

Monbat batteries review

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Caravan leisure batteries, it has to be said, have served us extremely well: cheap, compact, reliable and long-lasting, it has illuminated our lighting and powered our (12V) TV's for many years. It's a little bundle of highly corrosive joy!

Of course, leisure batteries are different to car batteries, as they don't have to deliver that powerful 'mule kick' to turn a starter motor, instead they flow smooth, consistent power over a long period, and can be steadily recharged using a solar panel or smart charger, or by a few miles hooked up to the back of your tow car.

In addition, leisure batteries can also store electricity that is created by solar panels, and they have a third benefit, in that they smooth out the surges and spikes resulting from an inconsistent power flow & thereby protecting delicate electronics.

Leisure battery power ratings are measured in ampere-hours (Ah). This means, for example, that a 100Ah battery will deliver 1A for 100 hours, or 5A for 20 hours & or at least, they will do so in theory!

Typical caravan leisure batteries range from around 60Ah to 110Ah. The bigger the number, the more power they deliver, but also the larger, heavier and costlier they are. As with all things, caravanning life is a compromise.

Choose a battery that will fulfil all of your requirements. If you like the latest gadgets & motor movers, levellers and so on & you'll need a powerful battery of over 100Ah. Those are very large, so you'll also need to consider if one will fit into your battery compartment, and whether the extra kilos & when added to the weight of the device you're powering & eat up too much payload.

It's really important to check these things before committing to having a device fitted. I was once photographing a motor mover being installed, only for the owner to discover the recommended 110Ah battery wasn't even close to fitting inside his battery box.

Some of these batteries have removable plugs, which allow you to top up the battery with ionised water (never tap water or sulphuric acid), ensuring the plates are kept covered. You should do this at least annually.

Many modern FLA batteries are sealed, in which case, maintenance is not an option. All flooded batteries are at risk of leakage if they are tipped or tilted, and even sealed batteries have vents that can leak. Extreme care should be taken when removing or transporting these batteries.

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They are pricier than a basic battery, and caravaners don't really need to pay the extra cost of a gel battery, because they are designed for vehicles with more 'dynamic lifestyles', such as motorcycles and jet-skis.

Gel batteries also deliver less power for their size than standard batteries, but they can be deep-cycled (regularly deeply discharged, using most of their capacity) and they have an excellent lifespan. Care should be taken not to exceed the maximum charging voltage, because gel batteries are easily damaged by overcharging.

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