

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.

FIRST TIME ABROAD WITH YOUR CARAVAN OR MOTOR CARAVAN

One call for all your requirements

Whilst The Caravan Club does not own or run its own sites abroad, we have special arrangements with over 200 sites in 17 countries throughout Europe and can book your site and Channel crossing and arrange your insurance in one telephone call. This means no language problems, no expensive international deposit payments and no waiting for replies by letter. Booking through The Caravan Club gives you a price guarantee - whatever happens to the exchange rates, there will be no surcharges.

Choosing your site

The Caravan Club strongly recommends for your own safety that you stay on an official camp site rather than using roadside facilities such as motorway service areas, ferry terminal car parks or 'aires de services'. On your first visit you will probably not want to travel too far from the port. Bearing this in mind, decide whether you want a site near the seaside or in the country, quiet or lively, with facilities for the children or near specific interests, eg vineyards, châteaux, sports facilities, etc. Remember that in low season many site facilities will not be open.

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. 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 that your car and caravan are properly serviced and ready for the journey, paying particular attention to tyres and tyre pressures. Ensure that caravan tyres are suited to the maximum weight of the caravan and the maximum permitted speed when travelling abroad - see the Technical Information section of your Sites Directory & Handbook.
- Take a well-equipped spares and tool kit. Spare bulbs, a warning triangle (2 in Spain, Croatia, Slovenia and Turkey), a fire extinguisher and a first-aid kit are legal requirements in many European countries. A spare tyre or quick repair kit is essential. Nearside and offside extending mirrors are recommended. In some countries (see checklist) it is a legal requirement to carry a reflective waistcoat.
- 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. 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 cylinder. Check when making your booking.
- We suggest that people purchase a Campingaz adaptor. This will act as a safety net as although not necessarily cost effective, if you do run out of gas Campingaz is readily available on the continent. These adaptors for use with 901, 906 and 907 cylinders are produced for retail by various suppliers (e.g. Gaslow International Limited, part number: 01-1665; Cavagna Group UK Ltd, part number CC01577). Gaslow also manufacture adaptors and hoses for use with various European bottles (www.gaslow.co.uk). Any good caravan accessory shop should stock these. You can also find you local stockist at www.campingaz.com
- In Spain the Cepsa Company sells butane gas cylinders and regulators, which are available in large stores, ferreterías (hardware stores) and petrol stations. 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.
- In France popular brands of gas which visitors have found to be economical and easy to use are Primagaz, Butagaz, and Totalgaz. A loan deposit is required and caravanners who are purchasing a cylinder for time should also purchase the appropriate regulator, as European pressures vary considerably.
- **NB:** It is not possible to exchange gas cylinders between different countries. If you are interested in more general information on continental travel with your caravan, please consider our Caravan Europe guide, Volumes 1 and 2. These supply in depth information on continental travel and sites as detailed later in this information sheet.
- 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. Eurolites are available from most shops or on-line at www.travel-spot.co.uk these beam deflectors come with a list of over 300 different vehicle types and over 90 different diagrams showing where the beam deflector needs to be placed.

- Passport application forms can be obtained from branches of the Post Office. The fee for an adult's 32 page 10-year passport is £77.50 and £49.00 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; and a one-week fast track service for all types of applications. The fee for the one-week service is £112.00. You will not be able to obtain a first passport or a replacement for a lost or stolen passport in less than a week, same day service is only available for renewing your passport, at a cost of £129.50. In some countries, such as Portugal, Austria and The Netherlands, passports must be carried at all times as a form of photographic identification. More information is available on the website: www.passport.gov.uk. 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, Switzerland and Croatia insist that your passport is valid for 3 or 6 months beyond your departure dates, information can be found at www.fco.gov.uk or telephone 0845 850 2829
- An application form for a European Health Insurance Card can be obtained from your local Post Office. Alternatively you can apply on line at www.dh.gov.uk/traveller 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/traveller.
- The Caravan Club's Red Pennant 'Motoring & Personal' Travel Insurance 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. This is backed by The Club's own helpline with assistance available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Details available from The Club.
- All major European countries maintain Tourist Information Offices in London who will supply information on their respective countries. A list of addresses and telephone numbers is available from the Travel Service Information Officer on 01342 336 766, or on our website www.caravanclub.co.uk under Overseas Advice

A checklist of documentation, equipment, etc, is attached. Either the new photocard pink/green or all pink EU-versions of the UK driving licence are universally acceptable, unlike the older-style all green licence. Holders of the all-green version travelling to Austria, Italy, Spain or Eastern European countries in particular should consider changing for the newer version or carry an International Driving Permit (application forms are available from selected Post Offices, Green Flag, The AA and the RAC.

- You will receive a confirmation when you book your holiday or ferry crossing, and you take this to the port and show it to the ferry operator you are booked with. When you have paid in full you will receive the relevant documentation from The Club. If all services have been booked, this will include a copy of the Overseas Campsite Guide and General Information booklet, Red Pennant Travel Insurance Assistance booklet, Camping Card International and GB sticker. **Make sure you read all the information before you travel and check your confirmation to ensure the correct ferries, sites and dates have been booked.**
- Plan your route in advance. An up-to-date map or atlas covering the areas you are driving through and visiting is essential. If you have access to the internet you can also plan a route using www.viamichelin.co.uk
- You may also wish to consider purchasing a copy of The Caravan Club's Caravan Europe sites guide. Volume 1 covers France, Spain, Portugal and Andorra. Volume 2 covers the rest of Europe including Austria, Germany, Italy, Scandinavia, Switzerland, the Benelux countries and Eastern European countries. This annual publication is 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.
- For a selection of touring publications for Europe (including: All the Aires (for France) and all the Aires (Spain) go www.vicariousbooks.co.uk
- 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). Information on traffic and roadworks is also available from the RAC on 0906 470 1740 (calls on this number cost 60p per minute).
- If you are going to be away from your home for some time, check your house and contents insurance policies regarding any limitations or regulations.
- It is a good idea to carry an initial amount of cash for the country you are travelling through with you in case of emergencies, (or when shopping - French supermarket/hypermarket trolleys usually require a €1 piece, Italian trolleys €2, refundable when the trolley is returned). In addition further cash can be obtained through ATM cash machines. These will often be found in supermarkets as well as outside banks. The rate of exchange is often as good as anywhere else; look for the same symbol on the machine as on your debit or 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 cash in advance and pay with that to avoid the problem. In some countries you may be asked to produce your passport when paying by credit card for photographic identification purposes. When purchasing travellers cheques, check with the issuer where these can be cashed as some banks and post offices abroad are proving reluctant to exchange them.

- Filling stations often close on Sundays. Ensure that you refill with fuel in France whilst the filling stations are open and manned as although local payment cards can be used out of hours, the machines will frequently not accept UK chip and pin cards.

At the port

Report to the check-in desk at the port or the Eurotunnel terminal, allowing plenty of time before the scheduled boarding time. The staff will direct you to the waiting area for your departure. Whilst waiting, turn off the 12v electric supply to your fridge to prevent your battery going flat. You may be required to show that your gas supply has been turned off correctly. Spare petrol cans, empty or full, are not permitted by the ferry companies or Eurotunnel.

Ferries

You will be advised when to drive on to the ferry and once on board will be directed to the appropriate position. Apply your car and caravan brakes and ensure all doors are locked. Note the deck and staircase numbers for when you return. You will not be permitted access to your vehicle during the crossing so take everything you require with you, including your passports and tickets. Claim your cabin or seats, if booked, immediately upon boarding. Many ferries have a selection of restaurants and cafes, a children's play area, even a cinema, disco or casino as well as a shop, to while away the time during the crossing.

Listen carefully to on-board announcements which include one giving safety information at the time of departure. A further announcement will be made when it is time to return to your car.

Eurotunnel

Approach one of the toll booths with a car/caravan or motor caravan sign and type in your Eurotunnel booking reference. Having checked in you can then, if you wish, visit the terminal to make any last minute purchases, etc, and then follow signs to passport control and customs. Your LPG valves will be closed and sealed as a safety precaution and you will be asked to open the roof vents. LPG and dual powered vehicles cannot be accepted for transport by Eurotunnel. You can then join the waiting area allocated for your departure and will be directed on to the single-deck wagons of the train and told to park in gear with your brake on. You then stay in or around your car/motor caravan for the 35 minute journey but will not be allowed to use your caravan until arrival. Useful information and music are supplied via the on-board radio station. On arrival, remember to close the roof vent and release the caravan brake and, when directed by the crew, drive off - remembering to drive on the right!

Motoring on the Continent

24/02/2010

Most roads are not as busy as those in the UK but avoid rush hours in larger towns. With a little extra concentration, most people find they soon get used to driving on the right.

- Since it is often just as you start off from a parked position that you forget to drive on the right, you may want to make yourself a sign to be attached to the dashboard, reminding yourself to drive on the right. This can be removed before driving and replaced each time you stop. Alternatively, make a member of your party responsible for reminding the driver every time you start the car. Pay particular attention when turning left or when leaving a rest area, service station or campsite.
- Make sure the road ahead is clear before overtaking. Stay well behind the vehicle in front and, if possible, have someone with good judgement in the left-hand seat to give you the "all clear". Outside built-up areas, outfits totalling more than 3.5 tonnes or more than 7 metres in length are required by French law to leave at least 50m between themselves and the vehicle in front. They are also only permitted to use the two right-hand lanes on roads with three or more lanes and, where overtaking is difficult, should slow down or stop to allow other smaller vehicles to pass.
- Details of current toll charges in most countries are available on request from The Travel Service Information Officer, alternatively you can use www.viamichelin.co.uk using the blue "option" button to advise the system you are towing a caravan, the route planner will then calculate your estimated toll costs.
- We would recommend that you always come off 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.

In Catalonia, on the A7 motorway between La Junquera and Tarragona toll stations, there is an increase in 'flag down' robberies. Vehicles are flagged down by passengers in other vehicles, under the pretence of a problem somewhere on the car. Once stationary, the thieves will often use distraction techniques to remove tourists from the vehicle and steal valuable items.

These types of problems have also been reported on the on motorway from Naples to Salerno in Italy.

Drivers, especially on the M30 and M40 Madrid ring roads, the A4 and A5 should be wary of approaches by bogus police officers, in plain clothes and travelling in unmarked cars. In all traffic-related matters police officers will be in uniform. Unmarked vehicles will have a flashing electronic sign on the rear window which reads "Policia" or "Guardia Civil", and normally have blue flashing lights incorporated into the headlights, which are activated by the Police when they stop you. In non-related traffic matters police officers may be in plain clothes but in any case members of the public have the right to ask police officers to identify themselves. The Guardia Civil or Police will ask you to show them your documents only and do not request that you hand over your bag or wallet. If in any doubt, drivers should converse through the car window and contact the Guardia Civil on 062 or the Spanish National Police on 112 and ask them to confirm that the registration number of the vehicle corresponds to an official police vehicle. Bogus police officers are also known to operate in the Alicante region.

- At the approach to some roundabouts in France you will see a sign "Vous n'avez pas la priorité". This shows that traffic *on* the roundabout has priority. If there is no such sign, traffic *entering* the roundabout has priority. Other common signs are "Toutes Directions" (all directions), "Autres Directions" (other routes) and "Péage" (toll motorway).
- A solid white line down the centre of the road prohibits overtaking. In Spain this line must not be crossed to execute a left turn, despite the lack of any other "no left turn" sign. If necessary 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.
- Halt signs *mean* halt - on the spot fines are imposed on motorists creeping forward at these signs. When stopping at traffic lights, ensure that you stop soon enough so that you can still see the colour of the lights as they can be to the side or high overhead without a further set in front.
- 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. If you wish to carry bicycles in Spain or Italy you will need a 50 x 50 cm relectorised panel, which can be brought from most caravan/motor home accessory shops or from www.fiamma.com - they are available in plastic or aluminium if travelling to Italy the panel has to be aluminium
- Motorways provide convenient service stations and areas for a rest and a picnic en route but find a proper site for an overnight stop for your own safety.

- It is now compulsory in Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Croatia to use your headlights at all times, failure to do so will incur a fine. This rule also applies in, Switzerland, Hungary, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Slovenia and Italy, although as yet failure to do so will not incur a fine.
- In most European countries it is recommended that dipped headlights are used outside built-up areas at all times of day and night.
- In Spain, Italy, Portugal, Austria, Belgium, France, Slovenia, Croatia and the Czech Republic, 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 may alight from the vehicle in these circumstances must wear a reflective jacket. It is a requirement that these jackets be kept within reach inside so that they can be put on before leaving the vehicle.
- In most European countries it is also a legal requirement to carry a warning triangle (in Spain 2 are required if you are towing. A list of the legal requirements for all European Countries can be found on our website under - Practical Advice - Overseas Advice or from the Travel Service Information Officer
- Satellite Navigation systems that incorporate radar or laser detection (to warn of speed traps) are prohibited in Austria, Finland, France, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland, in some cases it is even illegal to carry such equipment in the boot of the car switched off. Systems that give locations of fixed speed camera locations are legal in France, Italy, Spain and the UK as this information is readily available to the public. In Belgium, Germany, Norway, and Switzerland the POI function (that gives the information of fixed speed camera locations) must be de-activated.
- Whilst motorway tolls in such countries as France, Spain and Italy are paid "as used" . There is a vignette system in Switzerland, Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia and Slovakia motorists need to purchase a vignette and display it on the windscreen of the car (in Switzerland you need one for the caravan as well). In most cases the vignette can be purchased at petrol stations on the approach to the boarder or at the boarder, further details can be found in Caravan Europe 1 and 2.
- Germany has introduced a Green Zone in 33 cities across the country. You may only enter these green zones with a "pollution badge" displayed on your windscreen. Full details can be found at http://www.germany-tourism.co.uk/driving_in_germany_10916.htm
- There are a number of countries that have introduced similar schemes and details can be found at www.lowemissionzones.eu
- 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

- Spain - Outfit over 12 meters

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 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 (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.

** In adverse weather conditions or rain these limits reduce to 110/100/80

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 telephone: 0800 988 7329 (between 10.00 - 14.00)

The stickers must be a minimum of 15cm in diameter. The speed limit must be written in black numbers on a white background. The sticker with the lowest speed must be attached to the back of the outfit on the bottom left hand side, any further stickers must be put to the right of the first one (if horizontally aligned) or above the first one (if vertically aligned)

On arrival at the site

Go to the site reception and fill in any registration forms required. You may need to leave your Camping Card International or passport. In Portugal, Austria and The Netherlands since you must carry your passport at all times as a form of photographic identity, a CCI is essential. A refundable deposit in local currency may be required for a key to the site barrier; this is usually about 15 - 20 euros.

Pitches are normally available when the site re-opens after their lunch break and not before this time. Aim to arrive before 19.00 or you may find site reception is closed. It is essential you arrive before 22.00 as the gates on most sites are closed for the night at this time. If you are delayed, remember to let the site know so that they will keep your pitch. When leaving, you will usually need to vacate your pitch by midday at the latest. Check specific times with each site.

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 the mains lead that you use in the UK, as many sites have the European standard connectors (CEE17) found on The Club's own sites and which your UK 3-pin connector will fit. On some sites, you may need a

continental 2-pin adaptor, available from UK caravan accessory shops.

Caravanners can encounter the problem known as reversed polarity. 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 accessory shops, 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.

Locate the water supply and fill the clean water tank for connection to the van. Connect the waste water disposal hose and tank. Turn on the gas.

Sites often have children's and/or adult entertainment in high season - ask at reception for details. Many have a cafe/restaurant/bar and pool and offer various sporting activities such as golf, water-sports, archery, horse-riding, fishing, cycle-hire, etc. A refundable deposit is sometimes required for a bracelet for each person wishing to use the swimming pool or other facilities.

Part of the enjoyment of caravanning overseas is eating the local food, often outdoors to take advantage of the good weather. Remember some areas may have regulations restricting the use of barbecues if there is a fire risk. Check with the site reception. Markets selling local produce are held in many towns at least once a week but they are usually only open in the morning.

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.
- 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 the doctor overseas to identify them.
- 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.
- 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.
- In the Netherlands, Visa cards are not as widely accepted as Mastercard, American Express and Diner's.

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.

Your children may want to visit the playground while you set up your caravan. Check that play areas are safe and find out if there are any age limits or other rules for any of the apparatus. Bear in mind that play areas are generally unsupervised - and remember it is your responsibility to know where your children are at all times.

Be careful with electric hook-ups. Follow the correct procedure for connecting and disconnecting your caravan from the supply (see the Sites Directory and 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)

If the site has a swimming pool, check the depth at the deep and shallow ends - and make sure everyone in the family knows which is which! Watch out for slippery surfaces and other hazards and look for safety equipment. Find out when (or even, if) the pool is supervised.

Water slides need careful supervision, by parents and professionals, and make sure you know

the depth of water in the landing area before using them. Read all the warning notices in the slide area, particularly about the correct position to adopt - usually sitting down, feet first. Remind everyone that they shouldn't swim directly after a meal or when they have been drinking alcohol. The rule applies to swimming in pools and in the sea, of course.

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.

Remember on farm sites that the animals are not pets. Don't approach any animal without the farmer's permission and keep children supervised. Make sure they wash their hands after touching any farm animal.

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) or EU numberplates
Headlight converters/deflectors
Jack and wheelbrace
Snow chains (for winter caravanning)
Spare bulbs
Spare keys
Spare wheel/tyre
Tool kit including jack
Tow rope
Warning triangle (2 when towing in Spain and Slovenia)
Reflective safety jackets (compulsory in Austria, Belgium, Croatia, France, Hungary, Slovenia, Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Czech Republic)

Caravan

Awning and groundsheet
Bucket
Caravan toilet chemical and flush liquids
Extra long motor caravan water hosepipe
Fire extinguisher
Fuses
Gas bottles
Gas regulator (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 Overseas campsite Guide and General Information booklet 2009
Cheque/Eurocheque books
Caravan Europe 2009 sites guide
Credit/debit cards
Currency and travellers' cheques
Driving licence (photocard or green/pink EU version)
European Health Insurance Card or certificate
Ferry reference and timetable
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/addresses of vets abroad
Phrase books/menu dictionary
Travel insurance documents