



Caravan Toolbox

With so much DIY kit available, it can be hard to decide what to take away with you.

This guide should help you pick through the hardware.

You will also find the spares list is handy, each of the items listed is something I have had to replace while away, not always easily obtainable.

SPARES

Bulbs for caravan and car (pack for each)

You'll need to keep these handy for your car and tourer road lights. Carrying a pack of bulbs for each is obligatory in the UK and most EU countries.

Fuses

Pack at least one of each for the fridge, lights, pump, charger and in-line battery fuse, as well as for auxiliary devices. Carry several 10A fuses, plus a couple each for 7.5A and 15A. The 10A in-line fuse for the leisure battery is normally the flat, colour-coded type. Sizes may vary depending on the make and model of caravan.

Spare 12N and 12S plugs

Their screws can come loose and get lost, so it's always worth being prepared for this.

Tap micro switches

Spares are a must-have. If your micro switches fail, you won't get any water from your taps without them. (NB Spares are not needed for pressure switches, which are adjusted via small screws.)

Water pump

This might seem like an extravagance, but pumps do fail occasionally, and it's a real pain if they do so after the nearest accessory shop has shut.

Breakaway cable

It's essential to ensure your caravan's brakes come on if it ever becomes uncoupled from your car. Accidents do happen, especially if you forget to undo the breakaway cable before you unhitch. You can fit a spare easily.

Electric connector strip

Used for joining 12V cables, but can also be used on 240V wiring provided the wires are covered

Internal water hose

and push-fit fixings (1m-2m) You don't want one damaged area to put your whole water system out of action. (doubles as filler hose for fresh water)

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TOOLS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT

Two-way-spirit level

For ensuring the van is level. Place it just inside the door, on the worktop or the floor while you level – or place it on the front chest so you can see it from outside the front window.

Bottle of White Spirit, sanding block and clean cloth

If your caravan has an AL-KO stabiliser, you will need these to clean off the towball before every journey, to ensure the stabiliser's friction pads do not get contaminated by road dirt.

Small pocket torch

Useful not only at night but by day when viewing darker recesses of the caravan. Better still, a head torch will let you make repairs with both hands.

Neon 12v electric screwdriver

A small neon screwdriver with an earth lead connected to a crocodile clip: the neon lights up when power is present at the point of contact. The clip must be attached to another part of the car or caravan – to create an earth - before it can be operated. This tester is very useful for checking your car's towing electrics.

Neon 240V electric screwdriver

This is like the 12V version above, except this one is for testing the supply of 240V power to the mains. The neon lights up if there is a current.

240V socket tester

An absolute must. Just plug it into any 13A socket in the van and a combination of three lights will tell you if all is well or if there is a negative, positive or earth fault. This is particularly important for caravanners who want to check for reversed polarity, such as on the Continent (although some caravans' consumer units also show with a red warning light). This is the ideal protection for polarity-sensitive equipment, such as laptops and some DVD players.

Assorted screws

Keep a variety of small wood screws, along with a few self-tapping screws for good measure.

Set of screwdrivers

Be sure to have small and medium sizes with both flat-head blades and cross-heads.

Small adjustable spanner

You'll need it to turn the range of small nuts found throughout the caravan.

Large adjustable spanner

This is a must if you use 4.5kg gas bottles, which have a bigger nut than other sizes. However, to keep the overall weight down, use a dedicated gas spanner, which is made of thin aluminium.

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Ratchet spanner

For lowering or raising corner steadies in confined spaces.

Mole grips

These can be used as a vice to get a firm hold on small items.

Scissors

Pliers

Side cutters

Used for cutting and stripping electric cables. However, if you have space and enough payload allowance, you may wish to take separate wire strippers for easier removal of insulation.

Stanley knife

Multi-tool

An example of what you'll find inside these versatile, all-in-one tools is a hefty pair of pliers with a small saw, two heavy-duty screwdrivers and a serrated knife blade. All the attachments fold down neatly to fit in a pouch.

Junior hacksaw

This will let you make important adjustments or repairs to the awning poles.

Small metal file

After you've done the sawing, a file will let you remove the rough edges from the end of awning poles that come into contact with the fabric.

Tape measure

Whether you're doing a repair or buying a replacement part, you'll need this to make sure you get the measurements right.

Soft pencil or Conté crayon

Use these as a removable marker for any places to screw or saw. (Conté is a hard crayon made of graphite and coloured clay.)

WD-40

Use this on electric connections to dispel moisture, and to lubricate and protect squeaky hinges and other metal joints.

Silicon spray

This is a handy alternative to general purpose grease for towballs used without a stabiliser. Also use it for corroded corner steadies, and jammed wheelclamps or handbrake linkages.

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Superglue

Ideal for repairing a wide variety of breakages.

Double-sided sticky tape or Velcro

Either will be handy for quick awning fixes.

Small G-clamp

Use it to hold items to be screwed or glued together.

Duck tape

This heavy-duty adhesive is ideal for repairing awning fabrics and waterproof coats.

Insulating tape

For covering exposed electric wires and connection blocks. Take two colours: red for live connections and black for negative ones.

Assortment of jubilee clips

These are for older caravans which use them on the gas tube and on water pipes. (Vans built after 2004 use a high-pressure gas system that doesn't need them.)

Tie-down strap for awning

This is an adjustable webbing strap that fits over the front edge of the awning roof and is held on either side by two very large steel pegs. Padding is required where the strap goes over the sides of the awning to stop the chafing of the roof material. This is essential for clifftop sites and useful for open sites generally.

Claw hammer

Use this at either end of your stay: hammer in metal awning pegs and use the claw to remove them from difficult ground.

Rubber mallet

For knocking in wooden or plastic awning pegs.

Spare guy lines

A guy line can break or get chewed by an animal, so take two extra including fasteners. It also is a good idea to use extra guy lines in windy weather.

240v Continental adaptor plug

For Continental travel, this will convert your UK 13A three-pin plug to fit a French/German two- or three-pin socket. It's mainly for use on sites which supply sockets for hairdryers, battery chargers or razor connections.

Piece of coloured ribbon Tie this to your steering wheel when entering the Continent to remind yourself that you should be driving on the right-hand side of the road. The brighter the colour, the better. Believe us, this works.

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Spare internal light bulbs

Have some for both 12V and 240V fixtures

Awning puller

A long rod with a hook on one end lets you pull the awning along the channel. You may find that your awning responds better to being pushed rather than being pulled, in which case, you can use the padded end of an awning pole to help it along.

Small electric drill

For use on battery or mains, it can be used for winding corner steadies, using a special attachment.

Electric multimeter a Very useful if you know how to use it. It will tell you the exact voltage passing through a point, as well as continuity, which will indicate whether a fuse is OK, or for tracing the route of a cable.

reverse polarity adaptor

For this you will need to make up an adaptor by wiring up a male-to-female external plug connected by a short length of cable, but wired in reverse (black to red, and red to black). This must be clearly marked on the adaptor, and only used when the polarity is reversed on the site.

waterproof tape. Stop small leaks in water hoses etc.

Small tube of General Purpose Grease

Box of moist wipes - last thing you want is greasy and oily fingermarks all over the cara and caravan!

Warning Triangle

- In Case of Breakdown or Accident Carry a Warning Triangle.
- Place the triangle 30m (100m on motorways) behind the caravan to warn other road users.
- Carrying one of these is compulsory in some countries.
- If you carry one all the time then you will be covered.

Extras

- A Strong Rope - In case you need to pull your caravan off a muddy pitch.
- Elastic Bungee's - handy for making sure items in the van don't move in transit

Don't forget to take a length of rope if you have a dog. Tie it to the chassis of the van and attach it to the dog for an instant run. (Can also be pegged down at Awning door.)

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