



# YOUR GUIDE TO OWNING YOUR FIRST 'VAN

When you purchase a motorhome or campervan, you are buying into a fantastic new lifestyle, full of exciting adventures. But it is a big step, so here's our expert guide to ownership, to help you on your way

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First, you need to find just the right floorplan to suit your family's needs

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CUT OUT  
AND KEEP  
GUIDE!



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## ADVICE

# MOTORHOME LAYOUTS EXPLAINED

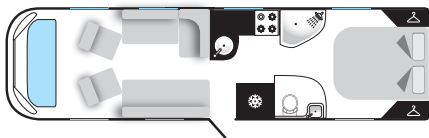
Purchasing a motorhome or campervan is a major investment, and the most effective way to begin your research is by deciding on a floorplan, says Peter Baber

**H**ere is our expert rundown of some of the most popular motorhome layouts, who they are good for and who would be better off avoiding them.

Be sure to consider all of your potential requirements – both now and in the future – before deciding which one of them is going to be the best for you!

For information on the weight of 'van you can legally drive, see p109.

### 1 Island bed, central washroom



Although fixed-bed vehicles have only been around for the past two decades or so, the rear island bed has become the staple of many low-profile and A-class ranges.

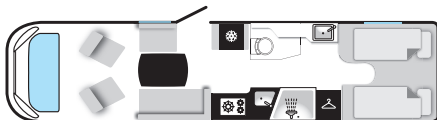
It is almost always an in-line bed (transverse island beds are popular in caravans, but motorhomes tend to be narrower, so they are much rarer here), and that can mean the resulting front lounge isn't as big as it could be.

The layout can incorporate a garage – many beds can be raised to create more storage space. Most now come with a midships washroom spread right across the 'van, although some manufacturers have resisted this in a bid to keep the central area more airy.

**+ Good for** Couples who want real luxury

**- Less good for** Large families or anyone who is looking for a roomy kitchen

### 2 Single beds, central washroom



### 1 Island bed, central washroom



This floorplan has probably become the second most popular fixed-bed layout after the island bed.

The single beds are usually (but not always) high, to allow enough room for a garage underneath. They can often be joined to form a sort-of double, usually by pulling out a central platform and

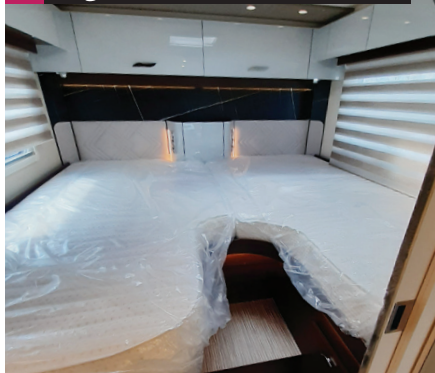
inserting an infill cushion. Overall, fixed single beds take up less room than an island bed, which is the main reason why they are much more common than island beds in van conversions.

The beds themselves are just as large and comfortable, however, and often come with more storage possibilities underneath, such as wardrobes with hanging rails that slide out.

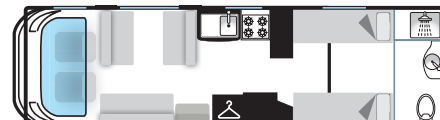
**+ Good for** Couples who want luxury but prefer to have their own sleeping space, or friends travelling together

**- Less good for** Large families or older people who might have more difficulty climbing up into a high bed

### 2 Single beds, central washroom



### 3 Single beds, end washroom



With low-level beds, this arrangement moves the washroom to the end of the motorhome. That usually leaves the central area of the interior feeling much more spacious. And as a bonus, you can even use the single beds as extra seating if it's a wet day and everyone wants to spend time inside.

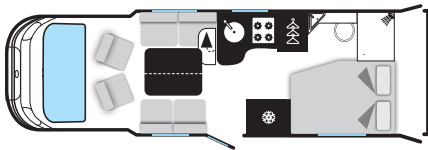
However, there isn't always any kind of partition separating off the bedroom area, and the end washroom is a fair way away at night-time for anyone who is sleeping in the front beds.

This floorplan almost always means that you don't get a garage, either, so storage capacity can be tight.

**+ Good for** People who like motorhome interiors to be airy, or want the toilet to be out of the way

**- Less good for** Anyone who values their privacy, or people travelling with children who are liable to need the toilet during the night. Possibly not ideal if you have a lot of heavy sports kit to carry

## 4 French bed, corner washroom



French beds – or double beds that are tucked into one rear corner – were once as popular as island-bed layouts, especially because they take up less room than the latter arrangement.

But some people seem to have grown tired of either having to clamber over their partner to get out of bed during the night, or being obliged to sleep on the side of the bed that is significantly shorter.

As a result, French beds are now less common, although they do still hang on in various guises.

French beds with corner washrooms, for example, are still a useful solution where the length of the 'van is the critical point,



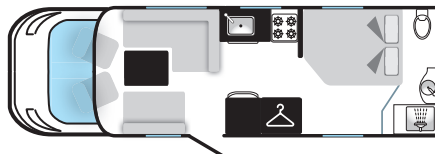
because you can have a fixed bed, as well as a washroom, in a shorter vehicle.

You also see them in 'vans designed for larger families, because they provide a bit more privacy for parents, with what is, in effect, a washroom en suite. With this layout you don't get a garage, but there is often a large space under the bed, with external access.

**+ Good for** People who want a fixed bed in a shorter motorhome, or larger families where the parents want some privacy

**- Less good for** Those seeking a luxurious washroom: the corner washrooms here are usually small, and often involve a toilet that is only accessible by going through the shower, or vice versa

## 5 French bed, end washroom



French beds are also just about hanging on with this type of layout, where the end washroom is tucked away out of sight behind the bed.

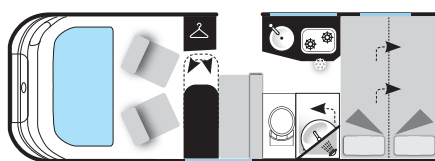
This arrangement gets over the problem of the washroom being poky, because these end washrooms are often huge. There's sometimes extra storage on the way down to the washroom door, too.

But that washroom is a very long way away from anyone sleeping at the front to be able to access at night. And again, with this layout, there's usually no garage, although storage underneath the bed is often externally accessible.

**+ Good for** People who still want the luxury of a large fixed double bed and a washroom on hand. Particularly good if there are usually just the two of you

**- Less good for** Anyone who is travelling with children who are liable to need the toilet during the night

## 6 Transverse bed



This is another layout that was once very popular, but has lost out because you have to climb over your sleeping partner to get out of bed at night.

However, transverse beds are an even better way of saving space than French beds, so they remain a favourite in van conversions, and in motorhomes designed for larger families, because with the bed neatly tucked away at the back, you can get so much more in. They leave enough

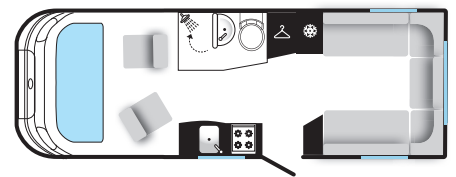
room for a garage underneath – in fact, as with island beds, they can often be raised and lowered, depending on whether you need more storage space or a lower bed. Sometimes there is even direct access to the garage from inside.

Transverse beds in coachbuilds are often a good option if you are well over 6ft tall, because these tend to be the longest beds to be found on the market.

**+ Good for** People needing a shorter 'van but still lots of living and storage space

**- Less good for** Anyone who doesn't like the idea of having to clamber over their partner to get out of bed

## 7 Rear lounge



It is a well-worn cliché – but still with a fair amount of truth in it – that 'vans with rear lounges are particularly popular among buyers in the UK.

Motorcaravanners on the Continent do like to eat and socialise outside when they are touring – thanks to the better weather that they are fortunate enough to enjoy – whereas we Brits prefer to huddle inside to escape our unpredictable climate.

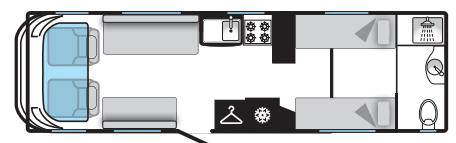
Rear lounges can indeed offer a sociable space for the family to gather together in, away from the cold. If you go for a layout with a separate front dinette as well, the kids can have their own area – or if it's just the two of you, you can leave the double bed that you make up from the rear lounge in place and then only use the dinette during the daytime.

Just remember, however, that rear lounges rarely come with a garage, and can take up what could otherwise be valuable storage in a van conversion.

**+ Good for** Bigger families, and anyone who might like to have large gatherings of guests in their motorhome

**- Less good for** Anyone who finds it a chore to have to put every bed together

## 8 End washroom



Coachbuilt motorhomes that provide a washroom at the rear which is large enough to be a dressing room have become something of a fad in recent years, led mainly by French manufacturer Chausson. These are mainly two-berth models, so they have no fixed bed, although





coachbuilt versions can also be fitted with drop-down beds to convert them into four-berths if preferred.

You get a lot of living space inside here, although because these 'vans also often have facing settees, they aren't always that practical for day-to-day driving use, unless they have fold-up travel seats, and sometimes not even then.

If there is a garage, it will be small, so while these vehicles might be great for storing food, clothes and bedding, you could struggle with larger items.

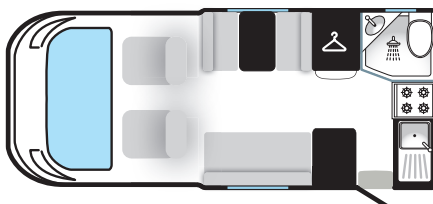


**8 End washroom**

**+ Good for** People who can't decide which clothes to leave behind at home, or really want a large washroom

**- Less good for** Those needing to take bulkier items along with them on tour

## 9 End kitchen



There are still a few motorhomes where much, if not all, of the rear area is given over to the kitchen.

This creates a much larger zone for food storage and cooking, usually well away from anywhere a bed needs to be made up, to avoid being compromised early in the morning. That is obviously all good news for the keen cook.

In coachbuilt versions, the kitchen can sometimes open up into a garage at the rear, while van conversions can have a hatchway through the doors at the back to a seating area outside.

It does mean you usually make do with a fairly poky corner washroom. As with end-washroom layouts, these are usually two-berths, although coachbuilds can include a drop-down bed. You need to check that belts and berths match.

**+ Good for** Motorhome chefs

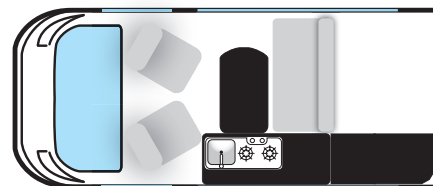
**- Less good for** Those who are looking for the luxury of a large washroom

## CAMPERVANS

Owing to their restrictions on interior space, and the kind of touring they tend to be used for – attending music festivals, or activities such as surfing and other watersports – campervans have layouts that are unique to them.

We're not just talking about 'vans with raising roofs here, but smaller fixed-roof vehicles, too. Here are the most common layouts you'll find on the forecourts.

## 10 Rear bench, side kitchen



Otherwise known as the Classic or VW style, this is the layout that pretty much all traditional campervans feature, in particular those that date back to the 1960s. In this floorplan, you get a bench slung across the back of the vehicle, sometimes providing two travel seats, sometimes three.

Often the bench can slide forwards, to make room for more luggage in the rear. It also folds out to make a double bed, usually in the rock'n'roll style, where the base folds forward and the back can be lowered flat.

All of the kitchen equipment – sink, water tanks, hob, and oven if there is one – and all of the storage, barring possibly a locker underneath the seats, is kept to one side of the interior.



## 9 End kitchen



This is certainly a classic layout, and is often found in classic campervans that still raise great prices at auction.

- + Good for** Anyone wanting to use the camper as a day-to-day vehicle as well. This is the most practical layout for that, and if the 'van comes with tinted windows, people passing by outside often don't even notice it is a campervan. So you can take it to the office, ready for that Friday getaway
- Less good for** Anyone who wants the comfort of having their own washroom in a 'van. This layout more or less precludes any washroom, and if there is a toilet at all, it is going to be a Porta Potti

## 11 Side settee



Touring in a campervan is supposed to be all about reconnecting with nature, and this layout lets you do just that, possibly more than any other.

Arrive on site, roll back the door, and you can simply sit and look out at the world, even if it is drizzling.

Side-settee layouts often come with one forward-facing seat as well, which adds to sociability and means that you can still use the camper as a day-to-day vehicle if you wish.

Sleeping arrangements are either two single beds, including one that is made up by connecting the single rear seat to the passenger cab seat, or a double made up by rolling the settee forward. There is usually plenty of room for storing luggage and kit in the back of the 'van, too.

- + Good for** Anyone who likes to arrive, sit back, relax and watch the world go by
- Less good for** Anyone who might find putting beds together rather frustrating. The arrangements here can often be tricky

## 12 End kitchen/washroom



Campers fitted with an end kitchen, or even providing the luxury of an end washroom, are becoming more common. Here, everything is usually tucked behind two forward-facing travel seats or a large bench.

The end kitchen tends to be L-shaped, and there is often a hatchway out to the rear of the vehicle, so that you can easily serve anyone sitting at a table outside.

With this arrangement, the roof usually raises at the rear to give the chef more headroom – although there is still the top rear of the base vehicle itself to contend with.

End washrooms can also often be accessed from both inside and outside the vehicle. This is particularly useful if you tour with a dog, because when you come back from walkies, Fido can be taken into the washroom to be hosed down before being allowed inside.

- + Good for** Anyone who thinks campers can still have a bit of room for luxury
- Less good for** Those who don't want to have to make up a bed each night

## 10 Rear bench, side kitchen camper



# LEADING BRANDS

# 20 TOP MOTORHOME MANUFACTURERS

You've looked at layouts, now it's time to start browsing brands – and with so many great manufacturers to choose from, our round-up is a good place to begin

If you're planning to buy a motorhome, it pays to do your research and seek out the right manufacturer. A new leisure vehicle is a significant purchase.

Fortunately, there is plenty of choice, with many excellent motorhome brands out there, so have a look online, go to a show, see the products and meet the manufacturers in person.

Here's our round-up of some of the top 'van manufacturers in the market – it's not an exhaustive list, but it will help steer you towards brands that are worth a look.

## Visit the motorhome shows

If you find the sheer number of vehicles out there bewildering, help is at hand. There are UK shows you can visit where you can view a wide variety of models from many of the manufacturers listed here, and all in one place.

The two biggest usually run at the NEC in Birmingham, with the larger show in October, when the season's new models are launched, and the smaller in February (see p72).

Two shows at Glasgow's SEC Centre take place at around the same time for buyers north of the border, although the most recent one has been postponed.

## Check out our annual awards

Our annual Owner Satisfaction Awards, run in conjunction with The Camping and Caravanning Club, provide great insight into the best manufacturers out there, as our readers – and Club members – offer feedback to give us an accurate idea of the market, as well as highlighting the best brands for the finest buying experience.

For our 2022 Owner Satisfaction Awards, we received more than 2600 completed surveys, an increase from the 2307 we

had last time and presenting us with the most insightful results to date.

We also run the *Practical Motorhome Awards* ([www.practicalmotorhome.com/awards](http://www.practicalmotorhome.com/awards)), where our expert judges use their collective decades of experience to select the standout 'vans from the top motorhome brands, across a range of categories.



## ADRIA

Drury Drive, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 1WH  
Tel 01787 888 980  
Web [www.adria.co.uk](http://www.adria.co.uk)

■ One of Europe's largest motorhome manufacturers, this Slovenian company produces everything from space-conscious van conversions to top-of-the-range A-classes. The brand is now part of the Trigano Group.

Adria was also the winner of the Best Manufacturer: New Motorhomes category at our recent Owner Satisfaction Awards, with the impressive score of 90.9% showing just how popular the brand is with customers.

As a result, it wasn't surprising to see Adria also doing very well at the *Practical Motorhome Awards* 2022, with the Adria Matrix Supreme 670 SL winning the Best Motorhome under £80,000 and Best Motorhome for Families categories. The quality interior on offer in the new-look model, combined with features such as the expanded 115-litre water tank, really impressed our judging panel.

## AUTO-SLEEPERS

Orchard Works, Willersey, nr Broadway, Worcestershire WR12 7QF

Tel 01386 853 338

Web [www.auto-sleepers.com](http://www.auto-sleepers.com)

■ This longstanding, well-regarded British brand produces van conversions, as well as low-profiles based on Peugeot and Mercedes vehicles. It is a sister company to dealer network Marquis Leisure, now also owned by Trigano.

The Owner Satisfaction Awards saw Auto-Sleepers win a gold award in the Best Manufacturer: Pre-owned Motorhome category, scoring 86.9%.

The brand had a good performance at the *Practical Motorhome Awards*, too, with our judging panel awarding the Best Motorhome under 7m category to the Auto-Sleeper Broadway EL and the Best Motorhome for Couples to the Nuevo EK.



## AUTO-TRAIL

Trigano House, Genesis Way, Europarc, Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire DN37 9TU

Tel 01472 571 000

Web [www.auto-trail.co.uk](http://www.auto-trail.co.uk)

■ A popular British brand producing van conversions, low-profiles and overcabs under the Auto-Trail and Tribute badges,





and ultimately owned by Trigano. Look out for the signature Auto-Trail umbrella you'll find provided in many models!

Auto-Trail recently achieved a gold award for Best Manufacturer: Pre-owned Motorhomes, with customers giving the brand a score of 86.3%.

The British manufacturer also impressed at the *Practical Motorhome Awards 2022*, winning the Best 2-berth Motorhome category, thanks to the Auto-Trail F68; the judges especially liked the inclusion of a huge panoramic skylight.

We also deemed the Auto-Trail Grand Frontier GF88 Best 4-berth Motorhome, with the comfortable lounge combining with features such as a generously sized dropdown bed to ensure top spot.

## BAILEY

South Liberty Lane, Bristol BS3 2SS

**Tel** 0117 966 5967

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

■ One of Britain's biggest caravan brands, Bailey only started producing motorhomes a decade ago, but already has three ranges of low-profiles. It has clearly won a strong following in this time, securing gold in the Best Manufacturer: Pre-owned Motorhome category, scoring 88.0%.

The brand also shone at our *Practical Motorhome Awards 2022*. The judging panel awarded the Best 6-berth Motorhome category to Bailey's Autograph 81-6, with a Thetford K-Series combined oven, grill and hob just one of the many features to impress us.



## BENIMAR

Willersey, nr Broadway,  
Worcestershire WR12 7QF

**Tel** 0800 026 7777

**Web** [www.marquisleisure.com](http://www.marquisleisure.com)

■ This popular Spanish brand has been reintroduced to the UK exclusively by fellow Trigano subsidiary Marquis Leisure.

It comprises three ranges – the Fiat-based Mileo and Primero, and the Ford-based Tessoro. The manufacturer won the Best Van Conversion over £50,000 category at the *Practical Motorhome Awards* with the Benimar Benivan, featuring a variety of improvements made over the past season that really caught our attention.



## BÜRSTNER

Weststrasse 33, D-77694,  
Kehl/Rhein, Germany

**Tel** 00 49 7851 850

**Web** [www.buerstner.com](http://www.buerstner.com)

■ A longstanding German brand, now part of the Erwin Hymer Group, Bürstner produces the full range of van conversions, low-profiles, A-classes and huge overcabs.

A gold award-winner in the Best Manufacturer: New Motorhomes category at the Owner Satisfaction Awards, the brand was also the recipient of the Best Motorhome for Innovation at the *Practical Motorhome Awards 2022*, thanks to the Bürstner Lyseo Gallery. We earmarked this motorhome as a potential game-changer, because it's like a "halfway house between a low-profile and an overcab".



## CARTHAGO

Carthago Ring 1, D-88326  
Aulendorf, Germany

**Tel** 00 49 07525 9200 0

**Web** [www.carthago.com/en](http://www.carthago.com/en)

■ Upmarket Carthago is one of the few German motorhome brands that is still privately owned. It produces well-built low-profiles and A-classes, while its more budget sister brand, Malibu, also does van conversions.

The motorhome manufacturer was awarded the Best A-class Motorhome at the *Practical Motorhome Awards 2022*,



with the Carthago chic c-line I 4.9 LE/L Superior. We were impressed by how much the A-class manages to fit in, with features including a really spacious lounge and a neat corner kitchen.

## CHAUSSON

CS 69003, 07302 Tournon  
sur Rhone, France

**Tel** 00 33 04 75 07 55 00

**Web** [www.chausson-motorhomes.com](http://www.chausson-motorhomes.com)

■ French brand Chausson, celebrating its 40th anniversary this season, is part of the Trigano Group. This is one of the best-selling Continental brands in the UK, with a range of highly innovative low-profiles. A silver award-winner for the Best Manufacturer: New Motorhomes category with a score of 79.7% at the Owner Satisfaction Awards, Chausson also took home the competitive Best Motorhome under 6m category at our *Practical Motorhome Awards 2022*.

A space-saving swivel partition in the washroom was just one of the features our judging panel highlighted.

## DETHLEFFS

Arist-Dethleffs Strasse 12, D-88316  
Isny im Allgäu, Germany

**Tel** 00 49 07562 9870

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

■ Dethleffs is one of the Erwin Hymer Group's more upmarket motorhome brands, producing everything from compact low-profiles to huge overcabs, with a strong focus on innovation.

The brand was also the winner of the Best Motorhome for Full-time Living category in our awards, with the Dethleffs Globetrotter XLI 7850-2 DBM.

This statement vehicle offers buyers real luxury, with neat touches such as a sideboard that can house a 32-inch TV creating a classic 'home from home' vibe.

## ERWIN HYMER GROUP UK

Delves Lane, Consett, Co Durham DH8 7PE

**Tel** 0371 964 2113

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

■ The Erwin Hymer Group bought Elddis, one of the UK's biggest brands, two years ago – around the same time that Elddis had resurrected the Compass brand in motorhomes. Since then, it has also moved into highly innovative van conversions. ➡

The Elddis Autoquest 150 took the Best Motorhome under £60,000 award in the *Practical Motorhome Awards 2022*, with the really spacious front lounge – which can be converted into a generous double bed – just one of the distinctive aspects that our judging panel picked out.

### FRANKIA

Bernecker Strasse 12, D-95509  
Marktschorgast, Germany  
**Tel** 00 49 09227 7380  
**Web** [www.frankia.com/en](http://www.frankia.com/en)



■ Owned by Pilote, Frankia produces luxurious A-classes and low-profiles, including the popular Plus models, with spacious beds that drop down over the cab. You can choose between Fiat- and Mercedes-based models.

The Best Motorhome over £80,000 category at the *Practical Motorhome Awards 2022* went to the manufacturer's Frankia I 8400 Plus Platin. The brand is particularly well known for its quality, and that's certainly provided in this motorhome, with a huge washroom and features such as the comfortable rear lounge impressing the panel of judges.

### HOBBY

Green Meadows, Bradshaw Lane,  
Greenhalgh, Lancashire PR45 3HQ  
**Tel** 01772 737 273  
**Web** [www.hobby-caravan.de/en](http://www.hobby-caravan.de/en)

■ German brand Hobby, the largest caravan manufacturer in Europe, also produces every type of motorhome except for A-classes. It has a particular focus on family-friendly vehicles.

### HYMER

Holzstrasse 19, D-88339  
Bad Waldsee, Germany  
**Tel** 00 49 7524 9990  
**Web** [www.hymer.com](http://www.hymer.com)

■ The flagship brand of the Erwin Hymer Group, Hymer produces luxurious A-classes and low-profiles that feature a distinctive exterior profile, as well as Fiat Ducato van conversions. It has just started building its own chassis, too. Hymer dominated at our recent Owner Satisfaction Awards,



securing the Best Volume Manufacturer Overall category with a score of 86.6%, as well as topping the Best Manufacturer: Pre-owned Motorhomes, with 90.1%.

### KNAUS

Helmut-Knaus-Strasse 1,  
D-94118 Jandelsbrunn, Germany  
**Tel** 00 49 8583 211  
**Web** [www.knaus.com](http://www.knaus.com)

■ Part of the huge Knaus Tabbert Group, Knaus currently has less of a presence in the UK market, but is expanding rapidly.

### LAIKA

Via Certaldese 41/A, San Casciano  
in Val di Pesa, 50026 Firenze, Italy  
**Tel** 00 39 055 80581  
**Web** [www.laika.it/en](http://www.laika.it/en)

■ A motorhome brand named after the dog that went into space? Why not? Tuscan brand Laika, part of the Erwin Hymer Group, produces A-classes and low-profiles with typical Italian flair and a great deal of attention to detail.

### MOBILVETTA

Willersey, nr Broadway,  
Worcestershire WR12 7QF  
**Tel** 0800 026 7777  
**Web** [www.marquisleisure.com](http://www.marquisleisure.com)



■ Like Spanish manufacturer Benimar, Italian motorhome brand Mobilvetta has been reintroduced into the UK exclusively by fellow Trigano Group subsidiary Marquis Leisure. As the name suggests, Mobilvetta's well-priced K Yacht Tekno Line range of A-classes offers an luxurious nautical feel.

### PILOTE

Route du Demi Boeuf, 4310  
La Limouzinière, France  
**Tel** 00 33 02 40 32 16 00  
**Web** [www.pilote-motorhome.uk](http://www.pilote-motorhome.uk)

■ French brand Pilote produces A-classes and low-profiles with a wide range of spec levels. It also manufactures the Le Voyageur range of top-class liner motorhomes.

### RAPIDO

414 Rue des Perrouins, CS 20019  
53101 Mayenne, France  
**Tel** 00 33 02 43 30 10 70  
**Web** [www.rapido-motorhome.co.uk](http://www.rapido-motorhome.co.uk)

■ Rapido produces a full range of 'vans under its own name, as well as the more budget-priced Itineo A-classes and low-profiles, and innovative campervans, branded as Dreamer in the UK.

### ROLLER-TEAM

Trigano House, Genesis Way, Europarc,  
Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire DN37 9TU  
**Tel** 01472 571 000  
**Web** [www.rollerteammotorhomes.co.uk](http://www.rollerteammotorhomes.co.uk)

■ Distributed in the UK by fellow Trigano Group subsidiary Auto-Trail, Roller-Team is an Italian motorhome manufacturer with a strong focus on family vehicles. It is also the only A-class producer to include UK-oriented cab doors.

### SWIFT

Dunswell Road, Cottingham,  
East Yorkshire HU16 4JX  
**Tel** 01482 875 740  
**Web** [www.swiftgroup.co.uk](http://www.swiftgroup.co.uk)

■ Britain's largest leisure vehicle brand, Swift has been producing motorhomes since 1985. Perhaps best known for its family-oriented Kon-Tiki range, it is an almost entirely Fiat-based manufacturer.

At the *Practical Motorhome Awards 2022*, the brand was the winner of the Best Low-profile Motorhome, with the Swift Select Compact C500. The model is a new layout, one we're convinced will prove very popular with customers.





# GUIDE TO ESSENTIAL KIT

With so much great gear to choose from, it would be easy to overload yourself with accessories – so here's our top 20 selection of touring must-haves

## 1 Camping chairs

A comfortable camping chair is worth its weight in gold on tour. These two Sunner padded camping chairs weigh in at just 3.3kg each, and come with a handy drinks holder and a useful pocket for stashing your copy of *Practical Motorhome*.

**Price** £89.99

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

## 2 Gas spanner

Spare your knuckles and unnecessary effort by investing in a good gas spanner. This heavy-duty example is well priced and should make changing gas bottles a doddle.

**Price** £6.35

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

## 3 Levelling ramps

Plastic ramps (or wedges) are a must-carry when you're on tour – place them under one or more of your wheels and you'll be able to drive up them, giving you more of a level motorhome. These are good value.

**Price** £18.95

**Web** [www.towsure.com](http://www.towsure.com)

## 4 Hook-up cable

Unless you plan to spend your entire tour off-grid, you shouldn't forget a hook-up cable to connect you to the mains. A 10m cable should do it, or to be doubly sure, you could go for a 25m one.

**Price** £22.27

**Web** [www.towsure.com](http://www.towsure.com)

## 5 Water hose

A food-grade water hose is a motorhome essential, allowing you to fill your water tank with ease. We'd recommend one with a variety of tap attachments, such as this neat product from Big White Box, guaranteeing connection wherever you're staying.

**Price** £20.99

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

## 6 Steering wheel lock

A robust steering wheel lock helps to protect your motorhome from theft, and could also lower your insurance costs. We're big fans of Milenco, and this lock should do the job well.

**Price** £59.99

**Web** [www.halfords.com](http://www.halfords.com)





## 7 Outwell Collaps Kettle

Get one of these and in a few days, you'll be wondering how you survived without it. It's collapsible, can be placed on direct heat, is dishwasher safe and, of course, makes a cracking cup of tea.

**Price** £42.95

**Web** [www.outwell.com](http://www.outwell.com)

## 8 Waste water container

If your 'van doesn't come with an inbuilt waste water tank – or if you want to easily empty the tank without needing to move your vehicle – one of these Wastemaster water containers is definitely worth considering.

**Price** £55.75

**Web** [www.towsure.com](http://www.towsure.com)

## 9 Milenco BC Lock

For a high level of protection, consider this BC Lock from Milenco, which encases and locks brake and clutch pedals, rendering them inoperative. Easy to fit, it comes recommended by the police and is Sold Secure Gold approved.

**Price** £74.43

**Web** [www.milenco.com](http://www.milenco.com)

## 10 Fire extinguisher

This 950g BC Powder 34B extinguisher is suitable for liquid and electrical equipment fires and compact enough to secure in your motorhome. Note that it is not suitable for use on deep fat fryers, and you should consider carrying a fire blanket, too.

**Price** £17.50

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

## 11 Weber Traveler Gas Barbecue

A barbecue is a wonderful enhancement to a touring holiday, and it pays to buy the best. This gas-fuelled model can be folded for easy storage, yet has a large cooking area and a low-to-high temperature range.

**Price** £465

**Web** [www.weber.com](http://www.weber.com)

## 12 First aid box

This well-stocked 220-piece first aid kit includes antiseptic towels, butterfly closures, safety pins, sticking plasters, fingertip strips, first-aid tape, eye pads and more. Enough to treat most minor injuries.

**Price** £24.99

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

## 13 Road atlas

Okay, so you probably have sat nav. But wouldn't you rather plan where you are going the night before by consulting an atlas? You can also use it to make sure your sat nav isn't sending you down narrow roads.

**Price** £14.99

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

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AA

2022

Road Atlas  
BRITAIN

NEW AND  
UPDATED

ROAD ATLAS BRITAIN

Large 2 miles to 1 inch scale  
Also features inset at  
10 miles to 1 inch

Clear route planner map

100 city, town and  
port plans

Top 200 AA-inspected  
Caravan and  
Camping sites





14



15



## 14 Aqua Kem Fluid & Rinse Concentrate Duo Pack

Keeping your toilet facilities in good condition is a key part of ensuring an enjoyable tour. That's where these useful products from Thetford come in – they prevent unpleasant odours and will keep everything just as it should be.

**Price** £15.49

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

## 15 Torch lantern

Even with an awning light and a flashlight app on your mobile, a torch that you can put down to provide light while you adjust the gas bottle or empty a locker is a godsend.

**Price** £22.99

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



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## 16 Outwell Newburg 160 Air

If you're looking for extra space on tour, an awning is a must. This particular product is an inflatable that can be used on either side of your campervan, with insect-proof mesh screens providing a very welcome touch.

**Price** £747.99

**Web** [www.outwell.com](http://www.outwell.com)



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18

## 17 Culinaire MagiCan tin opener

A tin opener is an undervalued yet essential item that is only fully appreciated when it isn't to hand. Make sure this doesn't happen to you by keeping this useful accessory in your motorhome kitchen at all times.

**Price** £6.49

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

## 18 Brunner Space melamine tableware

Melamine tableware removes any worries about having to clear up smashed crockery in the confines of your vehicle. This set from Brunner adds eye-catching colour to your touring experience and only weighs 3.28kg.

**Price** £61

**Web** [www.primaleisure.com](http://www.primaleisure.com)



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## 19 Thermal cab blinds

Many more budget-priced motorhomes do without ready-fitted blinds. So you'll need to add these to stop you being woken by the sun's early rays, or even just for a bit more privacy if there are only two of you touring and you're sleeping in the rear.

**Price** £77.14

**Web** [www.towsure.com](http://www.towsure.com)



20

## 20 The North Face Base Camp Slides III

Footwear that you can slide into is welcome on tour, ideal for just popping on when you need to go to the washrooms in the morning. This pair from The North Face provides comfort and style to create a really winning combination.

**Price** £35

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



## NEED TO KNOW...

# TAKING PETS ON TOUR

Touring is ideal for dog-lovers, offering freedom for you and your pets, and John Sootheran's tips will help ensure everyone in the family enjoys a relaxing holiday



**P**et-owning motorcaravanners will have guessed this already, but research reveals that more than 65% of people like to take their dogs away on tour with them.

It makes perfect sense... with a 'van, you have total freedom to head wherever you want, the space is your own, hundreds of sites welcome well-behaved dogs (and other creatures), you save a bundle on kennel fees and you get to share some excellent quality time with the whole family.

Dogs are great ice-breakers, too – a brilliant way to initiate conversations. We've found that these impromptu chats can often lead to acquiring very useful information from other dog-owners, particularly if we're visiting somewhere new.

They can enhance your sense of comfort and security, too, especially for solo travellers.

Here's how to make your tour an enjoyable experience for all – family, dogs, and campsite neighbours!

### Hitting the road

First, the important question of safe travel for your pet. Rule 57 of The Highway Code states: "When in a vehicle make sure dogs or other animals are suitably restrained so they cannot distract you while you are driving or injure you, or themselves, if you stop quickly. A seat belt harness, pet carrier, dog cage or dog guard are ways of restraining animals in [vehicles]."

In addition, when you're planning how much kit to pack in your 'van, bear in mind that you'll need space for your pet's gear (and food), and for a carrying crate if you choose that method.

Walk your dog before you head off on your trip, and plan to take regular breaks during the journey.

### At the campsite

Harnesses, crates and kennels can also be used when you're on site, as the pooch's spot on your pitch or in an awning, if you have one. Every dog is different, and only you know how well-behaved your hound is, but an adjustable tether and corkscrew ground anchor are great ways to ensure your pet doesn't wander away or upset other campers.

Your dog could have a basket overnight in the 'van, while harder animals might prefer a HoundHouse collapsible dog kennel, which can be 'pitched' outside the motorhome. We've had one for a decade, and it's great both at home and when on site.





## 'Dogs are really great ice-breakers, a brilliant way to initiate a chat. This can also often lead to the acquisition of very useful information from other dog-owners'

We have also invested in collapsible, silicone dog bowls (ours are from Wacky Practicals, but other brands are available), which take up less space in, say, a daypack. These high-quality products are hygienic, very easy to keep clean and colourful, too.

Awnings are useful spaces if you're touring with a dog. This can become your pet's domain, and they can eat and sleep in there. Wet and/or tinned pet foods, in particular, can be very pungent if consumed inside the 'van!

Many sites have specified dog-walking areas on the periphery of the grounds. Do your research before you arrive, to ensure the destination is the right choice for you and your pet.

Some posher campsites also offer little luxuries, including dog-showers! This might sound daft, but they're ideal if you've just taken your pet for a long, muddy walk, and your dog's going to be venturing inside your nice clean motorhome.

On this theme, we also really like the look of the microfibre dog-drying bags that are now on the

market. These absorbent 'towels' cover the dog, keep it from running off, and hold in hair, water and heat while you rub your pet dry.

For example, check out the Henry Wag Dog Drying Bag (from £18.99 at [innerwolf.co.uk](http://innerwolf.co.uk)). In fact, this website is an absolute goldmine of pet products that you didn't know you needed!

### Planning ahead

Taking a dog on tour with you does mean that you'll need to spend a bit more time planning your itinerary, to make the most of your trip. You'll also have to be very considerate of your fellow campers while you are staying at the campsite.

Remember, too, that many venues and attractions, particularly indoor ones, do not allow doggie

visitors. For example, motorcaravanning canines are not welcome inside National Trust houses, although they can usually visit land owned by the organisation.

You will also need to put together a suitable agenda for your leisure time, and be prepared to leave your dog in the 'van or on the pitch. Again, only you know if this will suit your pet, and only you can assess whether the conditions at the time allow it. In addition,

bear in mind that some campsites might charge a few extra pounds per night if you are bringing a dog with you, so you'll need to factor this in.

### Farmland etiquette

Remember that all dogs should be kept on a lead, and the more boisterous ones muzzled, if you are walking or staying on farmland, especially at lambing time. Even normally placid dogs can become overexcited when they're around farm animals, and although you know that they wouldn't do any harm, the farmer doesn't. Always better to be safe than sorry.

**1** Motorhomes and dogs make a great combination!

**2** Dogs are ideal companions on tour, particularly for solo travellers

**3** Canine friends are happy to use the shade of an awning during the hot summer months

**4** A smart drying bag can make light work of tidying your dog after a walk

**5** Rod Farrendon and his wife, keen motorcaravanners, take their beloved dog everywhere when they're away on holiday



# SPOTLIGHT ON COMMON ERRORS

Sammy Faircloth addresses some basic mistakes that are often made when touring – and simple ways to avoid them

**W**hen starting out in the world of motorhomes, a lot of new knowledge needs to be acquired and occasionally, mistakes are made. However, I like to see these as a useful learning curve. So let's take a look at some of the most common errors.

## Tyres

I have discussed the importance of tyre maintenance ([practicalmotorhome.com/advice/spotlight-on-tyre-maintenance](http://practicalmotorhome.com/advice/spotlight-on-tyre-maintenance)) and this vital area must not be missed.

The tyres are your only contact with the road and if they are not in good condition, or serviced regularly, you could end up anywhere but on the road.

Checking the condition of the tyres is often overlooked, so if your 'van has been stationary for a few months, do a visual check of the tyres (and the spare).

Are there cracks in the side wall (1)? Any bubbling? If you find signs of degradation, change the tyres.

How often do you check your tyre pressure? Check it before setting off on any journey, to ensure the vehicle is safe



and stable. Tyres must be cold before checking the pressure (2).

Incorrect tyre pressure could cause a number of problems, affecting the 'van's handling and fuel consumption, reducing the longevity of the tyre and potentially causing a tyre to fail.

## Waste and water

Some motorhomes have on-board water/waste tanks. Many people travel with the tanks full, but this can have an influence on fuel economy and more when driving. If possible, fill water tanks on arriving at your destination and empty waste before you leave (3).

How meticulous are you when storing a motorhome for the winter? Ensure that water/waste tanks are completely empty, to avoid frost damage. Water left in tanks for long will stagnate and start to smell.

When bringing a motorhome out of storage, take the time to give the pipes a good clean. It is a common mistake for people to use Milton fluid, but this can leave a nasty taste. Use products that are designed for leisure vehicles (4).



## Fridge care

When you are returning from a trip away, it is an easy mistake to make to empty the fridge of its contents and then just shut the door. However, once the fridge has been turned off, it is recommended to leave the door ajar, to help prevent the build-up of mildew or mould (5).

If you forget to do this and need to give the fridge a good clean, avoid using any household products on the interior – they can damage the lining.

Dissolve one heaped teaspoonful of bicarbonate of soda in a litre of warm water (6) for an effective cleaning solution. Alternatively, you could try Thetford Bathroom Cleaner (7).

## Power

Most of us like our home comforts when touring, including the TV and various electronic devices, so we tend to opt for hook-up when selecting a pitch.

If you do use your motorhome to go shopping or visit the local attractions,







remember to disconnect it from the hook-up. I have seen a motorhome drive off, oblivious to the fact that they were trailing the hook-up post behind them. It took a lot of waving to stop them in their tracks!

For those who prefer to go off-grid, regularly check the status of the leisure battery (8) – the last thing you want to do is discharge it completely (voltmeter reading of 12V or under).

## Toilets

Toilet cassettes can often be overlooked after returning from a holiday. There is nothing worse than going on your next trip to find that you have forgotten to empty the toilet cassette!

I deep-clean our toilet cassette every couple of months, using products such as Dometic Tank Cleaner (9). Not only does this tackle the problem of limescale, it will also freshen it up.

Following a good clean, don't forget to treat the seal with a silicone spray, which will prevent the rubber from drying out (10). In addition, doing this will also help to maintain the smooth operation of the toilet valve blades.

The flush water tank is often neglected and never emptied. This is a particular problem during the winter months because the residual water might freeze, causing damage.

Some toilet systems are fitted with a drain-down tube to aid the emptying

process (11). Alternatively, just keep flushing the water through into the toilet cassette until nothing more comes out.

## Windows and skylights

A costly mistake to make – and yet I see it happen a lot – is to leave a window or skylight open on leaving a site.

But the last thing you want is for your window or skylight to be ripped from the hinges and turned into a dangerous projectile further down the road.

If you are one of those motorcaravanners who regularly forget about closing all of the windows and skylights, you might want to consider fitting Smart-Trailer's E-Switch module (12).

One of its many really useful security functions is a warning system to alert you to an open window, skylight or door in your motorhome, communicating the alert via your smartphone. These modules are wireless and can be fitted to any type of door, window or skylight.



## Height

It can be easy to forget how tall or wide your motorhome is. Picture a family trip to a country park, with bikes loaded on the racks at the rear, only to find that you can't park up where you want to, because there is a height barrier (13).

Always keep a note of the dimensions of your motorhome to hand – you just never know when you might need them when you're out and about.

## Final thoughts

These are just a few of the most common motorcaravanning errors that I have come across on my travels, and there are many more tales of woe out there.

But don't let this put you off touring: use it as a handy reminder and perhaps share what you have learned with other touring enthusiasts, so they can avoid making the same mistakes. And always remember, accidents can happen, even to the most experienced motorcaravanners!



# LINGO JARGON BUSTER

Confused by some of the expressions used about motorhomes? We can help! Here's our guide to some of the most important terms you need to know

## ■ A-class

Often seen by many as the most luxurious type of motorhome, these models are built from a chassis cowl up. Their bespoke cab offers lots of space, but driving one can feel slightly different at first.

## ■ Grey water

Waste water from your tap or shower that is (usually) collected in an on-board tank.

## ■ GTW

### Gross train weight

The maximum weight that the vehicle and any trailer combined can be, including the loads within each.

## ■ Hardstanding

A type of campsite pitch that offers the user a solid base, rather than grass. Common materials are Tarmac or gravel.

## ■ Hook-up

Cable connection to the mains electrical supply at a campsite. Provides power to mains sockets and appliances.

## ■ Leisure battery

This 12V battery powers most of the essential kit within your motorhome's accommodation area. It's different to your base vehicle's battery.

## ■ MAW

### Maximum axle weights

As well as sticking to your vehicle MTPLM (see right), you'll need to ensure you do not exceed the weight limit of its individual axles. Check these by using a weighbridge ([www.gov.uk/find-weighbridge](http://www.gov.uk/find-weighbridge)).

## ■ MiRO

### Mass in running order

The motorhome's basic weight, with all factory-fitted equipment, when it leaves the factory. Some manufacturers include



the weight of a tank of fuel, water, a driver and more in this calculation; check with the firm to find out their exact definition.

## ■ MTPLM

### Maximum technically permissible laden mass

The maximum your motorhome must weigh; this is defined by the vehicle manufacturer. You may also see this value described as MAM (maximum authorised mass) or GVW (gross vehicle weight). For this, and other important weights, check the data plate on

## ■ Low-profile coachbuilt

A type of motorhome with a limited amount of space in the Luton (the area above the cab seats). Unlike in the overcab coachbuilt, this zone is generally reserved for storage.



## ■ Overcab coachbuilt

Overcab coachbuilds have a prominent Luton (the area over the cab), usually housing a double bed.



your motorhome: it will likely be found in the engine bay or on a cab door frame. For info on the weight of 'van you can drive, see p109.

## ■ Payload

The total weight of items you may load into your motorhome (including passengers). This figure is calculated by subtracting the MiRO from the MTPLM.

## ■ PDI

### Pre-delivery inspection

A final inspection and check of the 'van by the dealer before it is released to the buyer.