



YOUR GUIDE TO AWNINGS

Set up an awning and you instantly increase your living, sleeping and storage space. Here's how to find the ideal model for your needs

68

Selecting an awning

Everything you need to know before investing in an awning

71

Awning jargon-buster

Get to know the terminology!

72

Awning manufacturers

A round-up of some of the top brands in this specialist sector

75

Award winners

Our selection of some of the top awnings on the market

76

Awning care

Look after your awning and it will serve you well for years

78

Make a basic awning

On a tight budget? Try this low-cost DIY alternative

80

Awning accessories

Time to choose some brilliant kit to enhance your awning!

82

Put up a driveaway

It's easy when you follow our step-by-step guide



Also available as a FREE ebook
see www.practicalmotorhome.com/know-how to download yours!

BUYING ADVICE

ALL ABOUT AWNINGS

An awning will give you valuable extra living space, but there are a few things you need to consider before you splash out

1 Think about the design before you buy – do you want lots of windows, or more privacy?

2 Bear in mind that the awning has to be carried and stored



One of the main attractions of the motorhome lifestyle is the ability it offers you to go anywhere, whenever you like. However, many people find that they need a bit more room for convenient motorhome living, for accommodation and storage or for practical activities during the daytime – particularly if the vehicle that they own is a small campervan.

That's why awnings are so popular. Put simply, awnings are fabric structures that attach to, or sit beside, your 'van, delivering additional usable space to suit your requirements.

Motorhome awnings are available in a variety of styles. First there's the canopy – the wind-out unit that is permanently attached to the side of your 'van at roof level. You might already have one of these fitted, or have seen them in use on campsites. They act more like a sunshade than a full awning.

Then there's the driveaway awning. These are tent-like units that can be attached to the side of your vehicle, but can also be left freestanding.



They do indeed allow you to drive away, leaving the awning in place, and are a very good way of both expanding your living space and reserving your pitch when you travel to visit a nearby attraction.

Alternatively, you could set up a front-and-sides arrangement for a canopy, which is usually referred to as a safari room. These are fine if you are staying in one place for a good while, but can involve a fair bit of time to take down if you are frequently moving on.

How air awnings work

Given the time it takes to put them up and pack them away, a driveaway awning might not be at the top of a motorcaravanner's shopping list – especially for those who like to keep on the move while on tour. And let's face it, the image of awnings has never been well served by the wag who once memorably described them as 'a divorce in a bag'.

But that quip looks increasingly irrelevant these days. A new wave of inflatable driveaway awnings



attached to the motorhome by guy ropes over the roof – a common solution for campervans. Then all that's required is to inflate the awning using the supplied pump and peg it down securely once it is in position. It really is a simple process and one that's just as easy to follow in reverse (for more details about setting up a driveway awning, see p82). You'll be back on the road in no time.



Size and price matter

Whichever type of awning that you choose, you'll need to make sure it offers enough space for your needs. Porch-style driveway awnings might be as small as one to two metres wide – simply providing an 'airlock' to stop the weather getting straight into your vehicle when the door is open, and a handy boot room – or as large as several metres of flexible space, for

living, dining, storage or sleeping purposes. Costwise, new awnings can vary in price from £300 to more than £2000, and of course, you very much get what you pay for.

As with most products, cheap imports are also available, although for longevity, and build and materials quality, we would avoid them and go for something at least in the mid-market price range.

That would involve a minimum investment of £400 to £700. This will get you a high-quality product from a well-established brand.

Products to suit all budgets

If your budget isn't going to stretch that far, however, you could consider seeking out a secondhand awning from a recognised brand, on selling sites such as eBay or Gumtree. Time your purchase carefully and you'll find that there are some amazing bargains to be had – but only buy from trusted sellers who are supported by good levels of positive feedback.

Air or pole?

We've already outlined the many benefits of air awnings, but a quality pole awning still has its place.

Nothing looks quite as good as a properly erected pole awning, and they can withstand the very severe weather that might result in an air awning buckling or flexing. And even the best air awning might need a top-up of air from time to time.

Finally, pole awnings are available with composite/ carbon fibre poles, which are strong and light, and will help to mitigate some of the weight disadvantage. ➔



3 Inflating an air awning is a simple, speedy procedure

4 The pump usually supplied with an air awning makes set-up easier

5 Window panels make the awning light and airy, while curtains add privacy

6 Choose a smaller awning if you just need an airlock and boot room

CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE



Choosing an awning

Your eventual choice of awning for your motorhome is going to depend mainly on the following factors:

Size

How much additional space do you need? Bigger isn't always better, especially when you consider that the awning has to be transported, carried, unpacked, erected and stored.

In fact, our advice would always be to purchase the smallest awning you can comfortably get away with to do the job. The largest awnings can weigh 40kg or more, while a perfectly usable one can weigh less than half of that.

Matching your vehicle

If you choose a driveaway awning, buy a size that works with the dimensions of your motorhome or camper and the position of its doors and windows.

Preferably, you don't want the awning side cutting across a window and preventing it from being opened. Likewise, you don't want ancillaries (heating, fridge and so on) venting into the awning (ideally, pick a 'van with the heating, fridge and oven opposite the door).

Many awnings are also available in different heights – you'll need to work out the correct one for you, using the fixing point on the vehicle. Check the specific product for details.



Brand and materials

There are cheap imported awnings available, but we would advise choosing one from a reputable brand with a good history in the market, and a company that is contactable in case of problems.

Awning materials vary widely in terms of strength, water resistance, cost, opacity, longevity and looks. The materials used make the single biggest difference, and this will generally be reflected in their price.

Brands such as TenCate specialise in manufacturing awning materials. Polyester and polyvinyl alcohol coatings are considered the best, with a single-coated material ideal for awning walls, and a double-coated fabric more suitable for roofs.

Figures quoted in millimetres refer to the material's hydrostatic head, assessing how waterproof it is. Look for at least 3000–5000mm; the higher the figure, the better (for more on materials, see the opposite page).

Design

Beyond the space that your awning offers, would you prefer lots of window panels, and therefore a light and airy interior, or do you want more privacy?

Would you like to have a front roof extension, which you can stand under to take off your boots in the rain, and how about adding bedroom extensions?

The quality of the awning's zips, Velcro fixings, guy ropes/storm straps and so on is another key element. For example, some awnings offer fluorescent and luminous guy ropes to help prevent falls in the dark. All of these things will need to be considered.



7 Add an awning and you immediately increase your living and storage space

8, 9 Canopies provide welcome shade in sunny weather, for any size of motorhome

MATERIALS

AWNING ESSENTIALS

Some of the terminology used in this specialist sector can be a bit daunting, but here's what you really need to know before you buy

The fabric of the matter

Nowadays most awnings are made of synthetics. This isn't just a cost issue. Polyester is ideally suited to the unreliable British climate, because it is hardwearing. The only time you should really consider an awning in any other fabric is if you are going to be spending most of your touring time in hotter climes. Then you might opt for cotton (usually some form of 'technical' or specialised cotton) as it is more breathable.

That said, artificial fabrics can vary enormously in quality. You will come across all sorts of initials used to describe your awning's fabric. The main two to look out for, however, are D and T.

As anyone who wears tights has probably already guessed, D stands for denier. That's a measure of the thickness of the individual thread, so a higher D number will be more durable – but probably also heavier. Ideally, look for a D of at least 150.

T means thread count, or the number of horizontal and vertical threads per square inch. A high thread count doesn't necessarily mean the fabric is better quality, however, because the manufacturer might be using a thinner thread.

Nick Roberts, brand manager for Khyam, says, "The use of thread count instead of denier can give the impression a product with a high thread count but low denier is higher quality than it is."

Ideally you should consider the T and D counts together. And then there is the hydrostatic head (HH) to consider. That sounds rather scientific, but all it signifies is how deep a column of water pressed against the fabric needs to be before that water starts seeping through. For large awnings you should really aim for an HH of at least 5000mm. If the HH isn't easily located in the manufacturer's blurb, there's a chance that it isn't terribly high and the company is trying to use other factors (usually involving the price) to tempt you.

Framing it

With the huge growth in inflatable awnings in recent years, you might think the arguments over which type of awning to go for – poled or air – have been won. Even more so these days, when many higher-quality air awnings provide single-point inflation.



But in fact, such 'benefits' can have drawbacks. Single-point inflation awnings can take quite a while to deflate. That's why some firms now offer single-point inflation with multiple-point deflation.

A single body of air can also be a problem if you ever have to repair one of the awning tubes. So some manufacturers now allow you to seal off parts of the structure for such repairs, while others instead provide individual pods which you pump up and then fit together, so you only have to remove one pod to repair it.

Driveaway or fixed

The market has moved more towards driveaways, rather than fixed awnings, mainly because they give you a base on site to which you can return. But you do still have to understand how to attach and detach the awning. According to Clive Garrett from Oase Outdoors, this is "one of the most misunderstood areas we come across". In many cases, you need a driveaway kit to manage the attachment. You also need to make sure the keder (the fabric-covered cable at the edge of your awning or driveaway kit) fits the awning rail on your vehicle. Some more expensive awnings come with double keders in different sizes. Some awnings, particularly those for campers, will still require you to secure the awning with guy ropes over the vehicle.



1 You'll need to understand how to attach and detach the awning...

2 ... and consider single- versus multiple-point inflation if you go for an air awning

BRANDS

MEET THE MANUFACTURERS

When you shop for an awning, you'll find a huge selection of brands to choose from. Here are some of the big names to look out for

Awnings are perhaps more of an essential for caravans than for motorhomes. After all, motorcaravanning is supposed to be about getting up and going, and to some people, having to put up and take down an often bulky canvas construction might get in the way of that ideal.

But there are plenty of great awnings out there that are suitable for motorhomes and campervans – awnings that you simply roll out from the side of your vehicle and those you put up yourselves.

Driveaway awnings in particular – which stand on their own once you detach them from your vehicle – can prove useful as a means of staking out your pitch if you mean to drive off from a busy site for the day but plan to return in the evening.

There are so many, in fact, that getting to know the different brands can be confusing. Allow us to guide you through them.

Bradcot

Bradcot focuses mainly on producing caravan awnings but it does do a motorhome version of its flexible Modul-Air awning, designed primarily for coachbuilt motorhomes. This robust structure is made from highly waterproof TenCate fabric.

Web bradcot-awnings.co.uk

Camptech

Camptech is unusual among awning manufacturers in actually being owned by the factory that makes the awnings. Aimed at the more budget end of the market, it includes the MotoAir Monarch driveaway awning and Starline porch awning among its ranges.

Web camptech.com



1 Camptech's Starline inflatable porch awning is available in three sizes

Coleman

As with Dometic (*see below*), Coleman is well known for producing a wide range of products for camping and caravanning. With the increasing popularity of campervans, the company has brought out its own Campmaster range of campervan awnings.

These are driveaway air awnings and are compatible with Coleman's Blackout Bedroom inner tent, which the company says will block 99% of natural light compared with standard tents.

Web coleman.eu/uk

Dometic

You probably know Dometic as the name behind the fridge in your 'van, and quite possibly the toilet, too. The Swedish company produces awnings as well – and considerably broadened its footprint in this market when it took over Kampa (*see right*) in 2018.

Since then, when it comes to motorhome awnings, the Dometic brand has been retained mainly for those that are designed for larger coachbuilds – and that offering includes everything from roll-out awnings to more spacious, fully enclosed inflatable models such as the Rally Air range.

A recent innovation from the manufacturer is the Hub – a box-shaped personal shelter that can be connected to a campervan or SUV.

Web dometic.com

Dorema

Dutch company Dorema provides a small range of driveaway awnings in its line-up. These include the Discovery Air, with a sun canopy at the front, the Traveller Air KlimaTex, with a more arch-like structure, and the Quick'n'Easy 265 Air, designed more for campervans, with a built-in groundsheet and dual beading to make life easier.

Web dorema.co.uk

Easy Camp

Easy Camp, part of the Danish Oase Outdoors Group, is perhaps best known for the colourful pop-up tents it produces, which are extremely popular among festival-goers. But it also makes a range of poled driveaway awnings for campervans, including the best-selling Fairfields.

A recent new addition is the Flex Canopy, which comes with cross-braced glass fibre poles in the roof to increase headroom and reduce any flapping.

Web easycamp.com

2



3



Kampa

Since Kampa was bought by Dometic (see left) in 2018, the brand has changed, and only produces awnings designed for campers and larger cars.

All of these driveaways are inflatable: the former Kampa company was a pioneer in the development of air awnings. They include the Kampa Sprint Air, a rapidly assembled awning that weighs just 12kg but is 1.5m deep, with an extra 90cm canopy beyond that, where you could store muddy boots. This is also Practical Motorhome's current Awning of the Year (p75).

Web kampaoutdoors.com

Khyam

Many companies that make awnings for campervans also produce other camping equipment, and Khyam is no exception. Along with a wide range of family-size and smaller tents, it also offers driveaway campervan awnings, both inflatable and poled. Many models at least double your living space once they have been assembled. There is also a selection of canopies.

Web khyam.co.uk

Olpro

Olpro, like many of the other brands, provides a wide range of outdoor gear as well as awnings. But it's also different, in that it has no dealers, selling everything (including melamine crockery, camping furniture, daybeds and barbecues) through its website.

The company has a strong campervan ethos, and in recent years has come up with highly innovative designs including the Wrap, an awning that continues around the back of your camper as well as the side.

Web olproshop.com

Fiamma

You might often see Fiamma's name on the cassette of a roll-out canopy the dealer throws in as an option with your motorhome. They attach to the wall or the roof and can be manually or electrically operated.

These are obviously quick to roll out and back, so they are a great solution for motorcaravanners on the go, although you might not be able to use them in strong winds. The Italian company also produces panels you can attach to the front, sides and legs of the awning, to make it into a box-shaped enclosure.

Web www.fiamma.it

Isabella

Possibly the most widely recognised name in caravan awnings, this Danish company also produces a full range of motorhome and campervan air awnings.

Those air awnings originally came under its budget Ventura brand, including the Simplex, Vivo and Cito porches and the larger Trinius. But recently, Isabella has brought out the Air Cirrus North under its own name. It also produces the poled driveaway Ventura Freestander, and a heavy duty Winter porch awning.

Web isabella.net

4



5



2 The Fairfields is Easy Camp's bestselling camper driveaway awning

3 Roll-out canopy from Fiamma is quick to set up and put away again

4 Lightweight Kampa Sprint Air is also our Awning of the Year

5 Khyam's range of driveaways and canopies can double the living space in your campervan

6



Outdoor Revolution

A catchy name for a company that produces a wide range of family-size tents, as well as motorhome and caravan awnings. The vast majority of its motorhome awnings are driveaway models.

The firm also makes the Sportlite Air 3320L, a fixed porch awning for coachbuilt motorhomes, and a good selection of sun canopies.

Web outdoor-revolution.com

Outwell

Outwell is part of the Danish Oase Outdoors group. Along with a large selection of camping gear, it has a range of poled and inflatable awnings for campers and motorhomes, in a variety of shapes and with a variety of ways to connect awning to vehicle.

Recent launches from the brand include side- and tailgate-mounted awnings for campers and cars, such as the Sandcrest, Lakecrest, Woodcrest and Fieldcrest.

Web outwell.com

Quest Leisure

Quest Leisure is best known as a distributor of a wide range of motorhome and caravan products.

These include the Westfield, a line of air awnings from Germany, with the Vega for motorhomes.

But it also produces a more budget-priced selection of inflatable and poled awnings under its own name, and in this past season, it's this Falcon range that has been given a refresh.

Web questleisure.com

SunnCamp

While it is perhaps best known for its large caravan awnings, SunnCamp also has inflatable and poled awnings for motorhomes of all sizes, as well as sun canopies. As with much of the industry, product development has been hampered by the pandemic, but the company is promising more in 2023.

Web sunncamp.co.uk

6 Outwell's range of tailgate-mounted awnings includes the Woodcrest

7 Kela from Vango is an inflatable driveaway awning

Thule

Along with Fiamma, Thule is another name you will usually find gracing roll-out awnings on motorhomes around the UK. The firm, which is also well known for its car roof boxes and much else besides, provides a range of roof- and wall-mounted leisure vehicle awnings under its Omnistor brand.

Web thule.com

Trigano

Yes, Trigano is part of the group that includes some of the biggest names in motorhomes, such as Adria and Chausson. The awning producer is in fact the only part of the group that carries the Trigano name.

It manufactures a selection of inflatable awnings for motorhomes, including the most recent arrival, the lightweight Phuket.

Web trigano-camping.com

Vango

Vango offers a wide selection of poled and inflatable awnings, covering just about every eventuality – for coachbuilds and for campervans, awnings that attach to the vehicle side, and those that are attached to the tailgate. It also produces a range of sun canopies.

Web vango.co.uk

■ The annual Owner Satisfaction awards, which we run in partnership with The Camping and Caravanning Club, includes awnings. Read the latest results at campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk/helpandadvice/tent-survey/awning-owner-satisfaction-awards



BEST OF THE BEST

OUR AWARD WINNERS

Here we reveal all of the awnings that made it through to the shortlist of our 2022 awards – each and every one is a great pick

Kampa Sprint Air

Price £475

Web www.kampa-outdoors.com

Designed mainly for campervans, Kampa's new driveway awning takes much of the hassle out of giving you that little bit more living space.

It's lightweight, at just over 12kg, so it should be easy for anyone to lug around, yet it's made of fully waterproof 68D material. It's easy to assemble, with



multiple inflation point air poles, and large windows either side bring plenty of light into the interior. Side doors in the tunnel make it simple for anyone to get into and out of the campervan quickly, too.



Outwell Sandcrest

Price From £321.99

Web www.outwell.com

A rear-mounted pole awning for VW Transporters and similar vehicles, the Sandcrest's lightweight aluminium poles easily collapse, so it won't take up much room. It can be left freestanding, too.



Outwell Maryville 260SA Flex

Price £1152.99

Web www.outwell.com

A driveway with a movable front wall and two large side doors that are backed by mesh panels, this is made of 75D polyester ripstop with an impressive 6000mm hydrostatic head, so it should keep you dry whatever the weather.

Outdoor Revolution Cayman Cacos SL

Price £749

Web www.outdoor-revolution.com

The Cayman range was updated last year and has become a best-seller. This new model includes an optional inner tent for extra sleeping or storage areas without encroaching on the main living space.



Outdoor Revolution Movelite T3E

Price £879

Web www.outdoor-revolution.com

Outdoor Revolution's flagship range has been updated with lighter fabric and new designs so that on this model (and the larger T4E), there is an option to add a porch door and an annexe.



Trigano Phuket

Price €999

Web www.trigano-camping.com

A side-opening driveway awning for both motorhomes and campervans, the Phuket comes with a large single front window to let light flood in. The Camptex fabric is lightweight and water-resistant.

Vango Cove II Air

Price £570

Web www.vango.co.uk

With a front facing the same way as your camper, this driveway ensures that both awning and 'van have the same great view. It has a sewn-in groundsheet for easier assembly and dismantling.



Quest Leisure Falcon Awning

Price £549

Web www.questleisure.com

Quest's popular range has been updated for 2022 in both air and pole formats. The central roof beam on the air version includes a sleeve for adding an optional rooflight. Storm straps are also now included as standard.

SPOTLIGHT ON... AWNING CARE

Sammy Faircloth shares her top tips for prolonging the life of your awning

After buying your motorhome or campervan, an awning or canopy is probably the most expensive accessory you will purchase. Awnings offer much-needed respite from the elements, shelter from the sun and protection from rain. For those who enjoy longer stopovers, the awning can also provide extra room for sleeping (1), dining or storage.

With these facts in mind, it makes sense to look after your awning or canopy, and here are some handy tips to help you to prolong its life.

Pitching carefully

Most of us simply turn up on site and look for our ideal pitch, close to the amenities, without a thought for what's actually above or around us.

When you select a pitch, look up and identify the trees above you. Oaks are a favourite with squirrels, and it's not unknown for these cute little rodents to drop their acorns on your roof!

Pine trees have a pleasant aroma, but they also drip sap, which is not great for your awning and when spotted, must be cleaned off quickly.

While assessing the type of tree, look out for dead branches. The last thing you want is for one to fall on you.

Of course, trees are also home to the birds, which are lovely to see and hear, but often leave unwelcome messages! If they do, try to clean this up sooner, rather than later, or the fabric of your awning might be permanently stained.

Most pitches are on relatively level land, but occasionally they can be undulating.



Pitch so that the ground falls away from the awning, and then in the event of any heavy downpour, the rainwater will drain away from you.

Sometimes, though, this is not possible, as we found on one of our trips to Spain. Following a positively torrential downpour, the campsite turned into a river, causing a great deal of damage (2). Luckily, we came off quite lightly – no long-term harm was caused.

When assembling your awning, follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully. The awning should be taut, to prevent rain from pooling on the roof (3). If this has happened, gently push the water off, because it could deform the awning material if left for a long period of time.

If you asked me to recommend one piece of awning kit, it would be storm straps (4). On one of our trips to Spain, we were surprised by the severity of the winds and found ourselves (along with many other motorcaravanners) deploying extra pegs and guy ropes in the early hours of the morning. We now fit our storm straps as a matter of course.



Some canopy awnings can be large and might act like a kite in strong winds (5). I recommend pegging your canopy down, or attaching storm straps, to stop the wind getting underneath (6).

Certain materials are not 'breathable' and if you are intending to sleep in your awning, condensation can form. Zipped air vents are important (7).

Cleaning your awning

Cleaning and reproofing an awning at the end of the touring season will help prolong its life. However, it is important to check with the manufacturer about the best way to clean your awning.



CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE



There are various ways to clean your awning: in situ, by dropping the sides and resting it on the side of the 'van' (8), or by laying it out on the groundsheet (9). You might need steps to help you to reach those awkward places.

In terms of cleaning fluids to use, some manufacturers recommend just using water (10) and a brush (11). This is fine for removing dust and general cleaning, but if there are particularly stubborn stains, such as algae, sap and bird mess, you might need specialised products.

Be very cautious when using cleaning fluids and check beforehand that they are suitable for the type of material your awning is made from.

Many of the awning manufacturers, such as Olpro and Isabella, sell their own brands of cleaner and reproof (12). You will soon be able to see the difference that a good clean can make (13, 14).

Don't forget to clean the skirt and the draught skirt, because they tend to get

muddy, particularly in wet weather (15). We often rope the children in to help take care of the groundsheet (16).

Packing away

Packing up your awning can feel a bit like attempting large-scale origami. Many's the time we have had to fold, unfold and refold our full-size awning.

Try to avoid folding on the windows, because this can damage them, and be mindful of where the zips and any other protruding objects are.

Packing away an awning completely dry saves a great deal of time when you get home. Unfortunately, our unreliable British climate doesn't always enable us to do this. But it is very important to pack the awning away dry.

If it is wet, inside or out, on your leaving day, just dismantle the awning and lay it out in your motorhome. When you get home, spread it out for a few days in the

garage or a spare room, so you can be absolutely sure that it is dry.

The reason for this is, if you pack it up tightly and stow it in the attic while it is damp, mould will start to grow. The last thing you want to find on your next trip is a mouldy awning. Even using specialised products, mould stains are notoriously hard to remove and can be unsightly.

Finally, I really like the oversized bags that most manufacturers supply (17). There is nothing worse than grappling for hours with a small bag.

Final thoughts

Awnings are a good investment, offering welcome additional storage and sleeping space. Drive-away awnings are a great place to store outdoor furniture, but also make a useful pitch marker (18).

With regular cleaning and maintenance, and careful storage, they should also last you for many years.

HOW TO

MAKE A BASIC MOTORHOME AWNING

Looking for a low-cost awning that you can attach without drilling into the sides of your 'van? Sam Coles shows you how to make your own

One of the most useful adjuncts to any motorhome is an awning. On the one hand, they provide shade from the sun, and on the other, they also offer shelter from the rain.

There are a number of manufacturers supplying canopy awnings, which come as self-contained units for attaching to the side of your motorhome.

These are usually deployed using a rotational handle at one end, or by remote control, provided that your budget stretches that far.

Depending on the size required and the level of sophistication you might choose, awnings such as these can cost in the region of £500 or more.

Because they will require attaching to the side of your motorhome using bolts (and wiring into a power supply in the case of a remote control), there is an added fitting cost (£250+); very few owners will be keen to attack their pride and joy with a cordless drill themselves, let alone muck about with the electricians! So all up, the cost of fitting an awning can be in the region of £750 upwards.

However, this article explains how you can construct a rudimentary, but perfectly functional, awning that requires no modifications to your motorhome whatsoever (that is, no drilling of holes), at an all-up cost of about £75.

My costings are for a 3 x 3m tarpaulin and four suction pads. If you require a larger tarpaulin, this will naturally cost more proportionally.

I already have a Fiamma awning on the habitation door side of my 'van, but I have been on many sites (French *aires* in the main) where there is plenty of space all around the vehicle.

On such occasions, the awning detailed in this article can be set up on the opposite side of the 'van as an additional awning, giving extra shade or rain protection and welcome additional storage space for chairs, bikes and so on.

Note that this project relies on the use of powerful suction pads. Logic therefore dictates that the awning can only be deployed on 'vans with a smooth, flat exterior. Some older models have a dimpled exterior, which would render the suction pads ineffective.

The suction pads, according to the manufacturer, will withstand a 20kg loading, which will, with the

'Depending on the size required and the level of sophistication you might choose, awnings like these can cost in the region of £500 or more'

four I have used, be sufficient to support the tarpaulin in moderate wind conditions. If greater security is needed, more eyelets can be let into the tarpaulin edge and more suction pads deployed.

An additional point of consideration is that areas of the exterior that have any stuck-on wording or decorative flashing should be avoided, because the suction pads might lift these.

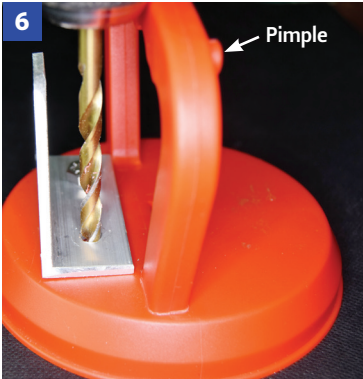
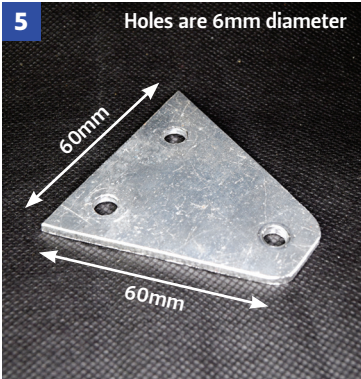
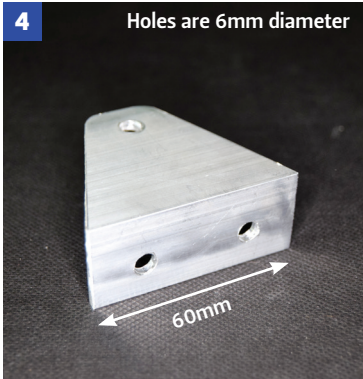
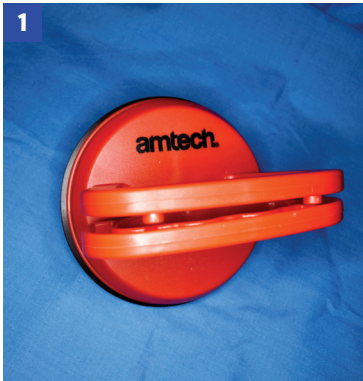
Parts required

For a four-suction-pad awning

- Four dent-puller/sheet-glass-handling suction pads 120mm diameter
- Aluminium 'L' section 60 x 25 x 300mm (or strip if horizontal option is adopted)
- Tarpaulin to suit. Mine was 3 x 3m. Choose a good quality type (260gsm or better). Mine has a silvered side, which helps to reflect the sun
- Four tent pegs
- Two tent poles (mine are collapsible 2m variants)
- Two nylon guy ropes (I used hi-vis yellow cordage)
- Pole bases (I made these myself using scrap wood)
- A variety of bolts, washers and wing nuts as shown on the right. These will be exposed to the elements, so I used stainless steel

Tools

- Conventional toolbox (screwdrivers, pliers and so on)
- Hacksaw
- Bench vice
- Drills



1 This project used four dent-puller 120mm suction pads
2 First step is to undo and remove the central shaft-retaining screw
3 These are the component parts of the stripped-down suction pad
4 Bracket for suction pad to be used on a vertical surface
5 Bracket for suction pad to be used on a horizontal surface
6 Using the bracket as a template, drill 6mm holes as shown. Make sure the pimples on the handle are as shown
7 Next, push two M6 x 16 bolts through the suction pad housing with 15mm washers, as shown here
8 Then secure the bracket using M6 locking nuts and washers
9 Clamp a 25mm penny washer and two M6 washers using M6 x 25 bolt and M6 nut, as shown here
10 Horizontal version can be used to secure tarpaulin to flat roofs and so on
11 Eyelet clamped by a 25mm penny washer and M6 wing nut. Eyelet should be free to turn; if not, add more washers
12 Suction pads deployed along side of the 'van. Wipe area to be used with a damp cloth before attaching
13 Wooden block securing base of pole
14 Guy rope showing end designed to go over the pole spike and the tensioner
15 Fully deployed awning, with no drilling into 'van sides required

CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE

KNOW HOW AWNING ACCESSORIES

Now you have your awning, it's time to choose some essential kit!



Glow in the Dark Hard Ground Pegs

Price £11.95

Web towsure.com

Tackle any surface when you pitch with these sturdy pegs. Made from stainless steel, they also have a glow-in-the-dark plastic hook, to help prevent trips or falls.

They are 20cm long and come in a convenient plastic storage box with a handy integrated cleaning brush.



Fabsil waterproofer & UV protector

Price £21.51 (five litres)

Web wowcamping.co.uk

If your awning looks a bit tired, or you are buying secondhand, a coating of waterproofer, such as Fabsil Universal Protector, will give it a new lease of (leakproof) life. Simply paint it on and allow to dry; the UV protector will also help to minimise future sun damage.



Fiamma Awning Skirt

Price From £84.99

Web leisureoutlet.com

An awning skirt is essential to help prevent draughts from underneath the 'van. This one, which can be used with all Fiamma privacy rooms, is available in three different sizes, suitable for motorhomes, VW T5 vehicles and Ducato-based campers.



Via Mondo outdoor curtains

Price £29.99 (pack of eight)

Web caravanstuff4u.co.uk

If your awning doesn't come with curtains and you'd like a bit more privacy, you can purchase dedicated sets, including this pack of eight white curtains from Via Mondo. They feature a clip and a stitched top, so are suitable for curtain poles, and various sizes are available.



Extra-large zippered awning bag

Price £25.99

Web bags2cover.co.uk

Tired of having to stuff your awning into a bag that will only just hold it? You need to get your hands on a new bag, such as this one from Bags2Cover – it measures 115 x 43cm and is made of heavy-duty fabric. It's also available in a choice of four colours: black, blue, red or green.



Awning storm tie-down kit

Price £20.99

Web amazon.co.uk

Most awning manufacturers offer their own brand-specific storm straps, but universal kits are available, too.

This one features sturdy straps with metal clips and strong pegs that will help to keep your awning safely in place during rough weather.

CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE



Outwell Laze inflatable furniture
Price £207.99 **Web** decathlon.co.uk

Your awning should be a great space in which to relax, and the Outwell Laze inflatable furniture set allows you to do just that. Featuring a sofa, chair and footrest, it comes with soft, durable, removable covers, and packs down to just 54 x 38 x 23cm.



Dometic TPV 115 camping table
Price £150 **Web** dometic.com

Every awning needs a table for dining or card games, and the TPV 115 from Dometic is a smart one. It features a stylish waterproof marble-effect top and sturdy aluminium legs, and has a 100kg load capacity. Yet it weighs just 11.5kg and folds flat for easy storage.



Stormsure repairer
Price £6.95 **Web** towsure.com
Don't write off your awning if it has a small rip or hole – give this stuff a go first. Stormsure forms a thick, flexible film to help seal tears in waterproof fabrics, extending your awning's lease of life if it's suffered damage in the past.



Outdoor Revolution Breathable Carpet
Price £29.99 (380 x 250cm)
Web winfieldsoutdoors.co.uk

Many campsites insist on breathable groundsheets to prevent damage to grass pitches, in which case you need something like this Outdoor Revolution carpet, available in a range of sizes. It allows the grass underneath to breathe, and comes in a handy carry bag.



Awning organiser
Price £20 **Web** etsy.com/uk/shop/TheHappyCaravanner
Keep your maps, books and copies of *Practical Motorhome* tidy with this handmade organiser in cheery polka-dot oilcloth, from The Happy Caravanner on Etsy. Measuring 38 x 50cm, it features a trio of pockets and can be located against the wall of your 'van using suction hooks.



Thule Sun Blocker G2 Side Panel
Price From £156.99
Web leisureoutlet.com
Make the most of hot sunny days by installing the Sun Blocker G2 side panel to your Thule roll-out awning – it can be fitted on either side. It blocks out the direct sun, but still keeps the rest of your awning open to the breeze. Other Thule panels are available and can be combined.

CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE



For our full video, see tinyurl.com/PMawning

HOW TO... PUT UP A DRIVEAWAY AWNING

Here's how to put up a driveaway air porch awning, from start to finish



1 Open out the whole awning and locate the valves that inflate the main frame. Here, we're using a SunnCamp Silhouette Motor Air 250 Grande driveaway awning.



2 Connect the valves into position, ready for pumping. Generally, you pump up the two air poles independently, but this model has the optional extra that connects the two tubes, giving single-point inflation.



3 At this stage, you simply need to get the awning into a basic shape, which takes about 30 pumps. Then locate the beading that will fit into the channel on your roll-out canopy awning.



4 Bring the canopy down to a workable height and thread the beading into the channel, ensuring you have the right size – there are two slot sizes on this canopy.



5 Next, wind the canopy back in. Now for the pegging – the best place to start is by pulling the awning tight just underneath the 'van, so the material forms a seal along this side of the wall. Peg down, then do the same on the opposite side.



6 Move the awning into place, pulling the sides tight and pegging down the outside corners. Then continue with the other pegs, all around the base of the awning, so that it's secure.



7 Time to fix the canopy poles, to provide an overhang to the awning window, and essential ventilation. Thread the poles through the canopy – there may be more than one – and push to the end stops.



8 Now, fully inflate the awning. On this pump is a valve set at 7 psi, so you can never over-inflate. When done, pull out the pump and screw the valve cap back on.



9 Stretch out the guy lines and peg them down. Finally, pull the skirt of the awning out over the ground sheet pegs, and hammer home.

CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE