

Awnings

Struggling to put up the awning? If you find it hard to pull it along the rail, use candle wax to lubricate it. Run the candle along the bead on the awning.

When using an awning, take it down the afternoon before you leave the site. Even on a summer's morning there is a risk of early morning damp, which can damage the awning fabric if it is packed away before it is thoroughly dry.

When buying a caravan and you consider an awning, a small modern inexpensive porch awning may suffice.

If you are an occasional caravanner and do not have an awning, consider a garden gazebo for £20.

Caravanning abroad

A lot of people do not go abroad because they fear or worry about the unknown. If you want to take the plunge, place a post on CT asking if anyone is going to Europe and ask if you can accompany them.

Know the countries laws and abide by them.

Wearing a smile, and having a "no worries" state of mind works wonders with the natives.

If you are going to southern Europe for summer take a substantial hammer for the peg hammering into the hard baked earth. Metal pegs might be a necessity as well.

It's expensive, but if you holiday abroad, carry what spares you can afford. If you are stuck in a remote area with a broken water pump you will be glad you took a spare.

Comedy tips

Don't put light bulbs in your back pocket.

Don't eat yellow snow.

Make sure the wife brings her purse and credit cards.

Ferries

Good advice on [this web site](#).

Always ring the operator for special deals.

Food

For hangovers, eat a honey sandwich. The fructose in the honey will help to flush out the alcohol in your system.

To help prevent salt pots clogging up add half a teaspoonful of dry rice grains to the salt. You can also use dried peas. These absorb the moisture keeping the salt dry.

The next time you go to a fast food outlet, grab a handful of salt and pepper sachets. Keep these in a jam jar in the caravan.

Make some meals at home and then pack them in silver foil containers – label them and then freeze them. Put these straight into the fridge and it really helps to bring the temperature down a lot quicker and saves carrying cooling packs. Good food ready to eat in the caravan when you arrive on site.

To scramble eggs easily, put them into a clean jam jar, screw the lid on and shake. (Well, some people do this.)

Gas

Do not rely on blue butane to burn below 5 degrees C. Use red propane in low temperatures.

Consider switching to composite BP Gaslight gas cylinders. There's a marginal increase in cost, but they will decrease nose weight.

Handy tips

Put a black dot with a marker pen on the back window of the car and two on the caravan. When reversing to hook up, line up the marks and the ball will be under the hitch, which does away with all the tugging and pushing.

Ever found your loo paper that was in the toilet paper holder had unwound all over the floor and not a Labrador puppy in sight! The easy solution to prevent this happening again is to squash the roll in to an oval shape so it would not unwind without a pull, or you can use a rubber band placed over the holder stretched behind the roll.

Completely empty your van every 6 months then only put back in it what you actually need/use, you'll be surprised how much junk you tow up & down the county for no reason at all.

Oil on your clothes? Rub margarine well into the grease spots on clothes first, then rub washing up liquid in. Then rinse your treated clothes as normal.

Wash your dirty oily hands in washing up liquid and sugar. Don't wet them. Use a washing motion and the abrasive action of the paste will get the dirt out of the grooves in your skin. Once clean, simply rinse the mixture off.

If the toilet manual flush handle goes slack the bottom flange could be broken. An easy fix is with cable ties.

If a caravan door sticks on the door seal put talcum powder on the seal.

Hang a carrier bag's handles over the ends of a plastic coat hanger and hang on a door knob making an easy to reach space saving bin.

Fridge won't light? Take the vents off the outside and blow it out with a garage air line where the burner is. It is surprising how much debris gets in there.

Get some poles or cricket stumps from a kid's game and hammer them into the ground, and store your Wellington boots on them to keep them dry.

For a frost free windscreen on your car, wipe with a cloth soaked with 3 parts white vinegar to one part water and wipe onto windows. You will have frost free and clean windows.

When using coat hangers secure them using elastic 'bungee' style luggage straps, the types that have wire hooks at either end. Hook the neck of the first hanger and then wrap the 'bungee' around all the other hangers and secure both hooks together on the hanging rail.

To stop light from under the blinds disturbing your sleep, use a piece of foam pipe lagging along the bottom edge.

Put sheets of card in the runners where the sun blinds pull down. This prevents cushions from fading and saves the springs in the blinds. Do this when you are not using the van.

Labour saving

Get yourself a cheap cordless drill to lower and raise the steadies. Many people struggle with a hand brace when it can be done in half the time and with no effort.

Convert to Greased Lightning waterless polish. It's as good as other brands and you don't have to wash the caravan first.

Instead of lugging heavy objects around, take a small collapsing barrow to help your back.

Fit two pieces of 1 1/4" plastic waste pipe with clips to the underside of the caravan to guide the winding handle through onto the steady winder. Guess what, no wet knees any more.

Legal

There is a legal requirement for you to have towing mirrors that allow you to see clearly an area that is 4 metres wide from the side of your caravan at a distance 20 metres behind the driver. A caravan is significantly wider than a car even a large 4x4 and you simply can't comply with the law unless you fit towing mirrors.

Keep the mobile in your car so that if you ever have an accident you can take photographs to back up the written description on your claim form.

Medical

The easiest way to avoid athlete's foot and veruccas while using site or ferry showers is to wear a pair of flip flops.

If you are on permanent medication get a list of them from your doctor. This will be helpful for any customs queries and pharmacies at home or abroad.

Always carry a First Aid kit in the caravan and the car, you never know when you might need it.

For instant relief of itching from mosquito bites, rub the bite with soap!

Packing

Make a Pre Towing check list and stick it near the door of the caravan and read the list point by point to make sure you have not forgotten anything. E.g. Check fridge lock on and control set to towing and check all windows and roof lights shut.

Make a list on Microsoft Office Excel of the items you want to load, and save it. Print a copy each trip and tick or cross off the items as you load them.

Pets and critters

Pet travel rules changed on 1 January 2012 when the UK brought its procedures into line with the European Union. From this date all pets can enter or re-enter the UK from any country in the world without quarantine provided they meet the rules of the scheme, which will be different depending on the country or territory the pet is coming from.

Some ferry lines require that pets stay in vehicles during the trip, while others allow them on outside decks. If you're planning to bring a dog or cat along, be sure to ask about regulations and plan ahead for feeding, exercise and other pet needs.

If the dog comes into the caravan wet, towel and then wipe with a Bounce sheet and have a springtime fresh smelling dog. That will make a change for the better.

Secure your pets in a crate or with a harness in the car to keep them safe.

NEVER leave dogs or cats alone locked in the car or caravan. You could be arrested if you do.

To remove dog hairs from your carpet or upholstery wear a rubber glove to brush the carpet or upholstery towards you. This will collect up all the hairs.

Spiders do not like conkers, so a few placed in secure places does the trick.

Holes in a caravan floor are not good. Creepy crawlies can get in and mice only need a bit larger than pencil diameter hole to squeeze in. Silicone is the best way of blocking these holes, which are commonly found where cables enter the van.

Mice are repelled by mothballs. Get a string bag that comes with washing machine detergent or similar and store at least four in the caravan.

Power

To save power [fit SMD bulbs in your caravan](#).

If you have no EHU and the leisure battery is discharged, back the car up and connect up. This will give you power but make sure the fridge is on gas. This will work for the majority of caravans.

Use copper grease on all the female connections on plugs and sockets, tow bar plugs and sockets, water pump socket, and mains cable lead connections (especially over winter). The connections will mate more easily, help stop corrosion, and provide a more positive electrical connection.

Solar lights can illuminate your pitch at night and they also serve as night lights to gently illuminate the washroom and main lounge area or children's sleeping area without using the battery.

Carry a set of battery leads so if your car battery goes flat someone will help you, and in turn, you can help someone else.

Do you own a kettle with a transparent water indicator on it?

Use a marker pen; draw a line indicating the level required to fill 1, 2 or more cups. Doing this will help you not to overfill the kettle, thus saving power.

To boil eggs, pierce the eggs on the blunt end with a point. This will stop the egg white leaking out of the egg. Put them into a kettle of cold water so that the water is just above the eggs, and bring to the boil. Leave for 5 minutes and then bring to the boil again. Leave for another five minutes, then pour the hot water down the kitchen waste pipe to melt any fatty deposits and help to keep the drain clear. Fill the kettle with cold water and remove the eggs. This saves power by not keeping a pan of water continually simmering, why shell out more money than you have to?

Safety tips

When you've been drinking, your first faculty to fail isn't your speech or your coordination, it's your judgment. Set up before you have a drink.

Whether you are traveling with friends, your partner or your family, make sure that someone back home knows the essential details of your trip – where you're going, how long you'll be away for and how to contact you in an emergency.

If you have a powder extinguisher shake it once a week to prevent the powder from becoming solid. Carry a fire blanket as well.

Swimming pool tape - a black non-slip grip tape and can be bought on a roll. Use it on caravan steps and bunk bed ladders.

If you smell burning smells in the caravan get everyone out BEFORE you investigate the source of the smell. (If the Wife is not cooking – of course.)

Do everything at a slow rate whilst setting up and getting packed.

A friend of ours recently drove away with the manual mover still engaged.

He now puts the handle on his driver's seat to remind him to check the mover is disengaged.

If you fear that your glass hob might be shattered, make a wooden board which fits over the top of the hob, fix four 1" rubber feet to each corner of the board and this will sit over the top of the hob when it is not in use, and can just be lifted off then you need to use the hob.

Security

Make sure you have a hitch lock that can be attached with the car hooked up, especially important at motorway services.

Always have two sets of keys (car and van). Keep one set in the handbag and the other in a small bum bag for the males or hidden under the car and caravan in a magnetic key safe.

Keep a note of your credit card issuer's telephone number in the caravan and car, then if your cards are then lost or stolen, you can report them immediately and have them cancelled.

Site tips

Arriving on site, do you find that things have shaken loose in the caravan? Having the caravan tyres balanced may help.

If you have to correct the outfit when reversing, look in your towing mirrors and turn the wheel towards the one in you can see the side of the caravan. This will correct the situation.

When reversing your outfit, try to reverse into a space on the driver's side of the vehicle, the driver can then see the back of the van. If you try to do it the other way round all you can see is the front of the caravan.

The most common caravan damage is to rear corners. Remember the back of the caravan will kick out during sharp turning manoeuvres. Ask someone to watch your back if there is any doubt.

If you pitch on a sloping pitch, always park with the caravan facing down the slope. It makes it easier to pull off the pitch at the end of your stay and the caravan hand brake works more reliably in case you need it.

On a slope where the steadies will not reach the ground, try [Steadibloc](#).

When selecting your pitch, try not to be directly under trees. After rain the drips go on for a long time and in late in the season leaves, twigs or seeds can fall. Even in summer sap from trees can land on the caravan roof creating a sticky surface that is hard to remove.

It can be to your advantage to know which direction the sun is related to your pitch if you are able to choose. Some like to sit in the sun at the awning side others prefer a different direction. A compass can point more than just a satellite dish.

The sun rises in the east and sets in the west, worth remembering when choosing your pitch or setting up your solar panel.

Check where the fire point is and what is there.

If you keep leaving your washing up liquid bottle at the site sink, pour some washing up liquid in a dirty glass and leave the bottle in the caravan.

If you're taking the kids to large sites consider investing in a pair of a two-way 'walkie-talkie' radio set. It's cheaper than using the mobile phone and they offer peace of mind if the children are playing out of sight. Radios with a two-mile working range are inexpensive.

Keep some 20p. coins in a container in the caravan in case the showers on site charge.

A spare piece of breathable groundsheet about six feet by four feet...placed on the grass in front of the caravan door saves the ground being churned into mud and trailing into the caravan. I got a "roll end" from a dealer for a couple of quid. It weighs very little and it lives in the front locker until required.

In hot muggy weather in a place where midges are a problem, never park under a site lamp. The reflection off the caravan acts as a beacon for every midge in the neighbourhood. Opening a window even a crack is inviting torture if your midge screens are not in perfect condition.

Keep a can of spray fly killer in the van.

If you have to push the outfit off a boggy pitch, push the car not the caravan. Pushing the caravan towards the car applies the caravan brakes. Not many people know that.

Carry a strong towrope so if you need a tow, someone will help you, and in turn, you can help someone else. Tow ropes you buy from motorists' shops are intended for towing vehicles on tarmac surfaces such as roads. They are not intended to pull cars and caravans off boggy ground. If you do have to use a towrope in these conditions, make sure everyone stands clear because if the rope does break and whiplash, it will cause a serious injury. Flat braided-type tow ropes have the highest strength rating.

If you are thinking of feeding birds on a site, think again. Mice are attracted by fallen food and they get into caravans & motor homes and cause havoc with the electrics & anything else they sink their teeth into. This can be dangerous and costly to the owner.

Tool tips

Don't forget WD40 and Duct Tape. The WD40 for things that don't move and should and Duct Tape for things that do move and shouldn't.

Consider buying a packet of different sized cable ties. They come in handy.

A head torch is vital if you need light at night. It will light up where you look – invaluable. The latest LED versions are cheap and very bright.

Travelling tips

Get two large envelopes each containing photocopies of your passport, driving license, caravan insurance, travel insurance, tax disc, log book, personal travel insurance, copy of

EHIC card, copy of AA breakdown number etc, copy of pet passport and so on. Give one to a friend in the UK.

Is your toilet is set up ready to use when you go touring. There is nothing like bursting and stopping in a lay by to use the toilet rather than queuing at Services to use toilets. Never fill the flush tank more than a couple of litres. The liquid could slosh over the top of the tank while on the move.

Keep a bag packed with sandwiches etc, in the fridge so you can park up, have a lunch break, use the toilet and be underway in half an hour or so.

Take a largish bottle of water with you in the car, say 2.5 litres, so you can brew up if you've got the gas connected. It's useful to get the kettle on before unpacking the van/car because you can't find the water point, or its raining and you want to have a cuppa while waiting for the rain to abate.

If you belong to a car recovery scheme check that they will recover your caravan if it breaks down.

Taking things out of the caravan and putting it in the car has double the positive offset weight. This lightens the caravan and adds weight to the tug. You will have a better drive as well.

Water works

When you store your aquaroll, leave the top off and use a square of the wife's tights secured with a rubber band to allow air flow and keep out the insects.

Get a large plastic mineral bottle and cut off the base. You now have a funnel to fill your Aquaroll from the tap without splashing yourself.

Don't bother with Thetford pink in the loo - it creates black sludge.

Blocked drain? Use ordinary washing soda crystals and some hot (not boiling water) - mix up a strong solution, bung up the outlets and pour the solution down the plug holes and let it do it's stuff for half an hour or so.

To de-scale the hot water tank mix white vinegar and water, 50:50 - to include the pipe work as well as the heater in terms of volume you probably need 5.5 - 6.0 litres of white vinegar. Leave for three days then flush.

Do you hate chemical smells? Milton fluid disinfects, bleaches and protects without smells.

My Thanks to contributors,

Regards

Pete of the BO