

You and your motorhome



First steps to get you touring
confidently in your motorhome

THE
**CARAVAN
CLUB**

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Welcome to touring

Touring is a great way to get out and about, discovering new places and new people. So relax and enjoy yourself, after all that's what it's all about.

We've put together this guide to help you get started. It's full of practical advice and handy hints, so you'll soon be touring with confidence.

There's a section at the back we call 'The serious stuff'. Things like licences and law, and there's also a glossary so you can find out what all those initials stand for.

There's loads more info online. Visit www.discovertouring.co.uk to get a taste of the touring lifestyle or www.caravanclub.co.uk for in-depth help and advice, but you do have all the basics in this little booklet.

So enjoy touring and remember – we're here to help.



Choosing your motorhome

There are a number of good reasons you may be considering buying a motorhome. If you choose a motorhome you have a stylish self-contained vehicle, so you won't have to tow or hitch up. You also have more flexibility, especially when travelling abroad.

Driving a motorhome is easy, with the driving position, performance and handling quite similar to your car. Most people will have an everyday car as well but you could choose a small motorhome and use it as your sole vehicle.

If you want to build your confidence at the wheel of your motorhome, The Caravan Club offers informative and fun manoeuvring courses. See page 7 for more details.

Types of motorhome

The most common type of motorhome is a 'coachbuilt'. They have the living area mounted on the cab and chassis and it often includes a storage or sleeping area over the cab, usually with side windows. Those without 'overcabs' are less bulky, have better aerodynamics and look neater, but aren't as roomy.

Also fairly common are van conversions. They mostly have elevating roofs to avoid the problem of car park barriers and garage storage. Very small van conversions are cosy and you can extend the available living space with an awning. If you only stay on caravan sites with toilet blocks and showers, you may not need these facilities in your motorhome.



A-Class Motorhome



If your budget is more generous a coachbuilt 'A-Class' might suit you. These are built from the chassis up and can tow a trailer, a small car or store motorbikes. This is not so much a 'home from home', more a mobile hotel.

What to look for

You need enough sleeping places for all the people you're going to take on holiday. Permanently made-up beds are great for comfort, and suit a touring couple. With a family along too, beds that convert to seats in the daytime add extra living space. Overcab bunks in a coachbuilt motorhome are ideal for children too.

If you're going to be touring all year round, check heating, air-conditioning, insulation and frost protection for waste and fresh water tanks.

Seatbelts in the living area may not be provided in older vehicles, so make sure that you can take all your passengers safely. Child seats may be difficult to fit in some motorhomes, so check before buying if you need them.

Make sure the kitchen's right for you. Check the fridge is big enough and see if it runs on gas or electricity. See if there's an LPG gas oven, a microwave or at least space for one. There may not be an oven grill, especially in an imported motorhome.

Other considerations

Think about what type of holiday you're likely to have. If you need to take loads of stuff with you, you'll need a motorhome that will take the weight safely. All vehicles have a maximum load, which can be checked on a plate in the vehicle and in the handbook. As a minimum, allow 75kg per person. Then for personal effects add at least 100kg for two people, and another 25kg for everyone else. If you're going to take bikes, equipment for hobbies, extra gas bottles and so on, include those too.

If you're going to tow anything, check the vehicle can be equipped with a towing bracket and has sufficient towing capacity.

Check the warranty offered. The base vehicle probably has a separate warranty from the one from the motorhome manufacturer. They will both need to be serviced in accordance with their guidelines to ensure continuance of the warranties. Check where the servicing needs to be carried out, to make sure it will be convenient for you.

Motorhome Layouts

Imagine what it would be like using a motorhome on your holidays. Make sure the kitchen is just as you would like it. See if there's enough headroom for you, and that you won't be bumping into each other when you're moving around. The available space may be less than in a caravan, so this might be more important when choosing your motorhome.

If you have young children, they probably go to bed earlier than you. If you're happy using overcab beds in a large coachbuilt, you might want to choose one with the dinette in the middle and bunk beds at the other end for the children. That would leave you with seating in the evening where you can relax, plus the opportunity to convert the dining area into more beds for extra guests if needed.

Visit www.discovertouring.co.uk to see some examples. If you want more detailed information on buying a motorhome, go online to caravanclub.co.uk/expert-advice for a comprehensive downloadable leaflet.

It's worth considering hiring a motorhome for a short break to get the feel of living in one. Check The Caravan Club's website for a list of hirers.



Driving your motorhome

If you find the prospect of driving a motorhome a bit scary, please don't worry because lots of people do it.

You'll find a small motorhome as easy to drive as a car, just keep an eye out for slightly bigger overhangs and take care reversing in larger vehicles. A large motorhome has high sides and so watch out for strong crosswinds, especially on elevated motorways.

Make sure you know the height of your vehicle so you can avoid low bridges and other obstructions. When loading up for a trip, distribute the weight evenly and low down.

The Club offers practical courses for motorhomes, plus DVDs that demonstrate how to manoeuvre these vehicles safely. The practical courses are great fun even if you're an experienced driver, giving you confidence through hands on experience and they're open to non-members. For more information go to www.caravanclub.co.uk/trainingcourses or phone The Caravan Club events team on 01342 488 348.

TOP TIP

Make a note of your motorhome height in both feet and inches and metres, and stick it to the dashboards.



Setting up on site



A glance at your pitch should tell you if you need side to side levelling. Reverse onto your pitch a foot or so further back than you want to end up, then place the levelling ramp in front of the wheel that needs to be raised. Place a spirit level parallel to the axle or the door. It helps to have two people at this point, one to drive the motorhome very slowly forward up the ramp, and the other to indicate when the spirit level bubble is in the middle. Chock the raised wheel for safety.

It's easier to position with the slope running from the front up to the back, then the front wheels can be driven up two ramps until it is level. If your motorhome has corner steadies, these should now be wound down, using blocks on soft pitches.

TOP TIP

If the shower tray doesn't drain properly, a small adjustment to the levelling usually cures the problem.

Levelling

For your first trips you can save yourself the bother of levelling your motorhome by selecting a level hardstanding pitch. If you like to use grass pitches, it is something you might need to do. It's simple enough. You'll need levelling ramps, special plastic wedges to place under your wheels to raise them a little.

Hooking-up to the Mains

Most pitches have mains electricity available for lighting, water heating and the fridge in your motorhome. It means you can use appliances from home, such as hairdryers and cooling fans. The site supply will assume that not everyone will use the maximum power all at once, so it makes sense to use only

essential equipment at peak times to make sure everyone gets a fair share and the supply doesn't fail.

All standard Caravan Club pitches include electricity in the pitch price, and most outlets permit up to 16 amps of power. 1000 watts or 1 KW is equivalent to 4.3 amps. There are some economy pitches available without electricity outlets.

You'll probably be supplied with the required cable, if not, you can buy one.

To Connect:

1. First ensure your motorhome mains isolating switch is in the OFF position, and all the electrical switches inside are too.



2. Open the cover to the exterior mains inlet and insert the female blue connector.



3. Locate your electricity supply bollard – ask the warden if you're not sure which one – and, ensuring the cable is routed out of harm's way, raise the cover on the individual outlet and insert the blue plug (male). On Club sites, turn the plug clockwise until it locks. On other sites you may simply need to push it home firmly.



4. Place any surplus cable underneath the motorhome in large loose loops; a tightly coiled cable can overheat.
5. Put the mains isolating switch to ON.
6. Check the Residual Current Device is working by pressing the test button. Reset, check the fridge and water heater are switched to mains operation, then you are ready to relax.

To Disconnect:

Turn OFF the interior mains isolating switch. Release the plug from the site bollard (on Club sites, press the plug release button first). Disconnect from the other end and store the cable in an appropriate locker.

Connecting the Water

Most motorhomes have on-board fresh and waste water tanks. The majority of sites have designated motorhome service points and these make it a simple procedure to fill up your on-board fresh water tanks and empty your built-in waste tanks. There will be a fresh water tap with a hose connected. Simply remove the filler cap from the motorhome inlet and fill.



TOP TIP

It has been known for people to mistake the fresh water filling point for the petrol/diesel inlet and vice versa! It is a costly business either way so take care.

Waste Water

To empty motorhome waste tanks you need to position your motorhome adjacent to or over the manhole cover, depending on the location of the waste outlets. Usually you can

remove the manhole cover after you have positioned the vehicle, but if you have to do it before, be extra careful not to drive down the hole!



Connecting to LPG

Motorhomes usually have an LPG locker to carry one or more LPG cylinders. Cylinders are likely to be blue for Butane or red for Propane. Butane only works properly above freezing point, but Propane still works well in very cold weather. If you're touring all year, you might as well stick with Propane. The most commonly used size of cylinder is 6 or 7kg.

All but the smallest Butane cylinders have a simple clip on regulator, which should have the instructions stamped on it or supplied with it. Smaller Butane and all Propane cylinders need an appropriate spanner for connection, so make sure you have one in a safe place. Before connecting, make sure all the gas appliances are switched off.

Check there aren't any naked flames about, remove the safety cap on the cylinder and fit the regulator. Don't over tighten Butane connections, although with Propane you should ensure it is really tight. Be careful not to cross-thread, and remember to check whether it's a left or right hand thread. When on securely, open the valve: anticlockwise for handwheels, clockwise for clip-ons. Check the hob will light and, if you're not using mains electricity, switch your water heater and refrigerator operation to gas.



To disconnect or change a cylinder, ensure all gas appliances are switched off and reverse the above procedure.



Emptying the Toilet

Larger motorhomes have a cassette toilet that seals the waste tank between uses, and keeps it sealed for when you need to dispose of its contents. Emptying is easily done from outside:

1. Make sure the slide valve in the bottom of the toilet pan has been completely closed, then move outside. Open the locker door and release bottom or base catch securing cassette.



2. Remove cassette, ensuring the flap is in the closed position, and place on a trolley if required.



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3. At the chemical toilet waste disposal point remove cap and place safely away from emptying point.
4. Press the air release button near the handle before you tilt the tank to empty contents.



5. Rinse well and then leave some water in and replace cap.
6. Back at the motorhome, add a chemical treatment product. Replace cap and fold the emptying pipe away.
7. Slide back into locker until catch locks.
8. Close and lock door.

For further information, please request The Caravan Club's information leaflet 'Back to Basics'.



Cheddar Caravan Club site

Accessories

Once you have your motorhome, there are only a few items to buy at the start, as you'll already have many at home. However here's some you may like to consider. Some we consider 'essentials' and some 'desirables'.

Essentials

Step

Unless you have a built-in retractable step, you'll want a step to get in and out of your motorhome. Buy one specifically designed and tested for touring use from a reputable manufacturer.

Mains Hook-up Lead

This will be supplied if you're buying new but some older vehicles may have only a rather short 10m one. If not supplied – or too short – you really ought to buy one. 25m long with the appropriate blue connectors either end is the one you need.

Leisure Battery

Most motorhomes have two batteries, one to start the engine, and the other to run the 12V equipment on board, such as water pump and lighting. The second battery should come with the vehicle, a leisure battery specifically designed to power the living area equipment. This will be recharged every time you hook-up to mains electricity, and for most vehicles as you drive along too.

LPG Cylinders

Unless you're always going to cook with a microwave oven or some other electrical appliance and will always hook up to mains electricity, you'll need at least one LPG canister and regulator. Most people use LPG for the hob, oven and space heater, and to heat the water or the refrigerator if it's not connected to electricity.



Security Device

Some form of mechanical device for your motorhome is advisable and may be a requirement of your insurance. See the section on Security.

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Desirables

Awning

Awnings can double the size of the useful living area. They can provide a place to sleep in summer by using an inner tent, or a dining room or children's play area. They are an ideal place to store wellies, raincoats, bicycles, the barbecue and picnic chairs etc.

There are some drawbacks to a full awning – it can be heavy to transport, can take up quite a bit of space. It's more of a two person job to erect and can become damaged or damage something else in high winds. There

are alternatives with half sized or porch awnings, or even sun canopies, which are smaller, lighter, easier to erect. These smaller awnings can still provide a good seating area, or boot and bicycle storage area and being quicker to erect, might suit you if you keep changing pitch. Many motorhome awnings are freestanding like a tent, so you can leave them up when you go out for the day.

Levelling Ramps and Chocks

These may not be needed if you intend to use hard standings but are desirable if pitching on uneven grass.

Television and TV Antenna

Is this desirable or a necessity? Only you will know. You can buy a 12V or dual voltage television but if you're usually going to hook up to the mains then a small one from home will work perfectly well. Generally you will only be able to use it in the UK. For use abroad you'll need a multi-standard set.

Your home TV licence will cover you for viewing while on tour, but only if there's nobody left at home watching another set.

You can get directional or omni-directional antennae. Generally speaking a directional one will perform better, if set up correctly, than an omni-directional type.

Looking after your motorhome

Storage

Many people choose to store their motorhome in their driveway or garden, but not everyone likes doing this and some home owners are bound by restrictive covenants preventing it. A lot of caravan sites offer storage, and there are also independent storage compounds nationwide.

The Caravan Storage Site Owners' Association, or CaSSOA, grades storage sites according to the facilities and degree of security offered. The minimum requirement for a Bronze award is a site secured by perimeter fencing with single point access, but you're likely to find other security measures like CCTV cameras. At the other end of the scale are the Gold Award holders. These are likely to have security lighting, cameras, vermin control, undercover storage, motorhome washing facilities and quite often a 24-hour security presence.

For further guidance, contact CaSSOA on 0115 934 9826 or visit www.cassoa.co.uk.

The Caravan Club offers storage for its members at very reasonable prices. For more information visit www.caravanclub.co.uk/storage

Motorhome Security

Your motorhome represents a significant investment and you will want to protect it, and your insurer may require you to take some security measure whenever your vehicle is left unattended. They may specify what you should fit, or may offer a premium discount for specific products. Failure to comply could invalidate your insurance.

The main mechanical options are wheel clamps, steering wheel locks, foot pedal locks or gear locks. Wheel clamps come in many

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different types, so look for one that covers the wheel bolts, has robust parts that would take a long time to saw or drill through, and cannot be prised off simply by letting down the tyre.



Some storage compounds may not permit the use of wheel clamps, as it may compromise their fire safety arrangements. If this is the case, make sure other security systems are in place and that your insurance will not be invalidated.

Sold Secure is an independent attack test house. Any products tested to their 'Silver' or 'Gold' standards have had to resist 'determined' and 'dedicated' attacks respectively, and are well worth buying. More information is available on their website at www.soldsecure.com

Other security precautions include alarms, immobilisers and tracking devices. The motor insurance repair research centre, or 'Thatcham', approves various devices and some insurance companies will specify one must be fitted by an approved agent.

Also bear in mind that while the door locks on the habitation area have improved in design over recent years, they are generally unable to withstand a determined effort to get in, so don't leave the motorhome unattended for long periods with valuable items inside.

Servicing

There are two aspects to consider with a motorhome service - the base vehicle and the habitation side. The vehicle manufacturer will have set service intervals and to maintain the warranty these must be adhered to.

It is unlikely that your vehicle will meet the mileage intervals so you will probably be subject to time intervals. The habitation aspect should be inspected annually, including a gas and electrical system check and a damp check may also be required on some types for the bodywork warranty.

The Club recommends choosing a workshop that is a member of The Approved Workshop scheme for living area servicing, unless the vehicle warranty requires you to use a specific service agent. For details visit www.approvedworkshops.co.uk.



Low Manesty Caravan Club site

Law and order



Now, don't be scared. Your existing licence probably covers you for any motorhome you may want to drive. But if you've any doubts, here's what the law says.

Driving Licences

If you have a Category B Licence obtained prior to 1 January 1997 you can drive:

- a) Any motorhome/trailer combination, where the combined MAM (see Glossary) does not exceed 8,250 kg.
- b) Any motorhome without a trailer where the MAM does not exceed 7,500 kg.

If you have a Category B Licence obtained on or after 1 January 1997, you may drive:

- a) A towed outfit restricted to a combined weight of 3,500 kg and the trailer MAM must

not exceed the kerb weight of the towing vehicle. If this MAM is to be exceeded an E Test pass is required.

- b) A motorhome with a MAM of 3,500 kg. A pass of the LGV C1 test qualifies a driver for a MAM of up to 7,500 kg.
- c) A motorhome towing a trailer providing the trailer does not exceed 750 kg and the combined MAM does not exceed 4,250 kg. If the trailer does exceed 750 kg then (a) above applies. Otherwise an LGV C1 + E test is needed.

For further information visit www.dvla.gov.uk

Speed Limits

Motorhomes with an unladen weight of up to 3.05 tonnes and/or up to 8 passenger seats are subject to the same speed limits as ordinary cars.

Larger motorhomes are restricted to 50 mph on single carriageways, 60 mph on dual carriageways and 70 mph on motorways.

All these limits apply providing a lower speed limit is not in force. Vehicles towing trailers are not permitted in the outside lane of a three or more lane motorway unless the inner lanes are blocked.



Dimensions

Most motorhomes may (subject to any manufacturer's restrictions) tow a trailer with a maximum body length of 7 metres (excluding drawbar) and a maximum width of 2.55 metres. A vehicle with a maximum gross weight of 3500 kg or more is required if you wish to tow in excess of this. Maximum overall length (motorhome plus trailer) is 18.75 metres.

Owners of larger motorhomes may find it useful to record their vehicle's overall height on a note displayed in the cab. This has been a legal requirement for vehicles over 3 metres high since October 1997.

Parking

The law says you can't leave a vehicle or outfit where it may cause an obstruction. Because lay-bys are part of the highway, you can't camp overnight in them. Observe local by-laws, which may prevent the parking of some motorhomes in street bays. It is an offence to drive more than 15 yards off the road without authority in both urban and rural areas. Always read any car park signs carefully before leaving your vehicle, as many operators have specific restrictions on the types allowed. Watch out for height barriers on many car parks, which will generally only allow the smallest motorhomes entry.



Glossary of Terms

A Class Type of motorhome where both the cab and living area are integrated and have been constructed by the converter, not the base vehicle manufacturer.

Actual Laden Weight (ALW) The total weight of the motorhome and its contents, when moving. The only reliable way to determine this is on a weighbridge.

Awning A tent-like structure of fabric over a supporting framework, which can be attached to the side of a motorhome, or be free standing. Also called an annexe. Many motorhomes are also built with permanently fixed roll-out blinds, some of which can be supplemented with zip-in side panels.

Base Vehicle The vehicle used as the platform on which a motorhome is built.

Berth Sleeping place.

Butane A type of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) commonly used for caravanning when temperatures are above freezing. Usually sold in a blue cylinder.

Cassette Toilet (Chemical Toilet) A form of chemical toilet found in modern motorhomes, where the waste holding tank can be accessed and emptied from outside.

Chassis Cab A common type of base vehicle on which a motorhome may be built, consisting of a complete, driveable chassis with enclosed cab area.

Coachbuilt When referring to motorhomes, indicates any form of construction where the habitation area is built on to a chassis cab.

Converter The manufacturer who constructs a motorhome from the base vehicle.

Corner Steady The winding device built into each corner of a motorhome chassis that is used to stabilise the body once set up on a pitch.

Elevating Roof A feature of some smaller motorhomes, which provides greater headroom when on site, but gives a low profile to reduce wind resistance on the road and to facilitate garage storage.

Full Service Pitch A pitch with individual provision for fresh water supply and waste water disposal, in addition to mains electricity and sometimes TV aerial connection.

Gas Cylinder A portable, pressurised container for the storage of LPG.

Gas Cylinder Locker Compartment on the motorhome for the storage of gas cylinders.

Grey Water (see *Waste Water*) Waste water from sink/shower.

Gross Train Weight Also known as Combined Weight. The maximum permitted weight of an outfit. This is often the sum of the gross vehicle weight and the braked towing limit.

Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) The weight of the vehicle laden to its maximum, as defined by the manufacturer. See also MTPLM.

Habitation area The living space of a motorhome, as opposed to the external lockers or cab area.

Hardstanding A pitch with a hard surface made of gravel, asphalt, concrete etc, rather than grass.

High Top A form of motorhome where the base vehicle manufacturer or converter has added a fixed roof offering increased headroom.

Hook-Up A facility on a pitch for connection to mains electricity.

Kerbweight The empty weight of a motor vehicle as defined by the manufacturer.

LAV Leisure Accommodation Vehicle: A general term including caravans, motorhomes, campers and trailer tents.

Leisure Battery A 12V battery similar to a car battery, which powers the 12V lighting, water pump(s) etc. in the motorhome.

Levelling The process of ensuring that a motorhome is level when sited on a pitch.

Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) The fuel used to power the cooking hob/oven in most leisure vehicles.

Low-Profile A form of coachbuilt motorhome without an overcab area.

Luton A term originally applied to lorries with an overcab load area, and also used to describe motorhomes with a bed over the cab.

MAM (now MTPLM) Maximum Authorised Mass: the maximum weight limit as defined by the manufacturer/converter.

MIRO (formerly referred to as the MAM) Mass in Running Order: the weight of the motorhome ex-factory with fuel and water, but without any passengers or touring equipment. Previously called Unladen or Ex-Works Weight.

MTPLM Maximum Technically Permissible Laden Mass. The maximum weight which the chassis, as specified by the manufacturer, can legally carry.

Motorhome A self-propelled caravan. Also called a Motor Caravan, Campervan or Caravanette.

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Motorhome Service Point A facility on a caravan site where motorhomes can fill the onboard drinking water tank and empty the onboard waste water tank.

Payload Also called User Payload.

The difference between the MTPLM and the MIRO and is the weight you can add to the leisure vehicle, in the case of a motorhome including passengers.

Propane A type of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) usually stored in red cylinders and suitable for year-round use.

Pup Tent A small dome or ridge tent that may be erected next to a motorhome, to be used as sleeping accommodation for children only.

Residual Current Device (RCD) A safety device which disconnects the mains electricity supply in the event of an earth leakage fault.

Regulator A safety device which controls the pressure of LPG coming out of a cylinder, and going into the motorhome supply system.

RV Recreational Vehicle an American term for motorhome.

Torque Wrench A form of spanner used to set nuts and bolts to a specified tightness.

Van Conversion A type of motorhome based on a panel van.

VIN Vehicle Identification Number.

Waste Water (see Grey Water) Waste water from sink/shower.

Water Pump Since motorhome water tanks and containers are kept at low level, a pump must be used to deliver water to taps and the water heater.

Wheelbase The distance between the front and rear axles of a vehicle.

Wheel Clamp A security device, which should prevent a road wheel rotating or the wheel being removed.





We're here to help you get the most out of touring
and for any questions you may have on getting started.

www.caravanclub.co.uk

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