

If you have decent insulation and a good heater, you can use your caravan all year round



Hot TOPICS

As we approach the winter season, John Wickersham examines different ways of heating your caravan or motorhome

The phrase 'spoilt for choice' springs to mind. Anyone looking at space heating options in caravans and motorhomes will find a surprising variety. Even individual manufacturers seem less inclined to stick to one

heating specialist's products throughout their ranges. Take, for example, 2013 models from Bailey. → Orion caravans: Whale under-floor heaters → Pegasus and Olympus caravans: Truma wall-mounted heaters → Unicorn caravans: Alde radiator system

→ Approach motorhomes: Truma Combi space and water heaters. Similar diversity is found in models from companies such as Auto-Sleepers, Elddis and Swift.

DIFFERENT FUELS

Although the products mentioned above operate on gas or mains electricity, some motorhomes feature diesel fuel heaters. After 12 years running a coachbuilt motorhome equipped with an Eberspächer hydronic space/water heater mounted by the sump of the engine, I'm acutely aware of their merits. With diesel fuel drawn from the vehicle's tank (for heating), my motorhome's 4.5kg Calor cylinder (for a fridge, hob and grill) typically lasts for 12 months.

MODERN METHODS

Modern heaters are entirely 'room-sealed'. Air needed for combustion is drawn from outside and fumes are expelled through a flue. The burners



Light, efficient and space-saving; Whale's heaters are now installed in caravans by Bailey, Elddis and Lunar



Fins on a heat exchanger inside a wall-mounted appliance efficiently release warmth into the living area



A fan blowing through a tiny radiator in this oil-fired heating system adopts a principle employed in car heaters



A cut-away display shows a flue and internal parts of a Truma E series heater – usually installed in a locker



This cut-away display shows the intricate elements inside the latest Truma Combi space and water heater

are enclosed in a 'heat exchanger' which warms the living space – there are no exposed flames as in the 'gas fires' of old.

OPTIONS

- **Power and fuel** – most fixed appliances need a 12V supply to run a control panel and an ignition system. Fuels include diesel and gas while some appliances are also equipped with a 230V heating element. Gas and electricity can provide heat simultaneously on some systems – on others the user selects one or the other.
- **Installation** – most appliances have to be fitted internally; others are mounted under the floor, freeing-up space indoors.
- **Dual functions** – some products can be used to heat water as well as the caravan's interior.
- **Heat distribution** – in most systems warmed air is distributed by ducts. 'Wet' systems, however, use water (mixed with anti-freeze) to convey heat to convectors, radiators or fan matrix devices like those used in cars.

PRODUCT SHOWCASE

→ **Alde** – this long-established 'wet' system has been installed in coach-built motorhomes but it's popular now in some tourers as well.



The Alde 3010 gas appliance lies at the heart of a 'wet' system offering effective space and water heating

→ **Truma – E-series**: though seldom installed in the UK, these efficient, compact warm air heaters can be fitted in a locker.

S-series: often installed in UK caravans and motorhomes, these products are exclusively space heaters. In a gas-only version, the 3004 model achieves 3kW; the 5004 achieves 6kW. An Ultraheat 230V element adds a further 2kW.

Combi appliances: include 2kW, 4kW, 6kW and diesel versions. After being particularly prominent in motorhomes, these combined space and water heaters are now fitted in larger caravans, too.

Whale – two of its products are designed for installation indoors, one of which runs on gas and weighs just 5.4kg. Its 'gas or 230V' partner weighs 7.4kg. Two further versions with the above specifications are made to be fixed under-floor; only the warm air ducts are mounted indoors.

Eberspächer and Webasto – these competing diesel-heating specialists produce compact products for small van conversions and high-output appliances for large coachbuilds. Eberspächer has also developed a caravan version. Some units are fitted internally, while others are mounted outside.



This Truma S series is fitted in a 2011 Auto-Trail motorhome; it is equally popular in caravans, too



A small diesel fuel tank fitted in a caravan locker will run a heater that can operate safely while you're towing

INFORMATION

- **Club magazine reports** – diesel heating in motorhomes, December 2000; gas appliance servicing, March 2006; diesel heating in caravans, April 2009; Whale heaters, July 2010
- **Club website** – Winter Touring Tips, see caravanclub.co.uk/expert-advice



Mounted by the sump of a motorhome, this diesel fuel Eberspächer product is for space and water heating



This sealed Eberspächer Airtronic space heater was mounted in a locker with a flue going through the floor