



A LITTLE GUIDE TO **CARAVANNING** FOR NEWBIES



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HITCH UP FOR ADVENTURE



The fabulous thing about caravanning is that come rain or shine, you can simply hitch up and disappear for an adventure whenever the mood takes you! Your very own 'home from home' is fully stocked (ok, you're going to have to do this bit yourself, first) and ready and waiting to explore old places and new.

If you're new to all this, then you've come to the right place! There's nothing to be worried about once you've read through this this Little Guide; jam packed with loads of handy hints and tips to make your new hobby something pretty magical....bring on the fun!!

PULL YOUR WEIGHT

First things first – can your car actually tow a caravan? A tow bar needs to be fitted if you don't have one, that goes without saying, but the weight of the caravan is also an important factor. Here comes the maths...

The handbook for your car should tell you the kerb weight. Take this number and multiply it by 85, then divide that by 100. This is your 85% figure that the Club recommends. Once you've got that, you can check what the towing limit is for the caravan you want to / have bought. A much easier way is to use the **Towmatch service** which is free for members of The Camping and Caravanning Club!



LICENCE TO THRILL

It also matters what kind of driving license you have. You can check by looking on the back of your card licence – if you passed your driving test before 1997 and you are under 70 years old then you don't need to worry. However, anyone that doesn't already have it, will need to pass an additional test to get the required categories if you want to drive / pull a heavier car and caravan. This bit is pretty important so if you want a bit more information have a look at our ['Towing and the Law'](#) page.

TO BUY, OR NOT TO BUY, THAT IS THE QUESTION

Yes! Buy it! Seriously though, there's so many shapes and specs out there and should you get a brand new one from the caravan shop, or a second hand one out of the paper? It all really comes down to your budget and needs, and if you need a bit of help and support with that we can help. Do yourself a favour though and don't get it off your mate Geoff's, brothers cousin's sister's mate...it's an investment and you'll want a bit of a guarantee with it. Or in the least, some service history!



GETTING HITCHED

We know you can get attached to your caravan, but we're talking about actually 'attaching' the caravan to your car properly! It means that you'll get to where you're going, and still have your caravan with you - winner! In simple steps, follow the points below and you should be just fine:

- ★ Raise the Caravan Hitch with the Jockey Wheel – this raises it up so that you can...
- ★ Reverse your car to the hitch, so your towbar is underneath ready to lower the caravan down onto.
- ★ Connect the 13 Pin so that your lights will work, and breakaway cables for security 'just in case'!
- ★ Try your indicators and apply the brake to make sure the caravans rear lights are doing the same.
- ★ Put the corner steadies up and pack away the winder, and any levelling ramps/wheel chocks.
- ★ Make sure you've turned off the gas at the bottle.
- ★ Check that the handbrake is off and the stabiliser handle is properly engaged.
- ★ And finally, double check that the jockey wheel is up and tightly secured.

It's a really good idea to do a **towing course** if you're new to towing – not only will it teach invaluable skills but it will boost your confidence when towing a unit.



HIGH STANDARDS, LOW MAINTENANCE?

Keeping your caravan in top-top condition will keep it working hard for you for years to come and just as you have to with your car, you are legally required to keep your caravan in road-worthy condition.

You don't need to get it MOT'd but taking it for an annual service is highly recommended – a service on a caravan is a lot more detailed than one on your car because over an above the usual brakes and lights check, they'll be going over all the 'extra bits' too. A caravan service should cover the chassis, bodywork and trims, the gas system, the electrical systems, the water system, ventilation, fire and safety, and a carbon monoxide health check. One check, once a year will avoid any costly deterioration and damage, and it'll make it look all snazzy and fresh when you pull up on site!



'BE AWSOME AT CARAVANNING'... CHECK!

OK, so aside from the usual bits and bobs that you'll need on your camping trip, like cups and plates, bedding etc – what should you specifically have as a caravanner? Well, we asked the experts and here's the 'must haves' they recommended...

★ Toilet chemicals

Not all sites have facilities and even if they do, you might not want to trek across a field when it's cold and dark, so to make sure your own toilet is fit for purpose, you'll need special fluids to break down waste and keep your van smelling fresh at the same time.

★ Large water containers

You'll hear these referred to as an aquaroll and a wastemaster, and basically one is a big water carrier on wheels that you can fill up and attach to give you a water supply to your unit and the other is to collect the waste water after your, or washing the dishes (the stuff that goes down the drain).

★ Water pump

One end connects to the caravan and the other end gets dropped into your aqua roll to enable water supply. Most caravans will come with a water pump but always best to check!

★ Gas Bottle (and regulator)

If your caravan has heating, or you want to use the hob and have hot water for washing yourself or the dirty dishes then connect a gas cylinder and Bob's your uncle!

★ Fire Blanket and or extinguisher

It just makes things a bit safer in case of accidents and your insurance provider will probably insist that you have one.

★ Hitch lock and cover

Not 'essential' as such, but really good at stopping someone from making off with your beloved caravan! Plus, you'll probably get a bit knocked off your insurance premium if you have one. Cherr-ching!



'BE AWSOME AT CARAVANNING'... CHECK!

★ Chocks and a Spirit Level

You're in a field and even the flat earth believer should know that the ground is not always that flat – so using blocks or 'chocks' will help you get your unit on a nice even level and stop your belongings from sliding off the side! A spirit level will tell you when you've got it just right.

★ Mains lead and adapter

If you're on a site that has electric hook up, simply plug this cable into the socket and connect to your 'van and ta daa! You'll have lights, an oven, somewhere to charge your phone and plug in the hairdryer. No slumming it for you, my friend.

★ Towing Mirrors

Your car is almost always narrower in width than your caravan, so to make sure you can see behind you, you need these extra mirrors attached to your wing mirrors.

★ Large caravan battery

Where there is no electric hook-up but you still want your mod-cons, you can use your leisure battery instead.

★ Steps

Pretty self-explanatory, but there's a quite a big gap between your door and the floor, so a little set of steps will make getting in and out of your unit easy peasy.

Now you're all set for the open road and an adventure, or four, of a lifetime! We've got more suggestions of where to visit and stay, than you can shake a stick at, so check out our '**New to Caravanning**' pages on our website to give you some inspiration and tonnes more advice on all of the above, and more!



