

Driving ambition



Enjoy life at your own pace and away from the crowds with a motorhome holiday, writes **Laura French**

1 here's nothing quite like cruising along a deserted open road, cinematic landscapes flashing through the windscreen as you ponder where to stop off next.

Enter the motorhome holiday: one of the freest, easiest and cheapest ways to travel, offering clients all the flexibility, independence and privacy they might want – at a time when secluded, self-sufficient escapes have never been in higher demand.

But if you're new to selling campervan trips, the whole thing might seem like a bit of a minefield. So where do you start, who can you book through and what should you suggest for clients keen on booking a holiday to remember? We've spoken to four experts to get their insider insight.



"DON'T BE SCARED TO SELL A MOTORHOME AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE USUAL HOLIDAY"

Tracy Thompson, international sales manager for Cruise America and Canada RV Rentals

"Don't be scared to sell a motorhome as an alternative to the usual holiday – they're a much easier product to sell than you think. The minimum driving age is 21, and

clients just need an ordinary valid driving licence.

"North America is perfect for RV-ing and we welcome plenty of first-timers each year, so we take a lot into consideration to make this as easy as possible.

"Our vehicles are all custom-built to our specifications and we keep it simple by offering small, medium or large vehicles, as well as a truck camper, meaning they can accommodate up to seven people.

"When it comes to the campsites themselves, there are more than 16,000 campgrounds across the US and Canada, from high-class resorts with swimming pools and full amenities to national parks and well-known chains. We also offer more-unusual spots – from a blueberry farm to a vineyard – so there are lots of options to suit different clients. There's even a campground right in the heart of the French Quarter in New Orleans, and one opposite Graceland!

"In terms of trends, we're seeing a move towards extended stays heading into 2022. Bucket-list travel destinations will gain popularity with travellers trading one-week, jam-packed itineraries for more leisurely destination exploration.

"We also predict the rise of the conscious traveller, with people being more discerning about the journeys they go on, more appreciative of their surroundings and more careful with their spending."

DESTINATIONS

MOTORHOMES | SELF-DRIVE HOLIDAYS



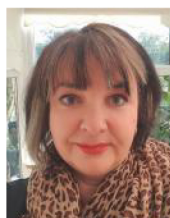
LEFT AND BELOW: Operators report demand for motorhome holidays in Canada and the US
BELOW LEFT: Double bed in an MH-B Midi Motorhome

PICTURES: Canadian Affair; First Class Holidays; Cruise America



fast fact

Interested in learning more? Cruise America has an online training site for agents at cruiseamericaspecialist.com



“REASSURE CLIENTS ABOUT DRIVING A LARGE VEHICLE - IT’S EASIER THAN THEY THINK”

Sheryl Wilkinson, car hire product and purchasing manager at Gold Medal

“Our top-selling destinations for campervan and RV rentals have always been the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Although there’s been limited opportunity to travel during the pandemic, interest in these destinations hasn’t wavered, and we anticipate bookings will be healthy when travel to them restarts.

“In the US, there are so many amazing national parks, plus Brits always love the Deep South. There are motorhome parks everywhere – even at Walt Disney World Resort in Florida – so it’s well set-up for a self-drive.

“In Canada, I’d recommend the East Coast, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. In New Zealand, we’d recommend the East Cape on the North Island and the Deep South, including the Catlins Coast. There are also some fantastic winery stays.

“In Australia, the sky’s the limit, but lesser-known regions in South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory remain relatively undiscovered by British travellers, so are a great option for quieter self-drives away from the crowds.

“Motorhomes are truly a home on wheels, with hot water, flushing toilets, showers, a kitchen, TV, Wi-Fi and comfy beds

“My top tip would be to encourage clients to book as early as possible, as prices are likely to increase over time and vehicle availability in popular destinations can be tight. Also, reassure clients who might be concerned about driving a larger vehicle – it’s easier than they might think.”



“WE’VE NOTICED A TREND TOWARDS LONGER RENTAL BOOKINGS AND UPGRADED EXPERIENCES”

Lee Rogers, product and commercial director for Canadian Affair and American Affair

“On the back of the pandemic, we’ve noticed a trend towards longer rental bookings and upgraded experiences in our RV holidays across the US and Canada. Most new bookings and rebookings look toward 2022, but there’s still significant interest in late 2021. We believe RV holidays will be among the first to return.

“Most bookings are for couples, families and groups of friends looking for an independent escape where they can choose to travel at their own pace, how they want.

“In terms of destinations, we’re seeing real growth in eastern Canada, including the Maritimes. Demand for the west of Canada and the American southwest, especially California and Nevada, remains strong as always. There’s also a high level of interest in the

DESTINATIONS

SELF-DRIVE HOLIDAYS | MOTORHOMES



ABOVE: Scenic drive through Kananaskis in Alberta, Canada PICTURE: First Class Holidays

northeast of the US, with cross-border itineraries taking in both the US and Canada. The Great Lakes route in northern Ontario, the Nova Scotia coastline and the Cabot Trail are all fantastic options for clients wanting to get the whole North American experience."



"WE'VE SEEN MORE DEMAND FOR HOLIDAYS WHERE PEOPLE STAY IN THEIR OWN BUBBLE"

Brian Hawe, product manager for First Class Holidays

"When I bought my motorhome, people asked why – the answer was freedom. We wanted the freedom to go where we wanted, at our own pace, and to enjoy the scenery in our own time. That's what makes a motorhome holiday different from any other – the ability to be at one with nature, meet the true locals and experience things you'd probably pass by on a pre-planned self-drive or coach tour itinerary.

"Since the pandemic, we've seen more demand for holidays that allow people to stay in their own bubble, including motorhome holidays. That's especially true in North America – where Canada is more popular than ever – plus Australia and New Zealand, which are simply made for motorhome holidays.

"In terms of demographic, they're a great option for

couples and families alike. Children love the excitement of staying in a motorhome and the freedom they get exploring the national parks, while adults are often drawn by the vineyard-themed itineraries we offer in Australia and New Zealand.

"The myth that a motorhome is a converted transit van is way out of date. Motorhomes are truly a home on wheels, with hot water, flushing toilets, showers, a kitchen, fridge-freezer, TV, Wi-Fi and comfy beds. Agents need to get that message across to prospective clients, as well as the freedom that they afford." **TW**

BOOK IT

American Affair has an 11-night Classic West motorhome package taking in Los Angeles, Newport Beach, San Diego, Yosemite, San Francisco, Santa Barbara and more from £1,639 per person, based on two adults sharing in May 2022 with motorhome rental, one night in a hotel in LA and flights from Heathrow. americanaffair.com

First Class Holidays offers a Canada self-drive round-trip from Calgary from £1,359 per person, including one night in a hotel and 14 nights in a six-berth CanaDream motorhome (with insurance), based on four sharing with flights from Gatwick on September 12. fcholidays.com

Gold Medal has an 11-day self-drive from Sydney to Brisbane from £1,169 per person, based on two sharing an Apollo Hitop Camper, including two nights' hotel accommodation (room-only) and flights from Heathrow, departing March 7, 2022. goldmedal.co.uk

TOP tips

Sheryl Wilkinson, Gold

Medal: "It can be cheaper to book in the opposite direction to the mainstream – for example, from Christchurch to Auckland or Brisbane to Cairns. And for New Zealand or Australia, consider travelling in late February to late April, as late summer is warm without being too busy."

Lee Rogers, Canadian Affair and American Affair:

"Campervan self-drives can seem complex, so it's important for travel agents to provide reassurance to the customer. Booking through an operator can help simplify the process and take the hassle out of planning. We can book campgrounds, flights, pre-drive accommodation and vehicle hire, so it's all in one package."

Tracy Thompson, Cruise

America: "When it comes to destination, don't overlook the lesser-known spots. The West Coast of the US is always popular, but for something a little different, suggest the Capital Region in the east."