

If you're
planning to
store you
caravan over
winter, here are
some tips to
help you out

ot everyone likes the prospect of caravanning through the winter. Come to that, if you've used all your annual holiday allowance by autumn, you might not have time for a trip?

There are plenty of caravanners who prefer sitting by a fire in winter while their van sits out in the cold. And that's where it stays... until daffodils poke their heads through the soil the following spring.

As long as you prepare your caravan for that spell of doing nothing, it shouldn't get damaged. On the other hand, if you didn't drain down the water, left milk in the fridge and forgot to empty the toilet, life won't be so pleasant when you open it up again. There are a number of things you need to do. An owners' manual will give you useful guidance. Or not, as the case may be. Some handbooks are remarkably brief about pre-storage tasks. It makes sense to compile your own caravan checklist.



outdoor activities

We'll start with the external jobs that need to be done before moving on to matters inside.

When you take an awning down after the last trip of the season, make sure it's absolutely dry. If it is even slightly damp, mildew will form, and that's very hard to remove



If you intend to fit a cover, the van has got to be cleaned – especially its plastic windows



Many

cylinders to a shed, ensuring that there are low-level vents in case this heavier-than-air gas leaks from a valve. For that reason, never store cylinders in a cellar

people

move gas

Use a damp repellent like Tri-Flow to ensure the 12N and 12S pins stay clean and shiny over winter



to half a litre of warm water.

A leisure battery needs charging

every two months-ish. Automatic

switching trickle-chargers are useful

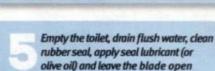
bicarbonate of soda added

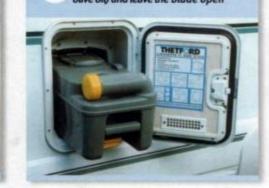
Indoor activities
It makes sense to leave

things clean. Dometic

one teaspoonful of

recommends you sponge down your internal fridge compartment with a weak solution of bicarbonate of soda. The potion comprises





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A caravan resting unmoved for an extended period puts strain on the tyres' side walls. Try axle stands



Leave taps and shower controls open. On lever taps, centralise the lifted lever between hot and cold



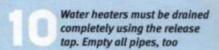
If your water system has a filter, its casing will probably retain water – remove it. Buy a replacement



Other tasks to consider



- Lower the corner steadies, check the wheels and leave the handbrake off. If left on, a handbrake mechanism has a tendency to seize up, and then the van can't be moved.
- If your caravan has an electronic alarm, disregard my advice about removing the leisure battery. But don't forget that if the battery discharges completely, the alarm won't be much use.
- Plug up the waste water outlets and any inlet pipe or heating air intake. Webs spun by a spiders can upset gas/air mixing on heater inlets and block water pipes.





Put plugs in the waste outlets of the sink, shower tray and wash basin – to avoid possible smells



Clean the fridge and leave the door partially open. A door wedge may be needed



■ These are the main points to consider, though you could add more. Your strategy will depend on whether the caravan is kept in a distant storage compound or just at the side of your house. When a caravan is parked alongside the home, the owner can install a low-consumption heater inside to stop things getting too damp.

Finally, don't forget that a new season often starts with a rush. Workshops suddenly get fully booked with servicing work – why not arrange a date with your dealer now? If a few components got broken last season, place orders for spares as soon as you can.

>> contacts

Grade UK Tel: 0115 9867151 (damp absorbing products)

Sold Secure Tel: 01327 264687 (independent test house)

Thetford Tel: 01203 322700 (for suppliers of seal lubricant)

WYKO Tel: 0121 5086000 (for suppliers of Tri-Flow)

Other tasks to consider



- If you've got room at home, it's sensible to transfer all the seat backs, mattresses and so on to a heated room to stay damp-free. A van without furnishings is unlikely to interest a thief.
- If you've got roller blinds, the manufacturers recommend they're left open to relax the spring mechanism. This can easily lead to fading inside, so you then need to put brown paper, or something similar, up in the windows.
- Damp develops inside during a long lay-up period. Dehumidifying granular packs, and the surprisingly inexpensive appliance shown below, are sold by Grade UK.



■ If the caravan isn't stored in a high-security compound, give thought to the installation of security devices. It's best to fit more than one anti-theft device and check products on Sold Secure's free test list (their contact details are on the panel below, to the left).

