



# YOUR GUIDE TO THE WINTER SEASON

Winter is wonderful, with sites and attractions much quieter and snowy landscapes sparkling; but whether you're planning to continue touring or lay-up your motorhome, we've everything you need to know



- 100 Tour all winter**  
With a little planning, you can carry on motorcaravanning all year round
- 104 Sites for winter walks**  
Hiking in the colder months can be pure pleasure, and there are plenty of great trails, and campsites, to choose from
- 108 Winter driving advice**  
It can be challenging to drive in winter, but our expert advice and practical tips will help to keep you safe on the road
- 110 Store all winter**  
If you prefer to store your motorhome over the winter, here are the essential tasks to make it ready for lay-up
- 112 Cold-weather gadgets**  
Add to your brilliant winter touring experience with some fabulous kit!



**Also available as a FREE ebook**  
see [www.practicalmotorhome.com/know-how](http://www.practicalmotorhome.com/know-how) to download yours!



**HOW TO...**

# **KEEP TOURING ALL WINTER**

If you want to carry on motorcaravanning throughout the winter months, follow our expert guide and maximise your memory-making, whatever the weather. John Sootheran shows you how



**T**hese days, thankfully, you no longer need the fortitude of Captain Scott to enjoy all-year-round touring. Almost all modern vehicles have incredible insulation and heroic heating, which make four-season touring not just possible, but a positive pleasure.

There are plenty of benefits to all-year touring, too: campsites are emptier (you get the best pitches and views), popular attractions are quiet, and cold-but-sunny winter days can be unbeatable. In addition, there are those magnificent Christmas markets and events to savour.

I've been winter touring since 2011, and the only problem I've ever had is being too hot to sleep in the 'van!

So all in all, we'd say 2021 is the ideal year to make the most of your investment and sample that wonderful feeling of being warm and cosy in your motorhome, while the winter weather tries to do its worst outside. The key to successful all-season touring is good preparation. Here's how...

### Pick the right 'van

You'll find that most motorhomes are now suitable for all-year touring. Some might reckon Continental models unbeatable for this purpose, but we would venture to suggest that you consider every suitably insulated and heated vehicle.

Unlike the fine summer months spent basking outside your motorhome, from October to April you will mostly be inside, so select a 'van with sufficient space to live comfortably indoors – this might preclude the tinier two-berths.

Pick a light and airy motorhome to make the most of minimal daylight in winter. Modern 'vans usually feature very large windows, and many are also fitted with sizeable rooflights.

Likewise, good ambient, mood and spot lighting can really enhance the interior. Many models do this brilliantly. It's a really good idea to factor some 'illuminated thinking' into your decision!

### Heating

There's an excellent choice of heating systems in motorhomes. Most function on gas and electricity, and combine the two for maximum output.

Truma and Whale make blown-air heating systems. These pipe hot air from a heater through ducting and distribute it around the motorhome.

Alde, meanwhile, uses a wet system. Rather like domestic central heating, hot water is pumped around the vehicle into radiators hidden behind the furniture, to warm the interior.

Both systems have their devotees. Some motorcaravanners believe that blown-air heating can leave cold spots around the 'van, so they prefer the 'all-encompassing' heat from the Alde radiator system. I've never found this, and I like the speed with which blown-air can heat an interior.

Alde also needs more maintenance, has a potential risk of leaking, is heavier and costs more, but it is quieter, and you also get heated towel rails with this system, which is a useful bonus.

Winter motorcaravanners should check their vehicle doesn't have any exposed heating ducts underneath, because this will greatly affect the performance of the heater in very cold weather. Internal ducting is best and can also be further insulated to raise performance levels.

All main heating systems also heat the 'van's hot water and feature LED control panels inside the motorhome.

Cleverly, Truma and Alde systems can be controlled remotely, using an app on a digital device. As long as you can get a Wi-Fi or 4G signal, you can turn on the heating or hot water from anywhere, using Truma's iNet or Alde's Smart Control. This way, you get back to a warm motorhome, with hot water on tap for that reviving shower.

Clearly, the choice of heating system in your motorhome is pretty much down to ➔

## DRIVING IN SNOW AND ICE

**Avoid driving in very bad weather if you can – but if you do take to the road...**

- Plan your route carefully, avoiding dangerous roads and regions. Google Street View can be useful when you are planning a winter journey.
- Decrease your speed.
- Look further ahead up the road to keep an eye out for hazards.
- Stopping distances are increased in standing water, ice or snow, so leave significantly greater distance between you and the vehicle in front. We always recommend turning the two-second rule into at least the three- or four-second rule – and more if possible.
- Make all of your driving inputs, such as steering and braking, gentler and more gradual than normal.
- If your wheels lock when braking, ease off the brake and try doing this again – gently.
- Keep your lights on all the time. But only use fog lamps when it's foggy.
- Check your wiper blades and ensure that your washer bottle is filled with a suitable mix for the temperature.
- If you experience a lot of wheel spin, consider setting off in second gear.
- Think about fitting your motorhome with winter tyres – bear in mind that this is a legal requirement in some European countries. A minimum of 4mm tyre tread is recommended.
- Carry a pair of traction mats, for added grip in slippery conditions. You can find these online from about £12, made by companies such as Fiamma.
- Take a good-quality de-icer spray with you, and pack a windscreen cover, so you can avoid all of that unnecessary windscreen chiselling in the morning!



CHATS WORTH WINTER



VISIT SCOTLAND



HENDRA

**Left to right** There are plenty of excellent reasons to tour in winter! Campsites are emptier, so it's easier to get the best pitches and enjoy the most spectacular views. Popular visitor attractions, such as Chatsworth House, are also much quieter. Winter activities, such as mountain biking in the Cairngorms, are really exhilarating. You can also enjoy a peaceful beach walk in the sunshine



## POWERING UP

### Avoid tripping out the EHU

The last thing that you need in freezing weather is for your electrical supply to fail because it has been overloaded.

Campsite power supplies vary, from around 4A to 16A. If the devices you use in your motorhome exceed the site's supply, the hook-up post will cut out.

Here's how to calculate the maximum number of devices you can use, before exceeding this limit:

### Amperage consumption

■ One watt is one amp of current delivered at a 'force' of one volt.

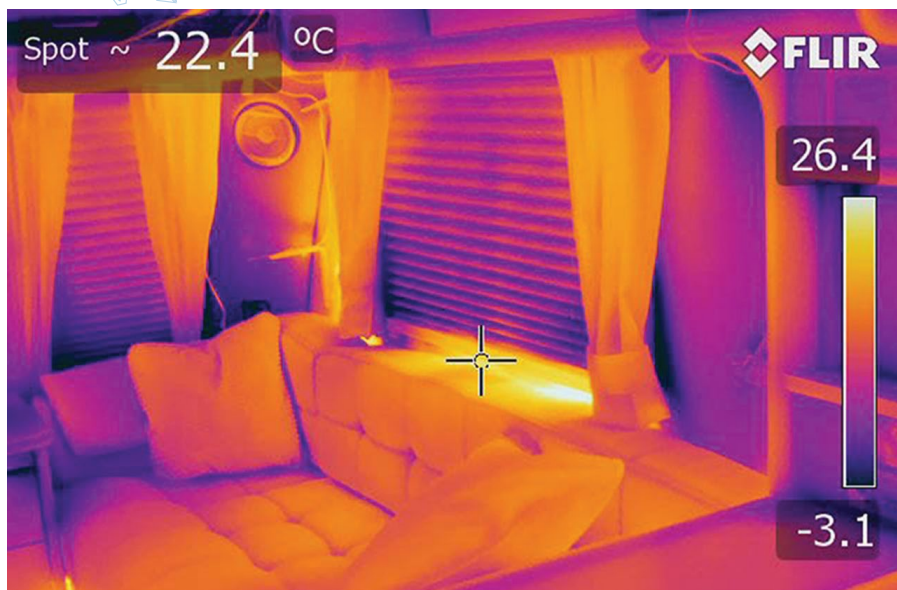
■ Amps x Volts = Watts OR  
Watts/Volts = Amps

■ In the UK and Europe, the voltage is 220–230V, so a 2kW (2000W) heater at 230V draws a current of 8.7A. This shows that if you have the heating on and use the microwave while someone dries their hair, you could easily exceed a 16A supply and trip the system.

### Typical current draws

|                           |        |
|---------------------------|--------|
| ■ Hotplate (1–2kW)        | 4.5–9A |
| ■ LED TV (60W)            | 0.25A  |
| ■ Microwave (800W)        | 3A     |
| ■ Water heater (750W)     | 3A     |
| ■ Motorhome kettle (750W) | 3A     |
| ■ Fridge (125W)           | 0.5A   |
| ■ Air conditioning (1kW)  | 4.5A   |

Some motorhomes have systems to cut off the heating if maximum amperage is exceeded, and turn it back on again when there is sufficient supply.



Rigorous testing assesses the heating performance in both motorhomes and caravans



Truma's system provides blown-air heating throughout the motorhome interior

personal preference, so before you make your decision, you might want to research them all. It could also be helpful to talk to friends who tour, to canvass their opinion.

### Draughts, cold spots

If your motorhome feels draughty, don't be tempted to block off the drop-out vents in the floor. These are crucial to allow the escape of heavier-than-air propane and butane gases, should you experience a gas leak.

Instead, consider insulating the floor areas underneath the beds and settees, and in the cupboards, with carpeting or some specialist insulation material.

Wheel arches and gas locker bulkheads are often left uninsulated, and these zones might benefit from being fitted with some additional lagging, too.

### Gas choice

LPG is the most effective source of heat when you are out in your motorhome. It delivers up to 6kW of energy, compared with electricity, which achieves 2kW or 3kW, where the site supply allows.

For touring during the winter months, it's essential to choose propane, rather than butane. Propane vaporises (turning from a liquid to a gas) at temperatures down to -42°C, whereas butane stops 'gassing' at -2°C.

Calor and Flogas supply propane gas bottles (red in colour), while the refillable specialists, SafeFill and Gaslow, use the Autogas that you can buy on many filling-station forecourts (including Morrison's).

Autogas can be a mix of butane and propane, although in the UK,

it is 100% propane all year round (find out more at [www.mylpg.eu](http://www.mylpg.eu)). Be mindful that if you refilled your gas bottles abroad in the summer, your gas mix might not be ideal for a UK winter.

Whichever gas you decide to use, don't underestimate your consumption rate and consider taking a spare bottle with you.

Regular winter motorcaravanners could make huge savings by buying Autogas at 67p per litre, rather than pre-bottled gas at around £2 per litre.



### Leisure batteries

You'll use more power in winter, due to the lower temperatures and shorter days, and more time spent indoors. Consider upgrading the leisure battery to allow for this. A 110Ah leisure battery is ideal,



## TOP TIPS

- 1 Chances are, your 'van will be an absolute oasis of tropical heat in Britain's icy winter, but be prepared, and take extra clothes: thick socks, warm pyjamas and at least one sweater! A 12 tog duvet or winter sleeping bag and a hot-water bottle are handy, too.
- 2 Special plastic covers can be obtained to partially cover the external fridge vents in very cold weather.
- 3 Toilet chemicals can freeze, so store them inside, or use sachet or tab-style products instead.
- 4 Keep your washroom well heated and – horror of horrors – leave the toilet seat raised to minimise the chances of the toilet freezing up.
- 5 Fit a carbon monoxide detector.
- 6 Avoid condensation creating mould in your mattress. When you are leaving the motorhome for the day, consider raising the sprung bed base to allow warmer air to circulate more freely all around the mattress.
- 7 Make sure that your motorhome is serviced annually, in particular ensuring the heating systems are properly maintained.
- 8 Be conservative when showering in the 'van, to avoid long delays while the water reservoir reheats.



- 9 Lag all of the motorhome's external waste pipes with split-foam lagging and gaffer tape it in place.
- 10 Using electric heating in your 'van during the night is an option over using gas.
- 11 Carry a small tool kit, a torch and spare fuses for the motorhome's DC supply.

12 Always plug your cable into the motorhome first, then the hook-up post. This way you're not carrying a live cable in potentially wet weather. When leaving, unplug from the post first.

13 Keep your electric cable dry. If you are obliged to link two cables, invest in a weatherproof cover to protect the join and keep it off the ground.

14 Always carry a set of grip mats, available from a company such as Fiamma – they will help you drive off if you start to get stuck.



Scenic locations are often overcrowded in summer, so enjoy the winter quiet

VISTWALES

remembering that batteries do not perform as well in cold temperatures.

There's very little point insulating your battery, because this will have no effect during extended cold periods. It might also take it longer to warm back up again when the sun does come out.

Bear in mind that shorter winter days and the low sun will make solar panels significantly less effective, too.

### Picking a pitch

Off-grid camping is possible in winter, but its demands on gas and electric supplies make it more challenging.

When staying on a standard campsite, it's worth selecting a hardstanding pitch that provides hook-up.

If possible, choose a pitch that's easily accessible, where you don't have to drive across any grass – which is universally recognised as the most slippery surface to negotiate when wet.

Although a level pitch might not drain so well, manoeuvring your 'van onto a slope can be tricky. We'll let you decide!

Note too, that if you park under trees, that rain shower might continue dripping on the roof. There's also the possibility of damage if any branches are blown off.

### Useful accessories

A porch awning is a good idea if you tour a lot in winter, especially if you are keen on outdoor pursuits. Awnings create an



'airlock', where you can remove wet gear without letting out too much heat. A compact air or pole awning can suffice – just make sure it is pegged securely.

If you are pitching on frozen ground, a cordless drill can be used, with a long, 4mm-diameter masonry bit, to create a guide-hole for tent pegs.

### Condensation

Condensation is less of a problem these days. The important point here is keeping the motorhome warm and maintaining a good airflow whenever possible.

In our experience, dehumidifying crystals are fairly ineffective for 'van interiors. Mains-powered dehumidifiers are much better, but they are expensive, and they need emptying. Keep a towel handy for mopping windows and ensure your mattress is on a breathable surface – wooden slats, not solid plywood. ■



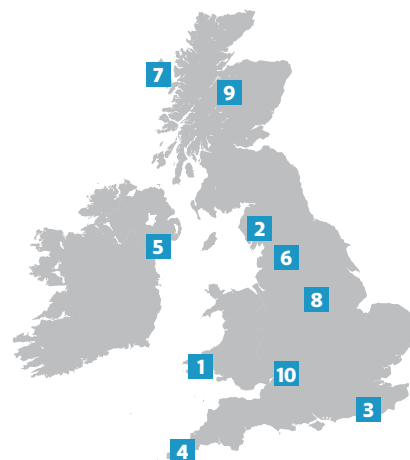




## WINTER WALKS

# WALKING THERAPY

You can't beat the restorative power of a good walk, especially in winter sunshine! Here are 10 of the UK's best hiking areas, and great open-all-year sites to stay at



### 1 The Blue Lagoon, Pembrokeshire

Pembrokeshire, in south-west Wales, has an almost indecent number of the most wonderful walks, and we particularly like the two-mile stretch from the fishing village of Porthgain, heading south to the Blue Lagoon and Abereddy beach.

Starting from Porthgain harbour, you can simply follow the coast path and you'll soon be taking in staggering clifftop views.

This dramatic, wild coastline is formed of high cliffs that overlook the rocks of Cerrig Gwylan, which lie out to sea at the northern extremity of Traeth Llyfn beach (but do be wary of high tides here).

You can drop down to the beach itself, or continue towards the Blue Lagoon and the beach at Abereddy. The Blue Lagoon

is a former quarry, which has become a popular swimming and high-diving spot – albeit in the warmer weather!

#### Where to stay

Celtic Camping

**Web** [www.celtic-camping.co.uk](http://www.celtic-camping.co.uk)

### 2 Old Man of Coniston, Lake District

A choice for the connoisseurs, the Old Man of Coniston, in the Furness Fells, is one of the Lake District's most iconic walks and a real magnet for keen hikers.

You'll need to have a good level of fitness to tackle this challenge, however, because this is a proper hike, rising to an elevation of some 800m. But it's well worth the effort – just make sure

you're dressed appropriately for any inclement weather that might appear.

There are several routes, although most people choose to hike from Walna Scar to the Old Man via Goats Water or Low Water.

The Low Water route is shorter, at some five miles for the round trip, but steeper, while Goats Water is a slightly lengthier trail, at about 6.5 miles.

The small mountain lakes, or tarns, are the perfect foil for the achingly beautiful fells. The zigzag to the top is exquisite and once you are at the peak, there is a roomy plateau where you can stop to take in the view.

#### Where to stay

Coniston Park Coppice C&MC Site

**Web** [www.caravanclub.co.uk](http://www.caravanclub.co.uk)



For info on how to stay safe on cold-weather walks, see <https://www.adventure.com/features/cold-weather-hiking>



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### 3 Pooh Sticks Bridge, Ashdown Forest

What child, or adult for that matter, hasn't enjoyed playing a game of Pooh Sticks?

For the uninitiated, the rules are simple – you just throw your sticks into the water from one side of a bridge, then run across to the other side and wait to see whose stick passes under the bridge first.

Immortalised in AA Milne's stories about Winnie-the-Pooh, the inspiration for Pooh Sticks Bridge is at Hartfield, in the heart of the wonderful Ashdown Forest.

The pretty village of Hartfield, which was home to the author, is in East Sussex, a few miles south-east of East Grinstead, and a quick search on Google will direct you to the nearby Pooh Car Park.

From there, it's a 15-minute walk to the bridge. This does become busy, with Pooh fans eager to play, but everyone has a turn.

The forest itself, the original inspiration for the Hundred Acre Wood, is really beautiful and makes a fine walk for all the family.



3



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**'The lakes are the perfect foil for the fells. The zigzag to the top is exquisite and at the peak, you can stop to take in the view'**

#### Where to stay

Long Acres Camping

**Web** <https://longacrescamping.co.uk/>

#### 4 Sennen Cove, Cornwall

The South West Coast Path, which runs all the way from Minehead in Somerset, along the coasts of Devon and Cornwall, to Poole Harbour in Dorset, abounds with fabulous walking routes.

Although Land's End is a bit of a tourist trap, approaching across the cliffs from Sennen Cove is simply breathtaking.

The crisp light reminds you of St Ives and the water is the richest blue. This is a gentle walk, good for all the family – but do hold on to small children near the clifftops!

Sennen is a beautiful cove with a lovely pub, an RNLI lifeboat station and a sandy beach. Occasionally, you might spot basking sharks and dolphins from the cliffs, and the rich green of the hillside contrasts beautifully with the wild Atlantic. On the way to Land's End, you'll pass the remains of *RMS Mülheim*,

a German cargo ship that foundered here in 2003. Be sure to stop and take a photo at the famous Land's End signpost!

#### Where to stay

Kelynack Caravan And Camping Park

**Web** [www.kelynackholidays.co.uk](http://www.kelynackholidays.co.uk)

#### 5 Mourne Mountains, Northern Ireland

Reached by a walk of around six miles, the glorious peak at Slieve Donard is the highest in Northern Ireland, at 850m, and makes a challenging but rewarding introduction to the beautiful Mourne Mountains before you consider taking on some of the more difficult hikes in the area.

You start at Donard car park and follow the path along the Glen River and the lush pine and oak forest – you cross bridges at various points, and you'll see a number of waterfalls.

There's a clear trail as you get further up the mountain. It takes around 2.5 hours to reach the peak, so this route is not really ➔



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Getty/Darrell Evans/EyeEm

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Getty/R A Kearton

for the fainthearted, but the beautiful views (and sense of achievement) make all of that hard work very worthwhile.

As with all significant walks of this type, appropriate local advice should be sought before you depart, and do be sure to dress suitably for all weathers, especially when visiting in the winter months.

#### Where to stay

Tollymore Forest Park

**Web** [www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/tollymore-forest-park-camping-touring-online-booking](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/tollymore-forest-park-camping-touring-online-booking)

#### 6 Malham Cove, Yorkshire Dales

As a particular favourite of ours, we have featured glorious Malham Cove, in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales, before in *Practical Motorhome*. It's worth highlighting again, because this spectacular eroded limestone pavement, which sits atop a dramatic,

amphitheatre-shaped cliff, must surely be one of the finest wonders of nature.

The limestone pavement was selected by TV presenter, keen hiker and President of The Camping and Caravanning Club Julia Bradbury as one of the UK's best walks, and has featured memorably in the film of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, and *The Trip*, starring Steve Coogan.

It's easy to see why this spectacular area attracts many celebrity endorsements – in a region of numerous breathtaking walks, Malham really is a star attraction.

There are plentiful trails to choose from, but the 7.5-mile circular route taking in Malham and Gordale Scar, with its waterfall, is very popular, and gives you the chance to explore two notable geological features.

#### Where to stay

Orcaber Farm Caravan & Camping Park

**Web** [caravancampingyorkshiredales.co.uk](http://caravancampingyorkshiredales.co.uk)

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9



Joe Cornish

#### 7 Fairy Pools Walk, Skye

A hopelessly romantic name for a hopelessly romantic setting, the Fairy Pools are a series of exquisite azure pools at the foot of the Black Cuillins, which pepper this part of Allt a' Choire Ghreadaidh, in Glen Brittle, on the beautiful Isle of Skye.

They are a hugely popular attraction. So much so, you'll have to arrive early at the Fairy Pools car park to secure a spot.

It takes 20 minutes to walk to the first waterfall and the start of the Fairy Pools – here you'll find the highest fall and the deepest of the pools.

Many visitors stop to enjoy wild swimming here, but pack your wetsuit and take all the necessary safety precautions if you're tempted to join them – this is Scotland in winter!

#### Where to stay

Manor House Touring Park (adults-only)

**Web** [www.manorhousetouringpark.co.uk](http://www.manorhousetouringpark.co.uk)

CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE





Getty/Andrew Locke

10

CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE

### 8 Kinder Scout, Peak District

The highest point of the Peak District in Derbyshire, Kinder Scout is understandably very popular with ramblers, who glory in this wonderful moorland plateau reaching some 2000ft above sea level.

The Kinder Scout and Edale Walk is a favourite circular route (so worth starting early), around eight miles long. It begins at Edale and will take approximately four to five hours to complete.

This scenic trail will take you past the dramatic waterfall at Kinder Downfall, on the River Kinder, and then up across Jacob's Ladder, a series of steep, zigzag steps that runs alongside the River Noe.

Rolling moorland and phenomenal views are what most characterise this walk, and on a clear winter day, it is said that you can see the peaks of Snowdonia – but binoculars are likely to be required!

#### Where to stay

Beech Croft Farm

**Web** <https://beechcroftfarm.co.uk/>

### 9 Loch an Eilein, Cairngorms National Park

Fishing, climbing, skiing, wild camping, canyoning – whatever your preferred outdoor activity might be, those looking for adventure will certainly find it in spades at the Cairngorms National Park.

Walkers are particularly spoiled for choice here, as nature trails, wonderful views and impressive peaks abound.

For an introduction to the area, try the circular walk around Loch an Eilein, which at 4.5 miles is a gentle stroll and great for all the family, who can enjoy the views, the wildlife and glimpses of the remains of a 14th-century castle built on a natural island in the middle of the loch.

Birdwatchers will also find there are many great viewing opportunities, even during the winter months, and should keep an eye out for ptarmigan, snow bunting and red grouse.

#### Where to stay

Dalraddy Holiday Park

**Web** [www.campinginaviemore.co.uk](http://www.campinginaviemore.co.uk)

### 10 Roman Way, Cotswolds

Running the entire length of the beautiful Cotswolds, the Cotswold Way National Trail stretches 102 miles as it winds south from Chipping Campden through picture-book pretty villages, such as Snowhill and Painswick, before ending at the imposing edifice of Bath Abbey.

There are lots of easy sections to choose from, ranging between four and 10 miles long, many of which are outlined in detail at [www.nationaltrail.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk).

Alternatively, you could go the whole hog and challenge yourself to a marathon (perhaps that should be marathon times four?), covering the full 102 miles!

If not, the Birdlip to Painswick stretch is a good start, at some 8.5 miles, taking in Cooper's Hill, site of the famous annual cheese-rolling event, and the ramparts of an Iron Age hill fort at Painswick Beacon.

#### Where to stay

Broadway Caravan and Motorhome Club Site

**Web** [www.caravanclub.co.uk](http://www.caravanclub.co.uk)

**‘Walkers are spoiled for choice in the Cairngorms, as nature trails, wonderful views and impressive peaks abound’**



# HOW TO... DRIVE IN WINTER

Motorcaravanning in the colder months can be spectacular, but even experienced drivers need to adapt to the road conditions, says David Motton

**W**hen winter weather grips the country, you need to make sure that you're driving as safely as possible when you are on tour. Depending on where you live, you may have a blanket of snow, or perhaps snow is forecast. Either way, driving conditions aren't always going to be easy.

Driving any vehicle in wintry weather can be hazardous, let alone a large and heavy motorhome, with longer stopping distances and reduced grip.

The safety experts at IAM RoadSmart have some excellent tips for winter driving,

many of which are pertinent for those who are driving a motorhome. We also have some advice of our own – read on for our guide to safe winter touring!

## If you can, stay put

"The best advice is to avoid travelling in extreme weather," says IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, Richard Gladman. "If [people are stuck], you'll just add to the problem – so listen to the travel advice."

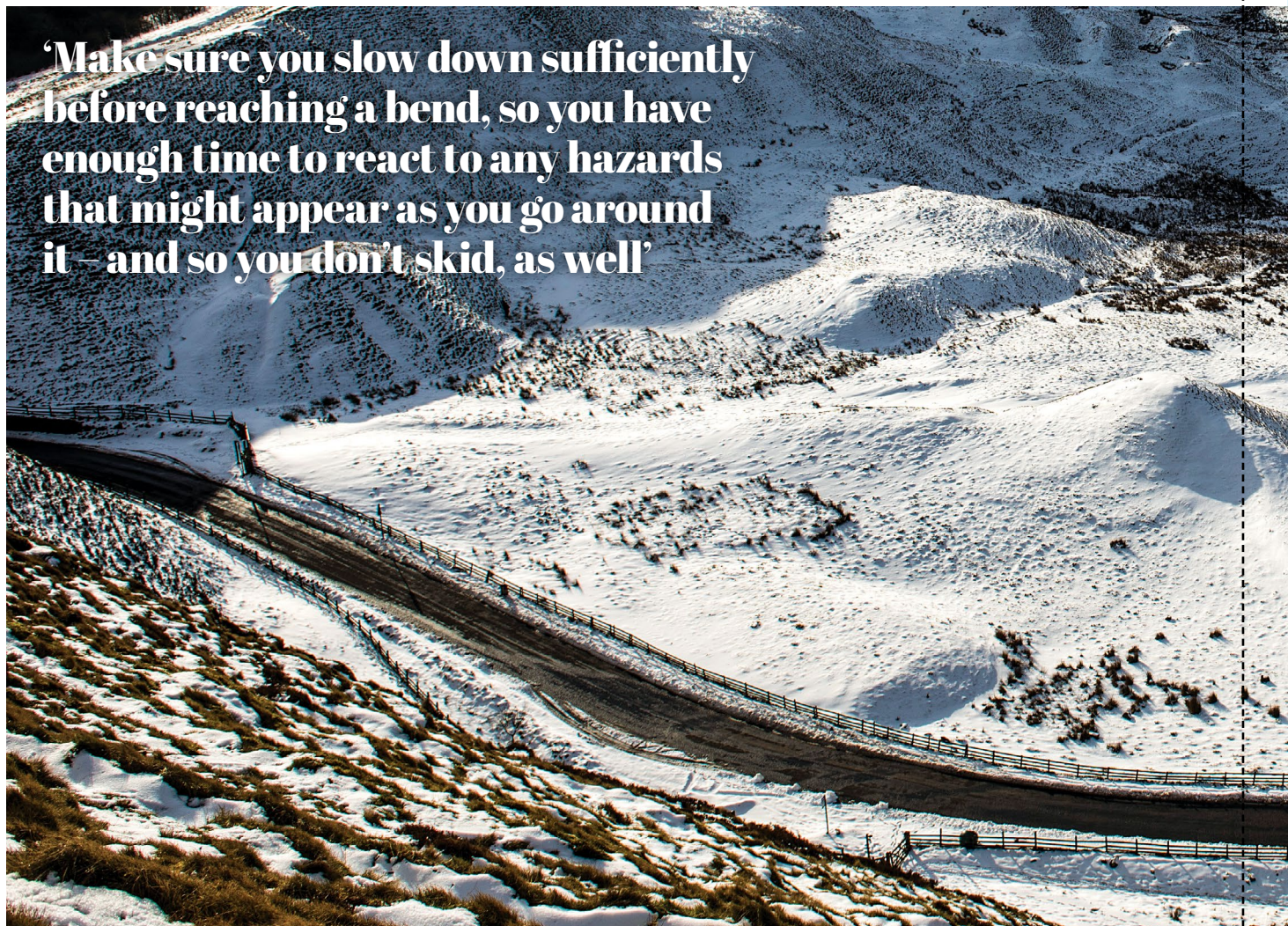
We'd second that. If the weather is really bad, with snow and ice making driving

conditions difficult, rethink your touring plans. Either delay travelling by a day or two until the weather improves, or cancel the trip entirely and rearrange it once the weather has cleared.

## Plan ahead

"If you do have to travel in bad weather, plan your journey thoroughly. Think about where you are going and what it will be like all the way along the route. If you can, avoid travelling on less-used roads or country lanes, because these are less likely to be gritted," says Gladman.

**'Make sure you slow down sufficiently before reaching a bend, so you have enough time to react to any hazards that might appear as you go around it – and so you don't skid, as well'**





Very narrow country lanes can be quite a challenge in a motorhome at the best of times, but become treacherous if you are driving in snow.

At this time of year, it's more important than ever to contact the campsite you are heading for and confirm the best way to approach it, which might not be the most direct route. Sat navs are not always right! The warden can also give you an update on the weather at your destination, to help you decide whether or not to travel.

### Prepare your vehicle

Before setting off, clear all your windows and mirrors fully. Remove snow piled on the roof and bonnet as much as you can – using a long-handled broom can help – because it can fall and blow onto the windscreen, or onto vehicles following you. Don't leave anything obscured.

### Take your time

IAM RoadSmart's tips on how to drive in wintry weather are important, and apply just as much to motorhomes as to cars. "Start your car gently from stationary and avoid high revs. If the road conditions are extremely icy and you drive a manual car, you should move off in a higher gear, rather than first gear. You should stay in a higher

gear to avoid wheel spin," says Gladman. He's right, of course, but starting off in a higher gear than first might not always be possible with the weight of a motorhome to drag forward. It can take careful balancing of the clutch and throttle to pull away when driving on a slippery surface.

"It's important to get your speed right when you are travelling in snow. Never drive too fast that you risk losing control, and don't drive so slowly that you risk losing momentum for getting up a slope.

"Increase your following distance from the vehicle in front of you. It may take up to 10 times as long to stop on snow or ice. Build this into your following distance – this will give you more time to slow down using engine braking, which is less likely to induce a skid.

"Make sure you slow down sufficiently before reaching a bend, so that you have enough time to react to any hazards that might appear as you go around it – and so you don't skid, as well. You should have finished slowing down before you start to turn the steering wheel," he explains.

### Expect the unexpected

When you are touring in winter, it pays to be prepared for bad weather and delays. "At the very least, you should have with

you a shovel, torch, blanket, jump-leads and tow rope," says Gladman.

In addition, you should ensure your mobile is fully charged, and the number of your recovery organisation has been saved into it.

A bottle of water and snacks might prove useful, and don't set out on any journey without knowing the locations of fuel stations along your way.

### Tyres for the time of year

IAM RoadSmart's advice focuses on what you can do if you are about to set off on a journey. But there are steps you can take well before the worst of winter arrives.

Consider fitting winter tyres if you want to stay mobile all winter. They don't just make a difference when there's snow and ice about. They offer better grip once the temperature drops below 7°C.

Winter can be a magical time of year for touring, with quiet campsites and crisp, bracing weather. But when the cold bites hardest, safety has to be top priority.

So if you do have a winter break planned during icy conditions, pay close attention to the weather forecast before you set out on the road. And if you decide it's sensible to travel, take extra precautions to make sure that everybody stays safe. ■





# HOW TO... STORE ALL WINTER

Not all motorcaravanners tour in the winter, so Sammy Faircloth looks at important tasks that need to be carried out before storing your motorhome

**T**he dark, cold evenings are not to everyone's taste, and some of us like nothing better than to cosy up at home in front of the fire in winter. Before you store your motorhome for the season, however, it is advisable to carry out a few simple housekeeping and maintenance tasks. That way, you should have no problems next spring.

## Indoor tasks

### ■ Cleaning

It really would be most remiss to leave any motorhome in a mucky state, so the first step is to give it a thorough clean before putting it away.

Be careful about cleaning agents that you use on plastic fixtures and fittings. Avoid using household bleach, which will damage the plastic. And bear in mind that products such as Thetford Bathroom Cleaner can be used in the fridge, as well as the washroom.

As an alternative, use a solution of one teaspoonful of bicarbonate of soda in half a litre of warm water.

I always store the removable carpets, cushions and upholstery elsewhere, as they can get damp in colder months.

### ■ Drain-down

This is one of the most important jobs. Water tends to freeze at 0°C, so it's vital to drain down your motorhome before storing it away for winter. If any water is left in the pipes, it will expand on freezing and this could split them, resulting in some rather costly consequences.



Thetford Bathroom Cleaner is not just for cleaning the washroom. It can also be used to freshen the inside of the fridge



Wherever you store your 'van in winter, good preparation will be essential

To drain the water heater, switch off the pump and turn the yellow tap to the open or drain-down position. Once it has finished draining, open all of the taps, including the shower.

If you have a single-lever mixer tap, ensure the lever is in the middle, raised position, to open both hot and cold feeds. Don't forget to drain down any on-board water tanks, too.

For absolute peace of mind, though, you could use a Floë Drain-Down Kit, which connects to the water in-supply at the side of the motorhome, with a foot pump or a 12V tyre compressor.

Make sure that it is set to no more than 15psi (1 bar). It will then simply blast air

through the pipes to push out any residual water remaining in the system.

The next step is to drain down the flush water tank to your toilet cassette. Locate the drain-down pipe, usually found in the locker where the cassette is housed.

Using a bowl or bucket, remove the plug on the end of the drain-down pipe and be ready to catch the water. It is surprising how dirty the water can get!

If there is no drain-down pipe, flush the toilet until no more water comes out, but make sure that you empty the cassette.

It is also recommended to leave the blade in the open position, to prevent the rubber seal from sticking to the blade.

To finish off, place plugs in the sink, handbasin and shower cubicle, to stop any nasty smells coming up through the plughole into the 'van.



One teaspoonful of bicarbonate of soda added to half a litre of warm water is a safe option when cleaning a motorhome

### ■ Fridge and freezer

After emptying the fridge and freezer compartments, leave the doors ajar. With the door sealed shut for extended periods, there is a risk of mould.

### ■ Roller blinds

Most of us tend to leave the blinds pulled down, to improve security. But if they are





To drain the water heater, first switch off the pump and then turn the yellow tap to the open or drain-down position



Empty the toilet flush water tank via the drain-down pipe (usually in the cassette locker), as well as the cassette itself



Leaving the fridge and freezer doors ajar will help to prevent mould from growing

kept like this for long, it can strain the spring coils. If you have curtains as well as blinds, close them instead.

## ■ Damp prevention

Damp is inevitable in winter, so install a dehumidifier or damp trap. In my first year of touring, I didn't do this, and on our return in spring, I found mould growing on my wooden spoons!

During cold snaps, I run an oil-filled radiator on a timer to keep damp at bay. This is fine if your motorhome is hooked up to a mains supply on your drive – it is important to keep an eye on it. Leaving some types of heater running is unwise.

## Outdoor tasks

### ■ Leisure battery

Leisure batteries need to be monitored throughout winter – left unattended, they will fully discharge (12.2V or below). They can be maintained by hooking the motorhome up to a 230V supply – perfect if your 'van is stored on the drive. Using mains hook-up in your garage or house means that the motorhome's built-in charger will keep the battery charged.

However, if your motorhome is kept at a storage site, mains hook-up might not be an option. One possibility is to remove the leisure battery and charge it at home.



Mould really likes to spread in sealed fridges over the winter months!



If you have curtains, close them rather than the roller blinds, to help prevent strain on spring coils

Damp traps work to draw up some of the moisture during the winter months



If you have an alarm or tracker fitted to your motorhome, the leisure battery would need to remain in the vehicle. And in this case, it might be worth considering a solar pulse charger.

However you maintain your leisure battery, it is always advisable to make regular checks that the reading does not fall below 12.2V. It can be a costly mistake to neglect a leisure battery.

### ■ Gas cylinders

Gas bottles can be left in the gas locker of your motorhome, as long as the valves are in the closed position or the regulators are disconnected.

But if the vehicle is going into storage, check the gas cylinder policy, because some facilities do not allow gas cylinders to be left on site. If you are storing any gas bottles at home, ensure that they are kept in a well-ventilated shed.

### ■ Brakes and tyres

Handbrakes sometimes seize up if left for extended periods, so chock the wheels and release the handbrake.

Tyre walls can suffer during long stints in storage, especially if they are exposed to sunlight. Over time, they can start to crack or bubble. To prevent this, move your motorhome forward or back, to take the pressure off the tyre wall.

### ■ Wash the exterior

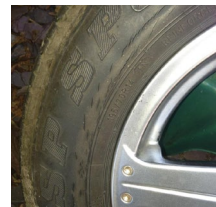
To complete your preparations for winter storage, give your motorhome a thorough wash and wax. Apart from the pleasing



Oil-filled radiators run on particularly cold days can help keep damp at bay, but they must be well monitored



Replacing a dead leisure battery can be expensive, so remove it and maintain the charge at home in your garage



Tyres that are left motionless for long periods of time can crack, particularly if they are exposed to direct sunlight

'sprucing up' effect, washing will remove any potentially damaging grit or debris from your motorhome's exterior surfaces.

The wax treatment will then offer further protection, because it forms a barrier that will keep the shine in and the dirt out.

Some companies, such as Fenwick's, sell specialist cleaning products that have been specifically formulated for vehicles that are overwintering.

### ■ Time to cover up?

Covers are not everyone's preference, and some storage facilities don't allow them. I think that they offer protection from leaf mould, sap and bird mess.

It only takes a few minutes to pull the cover on or off, but do make sure that you wash your motorhome thoroughly before covering, to avoid scratches. If you have waxed your 'van, you'll find that the cover will just glide on!

Then, when you return in the spring, your well-prepared motorhome will be all ready for your next adventure.

## Final thoughts

There are a number of jobs that need to be completed before laying-up your motorhome for the winter – making a checklist means you won't forget any.

After all of that careful preparation, the final step is to make sure that windows, doors and skylights are fully shut and (where possible) locked and, if you have them, alarms or trackers are set. You don't want to find any nasty surprises when you come back in the spring! ■



## ACCESSORIES

# TOP GADGETS FOR COLD-WEATHER TOURING

Paul Critcher picks out some brilliant winter kit



### ▲ Storm cloud weather predictor £29.99

Now here's a novelty item – the idea is that the liquid inside the storm cloud will indicate what the weather has in store for you. It's full of little crystals that freak out to match the weather. Note the cloud takes a week to acclimatise to its new surroundings before becoming fully functional.

Web [firebox.com](http://firebox.com)

### ▼ Nanopresso Elements Chill White £69.90 (+VAT)

This portable espresso machine uses a patented pumping system to deliver you fantastic coffee on the go. The hand-powered Nanopresso is capable of reaching 18 bars of pressure, so you can enjoy creamy espresso whenever and wherever you like. It comes with a case made of durable EVA material and a soft fabric interior lining.

Web [www.wacaco.com](http://www.wacaco.com)





### ▼ Kampa Diddy Fan Heater £19.99

After a day out in the cold, the last thing you want to do is wait for the 'van to heat up. Enter the Diddy, a compact yet powerful fan heater that will have you at optimum temperature within a few minutes. This lightweight unit measures 21.5cm high and has two heat settings (750W/1500W). Safety measures include a tip-over protection switch and a thermal overheat protection device. Simply plug it in and warm up!

Web [www.awnings.co.uk](http://www.awnings.co.uk)



### ► Outwell heated carpet £44.95

Delight in the warmth that this heated carpet delivers. Neatly quilted on top, the 150 x 100cm carpet simply plugs into the electrics, so you can enjoy a warm feel underfoot in your awning when the temperature drops.

Web [www.outdooraction.co.uk](http://www.outdooraction.co.uk)



### ▲ Intelliheat Heatpad £34.99

Imagine if you could control the temperature of your hot water bottle at the touch of a button. This modern alternative is a heated pad that delivers three hours of heat treatment and has five digitally controlled temperature settings. There's a fast five-minute heat-up function and it is machine washable and tumble dryer safe.

Web [www.dreamlanduk.co.uk](http://www.dreamlanduk.co.uk)



### ▼ Tweed foot warmer £49.95

We all deserve a bit of luxury, especially on tour in the depths of winter, and this tweed foot warmer is just the thing to keep your toes at optimum temperature. Made from pure wool with a snug sheepskin lining, it makes a comforting accompaniment to a cup of cocoa and a good book.

Web [www.houseofbruar.com](http://www.houseofbruar.com)



### ▲ Hanpure Bluetooth beanie £16.99

Here's a fun buy for your Secret Santa. The Hanpure Bluetooth beanie, with built-in microphone, gives you up to 10-12 hours of talk/music time and more than 200 hours of standby time. You can connect the beanie to your Bluetooth devices in seconds, and the three-button control panel makes it easy to switch the songs and control the volume as you prefer.

Web [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) ➔



## ▼ Microlite 1400 Winter Sleeping Bag £39.99

When the weather is cold outside, it's crucial that you stay warm in your motorhome overnight – and this winter sleeping bag will help you do just that. It offers excellent heat retention, a two-way zip, and is suitable for those up to 6'4" in height. Two bags can be zipped together to form a good-sized double, too.

Web [www.mountainwarehouse.com](http://www.mountainwarehouse.com)



## ▼ Fortnum and Mason Christmas Treat Hamper £100

It's not a gadget, but this is a purchase guaranteed to make you the most popular person onsite – a classic Fortnum & Mason hamper is the perfect seasonal gift for the whole family, and you can continue to use the wicker basket for picnics in summer. Season's greetings!

Web [www.fortnumandmason.com](http://www.fortnumandmason.com)



## ▲ Olight S2R Baton II £51.96

This rechargeable LED flashlight delivers a super-bright 1150 lumen output and is waterproof and impact-resistant. Great for outdoor use.

Web [www.ilightstore.uk](http://www.ilightstore.uk)



## ▲ Personalised campervan enamel mug £14.75

A wonderful gift for campervan enthusiasts that should be accompanied by a can of your favourite soup – just the thing after a wintry walk!

Web [www.notonthehighstreet.com](http://www.notonthehighstreet.com)



## ▲ Dreamland Velvety Heated Throw £52.99

There's nothing better than feeling cosy in your 'van as the pitter-patter of rain slowly wakes you. This 12V heated blanket, made from soft, slate-grey plush, is ideal for keeping you toasty warm – you'll never want to go outside! The 150W blanket has five different temperature settings, auto shut-off, and a 1.5m-long power cord.

Web [www.lakeland.co.uk](http://www.lakeland.co.uk)