



# YOUR GUIDE TO NEW SEASON KNOW-HOW

There's so much to look forward to when the new season sees everyone back on the road again, and our expert guide will help you ensure you and your vehicle are all set for exciting adventures!

CUT OUT  
AND KEEP  
GUIDE!



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



## MASTERCLASS

# GET BACK ON THE ROAD

No matter whether your motorhome has been in storage over the winter, or you've continued touring, now is a great time to give everything a thorough once-over. Here's our handy guide



CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE



**M**any of us choose to put our motorhome into storage over the winter, but even if you've decided to carry on with your travels during the colder months, the period before the main season is a great time to check that everything is in order.

With a few simple items and some basic tools, you can make sure that your first trip out this season is memorable for all the right reasons.

We are taking for granted that your motorhome has passed its MoT and the vehicle and habitation servicing is also up-to-date. These tips are specifically for those with a 'van that has been in hibernation, or those who just want to check everything is in tip-top condition before taking to the road on their spring tours.

### Essential tools and kit

You don't need loads of tools or specialised kit – a few basic items will go a long way to ensuring your first time back on the road runs smoothly. Depending on exactly what you are planning to do, you should gather together the following:

- Warm water
- Car shampoo
- WD-40 or equivalent
- Silicone spray
- White lithium grease
- Graphite grease
- Surgical spirit
- White vinegar
- Cotton buds
- Petroleum jelly
- An old toothbrush
- Microfibre cloths
- Cotton cloths
- A nailbrush
- Some newspaper

### Check and charge the batteries

Put simply, if you don't look after your motorhome's batteries, you won't be going anywhere at all, so it is essential to keep them in good shape.

In any motorhome, almost without exception, there are two batteries. The vehicle battery starts and runs all of the



▲ It's simple to use a multimeter to check the level of charge in the battery

vehicle systems while on the road, and the required maintenance is limited.

All you can really do is check visually for bulges or physical damage, check and replenish the level of charge, and ensure the terminals are clean.

If your batteries are topped up by being on hook-up or a solar panel, that's the big headache (and the most common problem) taken care of. Use a built-in meter on the 'van or hook up a multimeter between terminals to check the state of the battery's charge.

If needed, the best way to charge a battery safely is to remove it from the 'van, but in a lot of modern vehicles, that can be quite tricky.

The next best thing is to disconnect the battery and charge it in situ. Take a look at your handbook for vehicle-specific instructions before doing anything, though, to avoid potential problems with radio codes, alarms and errant dashboard warning lights on reconnection.

When it comes to leisure batteries, charging is far simpler; not least because on most 'vans, plugging in the mains hook-up will juice up the battery without getting the spanners out.

However, if you have an older vehicle, without a multistage battery charger, a good standalone charger will charge and condition the battery. Again, you will need to disconnect the battery before you connect up the charger.

If the terminals are covered in white fluff, that is oxidation, which you will need to clean off to ensure a good connection. Disconnect the terminal (check the 'van handbook for specific instructions on this) and then use an old toothbrush to dust off the powdery white stuff. If it is a bit more persistent, a couple of squirts of a 50/50

**'The easiest check is the pressure of your tyres. A small digital pressure gauge is essential and can give change from a tenner'**

mix of vinegar and warm water will dissolve the remnants, and a bit more brushing will have it sparkling.

Once the battery has been refitted, a smear of petroleum jelly across the top will help to prevent rapid recurrence.

### Assess the tyres

It might seem as though you read an endless amount of information about tyres, and you might think you know everything about them, but quite simply, nothing on a 'van is as safety-critical and more likely to be ignored. Unless a tyre is actually flat, many owners pay them scant attention – which is a big mistake.

The easiest check is the tyre pressure. A small digital pressure gauge is a toolbox must-have and can give you change from a tenner. An analogue one is fine, too, so long as it can cope with the high pressures specified for the tyres on a motorhome.

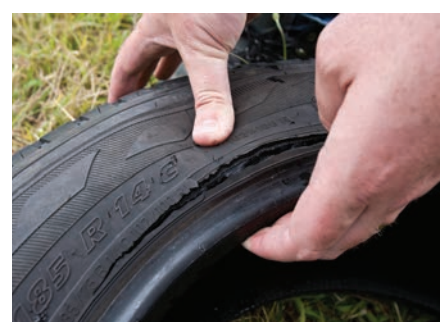
Check your handbook and ensure that your pressures are where they need to be. If any are low, top them up and then check again a few days later to see whether this needs further investigation.

Next, using an old sponge, a nailbrush and some car shampoo, give the tyres a good wash. Given the muck and grit that can be present, we'd advise keeping this mixture just for the tyres. This is less about actual cleanliness and more about giving your tyres a good inspection.

Examine the tyre walls for bulges caused by the structure failing. Look closely for ➡



▲ Oxidation on the battery terminals will need to be cleaned away to ensure that a good connection can be maintained



▲ Look for cuts in the tyre sidewall, caused by an impact of some sort, or anything that might have become stuck in the tread

signs of cracking, too. Walls can crack and this is easiest to identify at the bottom, where the tyre wall is flexed the most.

Radial cracking is harder to spot, but for this, you need to look between the tyre treads for cracks running around the radius (hence 'radial' cracking).

The other thing to look out for is cuts in the sidewall, which are caused by an impact of some sort, or anything stuck in the tread. Any of these problems will require immediate investigation by a specialist tyre workshop.

You can't do this inspection properly with the vehicle in one position, either. Drive it forward a few feet and clean the tread that was in contact with the ground. Turn the front wheels from lock to lock, too, so you can more easily inspect the inside walls for damage.

At the rear of the vehicle, there is no alternative to sliding underneath (with wheels chocked for safety) and having a good look. In this situation, your mobile phone is a bonus – it works as a torch and you can poke the camera into places your eyes can't reach to look for signs of damage.

Lastly, don't forget to check the spare tyre. Yes, it's a horrible job clambering under the motorhome or winding down a carrier to find that all is well, but if you find yourself in a situation where you need the spare, you'll be glad you checked.

Ensure that the carrier isn't red-rusty, too, and apply a little grease if it is starting to get a bit scratchy.



▲ When a vehicle is laid up for any length of time, it is not unusual for the brakes to get a bit rusty-looking and sound rough



▲ A spell on the sidelines can also cause electrical connections to become dirty

## Check the brakes

Let's be clear here. We are not advocating that you strip-service your brakes on the driveway, but ensuring things are working correctly before you hit the road is simply basic common sense.

Anything that doesn't feel quite right should always be referred to your regular workshop for further investigation.

When a vehicle is laid up, it is not that unusual for the brakes to become a little rusty-looking and sound a bit rough, so this is not a reason for panic.

Another common occurrence might be a sticky hand/parking brake. The best way to assess how things are working is to take your 'van for a short test drive.

Release the handbrake and pull away gently. You might get some hesitancy, as if it is still being applied, but typically, it will release as the vehicle moves, possibly with a gentle thump.

Reapply and release the handbrake a few times to assess whether it is working correctly. Any signs of it not releasing or applying as it should will require further investigation by the professionals.

If that all seems good, a short road-test drive should be sufficient to clean light surface rust from the brake discs and restore good function. If after a few miles of stopping and starting, the brakes are noisier than normal, or you notice there is any reduced function, you must book in at your local service centre.

Once you return, take a look at the brake disc, which should be shiny. Anything less will require specialist investigation.

## Lights, appliances, windows

Vehicle bulbs don't usually fail through lack of use, although a spell sitting on the sidelines can cause their connections to become dirty and lights not to work.

If you have road lights not responding, get out the handbook for instructions on how to inspect the bulbs. If needed, clean the contacts. If they are just a bit grubby, some WD-40 and a cotton bud will do the trick. If they are looking really encrusted, a strip of sandpaper might be needed to ensure a good connection is achieved.

Clean the crud from around vents, grilles and outlets to ensure that everything that breathes, can do so. Over the winter, in particular, leaves and debris can build up around vents, reducing performance and causing leaks or draughts.

If you have the chance, hook up the 'van and turn everything on. Investigating non-working sockets, a warm fridge or a lack of heating is a lot more comfortable on your driveway or a local site, rather than waiting to board a ferry or when you are on a remote campsite.

Next, the same trick, but with all of the gas appliances. We are assuming that you



▲ Treat window rubbers with silicone spray, otherwise they can stick when opening and might even cause the window to crack



▲▲ Follow the product instructions when using specialist formula such as Pro-Kleen, and make sure to thoroughly flush your water system through afterwards

have the gas safety checks as part of your regular vehicle servicing, but ensuring that everything works correctly between services and after a lay-up is simply good sense. Light each appliance to ensure it fires up easily, has an even blue flame and is functioning as expected. If anything seems a bit odd, call the workshop.

Open up the windows one at a time, but do so carefully. Window rubbers can stick, and forcing the window open could split the acrylic pane.

Sticky rubbers can be treated with silicone spray, squirted on a cloth and rubbed around the rubber, or if you don't have that to hand, rummage through the bathroom cupboard for talcum powder. Keeping the rubbers supple also minimises the chances of leaks. It's a good idea to do the same for locker door rubbers, too.



## 'Hook up the 'van and turn everything on. Investigating non-working sockets, a warm fridge or a lack of heating is a lot more comfortable on your driveway'

### Locks and latches

Motorhome locks are not always of the most robust quality, so a bit of care helps ensure that everything works as expected.

A dab of graphite grease introduced to the lock barrels keeps the delicate innards moving freely, without leaving sticky muck behind to snare grit and grime. This is a dry lubricant, which you squirt onto the key blade before working it in and out of the lock a few times. Doing this will help to prevent seizing, sticking and bent keys, all of which are miserable.

External locker hinges and latches often don't like being unused and when they seize, expensive door or body damage can be the result. They are not the easiest things to service, either, but there are a few things that you can do.

If they are already getting a bit stiff, a drizzle of silicone-based lubricant on the moving surfaces will free things up.

If that isn't doing much, tip hot (not boiling) water over the offending item to ease the nylon/plastic bushings and then reapply the lubricant, which should now be able to find a route in.

### Water systems

Ensuring your 'van's water system is fresh and safe is simple, and an easy DIY job. Dedicated leisure-vehicle tank cleaners, such as Puriclean or Pro-Kleen, will have instructions to detail the correct concentration. Fill the fresh tank with it, then turn on the water system.

Go to the tap furthest from the tank and turn it on until the water runs through, then cut it off. Do the same for all of the taps in the system. Leave the system primed like this for a few hours, or however long the instructions suggest. After that, run the system to drain the cleaning solution.

Fill the tank with fresh water and run it through every tap until you can no longer smell the solution. This also deodorises the grey tank. Empty that afterwards! ■

## Windows on the world



**Driving your motorhome with dirty windows is not only bad for visibility, but also distracting and tiring. It's very easy and cheap to sort out, so there's zero excuse for any grimy glass!**

**1** To get the cleanest cab glass possible, you need to clean the worst muck off the windows before you polish them.

Run up the vehicle and squirt the washers over the screen for 10 seconds or so, to push through all the fluid that has been sitting in the system pipework for months. Remember to top up the washer reservoir afterwards.

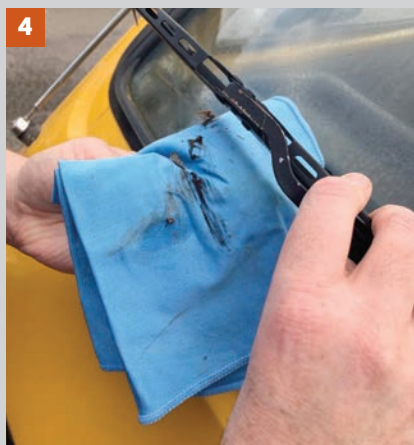


**2** Turn off the wipers and now clean the screen as normal. A good car shampoo and a sponge will get the worst off, but can dry a bit smeary. The next step is to hit the screen with a 50/50 mix of vinegar and warm water. This will cut through oily or greasy deposits, such as tree sap or soot on the glass.

We would advise avoiding household glass cleaners if possible, owing to their ammonia content, which is not good for rubbers and plastics.



**3** Make the vinegar mixture in a spray bottle, squirt it onto a clean microfiber cloth and start cleaning. Dry and polish the glass afterwards with a second, clean cloth or newspaper. Don't forget the inside, which often gets very hazy. The same mixture is great for cab windows and external mirrors, too.



**4** You also need to be really fastidious about cleaning the wiper blades. Many motorhomes spend extended periods parked up, and the blades sit against the glass. Gunge builds up along the edge of the blade and the screen, making the blades stick to the screen, blunting the nice square edge that is essential for smear-free wiping.



**5** You can buy expensive chemicals to clean wipers, but a cheap, effective solution is our favoured vinegar and water mix-up, which will cut all but the nastiest gunge.

Get a cloth, give a few long squirts of the mixture onto it, then draw the cloth along the length of the blade. Repeat until the cloth is left clean.

Ensure you dry the wipers thoroughly, to prevent vinegar being left in contact with the blades for an extended period.

## GUIDE TO...

# CLEANING YOUR MOTORHOME

Has your motorhome lost its sparkle? Sammy Faircloth examines the steps to take in creating that professional, showroom look before you hit the road this spring

**H**ave you ever taken your motorhome out of storage and it is covered in green algae, black smears, bird deposits and leaves (1)? Maybe there is a dull tone to the paintwork. This is a good time to give your motorhome a good wash and polish, ready for the touring season.

There are a number of products to choose from, Autoglym, Fenwick's, Care-avan, Muc-Off to name but a few (2). They all vary in price and performance, so it comes down to personal preference when choosing which one to buy. If you are unsure, visit one of the many national shows to help you make an informed decision, and speak to the experts.

### Step-by-step cleaning

For this article, a motorhome was brought in to Autoglym's Training Academy purely to show the different stages involved in a professional clean.

The stages below are based on using Autoglym products. Follow instructions on bottle for other manufacturers.



### Stage 1 – Preparation

We've all heard that old adage, 'it's all in the preparation' – well, it really is. Position your motorhome so that there is room to walk completely around it.

Ideally, have the front section lower than the rear (or vice versa) to allow for water to run off more easily from the roof section, by using ramps.

It is recommended to start from the top down, and by top I mean the roof section. This is where the algae and dirt are most likely to sit and where leaves will accumulate (3).

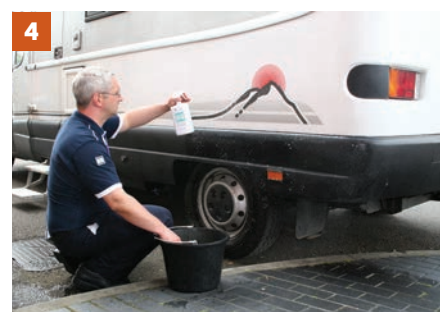
Although some motorhome manufacturers believe that it is safe to walk on the roof, I would advise against this as it does become very slippery when

wet and it is a long way to fall. Safety is paramount, so use a good, sturdy stepladder or invest in a work tower.

### Stage 2 – Clean

Wash down the entire motorhome using a hose to remove any loose items like moss, leaves and grit. The last thing you want to do is to be grinding grit into the paintwork when cleaning. Avoid using a pressure washer, unless you can control the pressure of the water. Too high a pressure will remove silicone from around areas like the TV antenna and could damage window seals, thus resulting in water ingress.

Using a motorhome or caravan cleaning product, spray on in sections and rub in using a sponge or brush (4). Do not allow





it to dry. Don't forget to open windows and skylights to reach those hidden areas (5).

Wash off with clean water and move on to another section until the whole of the motorhome has been covered.

Use a flexible silicone blade (6) to remove excess water, however, avoid using on windows. Instead use a microfibre cloth to dry windows.

Stage 3 – Polish

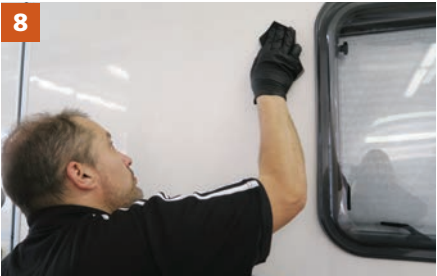
If your motorhome looks dull and lacks shine, then it will need a polish. The dullness (or bloom as it is called in the industry) is caused by the paintwork oxidising as a result of the sun's UV rays.

Polishing products have a cleaning action in them, which is used to correct the oxidation. This process only needs to be carried out once a year.

Pour a small amount of polish onto an applicator (7) and apply a thin layer to the paintwork in overlapping circles (8), trying to avoid rubber seals and textured plastics/trim. It can be used to polish out marks or scratches by increasing the pressure. Once applied, it needs to be left for 15–20 minutes, and then buffed with a Hi-Tech Finishing Cloth.

Stage 4 – Wax

The final stage is waxing. This is not the same as polishing as they achieve different results. Wax does not have a cleaning agent in it and is used purely for the



protection of paintwork and as a barrier to keep the dirt out and the shine in.

It is a similar procedure to polishing, whereby a thin layer is applied followed by a buff; however, it is recommended to leave the product for 30 minutes between applying and buffing.

A good way to see if an area has been waxed is to wet a small area. The waxed side will have beads of water running down and the non-waxed side will have what is termed as sheeting (9).

Windows and wheels

Most modern motorhome windows are acrylic (except for the cab area), a material susceptible to scratching – the tiniest piece of grit can cause a lot of damage.

On the market there are many specific window-cleaning products available that are kind to acrylic (10). Simply spray on the window and wipe off using a microfibre cloth or cotton open-weave cloth (11). Avoid using any cloths that have lint in, as this can be abrasive.

Finally, don't forget the wheels (12). A spray of Autoglym Instant Tyre Dressing (13) will give it that showstopper look!

Accessories

There are many different types of cleaning tools available in today's shops, from microfibre cloths to soft sponges (14).

The telescopic water-fed brush is great for those hard-to-reach places like the roof. The soft bristles avoid damaging the delicate paintwork and acrylic windows, and they come in various lengths (15).

In summary

Once a year, give your motorhome the full works. It may involve a lot of elbow grease and time, but it will pay dividends in the end.

Not only will your motorhome be protected from bugs, bird deposits, tar, algae and leaf rot, it will also be easier to clean the next time. In addition, it will prolong the life of the exterior and add to its resale value, too.



## TECH TIPS

# AIR-CON OPTIONS

Air conditioning is now pretty much essential for summertime touring, and now is a great time to start thinking about the right unit for the year ahead

**A**s the summer months appear to be getting hotter, and more of us are touring on the Continent (when pandemic regulations allow), life in a motorhome can sometimes feel a bit too warm for comfort.

On the hottest days, opening your 'van door when you arrive at your campsite can be rather akin to opening the oven.

Overheated motorhomes are not much fun to be inside, and sleeping comfortably in one is nigh-on impossible. You have to keep balancing the relative merits of opening the windows and rooflights (mozzie bites) or battening down the hatches (an unwelcome sauna). So this is a great time to think about your options for the year ahead, before the weather heats up.

### Selecting a suitable unit

As well as cooling the interior, air-con is great for allergy sufferers, because most units will clean and dehumidify the air. Pet owners will appreciate that they can leave their animals in comfort if they go out without them on a hot day.

The best permanent systems are made by Truma, Dometic and Sinclair, but there are portable options, too, such as the one from Cool My Camper (CMC).

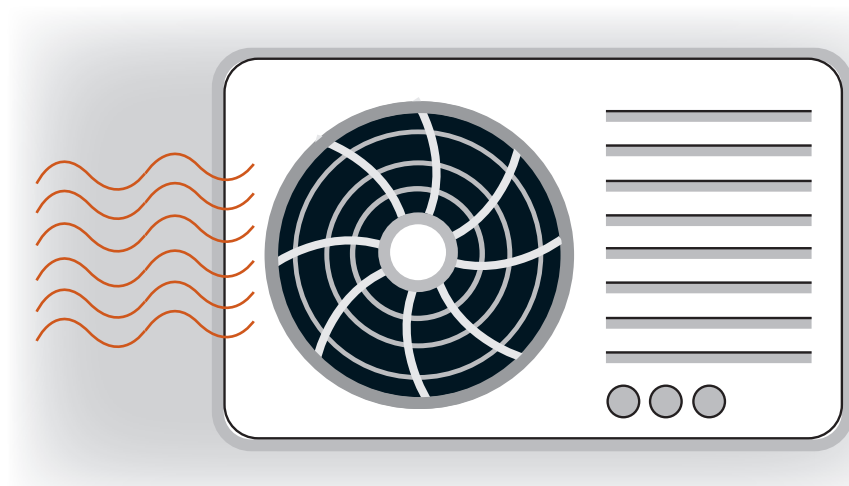
When choosing your air-con unit, the factors that you will need to consider are weight, price, power, size, and roof position and fitting.

### Weight

If you want to retain as much of your payload as possible, remember that an air conditioning unit can weigh more than 40kg. If you have a passenger on board, you could easily use up another 80kg of payload, before you even think about wine and beer! CMC's portable unit weighs just 19.4kg, minimising the impact on MTPLM.

### Price

Good air conditioning units don't come cheap. The CMC system costs £735, while



permanent units start at about £1500.

On top of that, professional installation is going to add some £200-plus to the price of the air-con unit itself.

### Power

The power of an air-con unit is measured in kW – for example, the compact CMC unit pumps out 0.7kW of cooling power. Roof-mounted systems will offer the following: Sinclair, 2.5–3.5kW; Truma, 1.7–2.4kW; Dometic, 1.7–3.2kW.

While more power equals more effective cooling, it also means more weight, cost and power consumption.

Each unit will be designated to cool a particular size of vehicle, so check online to see which is right for you.

### Size

The CMC unit is in two parts: one hangs outside the 'van, the other inside. They are connected by an arrangement of cables and tubes, which can be fed between the seals of a closed window. They are usable on almost any vehicle.

Roof-mounted air-con units must fit in between any rooflights, vents, aerials and satellite dishes that you might already have in place, so it's really important to

measure the roof space carefully!

Another type of permanent unit can be fitted in a locker or storage space, always bearing in mind safe weight distribution.

### Fitting

Roof-mounted systems require a large aperture to slot into. In some cases, they can be a replacement for a 400 x 400mm rooflight; otherwise, a hole has to be cut.

Check that the positioning won't affect existing cabling or any of the structural supports. They also need to connect to a power feed from your motorhome's electrical system.

**'As well as cooling, air conditioning is great for allergy sufferers, because most units will also dehumidify and clean the air'**





### Truma

Truma's range provides three Aventa roof-mounted systems and two Saphir units, which can be fitted under a sofa or bed. All are iNet-ready, so can be controlled remotely via an app.

These are high-quality and highly effective. In our experience, they heat just as well as they cool, and can provide a quick heating boost while the Alde warms up.

The Aventa range is light, yet it still delivers 1.7kW of fast and effective cooling. Once your target temperature has been achieved, the unit automatically maintains low-level cooling, while drawing a current of just 2.8A. The Aventa is super-quiet and has a sleep function.

The award-winning Saphir weighs in at 23.5kg, with up to 2.4kW of cooling. It is quick to install and will cool 'vans up to 6.5m in length.

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



### Dometic

Dometic's FreshJet systems are available in various sizes and outputs, suitable for campervans and 6m- or 7m-long motorhomes and caravans.

The FreshJet 1700 is ideal for smaller spaces, such as compact motorhomes. It costs £2290. Meanwhile, the mighty FreshJet 3000 is perfect for large vehicles and comes in at around £3070. In between are the 2000 and 2200 models, so one should be ideal for you.

The exterior units are aerodynamic and stylish. Inside, sleek housings are fitted with smart LED lighting. Dometic also offers the FreshLight 2200 roof unit, which has a built-in rooflight, and the highly effective FreshWell 3000. The latter is installed under a bench or bed, and provides a whopping 2.7kW output.

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



### Cool My Camper

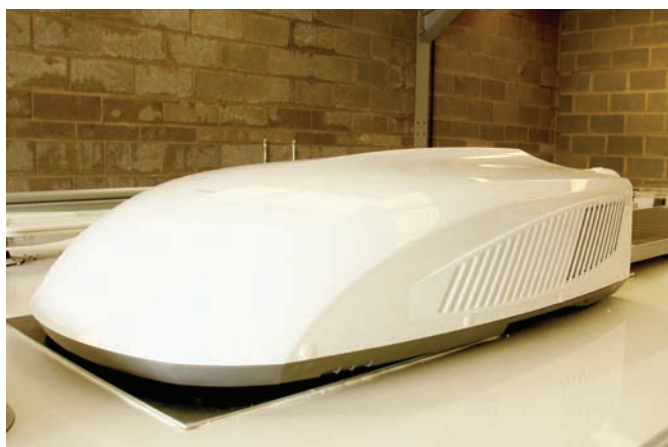
The portable CMC unit runs on 230V, drawing a relatively low current of 1.88A. It weighs in at about 22kg.

CMC offers two fan speeds and four levels of cooling, along with a handy timer. The units are thermostatically controlled, and will automatically switch over to a lower setting when the desired temperature has been achieved.

The literature says this unit will cool a space of 16m<sup>3</sup>, and online reviews seem to back this up, saying it is very effective for cooling a space before you go to sleep, but perhaps not designed to fully cool the interior of a 6m-long motorhome (approximately 24m<sup>3</sup>) in the heat of the day. However, pop it into a closed-off bedroom for an hour before bedtime, and it should cope admirably.

Users describe the unit's noise levels – 46dB at full power inside the vehicle – as being 'similar to a fan'.

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



### Sinclair

Sinclair specialises in air conditioning systems, air-to-water heat pumps and LED lighting. The company manufactures a range of high-quality, roof-mounted air conditioning units specifically designed for use in leisure vehicles.

These stylish and substantial systems can also be controlled via Wi-Fi and are built to cool motorhomes and caravans that measure up to 10m in length – in temperatures up to 43°C.

The Sinclair ASV35AS air conditioner weighs in at a whopping 42.5kg and provides 3.5kW of cooling capacity. It's a serious piece of kit, with what the company describes as 'soft-start technology'.

This means that the unit will happily run on 6A current or DC battery power. It also comes with a handy remote control, LED lighting and a timer, and retails for around £2300. This would obviously be a significant investment, but one that will provide excellent service.

**Web** [www.sinclair-world.com](http://www.sinclair-world.com)

# GUIDE TO... ESSENTIAL NEW KIT

Fancy treating yourself to some new kit, ready for the new season? Here are some of our favourite, award-winning gadgets and accessories

**T**here's a whole host of motorhome accessories available out there, so it can be hard to know exactly what you should be looking for.

But if you're keen to upgrade or update your kit for the new season, we can help – here's a selection of products that made it onto the shortlist for the Best Motorhome Gadget category in our recent Awards ([practicalmotorhome.com/awards](http://practicalmotorhome.com/awards)).

## Milenco BC lock

There's no question that motorhome security is increasingly important – they are expensive vehicles and vulnerable if not protected properly. Fortunately, there are companies like Milenco out there, building top-quality security products.

All the judges were impressed by the robust build quality and design of the BC lock, which encases and locks the brake and clutch pedals, rendering them inoperative. This is the only pedal-locking device on the market that is both Sold Secure Gold approved (the highest security rating) and recommended by the police.

**Price** £79.99

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

## Ember travel mug

If you like your hot drinks hot, this travel mug allows you to set the drinking temperature, then maintains it for three hours. The mug is also easy to clean, safe to handwash and submersible up to one metre in water. The leak-proof lid is dishwasher safe.

**Price** £179.95

**Web** [uk.ember.com](http://uk.ember.com)





**iTrack Mini GPS Tracker**

This nifty little device monitors the position of your vehicle and sends Google Map reports via SMS or tracks live on the free app. Suitable for monitoring your vehicle, bike, or any other asset you want to track.

**Price** £45  
**Web** [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)



**Cadac Grillo Chef 2**

This smart barbecue set has a power burner with finely adjustable temperature control, and comes with a ceramic-coated grid, solid pot stand and storage bag. The automatic piezo ignition means lighting the barbecue couldn't be easier.

**Price** £155 (with membership card)  
**Web** [www.gooutdoors.co.uk](http://www.gooutdoors.co.uk)



**Garmin eTrex 22X GPS unit**

The Garmin eTrex 22X handheld GPS unit has a clear, sunlight-readable 2.2-inch colour screen. It's preloaded with TopoActive Europe maps with routable roads and trails for cycling and hiking. An excellent tool to help with navigation.

**Price** £173  
**Web** [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)



**Milenco Security Handrail**

This robust, large handrail has a unique twin-locking design for ultimate security. In the open position, it offers a sturdy grab handle to help you in and out of your 'van. High-security locks provide countermeasures against bump keys.

**Price** £76.40  
**Web** [www.milenco.com](http://www.milenco.com)



**Defender plug-in TV**

This clever little device plugs into a mains socket to emit LED lights that look as though the TV is on in your motorhome when you are out.

**Price** £17.99  
**Web** [www.redlinesecurity.co.uk](http://www.redlinesecurity.co.uk)



**MP-Innovent Slip-Stop**

If you need to reach your motorhome's roof, Slip-Stop is definitely worth a look – it secures your ladder to the side of the motorhome, and you to the ladder, using lanyards, meaning that you'll be kept safe in the event of any slip or fall.

**Price** £70  
**Web** [mp-innovent.co.uk](http://mp-innovent.co.uk)



**Find out more**

For latest, best prices on all of these products, and links to help you buy, see our special guide at [www.practicalmotorhome.com/best\\_gadget\\_2022](http://www.practicalmotorhome.com/best_gadget_2022)



## INSPIRATION

# GO SOMEWHERE NEW IN 2022

Want to try somewhere different this year? Why not give a road trip a go? There are some fantastic driving routes around the UK that are a great starting point

CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE



If you're planning to hit the road for a long drive in search of spectacular scenery, you could do worse than the UK. While we might not have the distances of the US, with its iconic Route 66, there's plenty to enjoy – from Scotland's North Coast 500 to England's A272. Here are just a few classic routes to explore.

### North Coast 500, Scotland

For many, this is the UK's ultimate road trip. Following the north coast of Scotland, it begins and ends at Inverness Castle, and brings together just over 500 miles of stunning scenery. The NC500 follows main roads along the coastal edges of the North Highlands of Scotland, taking in the regions of Wester Ross, Sutherland, Caithness, Easter Ross, the Black Isle and Inverness-shire.

Visit Dunnet Head, the most northerly point in mainland Britain, or go dolphin watching in the Moray Firth. Try kayaking in the River Findhorn or take a break from the driving and enjoy a dram at one of the many distilleries. Whether you're looking for adventure, history, wildlife or food and drink, there's an itinerary to suit you.

Find out more about the NC500 at [practicalmotorhome.com/motorhome-travel-guides/north-coast-500](http://practicalmotorhome.com/motorhome-travel-guides/north-coast-500).

**Top touring sites** Barns Highland ([www.barnshighland.com](http://www.barnshighland.com)), Scourie Caravan and Camping Site ([scouriecampsitesutherland.com](http://scouriecampsitesutherland.com)), John O'Groats Caravan and Camping ([www.johnogroatscampsite.co.uk](http://www.johnogroatscampsite.co.uk))

### The A66 in the Lakes, England

In the heart of the Lake District between Bassenthwaite and Keswick, the A66 is superbly positioned to place you in some of England's finest, most dramatic countryside. Take your pick from Derwentwater, Bassenthwaite or Ullswater; the route skirts them all. If you follow it far enough west, it will bring you to the coast at Workington (go far enough east and you'll end up in Middlesbrough).

It's one of the north of England's major routes, with access to significant tourist attractions, as well as the Lakes, and puts

you in the vicinity of Hadrian's Wall and many glorious walking routes in the area.

**Top touring sites** Troutbeck Head CAMC Site ([caravanclub.co.uk](http://caravanclub.co.uk)), Derwentwater C&CC Site ([campingandcaravanning.club.co.uk](http://campingandcaravanning.club.co.uk)), Burns Farm Caravan and Campsite ([burns-farm.co.uk](http://burns-farm.co.uk))

### Causeway Coastal Route, Northern Ireland

Stretching from Derry/Londonderry to Belfast and taking in the Giant's Causeway and the nine Glens of Antrim, this magical route is a scene of beautiful countryside and an almost mystical land and seascape.

Explore Carrickfergus Castle before taking on the cliff-face pathway at The Gobbins. At Torr Head, you'll enjoy views of wonderful Rathlin Island and then, of course, there's The Dark Hedges, used to such great effect in *Game of Thrones* as the Kingsroad in Westeros.

Top of the bill is the Giant's Causeway, a UNESCO World Heritage Site comprising 40,000 basalt columns – and almost as many myths and legends. A geological wonder and a place to inspire awe.

**Top touring sites** Ballyness Caravan Park ([ballynesscaravanpark.com](http://ballynesscaravanpark.com)), Highview Holiday Park ([highviewholidaypark.co.uk](http://highviewholidaypark.co.uk)), Juniper Hill Holiday Park ([causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/see-do/caravan-parks/juniper-hill-caravan-park](http://causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/see-do/caravan-parks/juniper-hill-caravan-park))

### The A272, southern England

An east-west tour along the A272, from the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the western edge of the South Downs National Park, takes in beauty spots and interesting places to visit.

Starting at Five Ashes, near Mayfield in East Sussex, the road passes through Hadlow Down, a village sitting atop one of the ridges that make up the High Weald, with lovely views to the north and south. The village is known for its annual steam traction engine rally, held in May.

The road passes through the villages of Buxted, where the first cannon was made

## 'The road passes through the village of Buxted, where the first cannon was made in the 16th century'

in the 16th century, and Maresfield, which sits on the edge of the Ashdown Forest.

Heading west, the road reaches the pretty village of Newick, which like many of the villages in the vicinity, has a bonfire society that takes part in the annual Bonfire Night torchlit procession through nearby Lewes.

The county town of East Sussex, medieval Lewes is worth the 20-minute diversion. Highlights include a Norman castle, Anne of Cleves' townhouse and the ruins of a Cluniac priory. Best explored on foot, the town's steep narrow streets will be hard to navigate in a large vehicle.

North of Newick, off the A275, is the National Trust's Sheffield Park and Garden and the Bluebell Railway.

**Top touring sites** Sumners Ponds Fishery & Campsite ([sumnersponds.co.uk](http://sumnersponds.co.uk)), Blacklands Farm Caravan & Camping ([blacklandsfarm.co.uk](http://blacklandsfarm.co.uk)), Graffham C&CC Site ([campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk](http://campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk))

### The Coastal Way, Wales

Weaving between oceans and mountains, the 180-mile Coastal Way runs the entire length of Cardigan Bay. Highlights include the Italianate

village of Portmeirion, created by Sir Clough Williams-Ellis and famous as the location for cult 1960s TV series *The Prisoner*. Take in a visit to Bardsey Island, with its population of seals, or enjoy a spot of coasteering at The Blue Lagoon, not far from Abereddi, a former slate quarry that is now filled with sea water and a very popular spot for a range of watersports.

**Top touring sites** Cambrian Coast Caravan Park ([www.cambriancoast.wales](http://www.cambriancoast.wales)), Morfa Farm Caravan Park ([morfafarm.co.uk/en](http://morfafarm.co.uk/en)), Cardigan Camping and Caravan Site ([cardigancaravansite.co.uk](http://cardigancaravansite.co.uk))





## TRAVEL

# ENJOY A SPRING STROLL

Start the new season by blowing away the cobwebs with a walk in the glorious spring sunshine – here are 10 of our favourites

### 1 Walking on water

Stay just north of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, at Alderstead Heath, for a wealth of good walking.

There are plenty of walks from the site itself across the North Downs, or you can head further into the AONB.

The National Trust walk around Box Hill, for example, presents stunning views of the surrounding Surrey Hills.

Follow the River Mole and you'll come across the Stepping Stones. This is a great photo opportunity and a convenient spot to stop and admire the calm flowing water framed by elegant trees.

At the end of the trail, you'll pass by Box Hill Fort, which dates back to 1892 and now houses a colony of bats.

**Stay at** Alderstead Heath Caravan and Motorhome Club Site ([caravanclub.co.uk](http://caravanclub.co.uk))

### 2 Find the fairy glen

Among the many beauties to be enjoyed in the Yorkshire Dales National Park is a hidden gem, Malham Tarn. Aside from the glacial lake and rolling meadows, there is a great walk up through woodland following

Garsdale Beck to the enchanting waterfall, known as Janet's Foss, which is claimed to be the home of Janet, Queen of the Fairies. The secret cave behind the falls is magical.

**Stay at** nearby Knight Stainforth Hall ([knightstainforth.co.uk](http://knightstainforth.co.uk)), a 45-acre estate that dates back to Norman times

### 3 Poetry among the trees

The awe-inspiring beauty of the Lake District has long been a popular spot for getaways. Escape the commercial sites and crowds to stay at peaceful Lanefoot Farm and make the most of your break.

Hidden among the beautiful woodland of nearby Whinlatter Forest Park, the Words in the Woods trail is absolutely perfect for a gentle stroll.

Keep your eyes peeled for the poetic quotations about trees that have been carved into the waymarked posts.

**Stay at** Lanefoot Farm Campsite ([stayinthornthwaite.co.uk/camping](http://stayinthornthwaite.co.uk/camping))

### 4 Keep your head in the clouds

While away a relaxing afternoon with a stroll on the beautiful beach at Anderby

Creek, on the Lincolnshire coast near Sutton on Sea. This unspoilt stretch of sand is a real treasure, as is the Cloud Bar that artist Michael Trainor has installed. This observation platform has seats from which to watch the clouds, and a 'cloud menu', so that you can learn about the different formations up above.

**Stay at** adults-only Cherry Tree Touring Park ([springsholidayestates.co.uk/cherry-tree-springs-touring-park](http://springsholidayestates.co.uk/cherry-tree-springs-touring-park))

### 5 Lake District wanderings

There are of course, numerous gorgeous locations to explore throughout the beautiful Lake District, and many of these wonderful locations are at their very best during the spring months.

For starters, try the trail from Ashness Bridge to Watendlath – it's just perfect on a sunny early-season day.

**Stay at** Borrowdale Caravan and Motorhome Club Site ([caravanclub.co.uk](http://caravanclub.co.uk)), which is open to both members and non-members, for unfettered access to some of the most beautiful walking routes to enjoy in the area





CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE

### 6 Legends of gallantry

Channel tales of damsels in distress and valiant knights in shining armour at the enchanting remains of Tintagel Castle.

Teetering on the clifftops, this medieval stronghold, rumoured to be the birthplace of King Arthur, is evocative of all the myth and legend that enshrouds him.

It might be a blustery walk to get there, but you really can't beat the atmosphere. If you're visiting at low tide, be sure to descend the cliffs to see Merlin's Cave.

**Stay at** Headland Caravan Park ([headlandcaravanpark.co.uk](http://headlandcaravanpark.co.uk)) is less than a mile from the castle, so you can visit as often as you like, or strike out along the trails of the South West Coast Path

### 7 Downstairs dalliance

Follow the story of a real-life romance at Erddig Hall, the historic home of the Yorke family. The love story between two of the servants at the house in the early 20th century can be traced through the grounds of the great estate, taking in the dovecote, the coachman's cottage, the monkey-puzzle tree and the Black Brook.

These gorgeous grounds are perfect for exploring on a bright spring day, but if it's raining, it's no problem – just head inside to discover the fabulous house.

**Stay at** Plassey Holiday Park ([plassey.com/holiday-park](http://plassey.com/holiday-park)) for pristine facilities that are just a 10-minute drive from Erddig Hall

### 8 Seaside strolls

Botany Bay's flat, golden sand is spiked with tall chalk stacks to create a stunning destination for a beach walk.

As the white cliffs tower above you, don't forget to keep an eye out for fossils, or you could dabble in the rock pools.

The tearooms and shops of the fine old seaside resort of Margate are just along the coast to the west, so that you can warm up with a cuppa afterwards.

**Stay at** nearby Nethercourt Touring Park ([nethercourt.com](http://nethercourt.com)), which is just a mile from more beaches and makes a great base for exploring this corner of Kent

### 9 Romance in the ravine

The spectacular Falls of Bruar are well worth the hike through the dramatic

gorge. Rest up at the picnic spot as the roar of water surrounds you and watch the falls as they drop down through the awe-inspiring ravine.

This glorious walk is less than two miles from Blair Atholl, where you can pitch up at Blair Castle Caravan Park.

The campsite, set in the grounds of historic Blair Castle, also has stunning views of the surrounding Cairngorms.

**Stay at** Blair Castle Caravan Park ([blair-castle.co.uk/caravan-estate](http://blair-castle.co.uk/caravan-estate)) for spotless facilities and superb vistas

### 10 Ancient oaks

The 12 lakes at Cosgrove Park provide some charming on-site walks, but head further afield for uninterrupted peace.

Walk among the trees of ancient Salcey Forest and you'll come across the fallen Church Path Oak, just one of the forest's 'druid' oaks, thought to be 400 years old when it fell 12 years ago. Follow the trail past the elephant pond (where circus elephants bathed) to the treetop way for a bird's eye view of the forest.

**Stay at** Cosgrove Park ([cosgrovepark.co.uk](http://cosgrovepark.co.uk))



# ADVICE OUR TOP TIPS

Advice from the *PM* team about getting back on the road this spring

## Keep it local

Instead of beginning the new season with a big trip, I prefer to start small and local, with a weekend nearby. This gives you the chance to iron out any problems with your vehicle while you enjoy exploring closer to home. Sometimes we can miss what's right on our doorstep.

**Deputy editor Paul Critcher**

## Pack it in

Forget suitcases and holdalls, those big blue bags from Ikea (1) are the best way to transport your clothes and accoutrements to the motorhome, and to store things in underbed and underseat lockers.

We pack one each for our holidays, and we never run out of clothes. They're huge, lightweight, durable, easy to get into, and cheap. They also squish down a bit, so are simple to store in tight spaces.

**Contributor John Sootheran**



## Extend your space

If you find your 'van a bit on the compact side, consider an awning (2)! This is a great way of gaining some valuable space when you're on tour. If you're not sure how to select the right one for you, check out our best awnings guide, on our website.

**Content editor Peter Byrne**

## Focus on your hobbies

Instead of planning what to do on a trip based around where I have decided to go, I like to pick a location that matches my passion for cycling (3). This way I get to visit areas that I might not otherwise think of going, usually heading back with my family having seen that there's so much more to do there



than just riding my bike. But I use cycling as the catalyst to explore new regions in the first place.

**Contributor Marcus Leach**

## Slim down

Go on a diet – not you personally, but the 'van! We all keep adding stuff, but rarely take anything out. Lay out a groundsheet and empty the vehicle's contents on to it. With the exception of essentials such as the first-aid kit, only put back what you've actually used in the past year.

**Contributor Gentleman Jack**

## Set a budget

When buying a vehicle, set a budget



you can afford, which should include extras, such as an awning. And look for a layout that will suit your needs – for example, if you plan to use site facilities, a large washroom won't be a priority.

**Contributor Andrew Jenkinson**

## Think feet

Choose appropriate footwear! If you're visiting somewhere new and love the idea of a day spent exploring, make sure you take the right type of footwear (4) with you. After all, nothing ruins a walk quite so comprehensively as wet and cold feet.

**Content editor Peter Byrne**

