



Driving Your Motorhome

Tips for Beginners



Produced by Lifesure Insurance Broker, 2023

Driving Your Motorhome

Tips for Beginners

First Edition: July 2023

Images/Adobe Stock
Design by Lifesure Marketing Team

Copyright © Lifesure Insurance Broker, 2023

All rights reserved. No part of this guide may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from Lifesure, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.

Disclaimer: The sole purpose of this guide is to provide guidance on the topic covered. This guide is not intended to give legal advice, it should not be relied upon. It should not be regarded as a comprehensive statement of the law and/or market practice in this area.

Lifesure Group Limited is a Company registered in England and Wales, registration number 977416. Our registered office is 3 Fenice Court, Phoenix Park, Eaton Socon, St Neots, Cambs, PE19 8EW. Lifesure Group Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority under register number 305038 for Insurance Distribution activities and as a Credit Broker, and does not charge any fees to customers in relation to Credit Broking activities.

Introduction

Driving your motorhome for the first time may seem daunting, but it's much easier than you think. If you can drive a car, you can drive a motorhome. With some basic awareness and the right driving techniques, you'll be able to drive your motorhome safely to your chosen destination.

In this article, we cover some of the things you'll need to consider when driving your motorhome and offer some additional tips for a stress-free driving experience.

Let's explore what you'll need to know.





Can I drive a motorhome on a normal driving license?

First things first. Before you start driving your motorhome, you must be sure you're legally permitted to do so. If you're new to motorhome holidays and are considering buying your first van, you may not have realised that your driving license may not actually cover you for driving it.

In the UK, being able to drive a motorhome is dependent on two things:

1. When you passed your driving test
2. The weight of the vehicle you intend to drive

The limitations of your driving license depend on when you passed your test; those who passed before 1997 will be able to drive a heavier van than those who passed after the 1st January of that year. There are also specific rules and limitations for those older than 70.

If you passed your test before 1st January 1997, you will automatically be licensed to drive category C1 vehicles, meaning that you can legally drive vehicles weighing up to 7,500kg. This will be enough to cover almost all motorhomes, with the exception of large, American-style RVs. The exact categories which you can drive will be shown on your license, either on the back of your photo card license or the front of your old-style paper license.

Driving Your Motorhome

Tips for Beginners

Those who passed their driving test after 1st January 1997 will only be automatically licensed to drive vehicles up to 3,500kg. These vehicles fall into categories B and B1. You will also be allowed to tow a trailer weighing up to 750kg behind your car. Due to the change in driving licenses, most UK motorhomes are manufactured to fall within the limitations, but you will need to sit an additional driving test to add category C1 vehicles if you wish to buy an American RV.

Finally, those over 70 need to be particularly careful when it comes to the category limits. When you renew your license aged 70, the category C1 permission will be removed from it. If you wish to drive motorhomes weighing between 3,500kg and 7,500kg, you will need to request a completed form D4 from your GP.



Know your width

Getting used to the width of your motorhome can take a bit of time, especially when navigating around obstacles like parked cars.

The average motorhome is around 3ft wider than the average car, so if you often drive towards the centre of the road, you will need to bear this in mind to avoid crossing over to the other side. When driving in built up and residential areas or narrow country lanes, get into the habit of driving closer to the pavement than you normally would do. Use your wing mirrors, or the help of a passenger, to ensure you do not clip the pavement or mount the kerb.

Know your height

Remembering the height of your motorhome can help you to avoid issues when driving towards low bridges and height barriers. Don't leave it to guesswork. Write the height and width of your motorhome on a label and attach it to the sun visor, for quick reference.

Pay attention to overhanging branches and vegetation at the roadside, which may force you to take avoiding action. If it's a windy day, a large vehicle such as a high-sided motorhome will be more affected by crosswinds than smaller cars.





Know the speed limits for motorhomes

In general, motorhomes need to comply with slower speed limits, especially if the maximum unladen weight is over 3.05 tonnes, or you're towing your motorhome. Unladen weight is the weight of the vehicle when it's not carrying passengers, camping equipment or other items. It includes the body and all parts normally used with the vehicle but excludes fuel or batteries in an electric vehicle.

The infographic below shows you the speed limits you need to adhere to on UK roads when driving your motorhome. Further information can be found on the Gov.UK website. If you drive your motorhome in Europe, European motorhome speed limits may vary.

National speed limits for motorhomes

Weight

Motorhomes or motor caravans
(not more than 3.05 tonnes
maximum unladen weight)

Motorhomes or motor caravans
(more than 3.05 tonnes
maximum unladen weight)

Built-up areas

30 mph
(48 km/h)

30 mph
(48 km/h)

Single carriageways

60 mph
(96 km/h)

50 mph
(80 km/h)

Dual carriageways

70 mph
(112 km/h)

60 mph
(96 km/h)

Motorways

70 mph
(112 km/h)

70 mph
(112 km/h)

Watch your distance

Driving at a slower speed is advisable, particularly if you are not used to driving your motorhome. Heavy vehicles, such as motorhomes, take longer to slow down. So, one of the most important safety considerations when driving your motorhome is your stopping distance, especially if you're used to driving a smaller vehicle.

The Highway Code states: "Large vehicles and motorcycles need a greater distance to stop. If driving a large vehicle in a tunnel, you should allow a four-second gap between you and the vehicle in front."

The condition of your tyres can also have an impact on your stopping distance. According to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, a 1.6mm tyre tread, which is the lowest legal limit, increases stopping distances by up to 45%^[i]. Low tyre pressure can also increase stopping distances. So, it's essential to get your tyres checked regularly to make sure they're roadworthy and will slow you down, without fail.

TIP

Apply stickers to the reverse side of the sun visors on both the driver's and passenger's side, that shows the height and width of your motorhome in both metric and imperial units, so you don't forget.



With the aforementioned considerations in mind, we have listed a few things that will help you while you're out on the road.



Reversing

Start by assessing the situation. Be sure to check your blind spots before you attempt the manoeuvre. All vehicles have them, and the bigger the vehicle, the bigger they tend to be. Use additional blind spot mirrors on wing mirrors to give you fuller visibility of what's behind. The slower you drive in reverse, the easier it will be, and the less likely you are to cause serious damage to your motorhome, or other vehicles.



Cornering

Don't forget, the additional length may cause you to clip kerbs or cut corners. Gently apply the brakes at an ample distance, before reaching a corner, so that the motorhome is balanced when you make the turn. Your approach speed should be slower than it would be if you're driving a car, as motorhomes lean more when cornering. Take corners wider than you would normally do in your car.



Overtaking

When overtaking in a motorhome, it's a good idea to sit back from the vehicle you intend to overtake. So when the time comes, you have enough space to accelerate up to overtaking speed, without being on the wrong side of the road for too long. Before attempting to overtake, check your mirrors to make sure someone with a quicker vehicle isn't trying to do the same thing. Take extra care and give more space when overtaking motorcyclists, cyclists, horse riders, horse drawn vehicles and pedestrians in bad weather (including high winds) and at night.



Parking

The size of your motorhome can make parking more difficult. Some car parks have height restriction barriers, so knowing the height of your motorhome, before attempting to enter, can help to prevent damage to your vehicle. Similarly, not all car parks are laid out with motorhomes in mind. If you need to park in a public car park, make sure you don't fall foul of any access issues due to its dimensions, such as encroaching on multiple spaces, as this could leave you without a place to park or even a damaged vehicle.

Gadgets

There are a plethora of gadgets on the market designed to take the hassle out of driving your motorhome.

These include rear cameras for reversing, parking sensors and add-on mirrors, all of which can help you while performing driving manoeuvres. While gadgets are handy, it's important not to solely rely upon them. If a gap looks too small, it probably is. Using common sense is the best way to avoid accidents and prangs.

Know where you're heading

From finding the best roads to travel on, to checking the rules and regulations at a campsite you're staying on, a little pre-travel research goes a long way to enhancing the quality of your trip. Sat nav's are your friend when you're on the road and you can even use Google 360 street view, so you know what to expect when you reach your destination.



Driving Your Motorhome

Tips for Beginners



Get yourself covered

With motorhomes being much larger than standard cars, the risk of accidental damage is also much greater. Thankfully, we've been supporting motorhome owners just like you for over 40 years, so we know a thing or two about your insurance requirements. We work with leading UK insurers such as AXA, LV and Ageas, to bring you feature packed motorhome insurance and optional extras, such as RAC breakdown insurance, giving you peace of mind that you are in safe hands.

For further details on the motorhome policies we have on offer, visit www.lifesure.co.uk or call us on **01480 402 460**.



SCAN ME!



Motorhome insurance



RAC motorhome breakdown cover

