



The Swift Coastline is ready for occupancy

A TRULY KIWI EXPERIENCE

Jill Malcolm meets the caravan convert who's turned his love for the RV lifestyle into a thriving business

Two years ago Barry Clark, a firefighter from Whangaparāoa, north of Auckland, and his wife Fiona bought a late-model caravan in which to enjoy the great outdoors. They had spent years camping under canvas before deciding they would look for an easier way. From the first night in their new RV, they were hooked. And last year they came up with a business idea that would provide others with a similar experience.

What prompted you to invest in a caravan?

We had camped with our two girls since they were very young, and every summer holiday we went to one of the Rodney District's regional parks. We loved the open spaces and being near the bush and the beaches. We have great family memories of those holidays. As our girls got older, they often wanted friends to come along. To accommodate them we had to take an increasing

amount of gear. The car was filled to the brim and it was taking us longer and longer to set up. We needed to be away for at least five to seven days to make all the effort worthwhile. That's when we began taking notice of campers in their lovely caravans. Holidaying in a caravan with all modern amenities began to look a lot easier and way more comfortable than our inflatable mattresses and outdoor shower. How amazing it would be, we realised, to be able to camp in style rather than spending hours setting up tents for everyone. How much more time we would have just to relax and enjoy the beach.

How did you go about working out what you wanted?

We spent about six months researching and looking at different makes and models. It was challenging to find the layout that made the best use



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Guests camp in ultra comfort

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How did you go about working out what you wanted?

We spent about six months researching and looking at different makes and models. It was challenging to find the layout that made the best use

of space. At one stage we considered importing a caravan ourselves. We worked out that we must have an island bed, a shower and bathroom at the rear of the caravan, and modern upholstery and décor that wouldn't date. We had seen many layouts and we understood there would have to be compromises. But eventually, we found a caravan that had most of what we were looking for and, in the end, it was a quick decision.

What did you buy?

We decided on a Swift Coastline, an 7.48-metre, single axle, 1500kg model with a 150-watt solar panel and an E-move caravan manoeuvring system. The inflatable awning was additional. We also bought Torpedo 7 outdoor furniture, a mini Weber Baby Q barbecue, and a TV and DVD with free view aerial.



A large inflatable awning adds an extra room

IMAGES SUPPLIED



The Swift Coastline's lounge area is modern and comfortable

What were the deal-making features of your RV?

The Swift was a late model with modern design and upholstery, a double island bed that we could easily move around, and the biggest sized shower and bathroom we could find that fitted our budget. It was also a size that would fit in our driveway and would be easy to tow and manage.

Who did you buy your caravan from and how did you find the process?

We bought the Swift Coastline from the South Auckland Caravan Centre in East Tāmaki. They were easy to deal with and the handover was thorough. All the certification was done. Overall, buying the caravan was a good experience.

Can you describe your business and why you set it up?

We've always loved camping in Auckland's regional parks and wondered how we could get more people out to enjoy the beautiful beaches and areas around them. We thought about how we could make our caravan available when we weren't using it, and offer stress-free and accessible holidays for those who might never have been camping before. This is why we started Kiwi Caravan Experience so other

people could enjoy the beautiful outdoors in style and comfort. The idea was to invite busy couples to escape the rush of their day-to-day world and relax in a little piece of paradise.

It's not always easy to take time out and get away. Everyone seems to be working harder, and we know how great it feels to have a break. Kiwi Caravan Experience is adult-only accommodation for busy young couples, retirees, tired parents, people who want a quiet space to write or work, photographers, walkers, bird watchers – anyone who wants to get away on their own for a bit.

We've created a way in which people can have a caravanning experience without having to do anything other than pack their food supplies and clothes. We do the rest. We tow the caravan to the locality and site customers have chosen and set up the camp. Some sites can be in places that may not have other accommodation available.

What sites can people choose from?

The distance we tow the caravan is limited to a 60km radius from our place in Army Bay on the Whangaparāoa Peninsula. But within that limit, there is plenty of choice in some wonderful spots. Some of the places we suggest to people are Shakespear

Regional Park, Ōrewa Campground, Wenderholm Regional Park campground, Tāwharanui Regional Park, Sullivans Bay in Mahurangi Regional Park, Snells Beach in Martins Bay and the Sandspit Holiday Park. The best places to stay are unspoilt, quiet and close to nature. Rodney is only 40 minutes north of Auckland, but it feels like a million miles away.

How do people go about booking?

There are two ways to book. One is directly through our Kiwi Caravan Experience website, kiwicaravanexperience.co.nz, and we are also listed on the Camplify website at camplify.co.nz. ■

WIN!

Barry has kindly offered a fantastic prize for us to give away. To be in the draw to win a two-night stay with Kiwi Caravan Experience, visit our competition page at nzmc.co.nz/competitions before September 18, 2020.

Would you like to share your story? Contact us at claire@nzmc.co.nz to tell us a bit about your RV experience and we'll be in touch.