

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE *to* getting summer ready



Frances and Michael Howorth seek out ten top expert tips that reveal how best to get your motorcaravan summertime ready

Summer is here, so it's time for some sunshine touring. But before you set off, devote a moment or two to some summertime maintenance. Doing so at the very start of the season, is both prudent and important. Motorcaravans, that have sat dormant during the winter months, sometimes need a little coaxing to get them back into happy home mode.

Readying your motorhome for the new season may take some prior planning to ensure that your vehicle is in tip-top condition. But get it right, and it could save trouble when you least want it. From maintenance hacks to checking that your insurance is up to date, we have asked industry experts to give us

their top tips and pointers to help you get ready to hit the road this summer. Simpsons Motorhomes in Great Yarmouth have some good ideas on what to look out for.

1 Checking gas and water systems

Michelle Wing who looks after motorhome after-sales and warranty issues at Simpson says, "One of the most important aspects of ensuring that your motorhome is roadworthy is to thoroughly examine and clean the gas installation. Before testing any of the gas appliances, it's vital to check that the hoses have not split and that all of your connections are tight.

Once you are sure that it's safe to do so, light up your appliances

and make sure that the flame is blue – if it's orange, that's an indication that excess air is entering the system." She adds, "If you encounter any problems like this then arrange an inspection from a professional Gas Safe Register engineer capable of advising you and rectifying any problems."

"When surveying the water systems, make sure that installations are secure to prevent any leaks," suggests Ben Hartland at East Bay Campers in Newhaven. First you will need to turn on the water pump to pressurise the system. Listen to see the pump switch off automatically and stay that way. If it turns back on again, even briefly, search your motorhome for a leak. He adds, "However, no matter how diligent you >>

will have been, over the winter the tanks may have become home to some unpleasant bacteria or algae. The tanks, need to be sterilised and flushed thoroughly to make them safe for your next trip.”

Sarah Miles of Pro Kleen advises motorcaravanners to, “Empty any remaining water out and then fill with fresh. Add a water tank cleaner such as Pro-Kleen Caravan Fresh Water Tank Cleaner and leave overnight before emptying and rinsing through.

2 Spring cleaning the interior

Sarah also has advice on spring cleaning the interior of your van. She suggests, “All the interior surfaces will benefit from a clean after being shut up for so long. You can do this with a standard surface cleaner. Pay particular attention to the fridge to make sure it hasn’t developed any mould while in storage. She adds, It is always worth putting your curtains through the wash, and giving all of the surfaces a wipe. If there’s a carpet in your van, give it a deep clean to remove any bacteria or mould patches. After winter storage, mould can spring up in a variety of places. Always make sure that you check the cupboards, the upholstery and under mattresses for damp patches.”

3 Showers and toilets

“Remember to clean your cassette toilet, check your showerhead for mould and test the electric flush if you have one,” says John Morley of Camping and Marine in East Sussex. He adds, “Toilets are potential accumulator of germs and bacteria. They are not only unhygienic but can become quite smelly. At the start of the season, clean with phosphoric acid that both deep cleans and descales the system. That will sanitise it and extend its life. Add the product to the pan and allow it to stand for 2-3 hours or, ideally, overnight (you can do this at the same time as cleaning the water system). Next day and once the cassette has been emptied, you can flush the toilet. To maintain cleanliness and break down waste in the toilet, use natural products such as Solbio.

4 Electronics

Andy Harris of Road Pro (aka Motorhome Andy) advises that, “You should test all of the electronics in your vehicle, replacing any batteries that won’t hold a charge.” He adds, “Getting a solar panel fitted might be worthwhile, especially if you’re planning any long trips. as you’ll have to hook up your motorhome to a 220V charger at least once a fortnight.



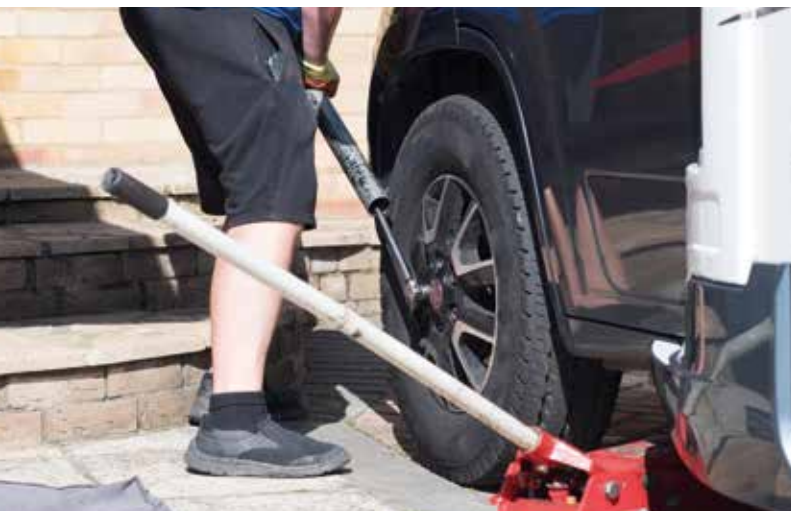
Your control panel will show you the battery levels.”

5 Inspect the tyres and bodywork

The last thing you need on your trip is a tyre blowout, says Kevin Fox the After Sales Manager at Simpsons Motorhomes. He adds, “It is crucial to do a thorough investigation of your tyres and exterior. Firstly, you’ll want to get a good look at the rubber and make sure there aren’t any cracks or trapped stones. Older tyres are susceptible to rupturing, so changing them regularly is a sound strategy. It’s not just the tyres that can suffer during storage – double check your windscreen wipers, chassis, oil and lights to make sure that everything is in working order. It’s much better to discover a problem before you take your motorhome out for a spin than whilst you’re out on the road.

6 Fire safety

Smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms are all there to fulfil a vital role. Sergio De Michele of Fire Safety Stick says, “Check they are all operating properly and whether their batteries need replacing. It is crazy to compromise safety for the price of a couple of AA batteries. Remind yourself and the rest of your party of any safety procedures you have in the event of a fire. If





PRE-DEPARTURE CHECK LIST

There are some safety checks you need to do before you take your van anywhere.

- Check that the following items are in working condition:
- Check the brakes and make sure they haven't seized up
- Check the tyres for correct pressure, cracks and splits, and tread depth
- Check lights and change bulbs if needed
- Make sure you have working

smoke and carbon monoxide alarms

- Test the leisure battery with a voltmeter to ensure that it charges up and holds its charge
- Check for any signs of dampness or leaks. Be vigilant for mould and mildew, damp patches, and musty smells. If you do spot anything, find the source of the leak and re-seal where possible
- Get any gas heating systems serviced by an engineer

your fire extinguishers are out of date, replace them. At just 215 grammes, the Fire Safety Stick is the lightest and most compact fire extinguisher in the world. Traditional extinguishers often create more damage than the fire. These leave no damaging mess or

residue and has longer discharge times. A 1 kilogramme traditional powder extinguisher would last just 7 seconds if set it off, the fire stick will last for at least 50 seconds. Time enough to point it at the fire and get out of the van. Traditional extinguishers last 5 years max and

must be serviced annually this lasts 15 years and needs no servicing.

7 **Ensure your MOT is valid**
Autocare Centre in Chepstow have spent over 40 years providing MOT's and Servicing Campervan and Motorhome >>

owners. Their advice is, "Before setting off, it is important to check that you have packed all of the necessary essentials and carried out a pre-trip vehicle inspection to rectify any potential issues with your vehicle and avoid an unexpected breakdown." They add, "Check to make sure that your vehicle's MOT certificate is valid. If you have not done this already, then we strongly recommend that you do so as soon as possible."

This way you leave plenty of time to book in for an MOT before the trip and avoid paying fines of up to £1000 if you are caught without a valid certificate."

8 Insurance whatever the season

A motorcaravan is a big investment for any family, so whether you're heading off for a summer break or a final trip out before the long winter sets in, make sure you've got the most dependable insurance. The specialist team at Motorhome Protect has years of experience arranging specialist cover. They say, "Not only is it simple and straightforward to obtain cover, but policies can include a range of benefits such as up to £3,000 cover for camping personal effects, unlimited mileage cover even in the EU."

9 Medical supplies and First Aid

Being prepared for all eventualities is an important part of any successful motorhome trip.

Julia Salmon, a paramedic who has her own campervan says, "Check your first aid and medical supplies for expiration dates and restock anything that's running low." She suggests a useful medical kit would include Paracetamol tablets, waterproof plasters, rehydration sachets and Imodium tablets, wipes, surgical tape and bandages." She adds, "In the summertime you might want to add Insect repellent



HOW TO SANITISE THE WATER SYSTEM

Follow these steps to thoroughly sanitise your motorcaravan water system

- Close all drains and install drain plugs.
- Measure out 50ml of everyday household bleach for every 50 litres your fresh water tank holds.
- Pour the bleach into a 5-litre container and fill it with water.
- Add the bleach and water mixture into the fresh water tank.
- Fill the fresh water tank entirely with water.
- Turn on the water pump and open all taps.
- Run the water until you can smell the bleach and then turn off the taps.
- Let the solution sit for up to twelve hours in the water tank and water system.
- Drain all of the water from the system.
- Refill the fresh water tank with water.
- Flush the system by turning on the water pump and opening all taps.
- Allow the water to run until it no longer smells like bleach.
- While you're at it, check you've got all your hoses and connectors ready for when you need to fill up on site.

Antihistamine and antiseptic cream

10 Memberships and passes

Holidays are not complete without visiting attractions and camping at your favourite spots. Rob Fern is the General Manager of Alan Rogers Travel Ltd a firm that specialises in motorcaravan holidays says, "There will be frowns all round if you've left your passes

or membership details at home. And it'll be worse still if you've forgotten to renew your membership altogether! Whether membership of the National Trust or English Heritage, a forgotten card or missed renewal should be easily solved but it can still cause unnecessary irritation and annoyance. Make sure your memberships are in place before you set off.