat on the inward-facing seat will have to eat off a tray... that'll be me then in our family!

The face-forward rear passenger seats looked to be well-constructed and included an anti-submarine metal frame to the squab. They were a tad upright but nothing that a scatter cushion didn't ameliorate. However, I used to regularly carry passengers in the rear of our own coachbuilt motorhomes and the



General views forwards and rearwards illustrate the practical layout. We loved the elegant vibe created by the minimalist flat-front locker doors with hidden catches.

complaint was always the same from the little darlings...that the adjacent window should have been a slider so that it could have been opened on the move as well as on-site. Artificial light was adequate though had yet to catch up with the LED revolution.

GALLEY

Centrally placed, compact and functional. The removable draining surface was a good feature as there was only a tantalising suggestion of worktop. I'd like to have seen a slide-out one in place of the cutlery drawer which could have been relocated to the central base cupboard. If this was our van I'd

probably cut down a bit of nylon chopping board to place over the drawer to boost available work-surface.

Galley was equipped with the latest generation of Dometic fridges. Not only did it emit an audible warning when there was no power to it, it will also remonstrate with you if you've left the door ajar...which I did...twice!

The high-level lockers beg to be subdivided and there are lots of proprietary folding gizmos to achieve this if DIY isn't your bag. The locker catches are actually just behind the bottom edge of the doors and I felt that the one immediately above the cooker





might get hot after a prolonged use of the hob. The adjacent two-way three-speed Omnivent (powered rooflight) was greatly appreciated. These are far better than the usual hob extractor fans that in our experience are usually neither use nor ornament.

COMFORT STATION

The designers have gone for an all-in-one compartment rather than a separate walk-in shower cubicle. Thus the throne can be placed out of the way at the far end of the compartment leaving plenty of space in the middle for ablutions, changing clothes, moggy swinging or whatever. Full marks >>>

KNOWLEDGE BASE

Marquis Motorhomes began in 1973 and now have 10 retail outlets offering (almost) nationwide coverage. Their multi-site operation has the advantage of having a dealer local to you, but retains the purchasing power and wide stock choice that only a big concern can offer.

Marquis retail all the new motorcaravan ranges our three biggest manufacturers offer and also a wide choice of pre-owned examples, each with an impressive warranty package. They were instrumental in developing the Auto-Sleeper Mercs and their popular

'dealer specials' make them the biggest single purchaser of both Elddis and Swift motorhomes.

Swift Group has been building caravans since 1964 and motorhomes since 1984. They are the UK's biggest manufacturer of coachbults and PVC's (badged Autocruise) and have been building one of the most well-known 'names' for decades... the iconic Swift Kan-Tiki. Comparatively recently they launched a range of (permanent) holiday homes and have achieved strong market penetration among site operators and owner-occupiers alike.



Socially-inclusive lounge-diner made good use of the cab seats and it includes an additional pair of designated passenger seats. Centrally-located kitchen had all the kit. Removable freestanding moulded draining surface facilitated some more badly-needed worktop space

LIVE IN TEST

there but only two cheers for the shower curtain which got in the way wherever I 'parked it'. Still if that's all I could find to moan about...

Aaah nearly forgot, along with the rest of the Swift range the Lifestyle arrived with the current motorcaravan must-have, an Ecomamel shower head. This delivered a good even spray, much better than the one in our 'van, but crucially should use much less water than conventional alternatives.

BERTHS

It's a proper four-berth with a permanent double-bed at the rear and a transverse double-bed converted from the lounge seating. None of this 2 + 2 nonsense that requires two of you to be stick insects. A word or two about the layout, before we look at the beds in detail. I don't think it is designed as a family 'van, rather to be used by a couple most of the time but with the option of accommodating extra passengers safely on the road and comfortably when on-site. Perfect for club members who occasionally take grandchildren or friends along. The reason why I would question its suitability as a family 'van is because when the children go to bed, the lounge is lost! OK for the odd weekend but not long term!

Obviously the best bed was the permanent one, especially as it had a top banana Duvalay Duvalite mattress. Their manufacturer claims that these mattresses rely on lightweight memory fibre technology, are hypoallergenic, dust



Roomy washroom had an elongated shape but worked extremely well. Rear corner bed is permanent and the somnolent should have a good night's rest thanks to the Duvalay Duvalite mattress. Occasional (transverse double) bed was formed from the dinette seating. Here it is at the half-way stage

mite resistant, provide excellent pressure relief and are completely recyclable. Certainly I slept like a log and woke up completely pain free... not always the case with my ancient joints. Each occupant has their own reading light and the adjacent (opening) window was great to nose out of whilst 'coming-to' in the morning. One of the high-level storage areas is open-fronted so perfect for books, e-readers, specs and a box of tissues. Unfortunately there was nowhere for me to rest my early morning cup of tea other than on the ledge above the fire – which was quite a stretch. I've just read a book about early upper-class motorised caravanners (Gentleman Gypsies - as they were called then) and they frequently took along three or four domestic staff including their butler which might be my answer to the 'nowhere-to-put-down-the-cuppa' conundrum. My butler could hold it for me!

The occasional double-bed was made by cushion-shuffling after dropping the table and extending the seat bases. It's a decent size and

despite requiring several extra infill cushions, was quite comfortable.

MOD CONS

See the kit count for the definitive list, though apart from the previously mentioned reversing sensors and/or camera, there was nothing I felt it lacked. Fans of the idiot's lantern may wish for some sort of slide-away mechanism and dedicated storage for the goggle box, but as we rely mostly on audio for our relaxation or occasionally watch films on the laptop, it didn't bother me. Of course different folk have different priorities, so do think about this.

It was pleasing to see a proper fire as well as the dual fuel blown-air heating system.

CONCLUSION

I've deliberately not revealed the retail price in my report because I wanted to judge it firstly as a motorcaravan and secondly its VFM, NOT the other way around which is often the case with reviews of motorcaravans at this price point. The Lifestyle 664 was easy to live-in and will be perfect for couples who occasionally want to take along grandchildren or friends. Marquis and Swift have produced a cracking motorcaravan, one which we would feel privileged to own. To call it a 'budget' 'van is misleading, as this suggests it is pared down or somehow inferior. In a nutshell, this is a great motorcaravan at an



Under bed storage was cavernous. Access is via the interior or through an exterior-access locker door





approachable price.

The RRP has been set at an astonishingly competitive £42,831 OTR though they are currently on offer at £41,295 OTR. You'll have to be quick though, offer is bound to end on Dec 31st. (Comfortmatic automatic transmission is an extra £1695 including VAT.)

Marquis Lifestyle 644 by Swift kindly offered for evaluation by Marquis Motorhomes. (Nationwide). www.marquisamotorhomes.co.uk Freephone 0800 026 7777.

TECH TALK MARQUIS LIFESTYLE 664

BASE VEHICLE: Fiat Ducato MLH 'Light' chassis-cab
MOTIVE POWER: 2.3 litre 130bhp Euro 5 TD engine, 6-speed manual gearbox, front wheel drive.

WILL IT FIT?

LENGTH: 6.72m (22ft 1in)

WIDTH: 2.24m (7ft 4.25in)

+ mirrors

HEIGHT: 2.85m (9ft 4.25in)

+ TV aerial

MTPLM: 3.500kg

PAYLOAD: 550kg

SLEEPING BERTHS: 4

(2 x double-beds)

TRAVEL SEATS: 4 inc driver

KIT COUNT: Metallic Iron-Grey

cab, white side skirts, exclusive

graphics, cab air-con, cruise

control, upgraded radio/CD/

MP3 player with Bluetooth

hands-free connectivity. Electric

windows and mirrors. Driver and passenger airbags, underslung spare wheel. Wind-out awning, electric step, entrance door concertina flyscreen, USB power socket. Exclusive soft furnishing fabrics, scatter cushions, Thetford 3 burner hob, combi grill/oven, Dometic RMS 8401 85-litre gas/12V/230V 85-litre fridge, Truma 3kW space heater with 230V operation, 12V blown air distribution, Truma gas/230V storage water heater. Leisure battery, 230V hook-up and charge management system. Washroom containing electric-flush Thetford cassette toilet with wheeled holding tank, vanity basin, Eco-camel shower and storage. Status TV aerial and amplifier. Thatcham Tracker.

BOTTOM LINE: RRP £42,831 OTR