



Guide to... CAMPSITES

Selecting the right campsite can make the difference between a memorable holiday and one that is unforgettable for all the wrong reasons!
Here's how to find the ideal site for you and your family

- 68 How to choose a campsite**
There are thousands of sites to choose from, but we can help you decide!
- 72 Secret sites**
Discover the pleasures of staying at a CL or CS, in spectacular locations
- 74 Top 100 sites round-up**
All of the brilliant winners in our 2021 *Top 100 Sites Guide*, as voted for by you
- 76 Off-grid touring**
Expert tips on how to prepare and plan ahead for perfect off-grid adventures
- 78 How to run a campsite**
We go behind the scenes to find out how sites make fabulous holiday experiences
- 82 Handy websites and apps**
Use these websites and apps to track down the best campsites for your trip



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



FINDING THE RIGHT SITE

Pick a great campsite and you're guaranteed a brilliant holiday! Here's everything you need to think about – location, facilities, cost, adults-only and much more – to ensure the perfect stay

Hawes CAMC Site
is great for hiking in
the Yorkshire Dales



The Caravan and Motorhome Club

WHEN IT COMES to choosing the perfect place to stay while you're on tour, there's rather a lot to assimilate.

With more than 12,000 sites listed by UKcampsite.co.uk, 5000 holiday parks and sites by Pitchup.com, 2000 by The Camping and Caravanning Club and 2200 by the Caravan and Motorhome Club, deciding can be more than a little overwhelming.

But it is important: being unhappy with your campsite choice can ruin your trip. Holidays are about creating memories and you don't want them to be bad. So how do you narrow down the selection?

Who do you think you are?

Start by considering the needs of your family. A family with a couple of teenagers will require a different set-up to one with

under-10s, or comprising just adults.

Interests are important, too. Will it be coast, rivers, lakes, countryside, moorland, mountains or towns that offer the most opportunities to keep everyone in your party enthralled and entertained?

Your idea of a break might be one where there are few decisions to make because activities are laid on and meal solutions are readily available within a holiday park environment, so you can just relax.

Alternatively, you might prefer to stay on a campsite that is located deep in the countryside or on the coast, where you make your own fun.

Short of the readies?

Budget is, of course, another important consideration. If the coffers are looking a

bit empty, you might prefer a low-facility, environmentally friendly campsite.

Low season is always a good time to go touring on a budget, and you can quite often find some really excellent deals for midweek touring, too. A stay of seven nights or more can sometimes earn you an extra night for free.

What about pets?

Owning a caravan means your four-legged friends don't have to go into kennels, you can often take them on tour with you.

You will just need to find yourselves a pet-friendly campsite, with space to exercise your animal, on-site or on walks that you can access nearby.

Some campsites even have outside dog showers, so you can hose down your pet



**CUT OUT
AND KEEP
GUIDE!**



**Summers Ponds offers access
to a fabulous fishing lake**

**'Fishing and
touring seem to
be quite common
bedfellows, with
access to excellent
angling lakes at
many campsites'**



**Family-friendly Silverdale is
Holgates' flagship campsite**

after a muddy outing. Most insist on dogs being kept on leads, and some limit the number of dogs allowed per unit.

Join a touring club

Becoming a member of one or both of the major UK touring clubs – the Caravan and Motorhome Club and The Camping and Caravanning Club – will give you access to thousands of campsites.

The Clubs list sites they own, affiliated sites, and those designated Certificated Site/Location (CS/CL).

CSs and CLs are small, independently owned sites for members only, which take just five units. They are often in beautiful countryside settings; some are in areas set aside within larger campsites. For more information on these, see p72.

At any of the major Club campsites, you can be assured of the highest standards of hygiene and maintenance.

If you are thinking about touring abroad, both Clubs can help you with your travel arrangements, offering deals for ferry trips and European site bookings.

The important stuff

Make a list of what you require from your campsite. If you are stopping for just one or two nights, this might be as simple as having a nearby pub where you can get a meal.

Choose a site that provides service points where you can easily empty your grey water and fill up with fresh.

If you are staying longer, look for easy access to public transport, which can save

you the stress of driving into busy town centres and finding somewhere to park.

Washroom facilities on the majority of campsites will include showers, toilets and handbasins, with family rooms and some specifically for wheelchair users; many will also provide dishwashing and laundry facilities for their guests.

Reviews and awards listed on websites are very good indicators of how well any campsite is being run. For eco-friendly credentials, look for sites displaying the David Bellamy Awards symbol.

Super-clean washroom facilities can earn themselves a Loo of the Year Award.

Visit Britain and the AA grade campsites, and for people's choice awards, go to our annual *Top 100 Sites Guide*, where sites have been voted for by guests (see p74).

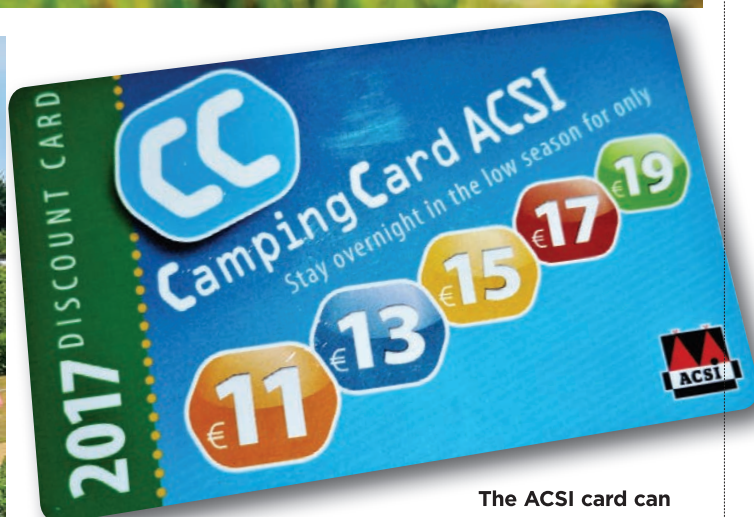
Silverdale



Windermere C&CC Site is just one of many great locations you can choose from



Fields End Water is ideal for keen anglers



The ACSI card can save you money

Sites for the grown-ups

Select an adults-only campsite if you are grown-ups seeking a bit of peace and quiet. Tranquil Parks (tranquillparks.co.uk) lists 43 independent, family-owned, adults-only parks across England and Wales, with some helpful search filters, such as dog-friendly, open all year and fishing.

Fishing and touring seem to be quite common bedfellows, with access to excellent angling lakes at many sites.

Sites for families

Families often prefer to stay on full-facility campsites, providing children's clubs, play areas, fields for ball games, a pool and a restaurant, café, bar or clubhouse. Some have crazy golf and petting zoos. Others offer spa facilities and a gym.

Take a look at holiday park operators such as Flower of May (flowerofmay.com),

which owns parks in Yorkshire offering a variety of family-friendly facilities.

Full-facility sites usually also host static caravans: some privately owned, others for hire. The ambience will be busy, active and very much family-orientated.

Other park operators your family might consider include Holgates (holgates.co.uk), Parkdean Resorts (parkdeanresorts.co.uk) and Away Resorts (awayresorts.co.uk).

Adventure, theme, location

For some, enjoyment of outdoor activities might guide your campsite choice. In that case, take a look at Adventure Campsites (adventurecampsites.com), which lists sites across the British Isles that offer outdoor adventures close by, such as walking the Brecon Beacons in Wales, or coastal and lake-based watersports.

Alternatively, selecting a specific location

– browse through the regional tourist board websites, which provide useful information about accommodation – or perhaps picking a particular theme, such as following the famous whisky trail across Scotland, could be the way for you to go.

Touring further afield

If you're thinking about travelling abroad, there's plenty of information to be found. As mentioned, the Caravan and Motorhome Club and The Camping and Caravanning Club can arrange and book ferries and campsites for members travelling abroad.

If you are touring during the low season, you might like to pick up an ACSI camping card (campingcard.co.uk), which offers savings of up to 60% at participating sites in Europe. Eurocampings (eurocampings.co.uk) lists 9705 sites inspected by ACSI.



TOP SECRET SITES

Caravanners in the know sing the praises of the major Clubs' CLs and CSs, says Dan Trudgian, but what is it that makes these campsites so special?

IF YOU ARE a recent arrival to the world of caravanning, you might have been a bit puzzled when reading articles about our pastime mentioning the major Clubs' CLs and CSs. What benefits do they offer?

A quick overview

CLs, or Certificated Locations, are small, private sites that accommodate no more than five units (caravans, motorhomes and trailer tents).

These can only be used by members of the Caravan and Motorhome Club, and there are more than 2000 of these sites dotted around the UK.

CSs, or Certificated Sites, are similar. These locations also hold a maximum

of five caravans or motorhomes, but they are exclusively for the use of members of The Camping and Caravanning Club, which has more than 1400 locations across the UK and Northern Ireland.

One difference between the two, though, is that CSs can also host up to 10 tents.

Facilities

On-site facilities will vary from site to site, but as a bare minimum, you can always expect to find drinking water, a chemical waste point and rubbish disposal.

Some campsites will offer a lot more than this. For example, facilities such as showers, electric hook-up and hardstanding pitches are not uncommon.

Owing to the nature of these sites as private enterprises, provision of facilities can be quite varied and quirky, however.

Some campsites offer visitors the use of fishing lakes, while others might provide access to local farm produce, picnic tables, barbecue points and communal firepits.

A variety of locations

Private sites can be found everywhere, from the grounds of country estates, to working farms and locations that are surprisingly close to local attractions.

It is perhaps the extensive range of such places that makes private sites so appealing. They can be situated in the heart of the rural landscape, where the commercial

CERTIFICATED LOCATIONS



'Certificated Locations are small private campsites holding no more than five units. They can only be used by members of the Caravan and Motorhome Club'



sites would never be granted planning permission for a large-scale development. Here are just two examples of campsites in my home county of Wiltshire.

■ **Thatado Farm CL**
(Caravan and Motorhome Club)
 Braydon Road, Leigh, Swindon SN6 6RQ
 > www.caravanclub.co.uk

This North Wiltshire CL makes a great base for exploring the surrounding area. Stay here and you are within easy reach of Malmesbury, Cirencester and Cricklade. It offers connections to Bath and Oxford, and is on the edge of the Cotswolds. Visitors to the site can expect to find:

- Hardstanding pitches
- On-site WC (exclusive use)
- Pets welcome
- 16A electric hook-up
- Great TV reception

■ **Orchard Farm CS**
(Camping and Caravanning Club)
 Rushmead Lane, South Wraxall,
 Bradford-on-Avon BA15 2RH
 > www.rushmeadcs.com

Orchard Farm CS is located in a beautiful setting just two miles from the historic town of Bradford-on-Avon, and is also only a 15-minute drive from the city of Bath. There's a nature trail to enjoy around the

campsite, where you can spot a wide range of flora and fauna. Visitors to the campsite can expect to find:

- Large, level pitches
- Electric hook-up
- Toilets
- Dishwashing facilities
- Metered shower

Cost savings

One of the main selling points of CLs and CSs is the potential cost saving. A pitch ranges from around £6 to £25 per night, depending on the season, the facilities provided and the location. Many sites will charge visitors per pitch, regardless of occupants or extras.

I booked a CL in Hampshire that cost just £60 for five nights, although I did pay an extra £1 per night for our dog. This was still much cheaper than a local mainstream site, which would have cost us £140.

Its location made the CL a far better option for us. It was quiet and closer to the places that we wanted to visit.

Find your own secret site

Talking to some site owners, I asked how they would sum up CLs and CSs to Club members. They compared these privately run sites with boutique hotels – small, quirky and possibly unique. They might not always be cheaper, but they always offer something slightly different,

whereas the large commercial sites could be aligned to a national chain.

The expectation of facilities, pitches and ambience will be recognisable, wherever you might stay. Private sites are renowned for being quiet oases in the heart of the most beautiful countryside.

It can, however, be quite difficult to find out about CLs and CSs, because avid caravanners can sometimes be a bit reluctant to share information about great campsites they have discovered!

Few people want to let on about a favourite site, for fear of it becoming overpopular in the peak season.

But if you take a look at the Clubs' websites, you will be able to read reviews by caravanners about particular sites, their facilities and locations.

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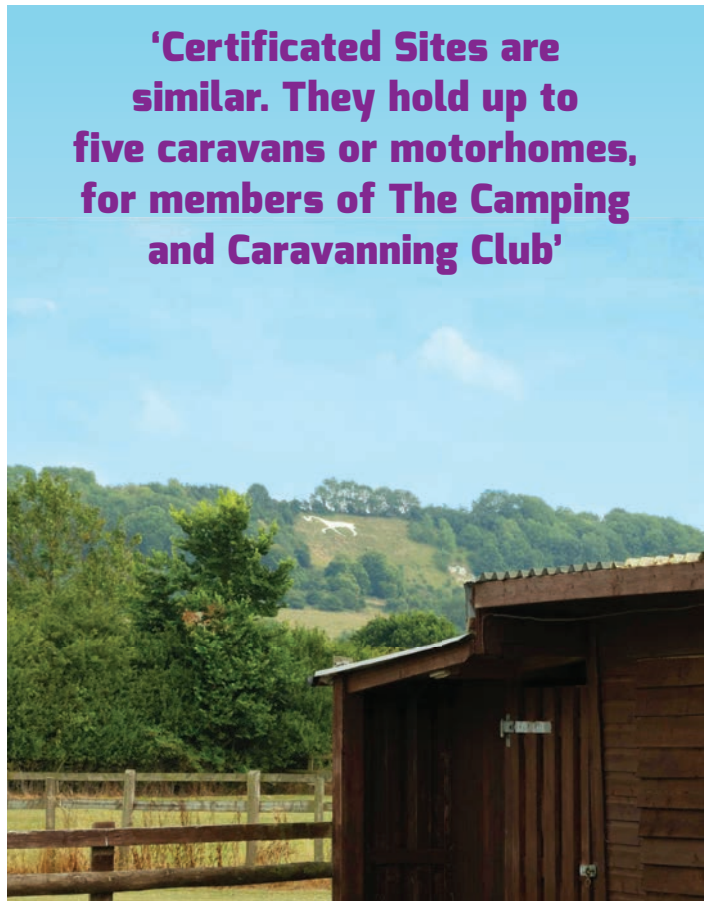


MORE INFORMATION

Caravan and Motorhome Club CLs
 > www.caravanclub.co.uk/uk-holidays/uk-sites/certificated-locations

Camping and Caravanning Club CSs
 > www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk/ukcampsites/smallsites

CERTIFICATED SITES



'Certificated Sites are similar. They hold up to five caravans or motorhomes, for members of The Camping and Caravanning Club'



OUR TOP 100 SITES

Stay on an award-winning pitch at one of *Practical Caravan's* fantastic Top 100 winners – here we round up each regional victor in our 2021 guide

NORTHERN IRELAND

Rushin House Caravan Park

Belcoo, County Fermanagh BT93 5DU

➤ rushinhouse.com

In an absolutely prime position, right on the shores of beautiful Lough MacNea, this AA five-star-rated campsite is a worthy Northern Ireland Regional Winner.

The panoramic views and rural farm setting, in combination with the exquisite loch itself, attract returning visitors year after year to this lovely location.



SCOTLAND

Myrus Caravan Park

Banff, Aberdeenshire AB45 3QP

➤ myrusholidaypark.co.uk

The site has excellent credentials, including a five-star award grading from Scotland's National Tourist Board. It offers a selection of fully equipped pitches, with hook-up, and water, sewage and TV connection. The touring section is adults-only. The heated toilet block includes a disabled suite and there's a fully equipped, spacious laundry.



WALES

South Wales Touring Park (Llwynifan Farm)

Llangennech, Llanelli SA14 8AX

➤ southwalescaravansite.co.uk

This adults-only park put 2020's downtime to good use, installing a dog-shower area and a covered chemical disposal point.

The site's location, near the M4, makes this a great base for exploring Wales. Local attractions include Llangennech village, which is less than a mile from the park.



NORTH-EAST ENGLAND

Cote Ghyll Caravan Park

Northallerton, North Yorkshire DL6 3AH

➤ coteghyll.com

Tucked into a beautiful valley on the edge of an idyllic village, Cote Ghyll lies within North York Moors National Park. Cyclists will particularly enjoy exploring the area, with routes to suit all levels of experience, and the nearby Moor to Sea Cycle Network. There are 150 miles to discover, through the heart of the beautiful National Park.



NORTH-WEST ENGLAND

Holgates Holiday Park (Silverdale)

Silverdale LA5 0SH

➤ holgates.co.uk/silverdale

Holgates' flagship site has everything you need for a fabulous family holiday – two play areas, a games room, a soft play area, a pool, sauna and gym, and a bowling alley. There's also a restaurant, café and bar for when you don't feel like venturing far. But step beyond the site gates and you'll find yourself in the Arncliffe & Silverdale AONB.



EASTERN ENGLAND

Old Brick Kilns Caravan & Camping Park

Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 0NL

➤ old-brick-kilns.co.uk

Fish for carp, bream, rudd and tench on the wildlife pond at the centre of this pristine park, or head out to explore the Norfolk Coast AONB, perfect for birdwatching.

If history and architecture are your interests, the area also has more than its fair share of spectacular stately homes.





HEART OF ENGLAND

Eye Kettleby Lakes Holiday Park

Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire LE14 2TN

➤ eyekettlebylakes.com

The nine coarse-fishing lakes that can be enjoyed by keen anglers at Eye Kettleby are just one of the many great attractions of this wonderful campsite.

The park has expanded with the passage of time and these days, has an adults-only campsite, adults-only glamping pods with shower rooms and their own barbecue area, and an adults-only touring zone.

There's a central clubhouse with a bar and a large tearoom, open to day visitors as well as touring and lodge guests (for more about this site, see p80).



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SOUTH-EAST ENGLAND

Horam Manor Country Park

Horam, Heathfield TN21 0YD

➤ horammanorcountrypark.com

Part of the Sellers Leisure group, this fine campsite makes regular appearances in our Top 100. It offers top-notch touring and camping on hardstanding or grass pitches, with seasonal pitches also available.

Amenities include the Lakeside Café and Bistro, a family-run fishery, riding stables and Horam Manor Farm nature trails.



DORSET

Back of Beyond Touring Park

St Leonards, East Dorset BH24 2SB

➤ backofbeyondtouringpark.co.uk

You can see an enormous amount of effort has gone into the environmentally friendly development of the site and its grounds, work that has been recognised with a David Bellamy Gold Conservation Award.

Visitors to this adults-only site can leave behind daily stress, with walks in 18 acres of woodland or around two fishing lakes.



SOMERSET, AVON & WILTSHIRE

Old Oaks Touring Park

Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 8JS

➤ theoldoaks.co.uk

Old Oaks is an adults-only site offering touring, camping and glamping, all less than two miles from Glastonbury.

Set in an idyllic spot surrounded by beautiful countryside, there's a choice of pitches, from standard to premier, a gift shop, and spotlessly clean facilities.



DEVON

Ross Park Caravan Park

Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 5TT

➤ rossparkcaravanpark.co.uk

In beautiful countryside with magnificent views over Dartmoor, Ross Park has been a regular in our Top 100. It's easy to see why, because facilities are excellent and standards are high. The heated amenities block has free hot water, baby-changing and disabled facilities. There is another toilet block and a dish-washing room.



CORNWALL

Tehidy Holiday Park

Illogan, Redruth TR16 4JQ

➤ tehidy.co.uk

Tehidy is in a fantastic position, from which guests can easily visit the best of Cornwall's beautiful towns and beaches, and offers excellent access to several great cycle routes, gardens and historic sites.

There's a children's play area, a games room, site shop, free Wi-Fi, launderette, and a disabled and family room.



To download your free copy of our **Top 100 Sites Guide 2021**, simply visit www.practicalcaravan.com/top100!



GO OFF-GRID

With many low-facility campsites charging single-figure nightly fees, going back to nature can save a fortune and land you on some of Britain's finest pitches, says John Sootheran

Plan your power supply and you can go off-grid in style



BY DEFINITION, TOURING off-grid means that you have no electric hook-up, Wi-Fi or those other luxuries we've come to expect. Most often, a lack of campsite facilities will also require you to rely solely on the washroom in your caravan.

The payback for these little 'hardships' is immense, however. The best off-grid sites are small, wild and set in the most extraordinary locations, where a large, commercial campsite simply wouldn't be allowed to operate.

Yes, you can save a small fortune in campsite fees, but off-gridding is more to do with the quality of the sites. Usually rural and remote, they will often have a camping X-factor that bigger, facility-filled parks just can't compete with.

Going off-grid can be a brilliant way to camp, although to ensure that your tour is stress-free, you do need to plan ahead and be prepared. We've pulled together some top tips to make sure that your next trip off-grid is a complete success!

Gas

Start by making sure you have sufficient gas supplies for your outing. This could be a bit awkward without investing in a second gas cylinder, so that you will always have a full one available for use.

One excellent solution to this quandary is to invest in a self-refill system, such as Safefill or Gaslow.

Both involve buying the bottle(s) – and in the case of Gaslow, the installation – which you can then fill up yourself at any of the UK's 240 LPG Autogas fuel stations, such as Morrisons, for example. You can find out more at drivelpg.co.uk.

You'll also need to think about the time of year when you will be going off-grid. If you are planning to tour during the colder months, bear in mind that butane vaporises at temperatures down to minus 2°C, while propane vaporises as low as minus 42°C. Touring in a typical British winter could easily cause a butane-powered system to cease functioning.

Electricity

With no mains hook-up, you'll be relying on your leisure battery for electric power, which is why many serious off-gridders install a second leisure battery, fitted with manual or automatic switchover.

Your caravan's battery power (reserve) is measured in ampere/hours (Ah), and an ideal size for off-gridders is 110Ah.

This is a large item, so check that it will fit in your leisure battery compartment. And bear in mind that a second battery can also take up 20kg of your payload.

A leisure battery has much thicker lead plates inside than those in a car battery. Typically, the heavier a battery is, the more lead it contains and the better-suited it is going to be for off-grid caravanning.

Avoid the charge in your lead-acid leisure battery becoming too depleted. It will last longer if it's regularly recharged from 75% capacity, rather than letting it go down to 50% or below. It's also important to keep your batteries properly charged during the



off-season and in storage. Use a smart charger where possible, or remove the battery and store it in a well-ventilated room, checking power levels periodically.

Solar panels

Solar panels can keep your leisure battery topped up with power, so they are perfect for off-gridding. Photovoltaic panels create electricity from all light, not just direct sunlight, so they will generate current in winter, albeit a fraction of what they'd make on a bright summer day.

They can be fixed to the roof (bonded or bolted), or they're available in portable metal frames, which can be moved to make the best use of available sunlight. Remember to move them at night during the summer, so they can make the most of the early morning sunlight before you rise.

Buy a good brand from a reputable dealer. Look for a panel with the international IEC 61215 quality certification, and buy from an outlet that is offering customers a good warranty. For example, Solar Technology International (solartechnology.co.uk) has a 25-year performance warranty.

The angle of your solar panel will hugely affect its performance. The optimum angle varies, depending on your location and the time of year. You can find the best angles online at solarelectricityhandbook.com/solar-angle-calculator.html.

All panels over 18W will require a voltage regulator/controller. We'd recommend a (slightly more expensive) Maximum Power Point Tracking charge controller, which can eke 20% more power from your system.

Aim to fit a solar panel that is capable of keeping your system charged; typically this will be a 100-200W set-up.

Water

All but the most extreme off-grid sites will provide a water supply, but we would still always recommend taking a large canister of drinking water with you just in case, especially when going to campsites that you haven't visited before.

Save power

You can take steps to limit the amount of power you use. A van with LED lighting uses a fraction of the power consumed in one with traditional tungsten bulbs. LED light conversions are a relatively easy job for the keen DIYer. Likewise, LED TVs consume less power than other types.

Avoid activating your water pump every time you turn on a tap to wash your hands, and save water, by using hand sanitiser.



CUT OUT
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GUIDE!



ABOVE Tasty marshmallows toasted around the firepit are a treat for the whole family
INSET Keen off-gridded Rod Farrendon demonstrates that you can dine well, too!
LEFT There's just you, and the gorgeous view

Hot summer days can often lead to cool evenings. But rather than flicking on the heating, you might consider taking along some items of 'unseasonal' clothing, such as bedsocks, for when you are indoors.

Alternatively, you could take a firepit with you (if the campsite allows them), then everyone will be able to sit outside later into the evening.

Shower in the morning, so the battery has all day to recharge via your solar panel.

Powered by 12V

Lots of appliances powered by 240V mains electricity at home are also available in 12V versions, and these are perfect for off-grid enthusiasts. For example, 12V toasters, kettles and hairdryers can be obtained from all good touring dealerships.

Inverters

Inverters turn 12V DC battery power into a 230V AC output. This allows you to run household appliances in your caravan when

you are off-grid. There are two types of inverter: quasi (or modified) sine wave inverters and pure sine wave inverters.

Quasi versions power most appliances, including microwaves, kettles, hairdryers and hair straighteners, although some thyristor-controlled equipment can only be run from a pure sine wave inverter.

Calculate the maximum power consumption that you'll need (in watts) and choose an inverter accordingly.

Remember that an inverter typically discharges your battery much faster than when using 12V equipment.

Save money

The typical night rate at a mainstream campsite is likely to be around £25-£30. A top-notch small site with fewer facilities and no hook-up can cost £10-£12 per night, sometimes as little as £8.

Both types will probably offer guests discounts for a week-long booking, so the totals might typically be £160 versus £65.



CAMPSITE SECRETS

Ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes at a site? We did too, so (pre-pandemic) our team spent time at our Top 100 Sites Guide overall winner, Eye Kettleby Lakes, to find out more and meet the staff

ALL OF US will have stayed on a campsite at one time or another, and it's very clear that a great deal of work goes on behind the scenes: from cleaning the toilets to staffing reception or cutting the grass, there's a lot to attend to.

We wanted to find out exactly what goes on during a typical day at a campsite, so we paid a (pre-pandemic) visit to our 2021 *Top 100 Sites Guide* overall winner, family-run Eye Kettleby Lakes, in Leicestershire.

Once there, our team took on some of the many roles that were required – no matter how challenging – to really live the campsite life. Here's how they got on...

7.00am

The cookers are lit and the fresh produce deliveries are taken in, while the campsite begins to wake up.

8.00am

Reception rapidly transforms into a hive of activity, with preparations made for the arrivals that day. Fishing tickets are issued, newspapers are sold, and every enquiry from the night before is dealt with. Tickets to special events are sold and telephone calls for booking requests are returned.

This is quite a tough role to manage, especially because the reception building had only just opened when we visited. The fact that there are two desks here suggests things can get busy.

But it's one that main receptionist Jess finds exhilarating. "We can be completely run off our feet. At peak times, there are three people at the desks and answering the phones, all working flat out."

8.30am

Breakfast is being served and head chef Sarah is rightly proud of the ever-popular Full English that the campsite serves: "It's a treat, isn't it? Our guests are on holiday, and we like to give them a proper breakfast to start the day."

Sarah is also keen to point out that all of the meat is sourced from local butchers,



ABOVE LEFT Main receptionist Jess talks Peter through Eye Kettleby Lakes' booking system
ABOVE RIGHT Head chef Sarah makes a cracking Full English...
MAIN ... which is then carried to the table by PC's Claudia!



and the free-range eggs are ordered in from just down the road, in Waltham.

Given the meat-lovers' paradise that is the traditional Full English, you'd be forgiven for thinking that vegetarians might have to make do with a slice of toast (gluten-free if required).

Forgiven, but wrong, because vegetarian guests are also well catered for, here at Eye Kettleby Lakes, with their very own breakfast option.

10.00am

Time for general manager Craig to gather the department managers together and discuss plans for the week ahead, such as upcoming special events that are held through the winter and at weekends in summer. "We continually evaluate all we do," he says. "The owners, Martin and Joyce Lomas, are building something that will go beyond the second generation, who are already working here."



MAIN Peter takes a break from all of the hard work to enjoy a spot of fishing and relaxation by the lake, while groundsman Sam looks on **MIDDLE** Simon fires up the lawnmower, with helpful guidance from groundsmen Matt and Wayne (INSET) **BOTTOM** Matt also has expert advice for Bryony about hedge-trimming and lighting maintenance



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12.00pm

Guests start arriving, and it's all hands on deck to ensure that they have everything they need to set up.
Short breaks are very popular here, and everyone seems to pull together to ensure that visitors' holiday experience will be the best possible.

1.00pm

What's cooking? Melts, among other things. "They are extremely popular nowadays, and we have a good variety," says Sarah.
"Then, of course, there are the traditional Sunday roasts, which have about four or five different options, starters, desserts, maybe a pie or two..."

2.00pm

As you might expect from its name, fishing certainly plays a major part at Eye Kettleby Lakes.

It was the lure of the first fishing lake at the farm, way back in the 1970s, that inspired owner Martin to start with the caravan park, because so many anglers wanted to stay overnight.

Most of the lakes on the site were built in the 1990s, and there are no fewer than nine in total. Fortunately for our Reviews editor, Peter, the site offers fishing tuition, too – even for complete novices.

2.30pm

The maintenance and grounds team are now going around the site to do their spot checks. Perched atop a ride-on lawnmower, groundsman Wayne looks around the lakes, accurately predicting the weather for our >>





MAIN Claudia meets the site's 'pets', a herd of pedigree Longhorn cattle **BELOW** Lizzy is in charge of payroll, but like the whole team, helps out wherever needed **BOTTOM** General manager Craig runs a tight ship



photoshoots, and tells us that he really can't imagine ever leaving here.

Having known the campsite well since he was just seven years old, Matt can give our team expert advice on how to handle the hedge-trimmer – all the while taking care not to stand too close.

3.00pm

The campsite's delicious traditional cream tea is a timeless British institution, and here it's very much homemade.

Head chef Sarah explains: "We make all our own mini-cakes. So many places just bake big cakes then cut them up, but we think that's cheating!" Instead, each dainty creation is individually handmade.

There was a rather intriguing alternative on offer when we visited, too – the Gentleman's Tea. "It's like a traditional afternoon tea, but consists of mini-burgers, sausage rolls, Scotch eggs, that kind of thing. There is a big demand."

4.00pm

The campsite has its roots as a working farm, and this is where owner Martin likes to spend much of his time: pottering about outside, planting, harvesting and tending to the pride of the farmyard, the fine herd of Longhorn cattle.

However, even though the second generation of Lomas are already on board, Martin thinks the question of retiring is our idea of a joke.

"Why would I ever want to do that?" he laughs. "I'm doing what I really enjoy. I love meeting people and finding out about our



guests. I always ask people where they're from, and if it's somewhere I haven't heard of, I'll look it up. That way, I'm learning about new places all the time."

4.30pm

"Well, I don't like to boast," says Lizzy Lomas, the daughter-in-law in the clan, with a glint in her eyes, "but I'm probably the most popular person around here! I'm in charge of payroll, you see."

But like everyone else on the staff team at Eye Kettleby Lakes, Lizzy can also be found here, there and everywhere there's a need for an extra pair of hands – she's full of praise for the superb running of the campsite.

"We have always had such positivity from Martin and Joyce – when we spoke about putting a bath in the bedroom of the lodges, they were sceptical at first, but they soon go along with things if they can see they are customer-driven."

5.00pm

It's wine o'clock, or will it be gin? As the bar is starting to fill up with visitors and regulars looking for a relaxing drink by the fire, they are spoiled for choice – not least by the 30 gins on offer, including a local Melton Mowbray gin and the famous Chase gin, originally distilled using potatoes.

6.15pm

Every Wednesday, a fish 'n' chip van rocks up outside the clubhouse. The tearoom is prepared with sauces and condiments, and who do we find behind the bar?

None other than cleaning supremo Ange and director Joyce. So how does Ange feel about this extra responsibility behind the bar at the end of a long day of cleaning?

"Actually, I asked if I could do it," she admits. "It's such good fun, because we get a lot of regulars in and Joyce and I get to share a fish 'n' chip supper, too. Wouldn't miss it for the world!"

Midnight

It's the end of the day, and security barriers are in place across the site; with Martin and Joyce also living on-site, everyone is sure to enjoy a great night's sleep. As will our team – before they get to do it all over again in the morning...

■ We visited Eye Kettleby Lakes before the pandemic; to find out more about how the site is keeping its guests safe, see www.eyekettlebylakes.com/covid-update.





SITES FOR SITES

Check out these websites and apps for great campsite information when you're on the go

Websites



Practical Caravan's Top 100

➤ www.practicalcaravan.com/locations

You'll find all of the winners of our annual Top 100 Sites awards on our website – it's easy to search by region or facility. While you're there, you can download a free PDF of the latest *Top 100 Sites Guide* to keep on your device for easy future reference.



UK Campsites

➤ ukcampsite.co.uk

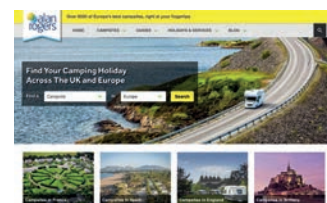
Thousands of campsites across the UK feature on this comprehensive website, which also provides handy search filters – such as adults-only, dog-friendly and open all year – to help you find the right site for you. There are plenty of informative user-generated reviews for you to read, too.



Tranquil Parks

➤ tranquillparks.co.uk

If you're thinking about booking a great adults-only site for your next tour, take a look at the Tranquil Parks website – it features details of the 42 individually owned member sites within its pages. All of these well-appointed campsites are designed to appeal specifically to those touring without children.

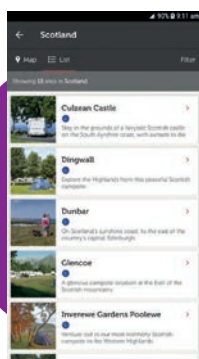


Alan Rogers

➤ alanrogers.com

More than 8000 campsites across Europe feature on the Alan Rogers website, with everything from all-singing, all-dancing, full-facility sites to smaller, more peaceful locations. The added reassurance is that the team of assessors at Alan Rogers has independently reviewed each one, verifying its quality.

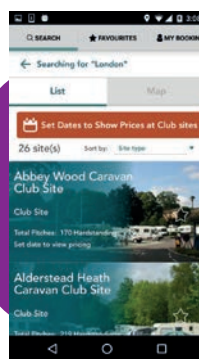
Apps



SiteSeeker

Price Free; iOS and Android

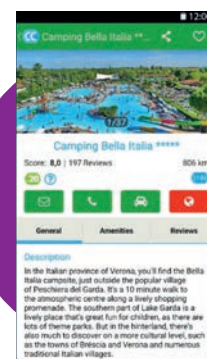
Find a campsite while you are on the road – this useful tool from The Camping and Caravanning Club allows you to locate the perfect place to camp, and features a smart interactive map.



CAMC UK Sites app

Price Free; iOS and Android

Allows you to quickly and easily locate a Caravan and Motorhome Club site – as well as affiliated sites and CLs – directly from your phone or tablet. If you're a Club member, you can book your stay, too.



ACSI app

Price Free, but requires an ACSI

discount card; iOS and Android
Card holders can search ACSI's network of sites across Europe to find one nearby. You can filter by amenities, save favourite campsites, leave reviews and much more.