



YOUR GUIDE TO

CONTINENTAL TRAVEL

Get ready to head overseas and enjoy brilliant touring!

In association with



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know how

GUIDE TO TOURING ABROAD

The ideal way to experience foreign lands is in your 'van, says full-timer Kim Liu Leach



You can choose the kind of holiday you want, such as a tour in the mountains

A motorhome isn't just for touring the UK, it's the perfect vehicle to take across the Channel, where motorcaravanning has to be one of the best ways to enjoy the many sights and delights on offer.

Europe is also wonderfully geared up for motorhomes, with larger parking spaces at many service stations and easy parking at some of the most popular tourist sites, such as Disneyland Paris.

We are halfway through our 18-month European road trip – the Big European Odyssey – and love the ease of touring abroad, with its abundance of campsites, facilities and free overnight parking spots. However, it can be a bit daunting planning

'It can be daunting, planning a journey abroad, particularly if it's your first time, but once you have experienced the ease of it, you'll be thinking of your return trip'

a journey abroad, particularly if it's your first time. But once you have experienced the ease and simplicity of it, you'll be thinking of your return trip in no time at all.

It helps if you have a rough idea of the type of holiday you're after, whether that's beautiful beaches, charming castles, rugged mountains or a mixture of them all, before planning your route.

We use the Garmin Camper 1090 sat nav, which is programmed with our vehicle dimensions, ensuring that we travel along roads we can comfortably navigate, and that we can fit under bridges without having to take off our aerial! It also has useful built-in features, such as searching for campsites ➔

Some motorcaravanners may be wary about driving on the other side of the road for the first time



along the way, and giving useful warnings on steep gradients or sharp curves ahead.

TomTom also has a motorhome-specific sat nav. Alternatively, if you prefer to use an existing device, such as your phone or iPad, the paid-for CoPilot Caravan Europe app could work well. Make sure that you have a strong windscreen mount to hold it in place without obstructing your view. Some countries also require you to turn off speed camera notification on your sat-nav.

Driving on the right

If you're nervous about driving on the right, my advice is to book somewhere for your first night. That way, you know where you're headed once you land, which can help make the start of the journey more enjoyable.

Travelling with young children, we like Château du Gandspette, located half an hour from Calais, because it has a play area, pool, and a small bar and restaurant – and it's walking distance to a *boulangerie* for those all-important pastries in the morning.

We took the Eurotunnel from Folkestone to Calais to avoid seasickness, which we all suffer from. Arriving an hour before our crossing, we were allocated a spot on an earlier train, which was convenient.

The crossing takes 35 minutes and we simply stayed inside the vehicle, with the gas safely turned off to avoid potential fires.

If you prefer a sea crossing, though, there are various ferry operators to choose from, including DFDS, Brittany Ferries and P&O, offering journeys from Dover to Dunkirk, and Portsmouth to Bilbao, as well as the popular Dover-Calais crossing. The latter takes 90 minutes, giving you time to browse the shops and enjoy a coffee and cake.

For holidays in peak season, make sure to book sites in advance, as many will be busy,



Ferries are a great option for crossing the Channel, although you might prefer the Eurotunnel if you get seasick!

‘For holidays in peak season, make sure to book sites in advance as many will be busy, especially those that have water slides and other entertainment for the children’

especially those that have water slides and other entertainment for the children. That said, during the quiet months we love seeing where the day takes us, so not having a plan means we can go with the flow.

Once, travelling through Haute-Alpes on a warm day, we stumbled across a canyon teeming with people enjoying a swim in the pristine turquoise waters. We found a spot to park and all of us gratefully jumped out to explore the spectacular Gorges de la Méouge. Travelling this way lets us linger in places we love and move on when we fancy a change.

We use the Caravan and Motorhome Club European Network if we want to plan ahead, so we know the quality of the campsites will be reassuringly high.



Campsites in France are numerous, and they are easy to find and book if you have the right resources



Tolls are more manageable with someone sitting in the passenger seat



Don't miss out on the fabulous local produce!

For times when we want to meander along at our own pace, the Campercontact app is useful for finding campsites, free parking spots (such as aires) and wild camping places.

It's possible to 'search this area' on a map, or type in a specific location, after which, symbols appear on the map to indicate which types of facilities are available.

Overnight stops

There are three types of listings: motorhome stopovers (indicated by a motorhome symbol), where you can stay overnight, campsites (tent symbol), and service areas (arrow symbol), for disposing of waste water and refilling with clean water. Overnight parking is not permitted at service areas.

Most French motorways operate a toll system, with the ticket and payment booths located on the left, making this an easier task for your front-seat passenger (so long as they are awake – I love napping on journeys!).

If you plan on staying in France, Spain and Portugal for an extended length of time and prefer the ease of breezing through the tolls with less queuing, consider investing in a toll tag – such as Emovis – which permits you to use the designated 't' lanes at the toll plazas, and the even more exclusive 't 30' lanes, which you can drive through at 30kph.

As well as being charged the toll, there is a one-off application fee for a tag of €10, plus an annual management fee of €6 and an active service fee of €5 a month, capped

at two months – so essentially the final 10 months come free of charge.

In Austria, Switzerland and Slovenia, you will need a prepaid road tax sticker, known as a *vignette*, which can be purchased at petrol stations once you cross the border.

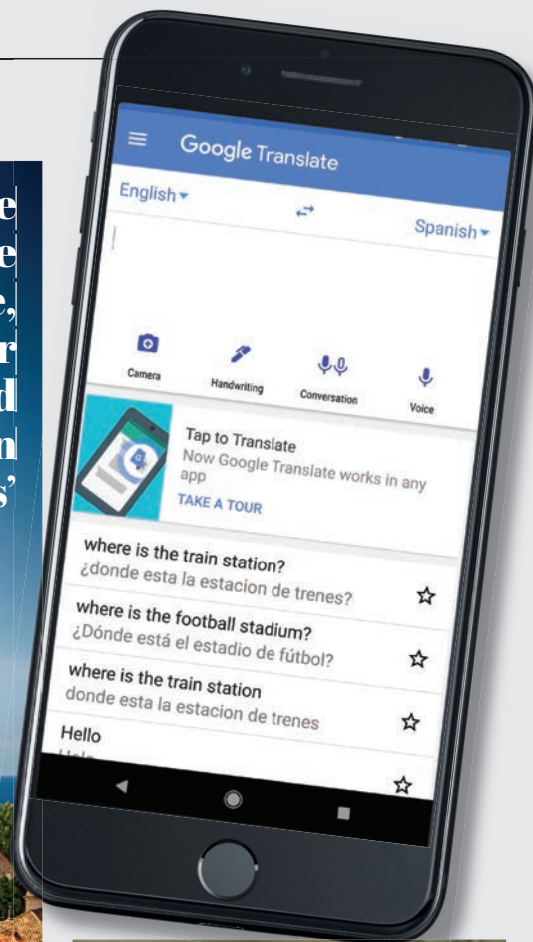
In Austria, a 10-day sticker costs €9.60, or it's €28.20 for two months. The *vignette* must be stuck to your windscreen to be valid. These are mandatory and fines will be levied if you are caught without one.

Sample local specialities

One thing we love about travelling is trying local produce, such as cheeses, wines and meats, and many farms are happy to offer tastings or a tour. The wonderful France →

A translation app is invaluable, from finding your way around a beautiful Balkan town...

‘Google Translate has been quite indispensable, especially for its camera and conversation features’



Passion is a motorhome stopover scheme offering over 2000 overnight stops at farms, vineyards or artisan workshops.

You pay an annual membership of €30, valid from March to Easter the following year, and receive a guidebook that details the sites and their locations, a membership card and a window sticker. You also have access to their app if you prefer to search online. Unless the site specifically requests it, there is no need to ring ahead to book.

Although you don't have to make any purchases, we often pick places to stay based on what they offer and invariably buy some cheese or eggs. Note that most of these places do not have any facilities available, so make sure to turn up with enough water and an empty toilet.

Dining in style

At times when we need to converse beyond simple gestures, Google Translate has been quite indispensable, especially its camera and conversation features.

Gone are the days when the tasty dishes on a menu were beyond our reach because we didn't have the vocabulary to understand every description. Now, by simply tapping on 'camera' in the app, you can take a photo of the menu, which is then translated into the language of your choice.

We also find this handy for following the cooking instructions on a ready meal pack, or reading a noticeboard for information about a historical monument.

We used the app's conversation mode extensively in the Balkans and enjoyed

many chats with campsite hosts about the local region and the best places to visit.

The app works with one person talking in their own language, which is translated into the chosen language, over the speaker or in text. Using this helped us to communicate with taxi drivers, for example.

Two final points – you'll need headlight beam deflectors to stop your headlamps dazzling drivers coming the other way. In France, if your 'van is over 3.5t, you might also need *angles morts* stickers on the sides and rear to show the blind spots.

It's important to check your insurance covers all of the countries you are visiting, and you should consider additional cover, such as a breakdown policy that will assist you in the event of an incident abroad. ■

need to know

CONTINENTAL TRAVEL & THE LAW

For UK motorcaravanners, touring abroad changed significantly after Brexit, and the new rules can be quite complicated. Here's what you need to know

Passports

In general, your UK passport must have six months' remaining validity and be less than 10 years old (even if it has six months left on it), but the rules do vary by country.

To check the exact details for your trip, see www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

You can continue to travel to Ireland so long as your passport is valid.

Global Health Insurance Card

The free Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) replaces the European Health Insurance Card (although if you have one, this is still valid while it remains in date).

This will give you access to emergency state-provided healthcare during any temporary stay in EU countries, at either a reduced cost or for free.

It doesn't cover private healthcare costs, and cannot be used in Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland.

In all cases, you should make sure that you are covered by travel insurance.

To apply for your GHIC, see www.gov.uk/global-health-insurance-card.

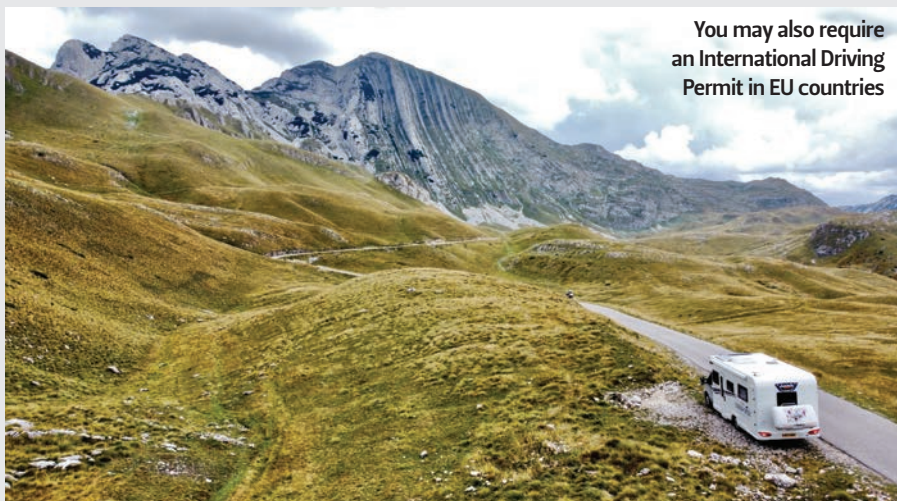
Some other websites will charge you to apply for the card, but this is unnecessary if you apply for it via the Government/NHS.

Visas

Visas are not necessary for short trips to most EU countries, Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein, where you can stay for 90 days in any 180-day period.

The rules on how long you can stay in each country within the Schengen zone vary: for further information on how the 90-within-180-days rule is calculated, see www.gov.uk/visit-eu-switzerland-norway-iceland-liechtenstein/how-long-stay-without-visa.

Regardless of where you are planning to tour and how long you might be staying, you may need to produce a return ticket and proof of having enough money for your stay at border control.



You may also require an International Driving Permit in EU countries

Covid-19 restrictions

Although Covid-19 restrictions have largely been lifted, the situation remains changeable and you should check each country's requirements before planning your visit.



Food and drink

Under EU regulations, you cannot take meat (or products containing it), milk or dairy, fresh fruit and vegetables and more into the EU. For a list of prohibitions, and the few exceptions, see food.ec.europa.eu/index_en.

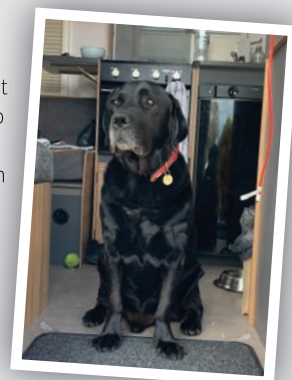
Driving

You can drive in the EU using your UK driving licence, but if this is a paper licence, or a licence issued in Gibraltar, Guernsey, Jersey or the Isle of Man, you will also need to have an International Driving Permit.

Your motorhome will require a 'UK' sticker and valid insurance. We would strongly suggest taking all vehicle documentation with you, so it can be produced if required.

Pet travel

An Animal Health Certificate replaces the existing passport scheme, which is no longer valid. Allow one month to obtain the certificate and the relevant pet vaccinations. More details at www.gov.uk/taking-your-pet-abroad.



■ For clarification on all matters concerning Continental travel, see www.gov.uk/browse/abroad/travel-abroad

advice

10 MUST-VISIT ACSI CAMPSITES

Our Know-how guide sponsor has chosen a selection of some of its top sites, all of which are guaranteed to give you a brilliant stay! Plus, use your ACSI card and you'll get a discount on your visit at certain times of the year

For details of all sites, see www.campingcard.co.uk



France

■ Flower Camping de l'Île des Trois Rois, Upper Normandy

With 150 touring and 150 year-round pitches, and located on the banks of the Seine, Flower Camping de l'Île des Trois Rois makes a fantastic base for your touring holiday in Normandy. It's great at any time of year, featuring a heated swimming pool and heated washrooms for your comfort. Paris is an hour's drive away, and Rouen just 30 minutes, so you can explore some of France's finest cities with ease.

Address 1 Rue Gilles Nicolle, 27700 Les Andelys, France



France

■ Campsite La Touesse, Brittany

Campsite La Touesse has 80 touring pitches, and the site is pleasantly divided up into fields, each with a small number of pitches, increasing your sense of peace and privacy. The site is also located just 350m from the sea, and within close reach of the historic seaside resort of Dinard. There are two pools, indoor and outdoor, a restaurant and bar, laundry facilities, a children's playroom, and an excellent programme of activities for youngsters.

Address 171 Rue de la Ville Géhan, 35800 Saint Lunaire, France



France

■ Campsite du Port de Plaisance, Picardy

Easily accessible from France's A1, and perfect for exploring the beautiful and historic Somme region, Campsite du Port de Plaisance offers a choice of both shaded and non-shaded pitches, so you can really make the most of the weather during your visit. An outdoor heated pool is available from June to the end of August, and a grocery shop, a bread and pastries ordering service and a terrace bar are open from March to October.

Address Route de Paris, 80200 Péronne, France



France

■ Campsite St Louis, Nord-Pas-de-Calais

Situated about half an hour from the ferry and Eurotunnel terminals at Calais, you'll find Campsite St Louis features good-sized pitches that are well spaced out. The onsite restaurant/bar is a great place to eat, drink and spend the evening, while the toilet and washroom facilities are modern and up-to-date. Lively entertainment and events suitable for all of the family take place on site throughout the season.

Address 223 Rue de Leulène, 62610 Autingues, France



France

■ Château du Gandspette, Nord-Pas-de-Calais

This campsite is set in 11 acres of beautiful wooded parkland, so it's ideal for nature-lovers looking for a little peace and quiet during their French tour. The facilities on site are extensive, and include two swimming pools (one of which is heated), a restaurant, a tennis court and much more.

There are also 199 pitches on the campsite, which is located just 10 minutes north of the historic market town of Saint-Omer, famous for its fine architecture and network of waterways.

Address 133 Rue du Gandspette, 62910 Éperlecques, France



Spain

■ Caravanning Oyambre, Cantabria

You're sure to enjoy your visit to the beautiful northern Spanish region of Cantabria if you stay at Caravanning Oyambre: it's set within one of the area's magnificent nature parks.

Stunning walks, culture and history are all within easy reach and waiting to be experienced during your tour.

Onsite, guests can make use of the campsite's restaurant, sports court, children's playground and playroom; there's also a laundry, a supermarket and more.

Address Barrio Los Llaos, 39540 San Vicente de la Barquera, Spain



Portugal

■ Camping Villa Park Zambujeira, Beja

If you're planning a tour to south-western Portugal, be sure to consider a stay at Camping Villa Park Zambujeira. It offers a wealth of facilities to enjoy during your visit, with amenities including a bar serving light meals, a supermarket where you can pick up your own supplies, two swimming pools suitable for adults and children, free Wi-Fi across the site and more. Pets are also welcome at Camping Villa Park Zambujeira.

Address Estrada Municipal da Zambujeira 2, Zambujeira do Mar, Portugal



Italy

■ Campsite Venezia, Veneto

Who can resist the unique beauty, elegance and history of Venice? It's a breathtaking place to visit, and if you're planning to do so, Campsite Venezia will make a brilliant base for your tour.

A bus to the city stops close by, which will take you to Piazzale Roma in 10 minutes. If you'd prefer to stay on site for the day and make use of the facilities, you'll find a heated indoor pool, sauna and Jacuzzi, a restaurant/pizzeria, and superbly clean and tidy washrooms.

Address Via Orlanda 8/C, 30170 Mestre, Venezia, Italy



Belgium

■ Campsite Klein Strand, West Flanders

Every motorcaravanner should take a tour to Bruges, and Campsite Klein Strand is the perfect site to stay at: it's a 15-minute drive from the UNESCO World Heritage city. This is a very family-friendly site, with a programme of activities for children, and a children's swimming pool for the youngsters to enjoy. Adults will appreciate the onsite lake and sandy beach, and the fact that pitches are marked out by hedgerows for privacy.

Address Varsenareweg 29, 8490 Jabbeke, Brugge, Belgium



Croatia

■ Camping Omišalj, Primorje-Gorski Kotar

You'll really be able to enjoy the sun, scenery and history of beautiful Croatia at five-star Camping Omišalj, situated on the north-western tip of the island of Krk. The facilities are of an excellent standard and include clean and tidy washrooms, a restaurant and bar, an outdoor swimming pool and a mini supermarket for provisions. There's also a children's club, which should keep younger members of the family happy!

Address Vodotoc 1, 51513 Omišalj, Croatia



spotlight on...

YOUR FIRST TIME ABROAD

Planning to venture across the Channel in your motorhome for the first time? Seasoned motorcaravanner Sammy Faircloth offers expert advice

For some, the thought of touring abroad might be a bit daunting – driving on the right, tolls, the language and the regulations. But don't let this dampen your wanderlust – here are some top tips to help you get ready for the big adventure.

Be prepared

The main gateways to Europe are ferry ports. But if you dislike travelling by sea, there's the Eurotunnel, from Folkestone to Calais. It only takes 30 minutes to cross to France under the Channel, as opposed to 1.5 hours by ferry from Dover to Calais.

Once you drive off the ferry or train, you must remember to drive on the right (except for Ireland, Malta and Cyprus). Driving laws vary, so always check the rules for the countries that you are visiting and identify what you will need to tour there.

Plan your route before leaving home and invest in up-to-date maps; your sat nav can sometimes lead you astray. In addition, remember to switch off the function that warns you of fixed speed cameras – it's illegal in France and elsewhere.

In most countries, when you are driving at night, it's compulsory to adjust the vehicle's headlamp pattern, to avoid dazzling the oncoming traffic (if you are driving on the right). You can purchase beam deflectors online or at the ferry terminal.

Under post-Brexit rules that came into effect in 2021, you must identify that your vehicle is from the UK when driving abroad.



Dover is the busiest passenger port in the UK and the nearest English port to France, at just 21 miles (34km) away

If it does not have the UK identifier within the numberplate, you will require a UK sticker.

In the event of a breakdown or incident while you're on the road, it is important to carry a warning triangle, along with hi-vis vests for every member of the party.

In France, you must put on your hi-vis vest before you get out of the vehicle.

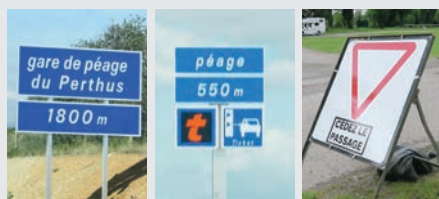
Most European motorways incorporate toll booths, with the option for you to pay by cash or card. But if you are driving through France, Spain or Portugal, I would recommend buying an Emovis Tag.

This allows you to use special lanes that are marked with a 't', and means you do not have to stop – just drive slowly until

you hear a beep and the barrier will open. This is particularly useful if you are driving on your own. You will then be charged the toll by direct debit.

Some countries also require the use of rear warning boards. In Spain, for example, if the overall length of your motorhome is more than 12m, you must display a warning board measuring 130 x 25cm, or show two 50 x 25cm yellow reflector(s).

In Spain, Italy and elsewhere, it's also mandatory to display a red-and-white diagonal-striped warning sign on any protruding loads, such as bikes. In Italy, this must be made of aluminium, but in Spain, it can be plastic or aluminium.



Road signs differ, so before leaving home, check the rules that are in force in all of the countries you will be driving through



Headlight deflectors on British vehicles are mandatory in countries that drive on the right-hand side of the road



In the event of a breakdown or incident, it is important to use a warning triangle, which most vehicles have supplied as standard equipment

CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE



If you buy an Emovis Tag before you travel, you will be able to use the 't' lanes at the tolls, for a swifter, more hassle-free journey



This *aire* in La Plagne, France, is ideally placed for visitors who like to ski in the winter months or go mountain-biking during the summer



At some sites in France, your cable might have to cross an access road and you could require extra cable to reach the hook-up



In some places, such as Spain and Italy, you will be obliged to display a red-and-white diagonal-striped warning sign on protruding loads, for example, bikes



Aires can sometimes feel a little cosy, but they're fine if you are just passing through



The Caravan and Motorhome Club operates escorted tours, which have included introducing you to overseas driving on its simulated course before you leave the UK



Look out for the dedicated parking bays that are available for motorhomes



Some *aires* are free, but others make a charge



This C&MC escorted tour presentation offered tips about driving abroad and what you can expect, followed by an itinerary run-through



Some *aires* will also provide children's play areas and pleasant spots to stop for a picnic



Buy an adaptor before you travel abroad, in case the site uses the old-style connectors

It is advisable to take a full bottle with you and if it does run out, you will need to bring home the empty. Some ferry companies restrict the number of gas cylinders you are allowed to carry, and Eurotunnel does not permit LPG, so check this before travelling.

Break your journey

We often take touring holidays in Spain, and that usually means crossing to France and then driving down to our destination.

It usually takes us two days to drive to Spain, and travelling with children, we need to allow for regular stops along the way.

On French motorways, you can find laybys with parking for motorhomes, but they often get very busy in the holidays, so lorry parking is an alternative. Some of these stopovers have play areas for the children, and offer pleasant picnic spots.

Alternatively, break the journey by booking a site en route or stopping at an *aire* in a town or village. These overnight stops are often free. Some can be in idyllic locations, while others can feel a little cosy. Some also provide service points, although they might charge you for this.

You'll find that most European campsites are very similar to those in the UK, but there are some important things to consider.

Electricity and gas

Some sites do not include hook-up in their prices, but instead charge a daily flat rate or a metered fee for electricity consumed, so check before booking.

In the UK and most of Europe, we use a three-pin plug that connects to the hook-up (EN 60309-2). However, some places use old-style connectors (CEE 17), meaning our three-pin plugs do not fit. It makes sense to buy an adaptor before travelling, but you could also hire one from the campsite.

On a recent trip to the Jura in France, we struggled to connect our 25m cable to the hook-up. It just about reached, but we had to pitch our motorhome right on the hedge boundary, crossing a neighbour's pitch. Take extra-length cable, and remember to buy a safety box for the connecting piece.

If you use Calor Gas bottles (butane and propane), bear in mind that they can't be exchanged abroad. European countries tend to use Campingaz or LPG cylinders.

Final thoughts

You might prefer to start your European adventures by taking an escorted tour. The Caravan and Motorhome Club, for example, has offered one that introduces you to overseas driving on its simulated course beforehand, followed by a presentation on top tips and your itinerary (see p78).

Road regulations change frequently, so check the latest updates before you go, for example at www.theaa.com.

Essential checklist

- Warning triangle
- Hi-vis vests
- Spare wheel
- Spare set of bulbs
- Beam deflectors
- Maps, sat nav
- First-aid kit
- Full driving licence
- Proof of insurance
- Full gas bottle
- Hook-up adaptor/extra cable

For more on essential kit to carry, see p80.

advice

ESCORTED TOURS

Motorhome escorted tours are a fantastic way to travel with likeminded people. And with all the organisation done for you, that means you can concentrate on what's really important – having a great time!

It's immensely liberating to be able to tour in your motorhome at your own pace, going wherever takes your fancy, but it can also be extremely rewarding and reassuring to travel with other people.

An escorted tour offers a perfect balance, providing structure to your route, removing much of the organisational work and allowing you to travel with likeminded people, yet still do your own thing whenever you prefer.

What is an escorted tour?

Exactly what it says on the tin! What this means, in practical terms, is that a small group of motorcaravanners travel together with a tour leader, on a curated trip.

The tour leader travels with the group, remaining available to offer advice and help with any problems that might crop up.

There will be a fixed itinerary, so you know where to drive to each day, and you often travel independently through the day, joining up with your group at the campsites.

On free days, you can either join organised days out, or simply do your own thing.

What is included will depend on who you travel with – some operators offer a more flexible approach, with fewer extras involved, while others will include meals, daily coach trips, ferry crossings and insurance cover. Obviously, the addition of such extras will affect the price.

Most tours, though, will organise your accommodation, provide a travel itinerary with maps and information and, of course, have hosts or leaders in place.

"Some people describe them as like flotilla holidays," explains Bob Reeves of Crossings Motorhome Tours, which has been operating for 10 years. "We all leave from one place in the morning and then end up together at a different site in the evening, but not necessarily following each other.

"Driving in convoy can be risky, so we don't do it like that, but we do have



Many motorcaravanners love the sociability of group touring

Photo Crossings Motorhome Tours

a detailed tour pack and we provide briefings, so everyone knows where they are going and what they are doing."

Why take an escorted tour?

If you're looking for a less complicated life, an escorted tour will take away a lot of those organisational headaches, and the routes and destinations that are available will also have been rigorously stress-tested by the companies providing the tours.

This means all of the campsites should be of the highest quality, the routes will have been created with large vehicles in mind, and the itinerary will take in some of the best touring destinations. Bob says: "People come with us for three main reasons – some

people like the social aspect, others like to have everything organised for them, and a small percentage are a bit nervous about it, and we give them that reassurance.

"It's a small group of motorcaravanners, in our case 12 units, plus the tour leaders travelling in their own motorhome and helping people get the best out of their trip."

What's included?

The Caravan and Motorhome Club offers a comprehensive selection of tours across Europe, and is a popular choice among many motorcaravanners.

Club tours tend to have more extras than some of the smaller independent companies (which affects the overall price), so you can

Five reasons to join an escorted tour

- All of the planning and organisation is done for you
- Travel with likeminded people and make new friends
- Do and see more than you would if travelling alone
- Tour guides will be able to provide local knowledge
- Reassurance of tour guides on hand throughout the trip

Bob Reeves, Crossings Motorhome Tours



Tracey and Steve Phillips enjoyed an alpine tour



Ljubljana, in Slovenia, is a popular destination



Explore local attractions, such as the statue of Christ the King in western Poland

2023 are going to be the Loire region of France, Ireland and Italy.

The size of the tour groups tends to be larger on Club trips, with up to 20 spaces per holiday, with other operators, such as Crossings, limiting their numbers to no more than 12 units.

Obviously, you'll need to do a bit of research to find a tour group that suits your preferences. Some of the Club tours, for example, are more centred on one campsite, which is used as a base for exploring the surrounding area, while other trips will seek to keep moving.

Either way, you can expect plenty of nearby attractions and can spend your free days in as busy or relaxing a way as you wish. If you are joining a tour that moves about more, consider the size of your vehicle – a 9m-plus 'van might not be suited to all of the tours available. Typically, escorted tours attract owners of 7-8m coachbuilds, and the occasional A-class.

What the customers say

Tracey and Steve Phillips took an escorted tour in July last year in their new four-berth Dethleffs, travelling with Bob and Wendy at Crossings Motorhome Tours on their Swiss and Austrian Alps tour.

Steve says: "We got our new 'van about three days before the tour and it was a bit of a nervous time, because we didn't know where anything went or how it worked.

"So it was good to be on an escorted trip, as we were surrounded by people who could help. Although we're experienced travellers, sometimes travelling with more people gives you a bit of a comfort blanket.

"What we enjoyed most was the camaraderie with other motorcaravanners. We didn't spend time with them during the day – people did their own thing. But in the evening, it was good to catch up and talk about the day's adventures.

"I'd 110% recommend this type of tour – it's difficult to come up with a reason not to do it. We like the atmosphere of travelling with other people – it's a good opportunity to meet people from different walks of life and we've made a lot of new friends because of it. Some of the people we travelled with will be on the trips we've booked in future."

CONTACTS

■ **Caravan and Motorhome Club**

Tel 01342 488 711

🌐 camc.com/europeantours

■ **Crossings Motorhome Tours**

Tel 01522 861715/07957 745434

🌐 crossingsmotorhometours.com

■ **GB Motorhome Tours**

Tel 07481 479 057

🌐 gbmotorhometours.com

■ **MandA Tours**

Tel 06081 919 1212

🌐 manda-motorhome-tours.com

expect ferry crossings, excursions and meals, and a motoring pack to be included. It can also arrange your travel insurance and emergency assistance.

Other firms, including Crossings Motorhome Tours, prefer a lighter-touch approach and don't bundle in things such as meals and bus travel, although it does pride itself on starting the trips in the UK and including ferries as part of its package.

"We pick up all our customers the night before and they have a night in a campsite near Dover," says Bob. "We find that works better than meeting abroad or on the ferry. Our customers prefer a flexible timetable, so they want the security of having a tour leader, but don't need a set timetable, and

this also keeps our prices lower. The places we go to allow for days out that customers can enjoy, and we help them with advice and information. Sometimes by chance we end up going as a group, for instance, to places like Venice – but we try to allow people to enjoy things at their leisure."

Where can you go?

The Club has trips worldwide and there are a number of travel operators across the globe, but those looking to travel to Europe will find it particularly well catered for.

Favourite destinations include France, Spain, Portugal and Italy, with Croatia and Slovenia also proving extremely attractive – the Club says its most popular tours in

CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE

Caravan and Motorhome Club

Photo Crossings Motorhome Tours

advice

ESSENTIAL KIT

There are certain items that you must carry when driving abroad – here's a selection, along with some other equipment that we'd also recommend taking with you



UK sticker

Following Brexit, the rules covering which country stickers you must display have changed. The GB sticker is no longer valid, and the UK sticker is its replacement. The AA says these must be at least 80mm high, with a stroke width of 10mm.

Price £3.99
[halfords.com](https://www.halfords.com)

Warning triangle

An essential in most countries, you should carry a good-quality warning triangle at all times, and be sure to use it if you break down, to alert other drivers to the hazard. Keep it somewhere within easy reach inside your motorhome. Bear in mind that you'll require two warning triangles if you're touring in Spain.

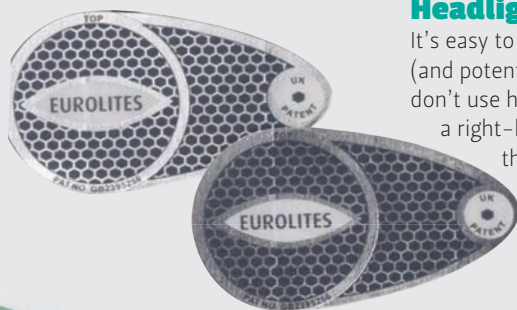
Price £9.99 [halfords.com](https://www.halfords.com)



Headlight deflectors

It's easy to forget to fit these, but you can be fined (and potentially cause other drivers problems) if you don't use headlight beam deflectors when you have a right-hand-drive motorhome and you can't alter the beams via the dashboard. Be sure to fit them before you leave the ferry/Channel Tunnel, even if it's not dark when you do so.

Price £4.99 [amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk)



First-aid kit

A good first-aid kit is another essential that you should carry at all times, and it's also worth checking that the expiry date of the contents hasn't passed. Always make sure that you replace any items that you use as soon as possible – it's easy to forget and then be left short when you next need a plaster, bandage or antiseptic wipe.

Price £12 [halfords.com](https://www.halfords.com)



High-vis jacket

A high-vis jacket is vital, and you should have one for each occupant of the vehicle.

You should also ensure that it's kept close by when you're driving – don't stow it in a locker or the garage, as you'll need to be able to retrieve it quickly in an emergency.

Price £5.30
[halfords.com](https://www.halfords.com)



CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE



Headlight bulbs

If your headlight bulb blows while you're on tour abroad, you could end up receiving a fine, so it's wise (and a legal requirement in some countries) to carry some spares.

A universal-fit set, such as this AA example, is a good idea, but before buying, double check that the bulbs contained in it will suit your motorhome – and make sure that you know how to change them.

Price £5.90

amazon.co.uk

Winter tyres or snow chains

A legal requirement in some countries, you should double check whether you will require winter tyres or snow chains before you set off. You'll also need to know the exact size of your wheels before you buy.

Price From about £50 for snow chains, depending on size

amazon.co.uk



Fire extinguisher

You should always carry a fire extinguisher in your motorhome (located so it's close to hand in the event of an emergency). It's worth checking that the expiry date on yours hasn't passed; it will need replacing if so. This 1kg Streetwise unit from Towsure comes complete with an installation bracket.

Price £19.95

towsure.com



This is not a full list, so check the requirements of any countries you intend to visit; for example, you will require a spare pair of glasses in some places. For information on essential kit that you must carry when travelling abroad, in a handy country-by-country format, see www.gov.uk/driving-abroad.

CHECKLIST

Essential documents and equipment

Here's a list of key items you could need for touring in the EU. Although requirements will vary slightly from country to country, it might be wisest to take all of these, to ensure that you are not issued with a hefty fine while you're away, owing to an oversight.

- Full driving licences for all drivers (photo ID is recommended)
- Vehicle registration document (V5)
- VE103 certificate for company/hire vehicles
- Insurance documents
- International Driving Permit (if necessary)
- Breakdown/recovery policy documents
- Travel insurance documents
- EHIC/GHIC
- Medical prescriptions

Vehicle essentials

- First-aid kit
- Reflective jackets for all occupants (must be easily accessible within the motorhome)
- Two warning triangles
- Spare bulb kit
- UK sticker
- Headlamp beam converter
- Alcohol breath-tester
- Spare pair of prescription glasses (if driving in Spain)

European traffic police are (rightly) uncompromising at the best of times.

Following Brexit, we strongly recommend that you abide scrupulously by all of the regulations, to avoid any prolonged and expensive stopovers at their pleasure!

Other things to consider

- Take a torch, and a fire extinguisher
- Service your vehicle before departure
- Check the water, oil and coolant levels, and tyre pressures/tread
- Carry a basic toolkit
- Take a spare wheel and check it's road legal



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