

OUR 'VANS, OUR MONTH

Rob and his wife Anna took the Kon-Tiki on a grand tour of Picardy this month



Kon-Tiki: luxury touring for two



I took our Swift Kon-Tiki 659 on an extended tour of Picardy and Isle-de-France in

late January for this month's Grand Tour (p24). It's now got more than 1300 miles on the clock, and that 3.0-litre, 160 Multijet engine is loosening up nicely, and beginning to rev freely. The 22.4mpg fuel economy it returned – quite a bit of which was motorway and autoroute driving with cruise control set to 60mph – will surely improve with time. We'll need to get the brakes checked, though – idling to a halt at traffic lights now comes with a growing squeak from those rear wheels.

Otherwise it's a dream to drive: the huge footprint and twin rear axles flatten out all the road bumps, and the low-slung AL-KO chassis irons out most of the body roll when cornering. Of course, at 8.67m (28'5") it's not the easiest to manoeuvre through tight urban environs, and you may find it too big for some *aires* and even campsites

itches, but we never found ourselves restricted. Also, the large, colour reversing camera, which doubles as a rear view mirror on the road, proved very useful. Motorhomes of this size are charged extra each way on ferry crossings, though.



LIKES

The sheer size of it – this is a 'van that doesn't need to compromise in any quarter



DISLIKES

The sheer size of it – difficult to manoeuvre and park in urban areas



Rob and Anna made good use of the Kon-Tiki's spacious lounge

It's got a double floor of sorts, in the form of a series of underslung storage trays to house, for example, the fresh water tank and provide some storage that can be accessed through an external locker. However, we would also have liked access to the spacious under-bed storage area from outside the 'van, to spare us carrying bulky items through the living quarters.

On tour, we found the Kon-Tiki to be a 'van for all seasons: although temperatures dipped to below 0° outside, our water supplies didn't freeze. And two 95Ah leisure batteries, and LED lighting throughout, enabled us to camp 'off-grid' on several occasions.

The 659 is the new addition to the Kon-Tiki stable for the 2011 season, and was launched at last October's NEC show. The great beauty of a 'van of this size is that there's no skimping in the living quarters. The cab seats swivel to join the facing sofas and happily seat six. The kitchen offers acres of workspace and plenty of storage. Although

it's really a luxury two berth, on account of no belted passenger seats rear of the Ducato cab, it will sleep four happily: two in the ensuite rear bedroom, and two up front (in two single berths, or a double bed), with a concertina partition blind to offer privacy for the occupants. But it's the washroom that's the *pièce de résistance*. It runs the full width of the 'van across the rear, and is more than 1m wide, so it's truly spacious. There's plenty of room around the latest Thetford swivel cassette toilet and a separate, fully-lined shower cubicle.

Next month, we'll draw together all our testers' feedback on the motorhome for our full, live-in test farewell verdict.

ROB GANLEY

Swift Kon-Tiki 659

Price from £70,178.83 OTR

Mileage 1370

Economy 22.4mpg

Faults Squeaking rear brakes

Expenses Just water purifying tablets: £6