

Highway to sell

From driving coastlines to canyons, booking a motorhome adventure is easier than you think, writes **India-Jayne Trainor**

motorhome holidays offer the freedom and flexibility to explore at your own pace, with no hotel check-in, flight schedules or train timetables to consider.

Countries that come with jaw-dropping natural scenery and straightforward driving routes – including the US, Australia and New Zealand – are popular for a reason, with well-trodden motorhome routes, plentiful campsites and itineraries that hit the highlights.

Some clients will be experts in motorhome adventures, while others may be daunted by the prospect of their first road trip; but rest assured, motorhome holidays can fit every type of traveller. Here's a guide to help you brush up on essential knowledge and have some destination suggestions up your sleeve.

RULES OF THE ROAD

Even the most-experienced drivers would say that the best motorhome trips start with good preparation. Although many include vehicle hire, a set route and pre-planned overnight stops, there are practical tips agents should keep in mind.

Loma Curry, product manager at First Class Holidays, says: "For clients who are nervous about their trip, it's possible to map out their route and pre-book every night in advance. And do book early – rental companies often work on a supply and demand basis, which means booking earlier offers better prices and a wider choice of vehicles."

Crucially, if an itinerary doesn't include them already, advance campground bookings are essential, as busier routes fill up quickly in peak season. ➤

LEARNING THE ROPES

Clients who have never been on a motorhome holiday before might be unsure about what to expect.

Advise them to spend time getting to grips with their vehicle when they pick it up and familiarise themselves with the country's driving regulations. Most companies will provide an overview of how to deal with fuel, cooking and waste, and who to call if something goes wrong.

Before setting off, suggest stocking up on essentials, such as cleaning supplies and basic ingredients – although many motorhomes come with a 'starter kit' of bedding, towels and crockery, sometimes at an extra cost. Basic groceries and snacks come in handy in remote areas, such as when driving in Australia's remote Northern Territory or the deserts of the American west, where shops can be few and far between.

Once practical questions are taken care of, it's worth

highlighting the advantages of independent exploration.

Shubhra Halliday, sales director at Anzcro, says: "A benefit of motorhomes is that they have plenty of storage, dining areas and a pull-out awning for shade, and can accommodate up to six people. I'd recommend going for inclusive rates, which include handy items like a picnic table and chairs."

Being in full control means clients can stop for lunch on a mountain pass or enjoy a dinner under the stars. Some premium motorhomes feature ovens, but even basic camper vans should have fridges and hobs.

First-timers may expect hot showers and electricity more than seasoned adventurers, so book them on a ready-made itinerary. US national parks such as Yosemite and the Grand Canyon are the perfect choice, providing campsites with a range of utilities they can hook up to.

ASK THE agent



Gail Toon, partner and office manager, Villair Travel

"I regularly sell motorhome trips and also went on my own unforgettable motorhome trip to New Zealand with my late husband. I'd recommend reserving as far in advance as you can, as hire prices are dynamic; for example, in New Zealand, December to March is peak season, so aim for November for the best deals. We chose a camper van as there were only two of us, but when booking for families, larger motorhomes provide more space.

"Selling motorhome trips can seem scary, as there are lots of terms and conditions, so I'd always suggest upgrading to a comprehensive insurance package. Reassure first-timers that upon collecting their vehicle, they will be shown the equipment and controls, and usually given a starter kit with all the essentials – it's good to arrive early for this.

"Research busy driving times and check for local holidays during the peak periods, as campsites can get booked up. You can park up and free-camp in some countries, but having electricity and a hot shower is always welcome."

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DESTINATIONS

MOTORHOMES | SELF-DRIVE HOLIDAYS



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Bryce Canyon, US; South Island, New Zealand; Mount Cook, New Zealand

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FUN FOR EVERYONE

Free-wheeling couples are the obvious choice for a motorhome holiday, along with groups of friends and families who may feel more comfortable in close quarters with flexible sleeping arrangements.

They will benefit the most from multi-berth motorhomes – which can accommodate up to six people – along with the chance to save money, cook their own meals and stop for leg stretches as they please.

Help clients select the right type of motorhome for their needs, as space and amenities such as barbecues, baby seats or camping chairs aren't provided in every vehicle. For couples, smaller vehicles often allow more flexibility, so they can choose the scenic route and get off-grid.

Overpage, we take a look at some of the best routes for a road trip to remember. ➤

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DESTINATIONS

SELF-DRIVE HOLIDAYS | MOTORHOMES

ROADS WELL TRAVELLED

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY

Canada's 13 provinces and territories provide ample adventures for visitors with their own wheels. Although popular destinations such as Banff and the Rocky Mountains are go-to choices, they are busy in the peak summer months and campsites with water and electricity may be booked up – so suggest travelling in the shoulder seasons or look at other inspiring places. Clients can spot wildlife and cruise past fjords on a route through Mont Tremblant National Park and Lake Supérieur in Quebec, while New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island offer whale watching, coastal drives and freshly caught seafood.

Book it: An 11-day Best of Canada's West motorhome holiday with Journeyscape starts at £1,990 per person in June, based on two sharing, including RV hire, but excluding flights. The trip starts in Vancouver and takes in the Okanagan Valley, Lake Louise, the Icefields Parkway and Clearwater. journeyscape.com

RV THERE YET?

Wide, open roads and dramatic national parks make the US a dream driving destination – and that's without taking into account how motorhome-friendly the country is. Mandy McGlade, product manager at American Affair, says: "A motorhome trip in the US is a stress-free way to travel. Clients have the freedom to get off the beaten track and enjoy special moments such as stargazing in Utah's Dark Sky parks or seeing the sun rise in Bryce Canyon National Park." America is also perfect for a multigenerational motorhome



CLOCKWISE FROM

TOP: Utah, US; McLaren Vale, South Australia; Lake Pukaki, New Zealand; Mont Tremblant, Canada

PICTURES: Shutterstock/Studio concept, Vadim 777, Marcin Madry, kwest

trip, combining exciting cities such as Los Angeles and Las Vegas – where campsites are surprisingly close to city attractions – with scenic wilderness, wish-list sights and plenty of fun for all ages.

Book it: American Affair's 18-day Utah's Mighty Five & Beyond holiday starts at £1,786 per person in October, based on two sharing, including flights from Heathrow, three nights' hotel accommodation and 15 days' motorhome hire. americanaffair.com

DRIVING DOWN UNDER

Australia is the ultimate road-trip destination, offering numerous popular motorhome routes, from the Great Ocean Road and sun-kissed east coast to the outback or the beaches of Western Australia. Clients could spot wallabies in the bush, marvel at the rugged coastline and enjoy sunset barbecues in the desert. Easy-to-navigate routes, such as between Perth and Adelaide, allow clients to explore the Margaret River and

South Australia's Eyre Peninsula, while a trip down the east coast offers the opportunity to stop at Queensland's golden beaches. Given Australia's vast scale, opt for bite-sized itineraries to ensure clients don't spend more time driving than sightseeing.

Book it: Gold Medal offers a 19-day Perth to Adelaide motorhome holiday from £2,949 per person, for departures in the first week of September. The price is based on two sharing and includes three nights' accommodation, the hire of a two-berth motorhome and flights from Heathrow, via Doha, with British Airways. goldmedal.co.uk

CAMP LIKE A KIWI

Driving past stunning fjords, stopping at geothermal springs and admiring icy glaciers are just a few reasons to recommend a motorhome holiday in New Zealand. Whether clients tour the North Island, South Island or both, they can tick off some of New Zealand's best sights, such as Milford Sound, Hobbiton and Mount Cook, while having the freedom to try experiences such as whale watching or glacier-climbing. Free-camping laws in many areas mean clients can set up on the shores of vast lakes or at the base of snow-capped mountains without having to make specific reservations (while keeping to the rules). But in high season, campsites and attractions fill up quickly, so advance booking is essential.

Book it: A 21-day itinerary to New Zealand with Audley Travel starts at £8,000 per person, based on two travelling. The price includes flights from Heathrow or Manchester via Singapore, camper van hire and ferry tickets between the North and South islands.

audleytravel.com **TW**