



Well chosen trim gives a plush feel to interior



Bed forms large double

### SPECIFICATION

**Base vehicle** Fiat Ducato LWB chassis cab on Camping Chassis  
**Drive** Front-wheel drive  
**Engine** 2.3-litre turbo diesel (Euro 5)  
**Power** 130bhp  
**Economy** 25-30mpg  
**Gearbox** 6-speed manual  
**Number of travel seats** 2  
**Berths** 2  
**Leisure battery capacity** 75Ah  
**Payload** 610kg (estimated)  
**Length x width x height** 6.40m x 2.26m x 2.78m  
**Standard equipment** Spare wheel, LED DRLs, electric windows, electric/heated cab mirrors, Remis cab blinds, swivel front captain's seats, double or single beds, 3-burner/1 electric hotplate hob, oven and grill, AES fridge, microwave, Truma Combi 4E heater, toilet, shower, winterised fresh and waste water tanks, Tracker  
**Optional equipment** Comfort-Matic gearbox £1695, reversing camera £599, towbar £595, roll-out awning £530, Lux Pack (cab air-con, cruise control and aerial) £995  
**Warranty** 3 years base vehicle and conversion, 10 years water integrity (first owner only)  
**Price** From £44,400 on-the-road  
**Price of test vehicle** £45,395

[www.swiftleisure.co.uk](http://www.swiftleisure.co.uk)

For couples of a sporty bent, perhaps with canoes and bikes to carry, and facing the happy predicament of which new campervan to buy, the choice has just become wider – and the newcomer isn't even a panel van!

With 'downsizing' being the current leisure-industry buzzword, major British manufacturer, Swift, has launched a new, two-van, Rio range. The Rio 320 is the cheaper, two-berth, two-traveller version, competitively priced from £44,400, undercutting many panel van conversions. Its 340 sibling is a four-berth, four-seater, at £1,000 more. Both measure 6.40m - scarcely longer than the Fiat Ducato XLWB van - and are narrower than most coachbuilts, at 2.26m wide.

The Rios are based on Fiat's Ducato – the new X2/50 with face lifted nose, and many other, less obvious, improvements. Externally, they look very sleek and slim, with a notably low, smooth overcab, and a hardly-noticeable increase in width behind the cab – unlike many coachbuilts, there's no need for those extended-arm mirrors. The coachwork looks very smart, and SMART indeed it is – (Strong Modern Aerodynamic Resilient Tested) – the timberless body frame is now impervious to water, and comes with a ten-year warranty against water ingress (for the first owner).

The Rio's most striking feature, however, is at the back – a full-sized, centrally locked, tailgate. While unusual, these aren't the first coachbuilts so equipped, (the Hymer Compact and its Bürstner Brevio-t640 sister are similar). The Rio may just be the most practical, best equipped and most enjoyable so far.

# THE Rio IS GRAND!

When one of the UK's biggest manufacturers decides to launch a compact leisure vehicle, it's a big deal. Andrew and Rona Bromley explain why this is one trip to Rio you'll want to remember

WORDS AND PHOTOS ANDREW AND RONA BROMLEY

### SWIFT RIO 320

#### PROS

- ✓ Large rear tailgate
- ✓ Sturdy construction
- ✓ Spacious interior
- ✓ Load-carrying capacity
- ✓ Very competitive price

#### CONS

- ✗ Washroom could be bigger
- ✗ Shaped cushion required when lounging against tailgate

### On the road

We tested a prototype Rio 320, powered by the 130bhp 2.3-litre engine with only 20 miles on the clock. It still hustled along with unseemly haste. A short rear overhang and long wheelbase combine with the supple chassis to make for stable progress and good handling, and there's good rearwards visibility through the large tailgate window. There's also supportive, fully-adjustable seating and a good radio with CD, Bluetooth and four speakers. On this first prototype model there was some noise evident from the kitchen and cupboards, but to be fair to Swift this test vehicle was a pre-production model and they assure us that this will be sorted on the production models.

### Interior tour

Enter the Rio via the (nearside) doorway with its integral step, and you find a classic rear-lounge layout with swivelling cab seats, a central wardrobe and washroom opposite a long, nearside kitchen unit; and twin parallel settees at the rear. It's strikingly light and spacious - courtesy of the larger windows, enormous opening skylight and a plethora of lighting. Woodwork is in cool, mid-toned Aralie-Sen, while the upholstery is pleasant grey tweed. The tinted windows have concertina blinds.

### Lounging and dining

At the front are the swivelled cab seats, both with reading lights above, and with a small, oval pole-mounted table between (stored in the wardrobe). There's an adjacent worktop, with slim shelves above, and a cupboard below, plus a TV

### MORE INFO

For a full review of the new Swift Rio, make sure you pick up a copy of the November issue of our sister title, MMM, the UK's best-selling motorhome magazine. It's on sale 16 October - don't miss it!



Large rear hatch gives excellent access for bikes



Kitchen should please the most enthusiastic of chefs



Lounge is spacious and airy



Facelifted Fiat gives the Rio a slick look

## VERDICT

Swift have pulled out all the stops with their new Rio range. The 320 is extremely competitively priced, and comprehensively equipped; practically-sized for parking and manoeuvring, and drives well. The layout is traditional, but works well, though the washroom could be bigger.

The essence of the Rio is versatility, the tailgate being the key. It opens easily (and closes – with a helpful strap for shorter folk), and the internal layout means full use can be made of it for loading and carrying sports equipment – or flat-packs from Ikea!

For more passenger capacity, consider the Rio 340, with twin rear travel seats behind the driver, and shorter rear settees converting, as before, into a transverse double bed. Above this, providing the extra berths, is an electrically-powered drop-down transverse double bed.

Still sure you want a panel van based camper?

point and double sockets.

Alternatively, after canoeing the Spey, or completing that Triathlon, you could crash out in the rear lounge with its two, six-foot-long settees. The main table, also stored in the wardrobe, is free-standing and there's room for four diners, in comfort. There are four individually dimmable reading lights; two extra speakers at the rear; and another (wall-mounted), TV point in the front corner, so you can lean back against the tailgate to view, feet up. To bridge that gap between the tailgate and settee, a much larger cushion would be preferable.

Top-class Grade 3 insulation, winterised water tanks and a gas and electric Truma Combi 4, make it cosy all year-round.

### Night-time

For twin single beds, simply remove the backrests. Both mattresses are satisfactorily wide (70cm - 2ft 3½in in old money). The nearside is 6ft long, the offside 6ft 1in. The gap between tailgate

and bed gives extra room for taller folk and we enjoyed a good night's sleep. Alternatively, make up the transverse double by pulling the slatted bases into the centre and in-filling the gap with the backrests, to give a 6ft 4in long by 4ft 7in wide bed. The forward sections of the settee base are fixed, so you can't pull them out to make a monster longitudinal double, which we thought a pity.

### Kitchen

The Rio's kitchen will cater for hearty outdoor appetites with ease. Thetford's new Aspire 2 cooker has three gas-burners, an electric plate, a grill and oven. There's also a microwave and 100-litre Dometic AES fridge with a freezer. The new moulded sink has a small integral draining area (a draining tray and chopping board are provided) with good work-surface alongside, plus a lift-up flap by the cooker. Reasonable storage includes a well-placed cutlery drawer.

### Washroom

The shower tray forms the washroom floor, and needs a duckboard - both for protection, and to lower the over-tall Thetford swivel toilet. The stylish washbasin has a combined showerhead tap and there's a wall cupboard and mirror behind. It's well-finished, but it's not the largest.

### The outdoor life

The crux of the Rio's appeal is that big tailgate, and the opportunities it brings. There are tie-rings on the settee-base fronts, and we found it easy (with care and use of dust sheets) to carry two full-sized bikes in the central aisle. It's quite a step up, via the automatically retracting rear step, but there's plenty of room. We even managed to get our two hefty Ocean Frenzy boats slid inside! We've never before found a motorhome with this sort of accessible space, and the tailgate can also act as a sunshade (or umbrella) when you're on site.

“ The Rio may just be the most practical, best equipped and most enjoyable tailgate coachbuilt so far ”