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Guide to... CONTINENTAL TRAVEL

Now's the ideal time to hitch up and head overseas!

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AND KEEP
GUIDE!



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EASIER TOURING ABROAD

Foreign travel with your caravan can be plain sailing with a little planning and preparation! John Sootheran has some expert tips



I CANNOT RECOMMEND Euro-touring highly enough. The towing is easy, the weather is better and there are so many new places, and so much delicious food and drink, to discover.

Given that many of Britain's tourist hotspots seem rather oversubscribed these days, it needn't cost you any more to tour abroad – even cross-Channel travel can be bagged at great rates if you buy carefully. Follow our advice and we promise you a *fantastisch/fantastique/fantastico* caravanning holiday!

Ferries

When travelling to Europe, you have numerous ferry options, depending which country or region you'll be aiming for.

For northern Europe, Scandinavia, Poland and the Baltics, consider crossing to Amsterdam, Rotterdam or the Hook of Holland, because this will minimise the towing time to your destination.

Towing from Calais to this area is a distance of approximately 220 miles, and will take you around four hours, at the least. For France, Belgium, central and

southern Germany, Italy, the Alps and eastern Europe, crossing from Dover to Calais offers the shortest tow to these regions, and usually the best prices, too (as well as the shortest time actually at sea – just 90 minutes).

For western France If you're heading to Normandy, Brittany, the west coast of France or Spain, the Portsmouth-to-Caen ferry knocks more than 200 miles and four hours of towing off your journey, when compared to landing in Calais. >>



Leave yourselves plenty of time to board the ferry

'Family pets can sometimes be left in your outfit during the ferry crossing, but you must consider their welfare'

The ferry actually docks in Ouistreham, in the heart of D-Day country, 25 minutes from Caen and close to road links heading south (follow the Le Mans signs).

The Brittany Ferries crossing will take about four hours, but is on a 'super ferry', with restaurants, cinemas and cabins.

For Spain To minimise your towing and maximise your relaxation time, for Spanish touring, your best bet will be the Portsmouth-to-Santander or the Portsmouth-to-Bilbao crossings.

These take from 24 to 36 hours, but the vessels are very luxurious, especially *Salamanca* – Brittany Ferries' newest ship – on the Bilbao route (departing from Portsmouth on Thursdays and Sundays) and Cantabria on the Santander route (departing from Portsmouth on Mondays and Fridays). The Plymouth-to-Santander crossing runs on Sundays and Wednesdays.

John's choice We usually head over to western France on the excellent 8.15am Portsmouth-to-Caen crossing with Brittany Ferries. We leave Peterborough at about 4am, allowing time for any unexpected traffic/towing shenanigans, although of course, the roads are empty for the first half of the drive.

Our ritual is to stop at the St Albans (A405) Starbucks for a coffee break, then we always arrive at the ferry terminal with an hour to spare. It's all very relaxed and there are facilities available at the port.

Family pets can sometimes be left in your outfit during the crossing, but you must consider their welfare. Before you board the ferry, raise your jockey wheel to its maximum, to prevent it from grounding out.



Eurotunnel is the time-saving way to cross

We have breakfast on the boat, then grab a few hours' sleep in the (optional) cabin. Later, we might watch a film in the cinema or play table tennis outside on deck. After a leisurely lunch, it's almost time to dock at Ouistreham (3pm French time).

After exiting the ferry, we usually aim for Le Mans. Sometimes we prefer to travel for an additional hour-and-a-bit to reach Tours, staying at Camping Les Acacias (camping-tours.fr/en), where the restaurant does excellent pizzas. Here, we'd recommend pitches 64-68, which are spacious, grassy, on the edge of the campsite, but still close to all of the amenities.

From this site, you'll be onto the A10 in a matter of five minutes or so, and then western France is your oyster!

Eurotunnel

We've used Eurotunnel when we've been heading to Paris or Germany. It's fast and convenient, but quite expensive.

If you have a tighter schedule, or want to make good headway on the Continent on your first day, it may make sense to pay the extra – let the train take the strain.

Most of the time, this is a pretty slick service, too. You peel off the M20 when signposted, and thanks to the automated numberplate recognition, you're soon in line, ready to drive onto the train for your speedy 35-minute crossing.

It should be noted that Eurotunnel does not operate a red Customs channel, so any declarations must be made in advance.

To find out more about what you're allowed to bring into the UK, visit www.gov.uk/bringing-goods-into-uk-personal-use.

FERRY ROUTES

DFDS dfdsseaways.co.uk

- Dover to Calais
- Dover to Dunkirk
- Newhaven to Dieppe

Irish Ferries www.irishferries.com

- Dover to Calais

Brittany Ferries

brittany-ferries.co.uk

- Portsmouth to Le Havre
- Portsmouth to Caen
- Portsmouth to Cherbourg
- Portsmouth to St Malo
- Portsmouth to Bilbao
- Portsmouth to Santander
- Poole to Cherbourg
- Plymouth to Roscoff
- Plymouth to Santander

P&O Ferries poferries.com

- Dover to Calais
- Hull to Rotterdam
- Hull to Zeebrugge

Stena Line stenaline.co.uk

- Harwich to Hook of Holland

JOHN'S TOP EURO TOURING TIPS

■ You'll find the best travel, campsite and destination prices by booking in advance. Great offers can often be found at the Caravan & Motorhome Shows, because many regions and sites have stands at the NEC.

■ Always let your insurance provider know that you are taking your car and caravan abroad.

■ If you plan to tour for a month or more (as only leisure vehicle owners can!), check that your home insurance cover will remain valid for periods longer than 30 days.

■ Photograph your important travel documents and store them on your phone as back-up. Keep breakdown documentation in the vehicle. If you take V5 registration documents with you, store them securely, too.

■ When you are towing in Europe, be aware that some cities, such as Paris, Lyon and Grenoble, require you to display a Crit'Air (vehicle emissions) windscreen sticker. You can purchase a sticker at certificat-air.gouv.fr. They cost €3.72 per vehicle including p&p.

■ You'll also need a windscreen sticker known as a *vignette* if you are going to be driving on motorways in Austria and Switzerland. You can buy them at the border or online before you travel.

■ International breakdown cover for your car and caravan is essential, as it covers the costs of repatriating car, caravan and passengers to the UK (and potentially the costs of continuing your holiday), in the unfortunate event of breakdown or accident. Both major Clubs offer good breakdown cover.

Toll (*péage*) roads are the fastest way to travel in France, but can be costly



■ On certain days, especially Sundays and bank holidays, petrol stations might be left unattended, and the automated fuel pumps might not accept some British bank/credit cards. To avoid getting caught out, always carry spare cash with you, and try to refuel your tow car when you still have a quarter of a tank or more left.

■ Make a note of the dimensions of your caravan and tow car (imperial and metric) and stick this on the

driver's sun visor. It's reassuring to have these important measurements to hand when you're boarding ferries or entering car parks.

■ *Péage* (toll) motorways are the fastest way to traverse France, but they are expensive. Budget up to £100 if you plan to drive the entire length of France on these roads.

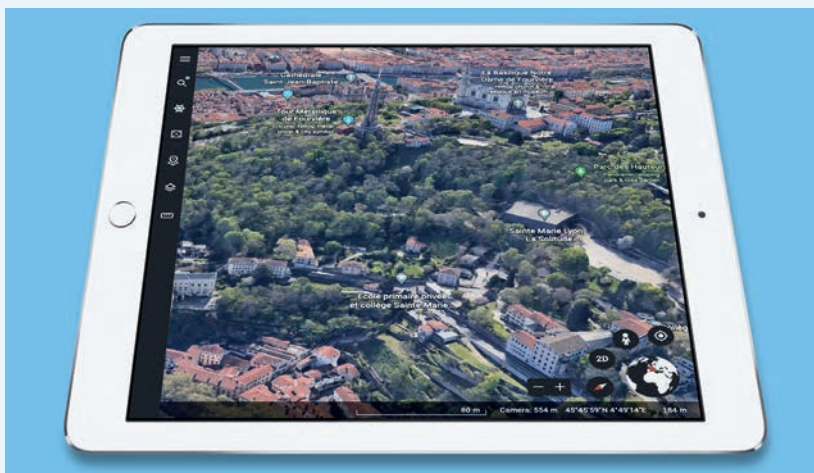
■ Alternatively, avoid those *péage* fees altogether by taking France's more scenic *Routes Nationales* (equivalent to our A-roads). You'll be able to soak up some of the country's finest scenery and experience French culture, as you can easily stop in pretty villages and towns en route.

■ Make a careful note of the power consumption (in amps) of all of your caravanning electrical devices. Most UK campsites offer 16A of current, but in Europe the amperage can be much lower, possibly 10A, or even as low as 4A. The lower the current, the fewer devices you can use without tripping the site hook-up.

To calculate the amp draw of any device, divide its wattage figure by the local voltage (220V in Europe). For example, a 2.2kW heater will draw 10A.

■ Use Google Earth maps and Street View to plan your routes and scope out destinations and attractions.

■ Consider purchasing low-wattage devices for caravanning. A domestic kettle usually devours 3kW, but you can buy 750W touring versions. >>



Google Earth maps and Street View can help you plan your itineraries on tour



■ Be sensible about the distances that you can comfortably tow each day, especially when you've had an early start to your trip.

■ Do not overnight on roadside *aires*, laybys or service station car parks, which may be targeted by thieves.

■ Never leave your rig unattended or out of sight at service stations when visiting the toilets or the shop.

■ On the Continent, tyre pressures are measured in bar rather than psi. There are 14.5 psi to one bar.

■ Fitting a roofbox frees up space inside your tow car. This is ideal for long journeys, especially if you need room for a pet in the vehicle. Once at your holiday destination, roofboxes are great for transporting wet and sandy gear and clothing back from the beach. Suppliers include:

➤ halfords.com

➤ thule.com

■ Make sure you take plenty of gas for the duration of your holiday. Continental gas connectors are not compatible with UK leisure vehicles. For longer breaks, take a Continental pigtail adaptor. That way, you'll be able to pick up a Euro cylinder at a service station or DIY outlet.

■ Consider taking a copy of any NHS prescriptions with you, because this will prove that your medication is prescribed. It means that you should be able to obtain further supplies if you haven't taken enough with you, or you are delayed for any reason.

■ In France, some of the municipal campsites do not accept twin-axle caravans. If you have a twin-axle, let the site know when you book.



Carry plenty of gas and buy a pigtail adaptor

'Fitting a roofbox frees up space inside your tow car, especially if you need room for a pet within the vehicle'

■ Take a basic toolkit with you, including screwdrivers (flat and Phillips), a range of spanners, pliers and a socket set. And don't forget the duct tape and WD-40.

■ Some Euro campsites may have hook-up with reverse polarity. This means that wiring can stay live even when a plug is switched off. Consider buying a tester and an adaptor lead with its wiring already reversed. These should be available from most camping accessory shops.

■ Take a jack for your car and caravan. Always (safely) jack the caravan on its axle, not the chassis.

■ There's a chance you'll need an adaptor to connect your UK mains lead to a French hook-up. The round, blue, three-pin Euro connection, as used on most UK campsites, is now the standard across much of Europe. Things could be more complicated in Scandinavia, but your caravan systems should still function.

■ When you are heading south in the summer, take a fan or air-con unit to keep the caravan at a comfortable temperature at night. Small portable fans are cheap, while air-conditioning



It might be difficult to find caravan fuses abroad, so take a good selection with you

units are going to be more expensive (and heavier, too). Suppliers include:

➤ coolmycamper.com

➤ totalcool.co.uk

■ Take a range of caravan fuses with you, because they might not be easily available abroad.

■ If you are heading north in the winter, make sure you are suitably prepared for extreme cold and fill up the windscreen washer with a concentrated solution.

■ Keep an eye on the weather near the end of your trip. Prepare to leave early if the weather looks likely to deteriorate, especially if high winds are being forecast.



An air-con unit will keep the caravan at a comfortable temperature in summer



ESCORTED TOURS

Group caravan tours are a fantastic way to travel with like-minded 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 HUGEY LIBERATING to tour with your caravan at your own pace, just going wherever takes your fancy, but it can also be extremely rewarding and reassuring to travel with other people.

An escorted tour offers you the perfect balance, giving structure to your route, removing much of the organisational burden and allowing you to travel with like-minded people, yet do your own thing as and when 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 caravanners 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 crop up.

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

On free days, you can either join the organised outings, or simply go your own way and explore as you please.

Most tour operators will also organise your accommodation, provide a travel itinerary with the relevant maps and detailed information and, of course, have hosts or leaders in place.



See Barcelona's famous Sagrada Família basilica on the Spanish East Coast tour

The CAMC First Time Brittany tour takes in historic St Malo



'A small group of caravanners travel with a tour leader, on a curated trip'

While there are several tour companies offering escorted caravan trips worldwide, UK operators offering trips to Europe tend to focus on motorhomes.

The Caravan and Motorhome Club (CAMC), however, offers tours suitable for both caravans and motorhomes to several European destinations.

Trips vary in length, but are typically between 14 and 25 nights. Some will focus on one particular area and stay at one campsite, while others involve changing sites every few days. In either case, the Club includes meals and daily excursions with transport. See individual trips for full details of what's included, because ferry transfers and holiday insurance, for example, must be booked separately.

Why take an escorted tour?

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

This means all of the campsites should be of the highest quality, the routes will have been created with caravans on tow in mind, and the itinerary will take in some of the best touring destinations.

Where can you go?

The CAMC has trips worldwide and there are a number of travel operators across the globe, but those looking to travel to Europe will find that the Club is a great choice as it is offering 18 escorted European tours in 2023.

These include two First Time Abroad tours to Normandy and Brittany, and three new ones: Wines of the Loire, France Grand Tour and Flavours of the Basque Country.

Favourite destinations include France, Spain, Portugal and Italy, with Croatia and Slovenia also proving attractive – the Club says its most popular tours this year will be the Loire, Ireland and Italy.

CONTACT

Caravan and Motorhome Club
➔ camc.com/europeantours



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 will be able to 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 to keep youngsters entertained.

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.

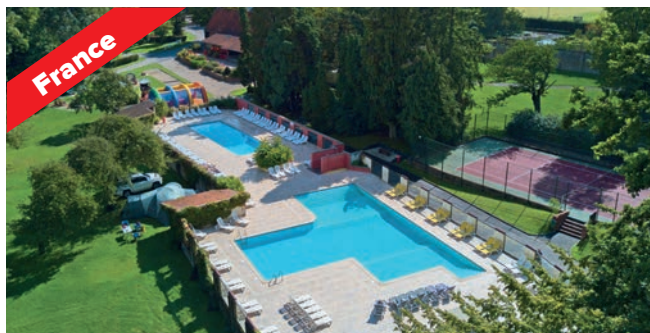
Address Route de Paris, 80200 Péronne, France



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



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 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



CARAVANING OYAMBRE, CANTABRIA

You're sure to enjoy your visit to the beautiful northern Spanish region of Cantabria if you stay at Caravaning 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 site'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



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



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 just 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



CAMPSITE KLEIN STRAND, WEST FLANDERS

Every caravanner should take a tour to Bruges, and Campsite Klein Strand is the perfect site to stay at: it's just 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 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



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

CONTINENTAL TRAVEL & THE LAW

For UK caravanners, 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 bear in mind that 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, it 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, either at 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 you are covered by travel insurance.

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

Some other websites will charge you to apply for the card, but this won't be necessary if you apply for your GHIC via the Government/NHS.

Covid-19 restrictions

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

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.

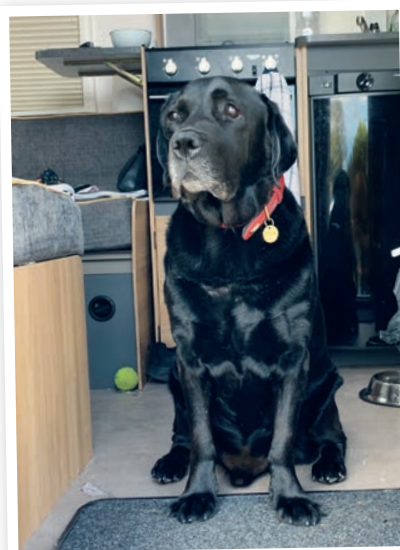
The rules covering how long you can stay in each country within the Schengen zone vary. For information about how the '90-within-180-days' rule is calculated, see www.gov.uk/visit-eu-switzerland-norway-iceland-liechtenstein/how-long-stay-without-visa. Regardless of where you are planning to tour and how long



You may also require an International Driving Permit in EU countries

'We would strongly suggest taking all documentation with you'

you might be staying, at border control you may also be required to produce a return ticket and proof of having enough money for your stay.



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 full list of the prohibitions, and the few exceptions, see food.ec.europa.eu/index_en.

Driving

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

Your caravan will require a 'UK' sticker and you'll need valid car insurance. We would strongly suggest taking all vehicle documentation with you, so that you can produce it if required to do so.

Pet travel

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

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



FIRST TIME ABROAD

Seasoned caravanner Sammy Faircloth offers expert advice for those who are new to foreign travel with their caravan

WHEN WE BOUGHT our Bailey Orion 460-5 in 2013, the first thing I said to my husband was, "Let's go to Spain!"

When I was growing up, my family spent long, hot summers on the beautiful Costa Brava, lapping up the warmth of the Spanish sun and swimming in the crystal-clear waters.

For some, touring abroad might seem a bit daunting – towing on the right-hand side, tolls, foreign languages, different road regulations and so forth. But don't let this dampen your wanderlust. Here are some top tips to help you get ready for your big adventure.

Prepare to travel

The main gateways to Europe are via the ferry ports, including Bilbao, Calais, Caen, St Malo and Santander, to name but a few. But for those who dislike travelling by sea, there is also the option of the Eurotunnel (eurotunnel.com), from Folkestone to Calais.

The bonus here is that it will only take you 30 minutes to get across to France under the English Channel, as opposed



Dover is the busiest passenger port in the UK, and the nearest English port to France

to voyages of one hour and 30 minutes by ferry from Dover to Calais.

Once you drive off the ferry or train to continue your journey by road, you must remember to drive on the right-hand side

of the road (except for Ireland, Malta and Cyprus). Driving regulations vary from country to country, so it is also advisable to check up on the latest legal requirements before you travel (p80), and identify what you will need for your various destinations.

Plan your itinerary before leaving home and invest in some up-to-date maps, because sat nav can sometimes lead you astray. We had a particularly scary moment using Google Maps to navigate around Paris!

This particular map took no account of the height of the caravan and tried to direct us through a road tunnel that was too low for our van. Luckily, with a bit of quick thinking and reverting to a good old paper map, we were able to find an alternative route.

Remember to switch off the function on your sat nav that warns you about fixed speed cameras, because this is illegal in places such as France.

Bear in mind, too, that for driving at night, it is mandatory in most countries to adjust the headlamp pattern of your car, to avoid dazzling oncoming traffic »



Road signs differ from country to country, so it's a good idea to familiarise yourself with the rules covering your whole route



(only if driving on the right-hand side). Alternatively, buy headlight deflectors, available from outlets such as Halfords and Amazon, or at the ferry terminal.

It is also obligatory to display a UK sticker, and some countries will impose fines if this is missing. This still applies even if your car/caravan has the blue EU flag on the numberplate.

In the event of a breakdown or incident, it is important to carry a warning triangle, which most modern cars have supplied as standard kit. Don't forget, too, that you need to carry hi-vis vests for all members of the party. In France, you must put on your hi-vis before exiting the vehicle, so make sure they are kept close at hand.

Most European road networks operate toll booths on the major motorways. You normally have the option to pay by cash or card, but I would highly recommend buying an Emovis Tag if you are driving through France, Spain or Portugal.

This allows you to enter the special toll booth lanes marked with a 't' and means that you do not have to stop. Just drive very slowly until you hear a beep and the barrier opens. I have found that this can be particularly useful if you are driving anywhere on your own.

You will then be charged the toll via direct debit, usually about a month later. It saves a lot of hassle on the road and facilitates a smooth journey.

Take a break

It usually takes us two days to drive down to Spain, and travelling with children, we always make regular stops.

France has some fantastic *aires* dotted at regular intervals along the motorways. Usually, there are dedicated parking areas for caravans, but they often get busy in the holiday period, so you could use the lorry parking as an alternative.

Some *aires* provide play areas for the children, and pleasant picnic spots, which can all help to make a long journey a bit more tolerable for everyone.

As an alternative, you could break your journey by booking a stopover en route. On one of our trips to Spain, we stumbled



- 1 Headlight deflectors are mandatory on UK vehicles in countries driving on the right-hand side of the road
- 2 You must display a UK sticker on the back of your caravan, unless your numberplate features the UK flag
- 3 You can be fined for not displaying the correct nationality sticker or plate
- 4 You must carry a warning triangle
- 5 With an Emovis Tag, you can use the 't' lanes at tolls for a hassle-free trip
- 6 At *aires* in France, you can use the dedicated parking bays for caravans
- 7 Look out for *aires* that have children's play areas or picnic spots; they're an excellent way to break a long journey



CUT OUT
AND KEEP
GUIDE!



8



9



10



11



12



CHECKLIST DON'T FORGET...

- ☐ Warning triangle
- ☐ Reflective jackets
- ☐ Spare set of bulbs
- ☐ First-aid kit
- ☐ Maps or sat nav
- ☐ Headlight deflectors
- ☐ Spare wheel
- ☐ Full, valid driving licence
- ☐ Proof of insurance
- ☐ Adaptor for hook-up
- ☐ Extra hook-up cable
- ☐ Full gas bottle

8 Book an overnight stop for longer journeys – you never know what little gems you might discover en route!

9 You might find that at some French campsites, your cable has to cross an access road, and you could require additional cable to reach the hook-up

10 Purchase an adaptor before going on your travels, just in case the site uses the old-style connectors

11 The Caravan & Motorhome Club runs escorted tours, and as part of the package, you get a stress-free introduction to overseas driving, on their simulated course

12 A presentation by the CAMC offers top tips on driving abroad and what you can expect, followed by a quick run-through of the planned itinerary

'Most European touring parks are similar to those in the UK, but there are key points to consider, particularly concerning power supplies'

upon a hidden gem, not far from Millau in France. The scenery was spectacular, and the site was quiet and well-equipped. Just what you need to relax and wind down after a long day's driving.

When you reach your site, you'll find that in terms of facilities and so on, most European touring parks are quite similar to those in the UK, but there are a few key points to consider, particularly concerning power supplies.

Electricity

Some campsites do not include hook-up in their prices. Instead, they charge a daily flat rate, or a metered fee for electricity used, so check before booking.

On a recent visit to the Jura region in France, we struggled to connect our 25m cable to the hook-up. It only just reached, but we had to pitch our van on the hedge boundary and cross a neighbouring pitch.

It's a good idea to take extra-length cable with you, just in case, and don't forget to purchase a cable safety box for the connecting piece.

In the UK and throughout most of Europe, we tend to use a three-pin plug that connects to the hook-up. Although most European countries use these connectors (EN 60309-2), some still have the old-style connectors (CEE 17), meaning three-pin plugs do not fit.

It's advisable to buy an adaptor before going on your travels – or you might be able to hire one from the campsite.

Gas

If you carry Calor Gas bottles (butane and propane), be aware that you cannot exchange them abroad. Most European countries tend to use Campingaz or LPG cylinders. It is best to take a full bottle with you and if it does run out, you will need to

bring home the empty. Some ferry operators limit the number of cylinders you can carry, and LPG tanks are not permitted on Eurotunnel, so check before you set off.

Escorted tours

If you like the idea of safety in numbers, you might consider joining an escorted tour. For example, Caravan & Motorhome Club first-timer escorted tours introduce you to overseas driving on the Club's simulated course before leaving the UK, followed by a presentation on touring tips and a run-through of your itinerary. For more about CAMC escorted tours, see p73.

Final thoughts

Even if you regularly travel abroad, the rules of the road frequently change, so always check the latest updates before departure. Up-to-date information can be found at www.theaa.com.



ESSENTIAL KIT

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

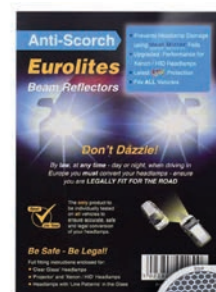
Web halfords.com

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 in a right-hand-drive car when you can't alter the beams via the dash.

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 **Web** amazon.co.uk



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 tow car. Bear in mind that you'll require two warning triangles if you're touring in Spain.

Price £9.99 **Web** halfords.com



FIRE EXTINGUISHER

You should always carry a fire extinguisher in your caravan (located 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 it has.

This 1kg Streetwise unit from Towsure comes with an installation bracket.

Price £19.95 **Web** towsure.com



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 **Web** halfords.com



CUT OUT
AND KEEP
GUIDE!



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
Web amazon.co.uk



HEADLIGHT BULBS

If your headlight bulb blows while you're on tour abroad, you could end up receiving a fine, so it's sensible (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 tow car and caravan – and make sure that you know how to change them.

Price £5.90
Web amazon.co.uk

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 keep it buried underneath everything else in the boot, as you'll need to be able to retrieve it quickly.

Price £5.30 **Web** halfords.com



CHECKLIST

ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS AND EQUIPMENT

Here's a list of key items that you could need for touring in the EU. Although requirements will vary slightly from country to country, it might be wise to take all of these, to ensure that you are not issued with a substantial fine while you're away, owing to a simple 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 (these must be easily accessible within the vehicle)
- 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 water, oil and coolant levels, and tyre pressures/tread
- Carry a basic toolkit
- Take a road-legal spare wheel for both car and caravan

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, set out in a very handy country-by-country format, see www.gov.uk/driving-abroad.

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