

Living the dream

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It doesn't cost anything to dream about owning your ultimate luxury motorhome. We put Swift's top-of-the-range Kon-Tiki 679 to the test

A MID ALL THE DOOM AND gloom of the recession, it's still great to dream about owning your ultimate motorhome – you never know, those lottery numbers could come up! What layout would your dream motorhome have? Would you want a permanent double bed? Would you want a large garage to store bicycles and scooters? Would you like a large kitchen and well-equipped washroom? Should the front seating area be large enough for all your friends to pop round for a gin and tonic?

Well, if you chose the Swift Kon-Tiki 679 as your dream van, you'd enjoy all the above features. However, the price tag for this life of opulence is a credit-crunching £64,645!

That's not to say that it doesn't offer value for money. The 679 is loaded with luxury features and clever gadgets, all of which have to be included in the price you pay. Our task in this test is to see if the Kon-Tiki is worth its lofty price tag: will it be a dream investment or a financial nightmare?

EXTERIOR FEATURES 9/10

The 679 is built on an AL-KO Low-Line chassis, attached to the back of the Fiat Ducato cab. The motorhome's floor is raised above this chassis on cross-members and the space in between has been used to house the fresh and waste water tanks.

Above this, the coachbuilt bodywork down either side of the vehicle is clad with thick-gauge aluminium, in a one-piece section. The main section of roof is a one-piece GRP moulding, with another moulding for the low-profile overcab and the rear wall. The one-piece GRP roof will prevent any water ingress problems. I also checked out the joints between the GRP roof and both the rear panel and front overcab. These seemed to be well executed, so again, water ingress shouldn't be an issue.

I always like to see a one-piece GRP roof as it's the joints between the walls and roof that often cause problems on coachbuilt motorhomes, a problem reduced when a one-piece GRP roof extends down to meet the side walls, so that water cannot penetrate the joint very easily.

ON THE ROAD

7/10

This is one long motorhome. When moving his camera, our photographer joked that, 'It takes a day just to walk down the side of it!'

While the tag-axle body seems massive when viewed in side-profile, once you're seated in the cab it feels just like any other coachbuilt motorhome. When driving along, you have to keep reminding yourself of the massive length, allowing an extra-wide sweep when turning a corner, plus allowing a bit more space when pulling back in after an overtake.

On the plus side, the Low-Line Al-Ko chassis, with its low centre of gravity, and its twin rear axles, provides superb road holding. Add in the powerful three-litre turbo-diesel engine and this Kon-Tiki is remarkably easy to handle, on everything from country lanes to a motorway.

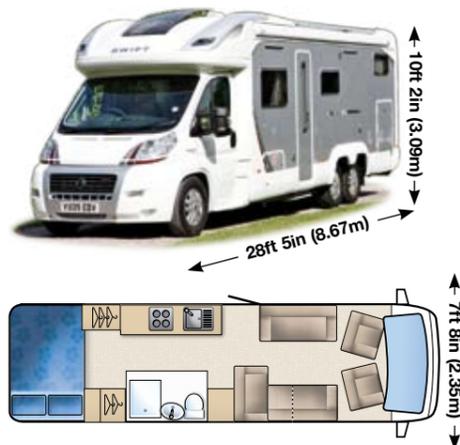
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VAN ON TEST
Swift Kon-Tiki 679
£64,645 OTR

Swift Kon-Tiki 679

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BASE VEHICLE
Fiat Ducato chassis cab with 3.0-litre (160bhp) Multijet TD engine

BERTHS
Four travel, four sleeping

BED DIMENSIONS
Rear permanent double bed measures 6ft 6in x 4ft 3in (1.99m x 1.3m); front dinette-derived double measures 6ft 10in x 4ft 6in (2.13m x 1.38m); front dinette-derived single (an alternative to the front double) 5ft 10in x 2ft 1in (1.8m x 0.64m)

MTPLM
5000kg

PAYLOAD
780kg

GAS
Compartment for two 13kg gas bottles

BATTERY
Twin 110Ah leisure batteries

FRESH WATER
120-litre, insulated under-floor tank with heater and level indicator

WASTE WATER
100-litre under-floor tank with level indicator and heater

BASE VEHICLE
Fiat Ducato chassis cab with 160bhp, 3.0-litre TD Multijet engine with 6-speed gearbox. Standard features include: remote central locking for cab doors, immobiliser, cab air-con, portable sat nav

CONSTRUCTION
Fiat chassis cab with AL-KO. GRP rear panel with high-level brake-light; flush-fitting, aluminium-framed, double-glazed windows; low-profile overcab moulding with 'Skyview' panoramic roof window

STANDARD EQUIPMENT
Dual-fuel Truma Combi boiler and blown-air space heater; 10in fold-down colour LCD TV with DVD player; 175-litre fridge; two Midi-Heki skylights; thermostatic oven; Status 530 directional roof aerial

MANUFACTURER
Swift Group, Dunswell Road, Cottingham, East Yorkshire HU16 4JX. ☎ 01482 847332
🌐 swiftgroup.co.uk

RIVAL MODELS
Auto-Trail Frontier Chieftain, Bessacar E789

FOR
A well-equipped luxury motorhome with a superb rear garage area to store cycles or scooters

AGAINST
It's very long and that might limit you when it comes to parking or getting off the beaten track!

PRACTICALITY 8/10

While the Kon-Tiki's massive length isn't really noticeable when driving, it can become a problem when it comes to manoeuvring. Don't even think of a three-point turn, unless you're driving down an old airfield runway and, if you're popping down to Tesco, be prepared to take up two or three spaces in the car park! On the other hand, all this length has enabled Swift to add that ultimate practical feature, a large rear garage area. It also provides space for a large kitchen and plenty of interior storage lockers and cupboards. Another nice practical touch is the large offside locker just behind the cab, which houses the two large leisure batteries in its base. These are easy to access and the space above them can be used for storing some of your outdoor gear.

DINING 8/10

When it comes to dining, there are a couple of table options. Firstly there's a small island-leg table that can be set up between the swivelled driver's cab seat and the offside seating. This would be great for occasional dining or television dinners, when it could be used as a place to put the wine and dessert!

For proper dining, a large demountable table can be removed from its storage cupboard at the rear of the vehicle and can be set up between the front settees.

There's a fold-down flap on the table top that can be used to increase its size. With this flap down there's not much room to get up and move round the table, but the person sitting at the rear can easily slip out to take care of cooking in the kitchen.

There are several dining options



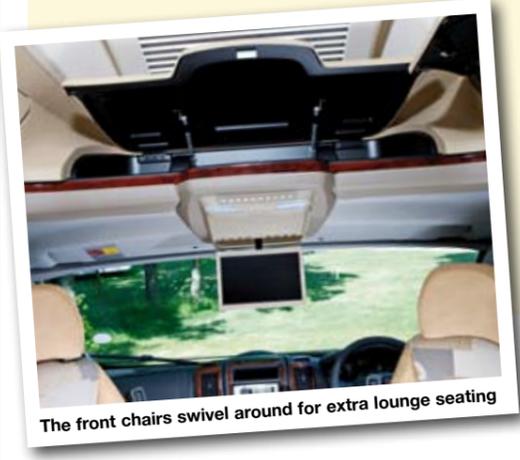
LOUNGING 9/10

Seating in the front lounge area can be extended by swivelling both of the cab seats. Then, there's room for seven or eight people to sit, at a pinch. For a couple there's bags of room to spread out and read your favourite book or even to watch the fold-down, flat-screen TV which is mounted on the roof above the cab seats.

There are a couple of three-pin mains power points on the walls at the rear of the cab, so scope to plug in a computer (as I am doing now with my laptop while I write this) or even to connect a games console.

One superb feature of the lounge is the large, curved roof-light which Swift call the 'Skyview' window. This lets in plenty of light and can be opened to allow a good flow of air inside the vehicle, plus, it also has its own sliding blind and flyscreen. This is in addition to two Heki roof-lights, in the middle of the van and above the rear bed.

Two of the seats in the lounge area are forward-facing, with three-point seatbelts, so these will be ideal if you are travelling with a couple of friends or children.



The front chairs swivel around for extra lounge seating



The 'Skyview' window lets in plenty of light and has its own blind and flyscreen

The flatscreen TV stores away neatly when on the road

The wide seats can easily accommodate seven or eight people

Huge amount of seating space

STORAGE 10/10

I think I can throw caution to the wind and give the Kon-Tiki full marks here. Its main storage area is the rear garage and this is a really well-executed piece of design.

As well as being fairly large, with an exterior access door on each side wall, it also boasts its own three-pin electrical socket and interior lighting, plus it has its own outlet from the blown-air heating system – you could practically live in the garage if you wanted to!

In addition, there are several tie-down points for cycles or scooters in the floor of this garage, plus there's even a central drain, like the plug hole on a bathtub, which allows any water from wet bikes etc. to drain out onto the ground below.

There's also a small hatch connecting the garage to the interior of the vehicle, which could just about be crawled through. I also liked the access hatch from the garage area to the Truma Combi boiler, which would be great when it comes to any servicing or repair work.

In addition to the rear garage, the Swift also boasts plenty of interior storage, including two wardrobes plus many drawers and lockers.



Full marks for storage: There's plenty of room for outdoor gear



The washroom is small but compact

WASHROOM 7/10

The washroom is positioned on the offside wall to the rear of the Kon-Tiki. It's a well-executed room with a swivel cassette toilet, small washbasin and a cylindrical shower cubicle. There's not a massive amount of space to move around, especially in the shower cubicle, where my 6ft 2in height meant that I was hitting the roof with my head.

However, for most people, this shower cubicle will be easy to use and it's much better than having a waterproof curtain clinging to you when showering.

The waste tank is positioned under the floor beneath the washroom and kitchen area, so the shower drains well, even if you're not on a perfectly flat pitch.



The large rear double bed with its domestic-style mattress, will ensure a good night's sleep

NIGHT TIME

9/10

The 679 boasts that most desirable of motorhome features – a large rear double bed with a domestic-style mattress. This is mounted fairly high up, with two steps providing access.

The bed is mounted high up to allow for plenty of space in the rear garage below so, as usual in motorhome design, a compromise has had to be made here.

Once you're in this bed, it's a really cosy place to sleep and is very long, thanks to its transverse wall-to-wall position at the back of the van.

I had the Truma Combi heater on its mains-powered setting to keep a constant flow of heat during the night. This seems to push out a stronger flow of hot air at the rear, where the heater unit is mounted, but the air flow is much weaker by the time it reaches the front lounge area.

Up front, you can make either an extra double bed or a single, derived from the front dinette seating. This involves juggling the seat cushions but, once assembled, the bed base is actually very solid, so a good night's sleep is on the cards. There's also plenty of lighting around each sleeping area, plus there's a position to mount a flat-screen television in the rear bedroom.

Thanks to The Caravan Club and its helpful wardens for the use of its Alderstead Heath site in Surrey during this test.

BUILD QUALITY

9/10

The fit and finish of furniture was very good and I particularly liked the heavy-duty Hartal entrance door. I wasn't keen on the position of the mains RCD unit, which is hard to access in the base of the forward-facing lounge seat. You have to move all the cushions and lift the seat base to gain access, which wouldn't be fun if you've managed to trip-out the electrics by plugging in that dodgy kettle. Also, I wasn't keen on the concertina blinds that are used to screen off the cab windows at night. These are a bit flimsy and the blind for the windscreen doesn't quite reach the bottom. I suspect many owners will supplement this with external, insulated Silver Screens anyway.



We've teamed up with Shield to give you an idea how much it would cost to insure a new Swift Kon-Tiki.

Premium Indication £320.68

Our premium indication is based upon a 55-year-old man living in Harrogate and driving on an insured and spouse basis, with unlimited mileage and a £400 excess.

**For a personal quote contact
0844 847 4478 or
www.shieldyourmotorhome.co.uk**



Plenty of work space in the luxury kitchen

KITCHEN

9/10

The kitchen has all of the facilities you'd expect in a luxury motorhome and boasts a large work surface area. There's a gas oven with separate grill, plus a versatile hob with one electric plate and three gas burners. There's also an extractor fan above the hob, to remove all those cooking smells.

Standard on Swift motorhomes now is the large circular sink with a removable plastic drainer. I like this set-up because of the flexibility it offers, allowing you to remove the drainer and have more work space instead. However, I know some people would prefer a permanent drainer joined onto a sink.

The fridge is a large three-way unit, with a separate freezer compartment. It features AES (automatic energy selection) and will opt for gas, mains electric or 12V battery power, depending on the situation. It is positioned opposite the main kitchen area, but still within easy reach.

Motor Caravan says

The real value of the Kon-Tiki comes from all the added extras, such as the Hartal entrance door. Other costly touches include the insulated water tanks. Luxury extras such as the fold-down television/DVD system aren't necessary but, if this is to be your dream motorhome, then they're exactly the sort of toys you'll want to show off to your friends. The long-running Kon-Tiki name also has its own special reputation, which will mean higher resale values. All things considered, it's good value for money.

Exterior features 9/10

On the road 7/10

Lounging 9/10

Dining 8/10

Night-time 9/10

Storage 10/10

Kitchen 9/10

Washroom 7/10

Practicality 8/10

Build quality 9/10

Overall mark 85/100

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