

Driving a Motor Home: Not Difficult...Just Different

Driving a motor home opens up a world of on-the-road travel adventure. It requires no special license and it's easier than many newcomers think. Experienced automobile drivers already have the skills to drive a motorized RV. Automatic transmissions, power brakes and steering are typical features.

With proper attention to the differences in vehicle size, height and weight, you'll find it fun and easy to take the wheel of a motor home. A motor home is not difficult to drive, however, it is substantially wider, longer, and heavier than an automobile. These differences do call for special driving procedures. The procedures are easy to master and make your trip that much more enjoyable.

- **Adjust and use all rear view mirrors.** Before leaving on a trip, sit in the drivers seat and adjust all mirrors for optimal road views.
- **The driver sits higher in a motor home.** This is a distinct advantage because you can see farther and react more quickly. It does take longer to accelerate and stop, therefore, do not follow too close in traffic. Allow more time to brake, change lanes and enter a busy highway, since these bigger vehicles take significantly more time to accelerate and slow down.
- **The driver is farther to the left of the center of the vehicle.** This causes most drivers to drive too far to the right side of the road. Be aware of this and make the necessary adjustments.
- **Minimum height clearance is 11 feet in a motor home.** Be on alert to avoid hitting over-hanging tree branches, carport roofs, and low canopies over filling stations, motels, etc. Keep in mind that the rear air conditioner is sometimes higher than the front. Allow plenty of clearance.
- **Due to the length of a motor home, its turning radius is greater.** The front and rear wheels will track paths much farther apart than those of a car. Also, when driving from a flat surface up an incline or vice versa, the rear end will drag. Though the motor home is built to handle most of these type situations with the built-in drag skids, driving very slowly will minimize the possibility of any damage. Very steep inclines should be avoided as damage may occur for which you will be held responsible.
- **Be aware that a motor home is buffeted by cross winds and air currents created by passing trucks.** Slow down driving speed. Anticipate these effects and compensate for them.
- **When backing the vehicle use the side mirrors and have someone watch out the back window.** In close quarters, have someone give directions from outside, while you view things through a side view mirror. If another person is not available, the driver should inspect the area behind the vehicle. By evaluating the situation before backing, drivers can avoid surprises and accidents.

MOUNTAIN DRIVING

Watch the engine temperature carefully. If the engine overheats, immediately pull off the right side of the road for the engine to cool. Check the engine for coolant. Use low gear on inclines where the transmission is repeatedly up shifting and downshifting. The proper way to descend is to put the transmission in low gear, thus avoiding the over use of the brakes. If at any time it appears that the brakes are fading, the coach should immediately be stopped and the brakes allowed to cool before proceeding.

GRAVEL ROADS

Motor homes operate reasonably well on dirt and gravel roads. However, on such roads, gravel thrown up by on coming traffic can produce dents in the fiberglass or windshield damage.

SLIPPERY ROADS

Motor homes are actually better at negotiating slippery road conditions than are automobiles. The fact that a higher percentage of the weight of the coach is on the rear wheels means that the traction will be good. However, slow down and exercise caution when you encounter slippery conditions. Traction may be better due to weight, but if you start to slide, the same extra weight will carry you farther than a car.

BACK COUNTRY ROADS

Motor homes are not suited for traveling on really rough roads. These roads frequently wind through woods that have not been cleared sufficiently to permit the huge bulk of a motor home to pass. Also, due to the height of a motor home, any unevenness in the road, especially side-to-side unevenness, may result in a constant throwing about of all items stored in the upper part of the coach.

HIGHWAY DRIVING

Frequently, long lines of cars collect behind a motor home. When this happens, the driver should pull off the road to let the cars go by. If you do not do this, particularly daring drivers will take dangerous risks to get by and the motor home will be the focal point of a potential accident.

WINDY CONDITIONS

Motor homes, by their very nature, are high profile vehicles. Like all such vehicles, they are adversely affected by windy conditions. If the wind is blowing, your best bet is to slow down. Speed and wind make for very dangerous situations. Turn on the radio and check for wind advisories. If the situations are dangerous (or you see other high-profile vehicles such as large trucks, other motor homes and RV's pulled over to the side), pull over and wait for the wind to subside.

FREEZING WEATHER

When the temperature drops, driving conditions change. In addition to watching for icy roads (including the hard-to-see black ice), cold weather may cause freezing of the vehicle. If the temperature drops below freezing, the operations guide gives specific actions to take to prevent damage to the vehicle systems. If you have any questions, please call.

When you're driving a motor home, make every trip a safer one by buckling up your safety belt and making sure passengers are secured too. Wearing a safety belt is the single most effective thing you can do to prevent serious injury and death in a traffic accident, according to the National Safety Belt Coalition. Besides, it's the law!

Your motor home vacation can be the experience of a lifetime. These guidelines can help make it a safe one too.

Altmans Winnebago