

This information is prepared by the Caravan Club as part of its service to Members. The contents are believed correct at the date of publication.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION ON TRAVELLING TO SPAIN AND PORTUGAL DURING THE WINTER MONTHS**

Many of our members wish to spend some of the winter months visiting the Iberian Peninsula in order to make the most of the better weather. The Caravan Club Travel Service is happy to assist with booking ferries, etc, and availability and prices can be checked with our reservations staff by telephoning 01342 316101. Several of the sites we work with are open all year and pitches can be reserved on these sites, subject to availability. However, some sites are only open in the summer or if open out of season not all facilities may be available. This is generally reflected in the better overnight rates available to out-of-season and long-term visitors.

An alternative to booking your sites in advance is the European Camping Cheque Scheme. The European Camping Cheque scheme is ideal for members able to take a holiday outside the peak holiday season. Reservations are not made with this scheme, giving the flexibility of staying at a campsite for several days or moving on after only one night. The Cheques are included in a package complete with return ferry crossings and Red Pennant Insurance and are accepted at around 575 sites throughout Europe. More details are given in the Club's Travel Service in Europe brochure or [www.campingcheque.co.uk](http://www.campingcheque.co.uk) Confirmed reservations made through The Caravan Club gives you a price guarantee - whatever happens to the exchange rates, there will be no surcharges. Red Pennant Travel Insurance can be arranged at the same time as your reservations (see next page).

#### **Before you Travel**

- Ensure your car and caravan or motor caravan are properly serviced and ready for the journey, paying particular attention to tyres and tyre pressures. Ensure caravan tyres are suited to the maximum weight of the caravan and the maximum permitted speed when travelling abroad - see Technical Information section of your Sites Directory & Handbook.
- Take a well-equipped spares and tool kit. A full set of spare bulbs plus any tools needed to change them, a warning triangle, reflective safety jacket, a fire extinguisher and a

first-aid kit are legal requirements in many European countries. A spare tyre and nearside and offside extending mirrors are essential.

- Adjust your headlights so that the dipped beam does not dazzle oncoming drivers using headlamp converters or beam deflectors available from any motor accessory shop. Even when not planning to drive at night, this will be required for tunnels or when visibility is poor.
- Most European countries recommend that dipped headlights are used even during daylight hours. It is now compulsory to use dipped headlights in Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Denmark, Hungary, Finland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Slovakia and Slovenia.
- Calor Gas is not available on the Continent. Campingaz is widely available but you will need an adaptor to connect to a Calor-type butane regulator for locations of stockists visit [www.campingaz.com](http://www.campingaz.com). Alternatively carry sufficient for your stay, subject to the cross-Channel operator's regulations which may restrict you to three, two or even only one gas cylinders. Check when making your booking. Locally produced gas is generally cheaper and available in countries other than Spain. You will need to purchase a regulator/adaptor at the same time. The **Cepsa** company sells butane gas cylinders and regulators, which are available in large stores and petrol stations, and the **Repsol** company sells butane cylinders at their petrol stations throughout the country. It is understood that Repsol and Cepsa depots will refill cylinders, but The Caravan Club does not recommend this practice.
- Passport application forms can be obtained from branches of the Post Office. The fee for an adult's 32 page 10-year passport is £72 and £46 for a child's 5-year passport. Since 5th October 1998 under-16-year-olds are required to have their own passports. Children already included in their parents' passports will not be affected by the change and can continue to travel on these, when accompanying their parents, until they reach the age of 16 or the parent's passport expires, whichever is the sooner. Allow a minimum of 28 working days for your application to be processed. The Passport Service provides a guaranteed same-day service for straightforward properly completed applications for passport renewals, amendments and child extensions only. Details for all services can be found at [www.passport.gov.uk](http://www.passport.gov.uk) or by contacting 0845 850 2829. In some countries, such as Portugal and Austria, passports must be carried at all times as a form of photographic identification. It is always a good idea to have at least 6 months validity on your passport in case your return journey is delayed, some countries such as Belgium, Poland, Denmark and Croatia insist that your passport is valid for 3 or 6 months beyond your departure dates, information on passport requirements can be found at [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk) or telephone 0845 850 2829
- An application form for a European Health Insurance Certificate (EHIC) can be obtained from your local Post Office. Alternatively you can apply on line at [www.dh.gov.uk/travellers](http://www.dh.gov.uk/travellers) or order by phone on 08456 062 030. You should then carry your copy with you since this will ensure you obtain reciprocal state-provided emergency

health care in all EU states. It is recommended that you also carry a few photocopies of this document as it may be retained by a hospital or clinic where assistance has been requested. However, only basic **emergency** cover is included and it is strongly recommended that additional travel insurance, such as The Caravan Club's Red Pennant, is also taken out. For more information on the new EHIC form visit The Department of Health's website [www.dh.gov.uk/travellers](http://www.dh.gov.uk/travellers).

- The Caravan Club's Red Pennant Travel Insurance 'Motoring & Personal' cover gives you maximum protection from the variety of mishaps which might otherwise ruin your eagerly anticipated trip. Even if you lose the use of your car, caravan or motor caravan, Red Pennant guarantee that your holiday can continue if you wish, helping to get you back on the road as quickly as possible. Perhaps even more important is the comprehensive medical cover and The Club's own helpline with assistance available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Details of the whole range of Red Pennant Travel Insurance are available from The Club. Bail cover for Spain and a Camping Card International are included with Red Pennant Motoring and Motoring and Personal Insurance
  - Check with your GP the generic name of any prescription medicines you are taking. If you need more or lose your supply, the generic name will help doctors overseas to identify them. All drugs prescribed by UK doctors since 2005 should be generic but it is still advisable to check.
- A list of addresses and telephone numbers of all major European countries maintaining Tourist Offices in London is available from The Club.
- A checklist of documentation, equipment, etc, is attached. The photo card licence or pink, pink/green EU-version of the UK driving licence are universally acceptable, the older-style all green licence is legal to use in Europe, however we would strongly advise that holders of the all green version should change for the new version or carry an International Driving Permit (application forms available from Green Flag and selected Post Offices details of these can be found at [www.postoffice.co.uk](http://www.postoffice.co.uk) or by calling 0845 7223 344).
- Once final payment has been made, The Club will send your documentation. If all services have been booked, this will include a copy of the Campsite Guide, Red Pennant Travel Insurance Assistance booklet, Camping Card International and GB sticker. Make sure you read all the information before you travel and double-check the dates on your confirmation for ferry crossings and campsites.
- Since information on the roads changes so frequently The Club has not provided routes for some years now. [www.viamichelin.co.uk](http://www.viamichelin.co.uk) allows you to request a recommended route for a car towing a caravan.
- Up-to-date road traffic information for Europe is available prior to your departure from the AA Continental Roadwatch on 09003 401100 (calls charged at premium rates).

- You may wish to consider purchasing The Caravan Club's Caravan Europe guide which is written in English and a mine of useful information on motoring, camping and caravanning across the continent, as well as containing details of sites of varying sizes and facilities. It is an invaluable guide to choosing your sites and planning your itinerary whether you prefer to book it all in advance or plan as you go. Each site entry states whether the site is small (maximum 50 pitches), medium (51-150 pitches), large (151-500 pitches) or very large (500+ pitches), together with information on site facilities, the address, telephone/fax numbers and instructions on how to locate it. There is also a quick reference map at the back of the guide showing which towns have sites which are open all year and which are purely seasonal. The essential difference between this and other guides is that these sites have been visited and recommended by our members and most entries include their comments on the facilities, etc. Volume 1 covers France, Spain, Andorra and Portugal and Volume 2 covers the rest of Europe. The price for members is £9.00 for volume 1 and £8.50 for volume 2, plus £2.50 P&P.
- If your home will be empty for some time, check your house and contents insurance policies regarding any limitations or regulations. Tell someone where you are going and consider leaving a set of house keys with someone you trust in case access is required in an emergency. Whilst mobile phones an ideal way of keeping in touch when abroad remember the international section of calls from the UK will be charged to your own telephone account.

### **On the Journey**

- It is a good idea to carry a small amount of currency in case of emergencies (or when shopping - French supermarket/hypermarket trolleys usually require a €1 piece, refundable when the trolley is returned). In addition you can take travellers' cheques or further cash can be obtained through ATM cash machines. These will often be found in supermarkets as well as outside banks; look for the same symbol on the machine as on your debit/credit card. French cards have a smart-card chip so that cards are not accepted without the user entering a PIN number; this can lead to some shops and automatic petrol pumps not accepting the UK version. It is better to obtain petrol during the daytime whilst the cash desk is manned to avoid the problem.
- In some countries you may be asked to produce your passport when paying by credit card for photographic identification purposes.
- Details of current toll charges for most European countries are available from The Club.
- We would recommend that you always come off the motorways to find overnight sites. Unfortunately, as you may have seen in the trade press including our own Club Magazine, it is becoming more and more of a problem that caravans and motor caravans parked overnight on service stations are targeted by thieves who are not deterred by the fact that people are asleep inside the vehicles. Motorways provide convenient service

stations and areas for a rest and a picnic en route but try not to leave the outfit unattended at any time and find a proper site for an overnight stop for your own safety.

- Also, particularly in the south of France and the north-east of Spain, it is preferable not to leave an outfit unattended on a service station or stop if flagged down by anyone other than bona fide police in a marked car. Wait until you reach the next well-lit, reasonably busy area and check the outfit then. A favourite gambit of thieves in this area is to flag an outfit down then steal valuables when the motorist stops to check all is in order. Whilst not wishing to cause undue concern, it is important to be alert and never to have valuables of any kind on show in the car or the caravan. This latter advice is obviously appropriate in all countries, including our own.
- A continuous white line down the centre of the road prohibits overtaking. In Spain this line must **not** be crossed for any reason, even to execute a left turn, despite the lack of any other "no left turn" sign. Proceed to a "cambio de sentido" (change of direction) sign to turn. Also in Spain, many roads have a single white line on the near (verge) side of the carriageway; this marks a narrow lane for pedestrians and/or cyclists and is not for use as a hard shoulder. A continuous line also indicates "no stopping"; even if it is possible to park entirely off the road, it should not be crossed except in a serious emergency. Offenders against either of these regulations are charged on-the-spot fines, as will those moving forward slowly at STOP signs. STOP signs mean STOP - not "move forward slowly"!
- Remember speed limit signs are in kilometres per hour, not miles per hour. In Spain vehicles and combinations of vehicles exceeding 10m in length and vehicles exceeding 3.5t in weight must keep a distance of at least 50m from the vehicle in front, except in built-up areas, on roads where overtaking is prohibited and when there are several lanes in the same direction or when the traffic is so heavy that it is not possible to overtake another vehicle.
- There is new legislation in Portugal which in practice means that only motor caravans are allowed to carry bicycles at the rear of the vehicle; cars should transport them on the roof provided an overall height of 4m is not exceeded. Drivers of cars with bicycles attached to the back of the vehicle will be subject to a fine.
- Police in France are being encouraged to stop drivers using mobile phones whilst driving by either imposing an on-the-spot fine or summoning them to court where the maximum fine is about €153 for not being in complete control of the vehicle. In Spain and Portugal use of a hand-held phone whilst driving is strictly prohibited.
- In both Spain and France it is compulsory for all motor vehicles to be equipped with reflective safety jackets. These must be worn whilst carrying out emergency operations e.g. changing a tyre, checking the engine, as well as when a motorist leaves a broken down vehicle on the hard shoulder or in a lay-by. Both the motorist and any passenger who alight the vehicle in these circumstances must wear a reflective vest. We strongly advise members to carry reflective vests in all European countries

- Sat navs that include laser or radar detection for speed traps are illegal in numerous countries including Spain France and Portugal

- **Large outfits in Spain**

Any car/caravan combinations or motor homes over 12m in length are required to fit marker boards to the back of the vehicle.

The marker boards which have a yellow centre and red boarder must be manufactured to ECE70 standards, and made of aluminium. You can have two boards measuring 565mm x 200mm or one large board measuring 1130mm x 200mm the boards must be placed between 50cm and 150cm off the ground, (the smaller boards can be attached horizontally or vertically.)

Marker boards can be purchased from most HGV suppliers including HGV Direct, [www.ghvdirect.co.uk](http://www.ghvdirect.co.uk) telephone: 0845 686 0008. Please ensure that any marker boards you purchase have ECE70 stamped on them. Further information can be found our website [www.caravanclub.co.uk](http://www.caravanclub.co.uk) (practical advice/overseas)

- **Speed Limits France**

We have now received confirmation from the legal department of Automobile Club de France regarding speed limits in France :

	Motorway	Dual carriageway	Single carriageway
Vehicle towing a caravan/trailer where the vehicle has a gross train mass of under 3.5t - or a motorhome that has a gross vehicle weight under 3.5t*	130	110	90
Motorhome which has a gross vehicle weight over 3.5t*	110	100	80
Vehicle towing a caravan/trailer where the vehicle has a gross train mass over 3.5t	90	90	80

*\* Motorhomes without a trailer, if the motorhome has a trailer then the speed limit will be based on the gross train mass.*

**Gross vehicle weight** - the weight of the vehicle when fully loaded with luggage, and passengers etc to its maximum permitted capacity.

**Gross train mass** - This information can normally be found in your owner's manual, on a plate or sticker fitted to the vehicle or by contacting the manufacturer of your car. In general terms the GTM is the gross vehicle weight of your car plus its towing limit. (There are exceptions to this rule, if in any doubt please contact your car manufacturer.)

**Example**

Honda CR-V 2.2 i-CTDI SE

Gross vehicle weight - 2160kg

Towing limit - 2000kg

Gross train mass - 4160kg

If you tow **any** trailer/caravan behind this car you will need to tow at the lower speed limits regardless of how much your trailer weighs. If the Honda is towing a caravan weighing 1000kg (total weight of 3160kg) the lower speed limits will still apply, because the gross train mass is over 3500kg.

The French highway code stipulates that 80 and 90 stickers must be displayed by vehicles required to drive at the lower limits, however we have been contacted by various members who live in France advising us that this requirement is being ignored, and the French police are not interested in enforcing it, nevertheless it is legal requirement and the stickers can be purchased from [www.speedstickers.co.uk](http://www.speedstickers.co.uk) telephone: 0800 988 7329 (between 10.00 - 14.00)

### **Arriving at your site**

- When checking into a site you may need to leave your Camping Card International or passport. In Portugal, since you must carry your passport at all times as a form of photographic identity, a CCI is essential.
- Be careful with electric hook-ups. Follow the correct procedure for connecting and disconnecting your caravan from the supply (see the Sites Directory & Handbook) and arrange the cable to avoid trip hazards. Voltage on most sites is usually 220v nominal but can be less. Most UK 240v appliances are rated at 220v - 240v and usually work satisfactorily. You will need your mains lead that you use in the UK. You may need a continental 2-pin adaptor (available from most UK caravan dealers), although many sites will have the European standard connectors (CEE17) which your UK 3-pin connector will fit.
- Sometimes the problem of reverse polarity is found. This is where the site supply's 'live' line connects to the caravan's 'neutral' and vice versa and is due to different standards of plug and socket wiring that exist in other countries. We therefore recommend checking the polarity immediately on connection, using a polarity tester, also available from caravan dealers before you leave.
- The caravan mains electrical installation should not be used whilst a reversed polarity situation exists. Ask the site manager if you can use an alternative socket or bollard, as the problem may be restricted to that particular socket only. Frequent travellers to the continent who are electrically competent often make themselves up an adaptor, clearly marked *reversed polarity* with the live and neutral wires reversed. This can be tried in place of the standard connector, to see if the electricity supply then reverts to 'normal'. A Mains Electricity leaflet with further information is available from the Travel Service Information Officer at The Club.

## General Suggestions

- Keep a note of your credit card numbers with you but separate from the cards so that if they are stolen you can report them immediately and have them cancelled.
- If you are unfortunate enough to have an accident, take some photographs to back up the written description on your claim form.
- Keep receipts for any medication or treatment purchased abroad, plus the labels from the medicines, as these will be required if you make a claim on returning home.
- In mountainous areas always remember to leave the blade valve of your portable toilet open a fraction whilst travelling. This avoids pressure build-up in the holding tank. In many countries it is a legal requirement to have winter tyres or snow chains, in bad weather the local authorities will uncover or put up road signs to advise when these are necessary.
- The maximum legal level of alcohol in the blood in most European countries is much lower than that permitted in the UK. It is better not to drink at all when driving as offenders are heavily fined.

## Caravan Site Safety

Everyone wants you to relax and have a good holiday when you use your caravan. The Caravan Club tries to help you achieve that aim and like other responsible organisations it takes steps to ensure your wellbeing on site. Safety is largely your own responsibility, however. Taking sensible precautions and being aware of possible hazards won't spoil your holiday, but a careless attitude might.

Safety matters from the moment you drive on to your pitch; never drive at more than a walking pace on site. A walk round the site can be a relaxing way to start your break. Even if you've been there before, the layout and facilities may have changed since your last visit.

Use your walk to make a note of the things you might need in an emergency - for instance, where is the nearest payphone? Is there a list of local hospitals and doctors? If not, find the information in case you need it in a hurry.

Be careful with electric hook-ups. Follow the correct procedure for connecting and disconnecting your caravan from the supply (see the Sites Directory & Handbook) and arrange the cable to avoid trip hazards. Take care to avoid other less thoughtful peoples' cables.

Before using the mains supply on Continental sites, you should check for reversed polarity using a polarity tester. If the device detects a problem, disconnect your mains cable and seek advice (see above).

Beachside sites have other hazards, too. Read warning notices and make sure you know the exact meaning of safety flags or signs that could indicate unsafe bathing areas, strong tides or an area patrolled by lifeguards. Find out about strong currents if you are swimming and wind strength and direction if you are sailing or windsurfing.

Fire is awful and something none of us likes to contemplate. Fortunately fires on site are extremely rare, but that's no excuse for ignoring the danger. Apart from taking common-sense precautions inside your own caravan, make sure everyone knows the correct drill should the worst happen. Find out where the nearest fire-fighting equipment is. Make sure everyone knows how to call the emergency services. Reinforce the fact that personal safety comes first.

Be especially careful if you are on a site that allows barbecues. Keep your barbecue away from other caravans, hedges and other inflammable material and keep a bucket of water handy for emergencies. Common sense should tell you that you need to be careful if your site is close to a main road, for instance, or alongside a river. Even something as basic as road crossing drill is important, even for adults if you are abroad and traffic is on the 'wrong' side of the road.

Natural disasters are rare but always think what *could* happen. A combination of heavy rain and a pitch by a river or in a valley could lead to flash flooding, for instance. Would you and your family know the site's evacuation procedure? Hopefully you'll never need it ... but who knows? Whatever the type of holiday you're after, have a good time - oh, and if the sun does shine, don't forget the sun block cream!

## Checklist

Assuming that most members are used to caravanning and aware of the usual items necessary when planning a trip, the following list is a reminder of those which *may* be necessary when travelling overseas.

### Car

Extending mirrors (compulsory in Spain)  
Fire extinguisher  
First aid kit  
Fuses  
GB stickers (for car and van)  
Headlight converters/deflectors  
Jack and wheel brace  
Snow chains (for winter caravanning)  
Spare bulbs  
Spare keys  
Spare wheel/tyre  
Tool kit including jack  
Tow rope  
Warning triangle (2 strongly recommended when towing in Spain)  
Reflective safety jacket (compulsory in Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Norway Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Czech Republic)

### Caravan

Awning and groundsheet  
Caravan toilet chemical and flush liquids  
Extra long motor caravan water hosepipe  
Fire extinguisher  
Fuses  
Gas bottles  
Gas adaptor (Calor Gas/Campingaz)  
Hitch and/or wheel lock  
Mains electrics adaptor  
Mains electrics lead  
Mains polarity tester  
Mosquito repellent  
Spare bulbs  
Spare keys  
Spare wheel/tyre  
Spirit level

Water containers (waste/fresh)

Water hoses (waste/fresh)

### Documents and Papers

Address book with contact telephone numbers  
Camping Card International  
Campsite booking confirmation  
Car/caravan insurance certificates  
Car/motor caravan registration document  
Caravan Club membership card  
Caravan Club Holiday Guide  
Cheque/Euro cheque books  
Caravan Europe sites guide  
Credit/debit cards  
Currency and travellers' cheques  
Driving licence (photo card or green/pink EU version)  
EHIC health service certificate and photocopies / Health Card  
European Camping Cheques  
Green card (certain countries only)  
International Driving Permit (if required)  
Letter of authorisation from vehicle's owner (if applicable)  
Card loss insurance contact numbers  
Maps and guides  
MOT certificate  
NHS medical card  
Passport and visas (if required)  
Pet documents  
Phrase books/menu dictionary  
Telephone card  
Travel insurance documents (Red Pennant)