

## 7 DAYS TRAVEL

# Caravan of love

**GRAHAM YOUNG and family enjoy the great outdoors on a trip to the Bard's birthplace**

**I**F you're stuck in a time warp you might think caravans are road-blocking sheds on wheels – but don't try telling Darren Brown that.

He's the proud managing director of Warwickshire's 45-year-old, family-run caravan company Broad Lane Leisure.

Stopping off at his showroom en route to our holiday destination in Stratford-upon-Avon, he showed me every trick in the book.

From aerodynamic fuel efficiency and stability to vastly improved insulation from extreme heat or cold, caravans have moved on.

They're positively space-age in terms of creating that home-from-home feeling with room to move and minimal spend.

"Caravanning is the best way of enjoying time with your family," says Darren. "It's also a chance to meet people enjoying the outdoors with the freedom and fun of going where you want, when you want. You can have a complete change of scenery and, even if it's just for a couple of nights, you'll feel like you've had a great break.

"Caravans are also made much better now than in the old days. Instead of wood frames with screws, they're made from a polyurethane material and bonded together."

Made by a company with more than 50 years' experience, our luxury Swift Danette caravan

was parked just 100 yards from the beautiful River Avon on the aptly named Riverside Park.

Like so many of the leading sites available to serious caravanners, a beautiful place like this instantly transports you from the madness



of the modern world.

Many caravan owners often head for somewhere different virtually every weekend – and you can see the attraction of that.

Within 45 minutes everything was ready, including the outdoor Isabella-brand awning. This not only doubles your space by adding a daylight-bright side room for meals and play, but it also encourages you to befriend your new neighbours.

Modern caravans now have more gadgets than a James Bond movie. And if we didn't have Q to explain how they worked, then at least we had Darren's tutorial.

Challenges included remembering how to use various lighting systems, refill the shower with

water and empty the loo, not forgetting the techniques required to conjure up some of the six – count 'em – hidden beds. Throw in adventures with the cooker, the microwave and the TV and radio sets and you'll soon see your caravan as a fully-featured second home.

After weeks of dry weather, it was almost inevitable that rain would lash down overnight. It didn't spoil our short break, though, because it proved how a modern caravan's ability to cope with all weathers simply makes you feel even more cosy.

Riverside Park's facilities include a first-floor bar built on flood-proof stilts, with catering provided by Amadeus, the NEC company. It's great if you want just a beer or a fully fledged grub meal while you enjoy a beautiful panoramic river view. We even caught a brilliant fireworks' display, too.

There's also the option to go

■ **The view of the River Avon from Riverside Park, above, and the family's Swift Danette caravan, right**



■ **The shower room inside the caravan**



■ **The bridge over the River Avon, looking towards the other side of Riverside Park**

off-site into the nearby local village pub close to a well-stocked Spar. From Riverside Park you can either walk into Stratford-upon-Avon, cycle if you've taken your own wheels, catch a river taxi along the Avon or drive.

Whichever option takes your fancy, all of the many delights of this Midlands' treasure trove for tourists are just minutes away.

These range from the famous collection of Shakespeare Houses run by the Birthplace Trust on Henley Street to the amazing RSC theatre and new viewing tower – an absolute must if you've never been up there and love the kind of panoramic views you can enjoy in cities such as London, Paris and Florence. And all for just £2.50 per adult or £1.25 for under-18s.

Given that 2016 is the 400th anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare in 1616, nobody will want to miss seeing his grave inside the beautiful parish church of Holy Trinity (first begun in 1210).

It made me wonder what The Bard would make of caravanning and how his plays might have had different titles if he could have sampled the standard of luxury we were enjoying.

As You Like It would still be a perfect choice of course. And stay for a fortnight to take in a Twelfth Night.

## NEED TO KNOW

■ **GRAHAM YOUNG** and family stayed for two nights in a Swift Danette caravan at Riverside Park, Stratford-upon-Avon courtesy of Broad Lane Leisure, Birmingham Road, Kings Coughton, Alcester, Warwickshire B49 5QD. Call 01789 763432 or visit [broadlane.co.uk](http://broadlane.co.uk)

■ **Founded in 1971**, Broad Lane Leisure is a caravan, motorhome, camper, awning and accessory specialist, with a wide range of new and used leisure vehicles for sale. As well as providing expert advice, it offers caravan test tows and motorhome test drives.

■ **The Swift Group** is one of the UK's leading manufacturers of motorhomes, caravans and caravan holiday homes and pods. Visit [swiftgroup.co.uk](http://swiftgroup.co.uk) or for product videos go to [swiftvco.uk](http://swiftvco.uk). Swift can also be found on Facebook and Twitter.

■ **The Caravan, Camping & Motorhome Show** will be held at the NEC Birmingham from February 23 to 28, 2016. Advance tickets are from £8 adults, £7 seniors, and under 15s go free. See [caravancampingmotorhomeshow.co.uk](http://caravancampingmotorhomeshow.co.uk)