You and your caravan

First steps to get you caravanning with confidence
## Contents

**SECTION ONE: The basics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 - 5</td>
<td>Choosing your caravan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SECTION TWO: A little more detail**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 - 8</td>
<td>Will my car tow the caravan I want?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - 10</td>
<td>Hitching up your caravan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Towing and manoeuvring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 - 16</td>
<td>Setting up on site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 - 19</td>
<td>Accessories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 23</td>
<td>Looking after your caravan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SECTION THREE: The serious stuff**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Law and order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 27</td>
<td>Glossary of terms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 little 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.
The right car for your caravan

Using your family saloon car to tow your caravan is usually fine. It’s just worth checking your car is big enough to handle your caravan, if you want a large caravan your existing car may not have the power and weight to tow it safely. You can easily check this using outfit matching, see page 7.

Caravan Layouts

There’s a great variety of caravan interior layouts. Take a look at some typical layouts at your dealership and try to imagine using them on a daily basis. You’ll soon get a good idea of what’s perfect for you. Simple things will become obvious immediately, such as making sure the headroom is adequate for your height.

Bedtime choices

How many people are going to sleep in your caravan? Caravans often have seating that converts into double or single beds (referred to as berths). Children may be happy to use convertible seating but you might want a fixed double bed, like you get in larger caravans.

Once you’ve decided how many beds are needed, make sure the width and length are suitable for you. Some of the seat-to-bed conversions may be too small for adults.
Check you’re happy with the mattress thickness to make sure you get a good night’s sleep and that there’s enough wardrobe space for you all.

Your kitchen

This is an area where you really should try to imagine yourself cooking on holiday. Check the worktop and sink are at a comfortable height and that people can get past easily without bumping into the cook. Make sure the cupboard and loo doors open without interfering with cooking and the doorway is clear. Check there’s enough storage space for you, and there’s plenty of ventilation too. Also make sure that the fridge is the right size for your caravanning needs.

Floor coverings

Decide what sort of floor covering you would prefer: deep pile carpets are cosy, but vinyl flooring is more practical, while removable carpeting gives you the best of both worlds.

Choosing your caravan layout

Caravan layouts come in all shapes and sizes, with the washroom at the end or in the middle, with fixed beds or beds that convert from seating. Visit the Discover Touring website to see some examples.

If you want more detailed information on buying a caravan, go online to www.caravanclub.co.uk/expert-advice for a comprehensive downloadable leaflet.
Will my car tow the caravan I want?

As we’ve already said, the heavier your car is and the lighter the caravan you’ve chosen to tow, the safer they’ll be together. The caravan’s weight, loaded up with everything you’re going to take on holiday, shouldn’t be more than 85% of the car’s weight with nothing loaded in the car, other than driver. Most car manufacturers tell you the maximum weight a car can tow, though this is only an indication of its power, not a guide to stability or safety when towing.

Check the weight of your car in its handbook. Look in the caravan’s handbook for the weight of that too. On page 8 we show you the weight of the sort of stuff an average family might take on holiday in their caravan. Best not to overload a caravan, it’s not safe and it’s against the law.

Members of The Caravan Club can use its free online service to research a future purchase or experiment with different options. If you’re not a Club member, talk to The Caravan Club’s Outfit Matching Service on 01342 326944 and we’ll offer basic outfit matching advice.

Loading up

A correctly loaded caravan pushes down onto your car’s towball. We call this the ‘noseweight’. It’s usually 5-7% of the caravan’s laden weight, so before buying a caravan, check this isn’t more than your car manufacturer’s stated limit.

Even with everything right, the rear of your car may go down and you might need to re-set your headlamps.
What can I carry in my caravan?

To find out the amount you can carry in the caravan, look for the payload allowance in the handbook. It’s very easy to accidentally exceed the weight allowance for a caravan. This may cause premature tyre failure and damage the running gear (chassis, brakes, axles and so on), and it’s illegal too.

After 1999 most caravans have been built to a European Standard. You’ll find the following information in the user’s handbook. The term ‘mass’ simply means the weight:

- The maximum permissible laden mass (MTPLM or MAW) in kilograms. This is the weight of the caravan with everything you’re allowed to load on board.

- The mass in running order (MIRO), in kilograms. This is the weight of the caravan without anything loaded into it.

- The maximum user payload allowance (MTPLM minus MIRO) in kilograms. This is the weight of stuff you could load into it.

To give you an idea of how much weight is allowed for such items as crockery, cutlery, clothing and the usual stuff you’re likely to take with you, here’s a rough guide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical item</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full awning and poles</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porch awning and poles</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack and winding handle</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 Ampere/hour battery</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spare wheel and tyre</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noseweight gauge</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10” portable television</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portable radio/cassette</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omni-directional antenna</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rollalong water carrier</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste water container</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire extinguisher</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal step</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mains extension lead</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Mover</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy duty hitch lock</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy duty wheel clamp</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continental adaptor</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 x 7Kg LPG cylinders</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porta-Potti (empty)</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water – per litre</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torque wrench</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set cooking pans</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunlounger (metal frame)</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folding chair alloy/steel</td>
<td>1.5/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic table</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood levelling ramp</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plates, cutlery (p/person)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microwave</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Lbs are approximate (to convert kg to lb multiply by 2.2)

Note: It is not recommended to travel with water container or toilet full.
Hitching up your caravan

To tow your caravan you need a towing bracket for your car and electrical connections for the caravan’s road lights. Older caravans have two 12V connectors, so to get the most out of them the car will also need two. Newer cars and caravans come with a single 13-pin connector that replaces these two.

You’ll need extending mirrors attached to your tow car so you can see past the caravan you’re towing. There are a variety of options both in size and attachment method. Some strap on, others clip to the rim of the existing mirror. It’s down to personal preference and the design of your car’s mirrors, but you must have one by law.

**Step by step guide**

When hitching up, why not use this handy checklist? Your caravan dealer will also be happy to explain the do’s and don’ts to you. It helps to have two people, one to give directions to the driver.

1. Make sure the caravan handbrake is on and the corner steadies are raised.
2. Use the jockey wheel to raise the caravan hitch height until it is higher than the car tow ball.
3. Reverse the car, until the tow ball is either underneath, or just beside the caravan hitch. Put the car’s handbrake on.
4. Raise the hitch lever and lower the hitch on to the tow ball by winding up the jockey wheel, giving a sideways push to the caravan if necessary to locate the hitch over the ball.
5. Keep winding the jockey wheel up until the hitch fits over the tow ball, and the hitch safety mechanism pops out, showing green, or in older types until the handle clicks back into place.
6. To check you have locked on properly, wind down the jockey wheel until the rear of the car starts to lift.

**TOP TIP**

Remove your towing mirrors once parked, and re-fit them before setting off again. Otherwise, you can guarantee one of the other passengers will walk into them, due to the limited space around the vehicles.
7. Return to winding up the jockey wheel, then stow it in the correct position beside the A-Frame, and tighten its retaining handle.

8. Attach the 12V connector(s) for the road lights etc.

9. Attach the breakaway cable.

10. Release the caravan handbrake.

11. Check all caravan road lights are working, the steadies are fully up and windows, roof lights and doors are properly secure.

12. Make sure the towing mirrors are properly adjusted and off you go.

The hitching up procedure is also covered in The Caravan Club’s practical courses and in the DVD ‘Towing the Line’.

The breakaway cable

You’ve probably spotted the ‘Breakaway cable’ mentioned in the checklist.

Legally, modern caravans must use a safety cable while being towed. This pulls on the caravan’s brakes if it becomes unhitched from the car when travelling and then it breaks.

Your caravan handbook should tell you how to use it. The cable should be passed through an attachment point on the towing bracket or threaded through the towing bracket structure, and then clipped back on to itself.

Unless there’s no other way to attach it, don’t loop the cable around the neck of the tow ball.

Make sure the cable runs as straight as possible, and goes through any cable guides on the caravan chassis. Make sure it won’t snag on the caravan hitch or stabiliser either.

Allow enough slack in the cable to allow the car and caravan to go round corners without the cable becoming taut, but not so slack it can drag on the ground. If it’s too tight it’ll pull on your caravan’s brakes unnecessarily, risking damage to the brakes and axle. If it’s too loose it may scrape on the ground, get weakened and fail.
Towing and manoeuvring

If you find the prospect of towing a caravan a bit scary, please don’t worry. Lots of people do it, so it’s really not that hard.

Caravan towing might take a little practice. Going forward you’ll find the caravan won’t give you any trouble and you may need to remind yourself it’s there. It just follows you around like an obedient dog.

If you’ve never done it before, it’s reversing that some people worry about. Remember that when reversing, the caravan will go in the opposite direction to the way you steer. Start by steering in the wrong direction and as soon as the caravan starts to turn, straighten your steering. Then steer in the opposite direction and the caravan will go in the direction you originally wanted it to. Steer your car round in line with the caravan and it will straighten up.

Taking corners wider and driving forward further before turning will help you avoid clipping a pavement kerb or other obstruction. Remember that your caravan is wider than your car. The weight of your car and caravan means you should allow more time and space for gentle braking.

There is a wealth of information available at www.caravanclub.co.uk/expertadvice so make sure you read up on towing techniques before you give it a go.

The Club offers practical caravan courses and DVD’s that demonstrate how to tow and manoeuvre safely.

The practical courses are great fun even if you’re an experienced driver, and they’re open to non-members. For more information go to www.caravanclub.co.uk/expert-advice/getting-started or phone The Caravan Club events team on 01342 336 666.

TOP TIP

Make a note of your caravan height in both feet and inches and metres and stick it to the dashboard, in case you come across a low bridge or height barrier, such as at the entrance to a car park.
Setting up on site

**Levelling**

For your first trips you can save yourself the bother of levelling your caravan 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.

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 on the caravan A-frame, or just inside the caravan door.

Drive the car very slowly forward up the ramp, until the spirit level bubble is in the middle. Secure the caravan handbrake and put a chock (a simple wooden block will do) by the raised wheel for safety. Your caravan can now be unhitched and the car parked next to it, away from the door side.

Front to back levelling is much easier. Place the spirit level pointing front to back just inside the door or on the A-frame, then raise or lower the jockey wheel until it’s level. If there’s a significant front to back slope, you may need to place a block under the jockey wheel. Then lower the corner steadies until they are firmly set against the ground. These might need blocks underneath too.

**TOP TIP**

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

**Hooking-up to the Mains**

Most pitches have mains electricity available for lighting, water heating and the fridge in your caravan. 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.
Economy pitches are also available without electricity outlets.

You’ve probably been supplied with the required cable, or you can buy one.

**To Connect:**

1. First make sure your caravan mains isolating switch is in the OFF position, and all the electrical switches inside.

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, once 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 caravan 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

Just follow these simple steps:

1. Take the fresh water container plus filling hose to a fresh water tap. You’ll find them at service points and also on the wall of a facility block.

2. Fill the container and replace cap.

3. Return to your caravan and stand the container upright near the external water inlet on the caravan. Remove cap and put this and the filling hose somewhere safe – don’t leave them on the ground, as they may contaminate your fresh water next time you use them.

4. Get the connecting hose or pump and lower into the container until it just touches the bottom.

5. Push the connector into its socket and secure with plastic clamps if it has these.

6. In the caravan, switch the car/caravan 12V switch to ‘caravan’. Some caravans have a waterpump switch on the control panel – so move this to the ‘ON’ position.

7. Later, when the waste container is coupled up, turn on the tap and let the water run through for several seconds, so that fresh incoming water can replace any residual water that’s been in the pipes.

Waste Water

Portable waste containers collect water from the kitchen sink, shower and washbasin of your caravan.

Simply follow the steps below:

1. Remove the cap from the waste container and store it safely.

2. Place the container under the caravan close to waste outlets.

3. Place the waste pipe in the outlet and then into the container, avoiding loops or sags. If you have more than one outlet, you may need two waste water containers. If they’re close together, you can use several pieces of pipe and connect them with Y or T-shaped connectors. Remember to check regularly so they don’t overflow, and empty them at the waste disposal points.
Connecting to LPG

Caravans usually have an externally accessed 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 caravanning all year, you might as well stick with Propane. The most commonly used cylinder size is 6 or 7kg.

Smaller Butane and all Propane cylinders need an appropriate spanner for connection, so make sure you keep one in a safe place. New caravans have a regulator fixed to them and connected to the cylinder by a flexible hose. Before connecting, make sure all the gas appliances in the caravan 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 make sure it’s 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, make sure all gas appliances are switched off and reverse the above procedure.
Emptying the Toilet

Modern caravans have a cassette toilet that seals the waste tank between uses, and keeps it sealed for when you need to dispose of its contents. Removal for 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.

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 the contents.

5. Rinse well and then leave some water in and replace cap.

6. Back at the caravan, 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’.
Once you have your caravan, 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 caravan. Buy one specifically designed and tested for touring 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**

If your caravan doesn’t have one already, a 12V leisure battery will power your 12V lighting and any other 12V outlets when separate from the car. It is listed under essentials, but some caravans can operate without one by using a 230V to 12V transformer, which is sufficient providing you always hook up to mains electricity.

**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, heat the water, or the refrigerator if it’s not connected to electricity.

**Water Containers for you caravan**

You’ll need a portable container for fresh water. A rollalong type is the most popular. You also need one, possibly two, for your waste water, depending on how far apart your waste outlets are.

You can either buy a waste container with built in wheels, or buy a wheeled carrier for them. The advantage of the former is that it has a place for you to transport your cassette toilet tank at the same time. Your fresh water connector/pump should be supplied with your caravan, otherwise you need to buy one. Buy some hose to connect the waste outlets.
to your container and perhaps a Y-shaped connector to make it tidy.

**Mirrors for towing your caravan**

Your rear view isn’t as clear when you’re towing, so you’ll need to be able to see behind you, both to the near and offside. Towing mirrors come in various types, but the most popular is one that straps onto your existing door mirrors. Alternatives are door or wing mounted varieties, but the latter can be prone to vibration. Remember that an adequate view down both sides of the caravan is a legal requirement.

**Torque wrench for caravan wheels**

It’s important your caravan wheels are tightened to the right torque setting, to avoid them coming off when you’re towing. The less sophisticated suspension on caravans means that the wheels are subjected to more vibration than car wheels. If a car wheel started to come loose, you would probably feel it through the steering, but a loose caravan wheel may go unnoticed. Use a torque wrench to make sure they’re correctly tightened before every journey.

**Security Device**

Some form of mechanical device for your caravan is essential and probably a requirement of your insurance. See the section on Security.

**Desirables**

**Awning**

Awnings can double the size of the useful living area. It can provide a place to sleep in summer by using an inner tent, or a dining room or children’s play area. It is 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 and 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.
Caravan Noseweight Gauge
To be safe you should make sure your caravan’s noseweight does not exceed the car limit. Unless you’re good enough to sense how loading will alter the noseweight, you’ll want to measure it before setting out on your journey. The easiest way is to use a noseweight gauge, but you can also use the bathroom scales and an appropriately cut down broom handle.

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 is 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.

Caravan Stabiliser
In a well set-up outfit in ideal operating conditions a stabiliser shouldn’t really be necessary. However a stabiliser can prove a real benefit and brings you peace of mind. Many caravans are now available with a self-stabilising hitch, and these have been shown to damp down a swaying caravan more quickly than non-stabilised hitches. It’s important to get the tow ball clean and free from grease or dirt before hitching up. Another common type is a leaf spring that attaches to the towing bracket and the caravan A-Frame. This not only offers resistance to caravan side to side motion, but also reduces any tendency for the caravan to pitch up and down, which not all of the self-stabilising hitches can do.

Levelling Ramps and Chocks
These may not be needed if you intend to use hard standings but are useful if pitching on uneven grass.
A little more detail

Clumber Park Caravan Club site
Looking after your caravan

Storage

Many people choose to store their caravan 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 caravan 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, caravan washing facilities and quite often a 24-hour security presence.

For further guidance, contact The Caravan Club’s Technical Advice and Information Department or CaSSOA on 0115 934 9826 or visit www.cassoa.co.uk

The Caravan Club offers storage for its members at very reasonable prices.

Caravan Security

Your caravan insurance will require you to take some security measure when your caravan is left unattended. It may specify what they want you to fit to validate your insurance. The two main options are a hitchlock or a wheel clamp. Hitchlocks come in all shapes and sizes but to be effective they must cover the hitch-head bolts, otherwise a thief can simply unbolt the hitch and put on a replacement. Some hitchlocks can be attached when your car and caravan are coupled. This is handy when you leave your outfit to visit a motorway service area.

However, for safety reasons don’t drive with the lock in place. No hitchlock can be considered foolproof. If your caravan is valuable enough, a thief may bypass a caravan’s coupling and bolt on a second one or use a chain. For caravans stored at home, using a hitchlock to secure the caravan to a security post greatly increases its effectiveness.
A wheel clamp offers better protection. Look for a robust one that covers the wheel bolts 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.

Look for ‘Sold Secure’ products, tested to ‘Silver’ or ‘Gold’ standards to resist ‘determined’ and ‘dedicated’ attacks respectively. The caravan tests replicate the techniques and tools used by caravan thieves, and are tougher than similar car security product tests. More information is available at www.soldsecure.com

Other security precautions include alarms and tracking devices. An alarm is only worthwhile as a deterrent if someone will respond to the noise and it scares a casual thief. A tracking device may help to recover the caravan, but won’t stop it being stolen. Bear in mind that while caravan door locks have improved over the years, caravans are not built to stand up to determined efforts to get in, so it’s unwise to leave them unattended for long periods with valuable items inside.

**Servicing**

Your caravan is a combination of road going chassis including hitch, brakes and tyres, as well as the habitation aspects including electrical and gas appliances. For your safety, it’s important an Approved Workshop annually services everything. At these workshops the facilities and performance have been independently inspected and monitored to make sure the highest levels of service are maintained. Contact The Caravan Club or the National Caravan Council for details of the nearest Approved Workshops in your area, or for a list of workshops, visit www.approvedworkshops.co.uk
Now, don’t be scared. Your existing licence probably covers you for anything you might want to tow. 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 any towed outfit where the combined MAM (see Glossary) does not exceed 8,250 kg.

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

For further information visit www.dvla.gov.uk

**Speed Limits**

Towed outfits may travel at up to 50 mph on single carriageway roads and 60 mph on dual carriageways and motorways.

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

**Parking**

The law says you can’t leave a vehicle or outfit where it may cause an obstruction. A trailer separated from the towing vehicle must be securely braked or chocked to prevent movement. After dark, a trailer parked on a road must be illuminated, which normally means keeping the towing vehicle attached to supply power. Because lay-bys are part of the highway, you can’t stop overnight. It is an offence to drive more than 15 yards off the road without authority in both urban and rural areas.
A-Frame or Drawbar  The triangular part at the front of a caravan chassis in between the main body and the hitch.

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

Aquaroll  A proprietary design of fresh water container that can be pulled along the ground.

Awning  A tent-like structure of fabric over a supporting framework, which can be attached to the side of a caravan, or be free standing. Also called an annexe.

Berth  Sleeping place.

Breakaway Cable  A thin steel cable linking the caravan handbrake to the vehicle’s towbar.

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 caravans, where the waste holding tank can be accessed and emptied from outside.

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

Coupling Head  Also known as the hitch.

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 caravan 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.

Hardstanding  A pitch with a hard surface made of gravel, asphalt, concrete etc, rather than grass.
Hitch  The mechanism that allows a caravan to be attached to a tow ball.

Hitch Lock  A security device that prevents the caravan hitch being used.

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

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

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

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

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 caravan ex-factory with fuel and water, without any passengers or caravanning 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.

Noseweight  This is the vertical load that the caravan hitch imposes on the car’s towball.

Outfit  The caravan plus its towing vehicle.

Payload  Also called User Payload. The difference between the MTPLM and the MIRO and is the weight you can add to the caravan.

Pigtail  The fixture on a tow bar designed to accommodate the breakaway cable.

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 caravan, to be used as sleeping accommodation for children only.

Rear Suspension Aid  A device that enhances the standard suspension of a vehicle.

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.

Single Axle  A caravan with a single pair of wheels on one axle.

Stabiliser  A safety device acting around the caravan hitch which may help to control instability.

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

Tow Ball  The end part of the tow bar that the caravan hitch fits over.
**Tow Bar (Also known as the towing bracket)** The framework attached to a towing vehicle that supports the tow ball.

**Towing Mirrors** Additional rear vision mirrors added to a towing vehicle to compensate for the extra width of a caravan.

**Twin Axle** A caravan with four wheels on two axles.

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

**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.
Coastal path with Lleithyr Meadow Caravan Club site in the background

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