

Winter Caravanning

These days more and more people consider caravanning through the whole year. Late October through to Mid-March is the main cold period.

There are many Sites now open all year or until after the New Year holiday. Most of them have hardstanding pitches and heated toilet blocks. Most modern caravans are well equipped to use in the winter months but you need to prepare for the cold, wet weather.

GAS

Butane gas stops working at about 6°C so you should changeover to **Propane** gas if you do not already use it. Safefill bottles are filled with LPG which is Propane. Red Color Gas cylinders also contain Propane.

AWNINGS

Many people like to use a porch awning during the winter. There are several main advantages. It protects the doorway to the caravan and provides a place to change clothes and footwear and hang the clothing up without taking wet into the caravan or letting all the heat out.

The disadvantages are: It needs to be put up and taken down, possibly wet. It is subject to the worst weather, snow and winds so needs to be well guyed down and suitable for these conditions.

We use a winter Porch/Storm Awning, notice the steep roof fall to help with snow.



WATER

Fresh water

Probably one of the most important items to consider, after the gas, in very cold weather.

Many people still use a conventional Aquaroll type container but it can freeze in low sustained temperatures. Some of the things you can do to help stop this:

Stand the Aquaroll on an insulating material such as foam or several layers of cardboard. The cold of the ground really does travel through into the container. Cover the container with insulating material, such as a cheap hot water jacket from any DIY store. I used to use an old hooded padded anorak, it doesn't absorb the rain, and it zips up easily and the pipe to the water inlet on the caravan can run through one of the sleeves.

You can of course buy a purpose built insulated cover.

On EHU I use a fish tank heater, which is low wattage, in the Aquaroll it is designed for immersion in water and is sterile.

The inlet pipe is in fact the most susceptible to freezing and you could cover this with household pipe lagging cut to shape. Some people take this pipe with either the filter or the pump into the caravan overnight to stop it freezing.

Use an on-board tank if you have one!

Most importantly have a container with fresh water in it, kept in the caravan, for that vital early morning cuppa!

Waste Water

This can be just as much trouble as the fresh water system as the under van outlet pipes can freeze if they hold water. Ideally the caravan manufacturer will have thought of this and there should be a good fall to the outlets with no sagging pipes to hold the water. Unfortunately this is not always the case so you need to keep an eye out for this. Instead of using a Wastemaster type container, use a bucket under the outlets to collect the water. Having to carry home a fully frozen, full, Wastemaster is no fun and heavy!! With a bucket you can empty out your big block of Ice!

Remember

At the end of each winter trip you need to drain down the water systems.

Ensure you have opened the drain tap to your water heater. The yellow tap needs to be in the raised position ie upright.



Remove the shower head and hose and empty out any water.

Leave **all the taps open** including the shower and **for mixer taps make sure you have left the handle in the half way position between hot and cold**. I blow down each tap in turn to remove excess water before leaving them all open. I use our Aquaroll filler pipe to fit over the tap nozzle and achieve a tight fit and then blow down the pipe.



you can now get a Floe drain down kit but I just use the above methods.

Put plugs in sinks and shower tray.

Empty and thoroughly rinse the toilet holding tank.

Smear the toilet flap seal mating surface with olive oil or silicone oil and leave the flap half open. This prevents it from sticking to the rubber seal.

Empty the toilet flush system. Using the drain plug which can be found in the toilet cassette locker



If you have a separate tank for the flush, drain it using the bung/pipe provided, and then run the flush pump to ensure no water is left.

Winter lay-up

If you are laying up the van for the winter there are several things you should think of.

Remove all food, tins and bottles of liquid.

Last year, we had a prolonged period of cold weather -6C for eight days. This meant that everything in a stored van was frozen. Some people even had bottles of washing up liquid freezing and splitting or overflowing. On thawing it could leave quite a mess!

To get around this we put all the kitchen items in the wash up bowl and all the bathroom stuff goes in the sink, if they freeze and split/overflow the mess will be minimised.

Leave cupboards open to let the air circulate.

Remove as many soft furnishings as practical.

If you need to leave seat cushions in place, stand them up on edge to let the air get under the seat lockers and around the cushions, move the seat backs away from the van sides.

Some people use moisture traps or the cheaper method is to have a couple of containers with ordinary household salt in them. The salt 'draws' the moisture out of the air.

Fit 'winter vent covers' to the fridge external vents. These can be left on whilst the fridge is in use if the ambient temperature is 8°C or below. In fact I use them from November until February at least. They not only help the fridge to work but cut down on dust and dirt entering and keep draughts down.

Remember to leave the fridge door ajar, once again for ventilation.

Keep the battery fully charged if possible. Some people remove them to the house so that they can charge them once a month. Remember, however, you probably need to leave the battery in the van if you have an Alarm!

Make sure tyres are inflated to the correct pressure.

Some people put the caravan on axle stands (and remove the wheels) to stop the tyres deteriorating and relieve pressure on the suspension. We are not allowed to do this under the conditions of our storage compound and fortunately go away often enough to

avoid this. Some people move the van slightly each month to rotate the tyre and load it at a different point.

Hand Brake

The advice on this is, if practicable, leave the hand brake OFF with the wheels chocked this will stop the brake shoes sticking on. However, where we store our van is a bit exposed and I am always worried the wind could move the van and cause it to hit the next van so we leave ours on and have done so for the last 20 years without a problem.

On a nice winter's day, go down to the caravan, if you can, to give it a good 'air' and check it out and plan your next outing!

Have a great Winter season.

Dave McCarthy