

Smart interior of a 2007
Coachman Pastiche 530/4Swift Challenger
540 from 2006/7

YOUR VIEWS

Coachman Pastiche 530/4 Swift Challenger 540

Mike Steer analyses member feedback on a pair of fixed-bed, single-axle models

When single-axe, fixed-bed caravans were first introduced to the UK mass market some years ago, prospective buyers had no option but to accept the compromise of a shortened living area and a cramped toilet-cum-shower cubicle. But hey, these were the bee's knees! A fixed bed; wow!

Over the years, chassis have stretched, weights have increased and tyre technology has sufficiently developed to allow increased accommodation and a superior level of comfort within fixed-bed caravans on a single axle.

Maybe that's why the layouts we chose for this edition of Owners' Report have begun to drift into the history books.

We sought members' opinions on Swift's Challenger 540, which was dropped from the range in 2011, and pitched it against the Coachman Pastiche 530/4, which ceased production in 2009.

Behind the living area, main entrance door and central kitchen, each has a double-bed slotted into a rear corner alongside a sneaked-in washroom. The wardrobe is in the living area and the washbasin in the bedroom. Both models have now been replaced by layouts that

sport full-width rear washrooms and bedrooms with wardrobes.

Member feedback allows us to produce percentage scores in key categories. Owners also tell us what they like best and least about their caravans.

LIKES AND DISLIKES

It was the 2007 Coachman's "stunning build quality" that impressed one member, who went on to praise the "attention to detail". Others agreed. "Well built, the quality of the finish is very good," said the owner of a 2008 vintage. The standard of the Coachman's construction was praised over and over by a small but faithful band of owners. They were equally enthusiastic about the Pastiche's towing characteristics, its storage capacity and its "light, bright and airy" interior.

Criticisms were few and not especially significant. The size of (and slow drainage from) the shower caused some irritation. The kitchen area didn't suit one member (he didn't say why) and another claimed the fridge was a bit small. There was a complaint that the quality of the double-mattress in a 2008 Pastiche failed to live up to expectations and one member, at 6ft 3in tall, thought the mattress could be a smidgen longer.

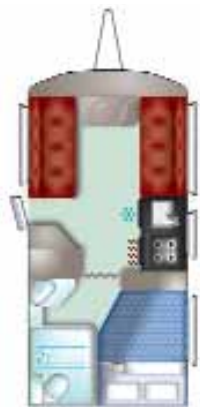
Meanwhile, the Swift's bedroom and washroom really did the trick for the majority of the Challenger group. Its "fixed bed and general layout" were much-admired. Of the washroom, one owner told us "the shower is better than at home".

Members told us they liked the Challenger's excellent storage capacity and towing performance, and how it is "very easy to live in". For one owner (2010 model), it was an "ideal two-berth, the best Swift model of the five that we have owned!"

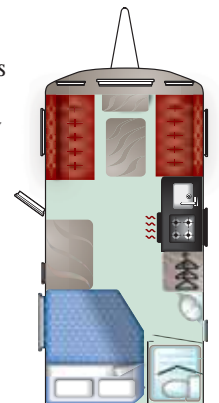
So, what's not to like? Well, to begin with there was "shoddy workmanship" in a 2008 model. Then, according to two more owners (of 2007 vintage vehicles), there was alleged "poor finish and build quality". These sentiments are bound to come as a surprise to the two Swift Challenger owners who could find nothing at all to dislike about their 2010 and 2011 models; "Happy with everything!" one of them said.

ON THE ROAD

Most owners had chosen a towcar with punch – Nissan X-Trails, Volvo Vs and XCs, Land Rovers and similar muscular motors were doing the pulling. 'On the road' scores were pretty good, the only real problems being some tyre failures reported on a couple of Swift Challengers.



Pastiche 530/4



Challenger 540

A five-year-old Pastiche



The Pastiche “tows immaculately” but, according to our member pulling with an Audi Allroad, it could be affected by the bow-wave of passing trucks.

The Swift “tows better fully laden”, reported one member. The “outfit is excellent. Does not give any problems,” commented another.

SLEEPING

Both models delivered a high level of comfort. “[The Pastiche] bed is very comfortable, never slept better in a caravan,” claimed a member with 28 years of touring experience behind him. Despite criticisms of its bed length and mattress quality, the Pastiche recorded a magnificent 90% sleeping mark.

The Challenger has a “fabulous comfy bed” which, strangely, “annoyingly creaks now and again”. Various owners claimed the fitted mattress to be “very comfortable”, “extremely comfortable”, even “perfect”, but its close proximity to the washroom gave rise to the sheets getting caught in the loo door.

LIVING ACCOMMODATION

We learnt from one reader that the Pastiche is “very comfortable to lounge in”, a sentiment at odds with another member’s view that the living area is “only just adequate”. The Pastiche collected generous marks for its lighting, daytime practicality and insulation, while its scores for seating comfort and dining table were almost off the scale.

The Swift was perceived to be both “excellent” and “adequate”. The “short front seating area” was acknowledged to be a worthwhile compromise to gain the benefits of the overall layout. The Swift has a “pleasant, comfy and airy” interior, which “feels roomy” and has an “especially large sideboard for television”.

WASHROOM

For some owners, these washrooms were examples of those compromises you simply have to live with in order to enjoy other

benefits. Despite being described as “cramped” and “tight”, the Pastiche washroom scored well. Several Swift owners expressed great satisfaction with the Challenger’s washroom. One described the compartment as “small” but acknowledged “we were aware of this when we purchased the caravan”.

KITCHEN

The 2007 Pastiche kitchen was “nice and spacious” with “enough work surface”, although “storage is a bit limited” and “the grill is not big enough”. One couple said the kitchen area was “adequate [when catering] for two people”, but added they felt it would be too small for four.

There were a couple of complaints that the Swift’s hob “had gone rusty”. Some also said the Swift’s oven was exceedingly gloomy and in urgent need of illumination.

SERVICES

Good news was that in the Pastiche, most things connected to the on-board gas, water and power supplies seemed to work. One gas regulator packed up, but there was little else to report. A number of Swift owners reported being troubled by noisy water pumps, and others were let down by faulty space heaters, fridges, water heaters, kitchen taps and battery chargers. The Pastiche’s 17-point advantage for services summed it up.

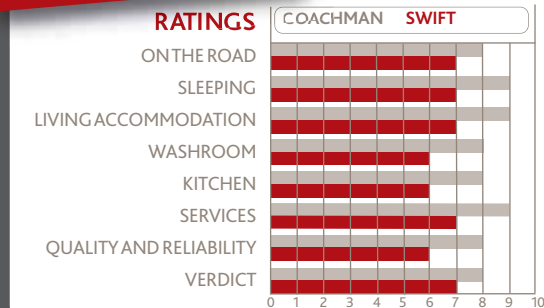
Owners of both models put out a plea for more power sockets, both 12V and mains.

QUALITY AND RELIABILITY

“Very good quality and reliability” and “excellent” were typical comments from the Coachman Pastiche set. Some Swift owners had no Q&R complaints but others told us unlucky stories in graphic detail, often concerning the breakdown of bought-in components. And would our members recommend their model to a friend?

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|---------------|
| Coachman Pastiche 530/4 | | |
| Yes: 9 (100%) | No: 0 | Don't know: 0 |
| Swift Challenger 540 | | |
| Yes: 10 (50%) | No: 6 | Don't know: 4 |

TECHNICAL



| | Coachman (2009) | Swift (2011) |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Internal length | 18ft (5.48m) | 18ft 1in (5.5m) |
| Overall length | 23ft 10in (7.26m) | 23ft 8in (7.22m) |
| Width | 7ft 5in (2.26m) | 7ft 7in (2.31m) |
| Headroom | 6ft 5in (1.95m) | 6ft 5in (1.95m) |
| MRO | 1,394kg (27.4 cwt) | 1,382kg (27.2 cwt) |
| MTPLM | 1,585kg (31.2 cwt) | 1,545kg (30.4 cwt) |
| Berths | 4 | 4 |
| New price (ex wks) | £16,345 (2009) | £16,989 (2011) |

Above figures from manufacturers' literature

AVERAGE USED PRICES

| Year | Coachman | Swift |
|------|----------|---------|
| 2006 | £6,725 | £7,538 |
| 2007 | £7,650 | £8,513 |
| 2008 | £8,738 | £9,413 |
| 2009 | £9,888 | £10,663 |

| OWNER PROFILE | Coachman | Swift | Avg |
|------------------------|----------|-------|----------|
| Age | 59 | 64 | 62 |
| Driving experience yrs | 41 | 47 | 45 |
| Towing experience yrs | 27 | 26 | 26 |
| Mileage | 6,563 | 7,200 | 7,011 |
| No. of contributors | 9 | 20 | Total 29 |

Info: coachman.co.uk ● swiftgroup.co.uk

Exterior of a 2006/7 Challenger



VERDICT

There’s no doubt that the opinions of those disgruntled members among the Swift group had a harmful effect on the Challenger’s scores, and models produced between 2007 and 2009 attracted the most criticism. Suffice to say that the comments and marks from owners of the Pastiche 530/4 showed it as one of Coachman’s most popular models.