

Notes on Safe Camping

Whatever form of camping you participate in the following notes are not an infallible safety check list but are intended to help those who are new to camping and act as a memory jogger to the more experienced campers.

Before you go:

1. Does your insurance cover you for the countries you will be visiting and the length of time you will be away for?
2. When was the vehicle last serviced? Check it over and in particular the tyre pressures and their condition.
3. For camper vans and caravans they should periodically have a habitation check which includes inspections of the gas, electrical and water systems. Gas pipes and regulators have a limited life of just a few years and should be professionally replaced when due.
4. All gas systems should be turned off at the bottle whilst travelling and ensure gas vents are not blocked.
5. Flame failure devices (FFDs) on all gas appliances should be working. Many older gas appliances do not have FFDs so care should be taken to ensure flames are not blown out by draughts from windows or doors.
6. It is highly recommended that carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are installed.

Many countries have very strict laws for what must be carried in a vehicle so check the requirement for the countries you intend to travel through. The following list may not be complete but is a guide for what you should carry:-

- At least one warning triangle (2 for Spain)
- Safety vests for each person in the vehicle
- Head light deflectors fitted
- At least 2 breathalysers
- A set of spare light bulbs
- First Aid kit
- Fire extinguisher and fire blanket
- If the driver requires glasses to drive he should have a spare pair

Spain and some other countries do not permit towing a car behind a motorhome on an 'A' frame.

En Route:

1. Have plenty of breaks from driving or swap drivers frequently. Tiredness is a killer.
2. If using Sat Nav some countries will fine you if your Sat Nav has speed camera warnings installed. Likewise some countries do not allow the driver to touch the Sat Nav whilst driving.
3. When towing ensure the weight distribution in the caravan / trailer is such that there is neither too much weight on the tow hitch nor no weight on it.
4. Be aware of your weight limit, both for towing and the gross weight of the caravan or Motorhome. The police in some countries can weigh your units on the road side and impose on the spot fines if overweight.
5. Be cautious about where you park up either for an overnight stop or just for a break. Ensure the vehicle / van is secure, motorway stops and some large shopping centre car parks are notorious for break-ins.

On Site:

The following may be obvious but are important considerations:

- If windy are there any trees nearby which are old and may fall or lose branches.
- If rain is forecast avoid low lying areas which could become flooded or at least difficult to drive out from.
- Check the site for the location of fire extinguishers or the nearest fire hydrant.
- Make others with you including children aware of where safety equipment is located and how to switch off the gas and electricity supplies.
- If hooking up for electricity check the polarity of the supply. Many sites on the continent have reverse polarity which prevents any on board electrical protection devices from working. It is well worth carrying a short cable which will reverse and correct the polarity.
- Do not leave long lengths of power cable in a coil or on a cable drum when in use as they get very hot and can cause a fire.
- Beware of the use of all portable fuel burning equipment including BBQs within the unit or even under an awning as deadly carbon monoxide can be emitted.
- Never change over a gas bottle on a device in an enclosed area.
- Take care when using candles or anything with a naked flame. A wise precaution is to have a bucket of water close at hand.

Enjoy your camping and for further information or advice please contact one of our club members who should be most willing to help.