



# Ngonyama Camper Rentals Pty Ltd

Plot 50/R, Atterbury Rd East  
[between Ajax & Saal Streets]  
Zwavelpoort  
Pretoria 0081

P.O. Box 25840  
**Monumentpark** 0105  
☎ +27 +12-9961241  
☎ +27 +12-996-1242  
☎ 08 444 10 333  
Fax: 0865309658

Award winning website: [www.ngonyamarentals.co.za](http://www.ngonyamarentals.co.za)

e-mail: [info@ngonyamarentals.co.za](mailto:info@ngonyamarentals.co.za)  
BTW/VAT reg no: 4160209047

---

"Show your style and class and rent a luxury off-road caravans/trailers, accessories from us"

---

25<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2009

## OFF-ROAD TOWING: CHECKLISTS

### PRE-DEPARTURE & TRAVELLING CHECKLIST

It is important to note that the maintenance of your towing vehicle as well as that of the off-road caravan or trailer that you intend to tow is up to date/current. Our caravans and trailers are serviced and maintained.

Towing puts additional stress on the towing vehicle and we have compiled the following checklist which may be useful to customers towing our caravans/trailers:

- Check correct tyre pressure on tow vehicle and caravan/trailer. On the highway it may be inflated up to 3.5 bar. However, going off the tarred road [i.e. gravel, sand, dirt, rocky etc] it is recommended that you deflate it to about 2.5 bar and towing on loose sand or rocky areas you may even deflate it to 1.8 bar or less – however always check the manufacturer's recommendations.] Remember to inflate the tyres again when you on harder surfaces. Flat tyres do overheat at speed and you can easily lose a tyre – prevention is better than cure. You may



not be able to replace a tyre in remote places with the same type of tyre. Please take care.

- Check the wheels lug nuts/bolts of both the tow vehicle and trailer is they are tightened to the correct torque. We recommend 100Nm for our caravans/trailers.
- Make sure that the hitch, coupler, draw bar and other equipment that connect the caravan/trailer to the tow vehicle are properly secured and adjusted. Check the tow bar to see if all bolts and nuts are securely tight.
- Check the wiring and cables – if they are properly connected e.g. not touching the road surface and that they are loose enough to allow safe turning without pulling the wiring/cables from their connections.
- Check that all lights, brake lights, indicator lights, hazards etc are in working order – this routine should be done daily on tour.
- Check the hand brakes before you drive. Lever must be down!!! Driving with it even one notch up can cause friction on the drums which may lead to heat on the wheel bearings that can cause it to seize. It is the driver's responsibility to check the brakes/drums regularly.
- Check the weight distribution and make sure that all loose items are securely tied
- Make sure that the jack support, stabilizers and other leveling support systems are folded up and secured after hitching.
- Make sure that you have wheel chocks and jack/stabilizer stands.  
REMEMBER almost all off-road caravans and trailers do have auto reverse axles and therefore the hand brakes are ineffective when a



caravan is facing backwards down a slope. Chock the wheels before unhitching [by chock we mean put a brick/stone behind the wheels].

- ❑ Check that the battery of the off-road caravan/trailer is fully charged before you leave. If you use solar panel systems check that they are working and charging before you leave.
- ❑ Check the condition of the battery off-road trailer/caravan regularly to see if it is fully charged. A flashing red light on the fridge is the first indication that a battery is running flat. It is your responsibility to make sure that a battery is fully charged AT ALL TIMES.
- ❑ Switch off 12v appliances [including fridges] at night and conserve battery power. Remember to switch your fridge on in the morning!

## **A COUPLE OF SAFETY TIPS FOR TOWING**

Practice...practice and practice before you hit the long road.

It is unlawful to have someone riding on or in a trailer/caravan.

Check the routes you want to travel long before you undertake the trip and consider the following:

### **GENERAL HANDLING**

- ❑ Use the equipment that manufacturers recommend for towing
- ❑ Make sure that you have packed/loaded the caravan/trailer with the proper weight distribution AND remember to secure all loose items. A shift a weight could cause your trailer/caravan to overturn
- ❑ Drive at moderate speeds – this will have less stress on your towing vehicle and caravan. The higher the speed the more likely that you will incur sway or instability.



- ❑ Avoid sudden stops and starts that can cause skidding, sliding or jackknifing
- ❑ Avoid sudden steering maneuvers which may increase or create sway or undue side force on the trailer/caravan.
- ❑ Always check the environment – loose surfaces, wind, mud or wet roads are dangerous. SLOW DOWN!
- ❑ SLOW DOWN when you go off-road, or when you are travelling on bumpy road, or negotiating rail road crossing or other crossings [especially on gravel], or when you have to negotiate dongas or ditches.
- ❑ When you negotiate corners or curbs – remember your vehicle is extended so you have to take wider turns. Your trailer's inside wheels are always closer to a turn than your towing vehicle's and therefore more likely to hit or ride over the curbs. In off-road situations it could be a rock or any obstacle and if you hit it as speed you will without a doubt incur damage and ruin your holiday.
- ❑ Swaying can be controlled by increasing the air pressure in your caravan's tyres. When in windy conditions or when e.g. a large truck passes you the way to control sway is to release the accelerator pedal to slow down and keep a firm grip on the steering wheel.
- ❑ On narrow roads do not go off the hard surface or onto the shoulders and then try to brake. Always brake on the hard [tarred] surface and only when it is safe to do so go on the shoulder or soft surface. Failing to do this will result into loss of control of the trailer/caravan which can jackknife or even turnover.

## **BRAKING:**



- ❑ Allow more distance for stopping – remember you probably have another 1.5 tons of weight behind you.
- ❑ Do not try to control sway by applying the towing vehicle's brakes – this will only increase the sway.
- ❑ Always brake in a straight line. Do not swerve and brake simultaneously. Do not jerk the steering or make sudden steering movement whilst braking.
- ❑ Always anticipate the need to slow down. There are two ways to accomplish the slow down i.e. to shift to a lower gear and press the brakes lightly.
- ❑ In off-road situations the need may arise to engage low range – low range offers excellent braking assistance.
- ❑ On long down hills you need to apply brakes sparingly as they tend to overheat. Overheating of the brake drums is the major cause for the wheel bearing grease to melt which results in bearing failures – try to gear back and drive against the tow vehicle's engine compression.
- ❑ Almost all caravans and trailers in South Africa are equipped with auto reverse axles. This means that the axle will allow you to reverse and this automatically release the braking system. This feature does have its downside because when you park your caravan you should always remember to chock the wheels. Many caravans and has landed up in a ditch or a dam because the owner were not aware of this. Remember your fully loaded off-road caravan or trailer weighs up to two tons and there is no way any human will stop it when it is running backwards on a downhill.

## **PASSING OTHER VEHICLES**



- ❑ Should you encounter slower moving vehicles ahead or should you want to change lanes on the highway you should signal well in advance and allow yourself extra time to overtake or pass.
- ❑ Always try to pass on level terrain. Remember the driving dynamics going uphill or going downhill changes dramatically when towing.
- ❑ It is always a good idea to change to a lower gear before overtaking.

## **REVERSING**

- ❑ Reversing is sometimes also called "backing up"
- ❑ When reversing always look at your mirrors if the backside of your caravan is pointing to the left you need to turn the steering wheel to the left and vice versa.
- ❑ Always reverse very slowly.
- ❑ Have someone to help with a look out. Use hand signals to indicate instructions to the driver.
- ❑ Do not make sudden steering movements; exaggerated steering movements will cause greater movement of the caravan. Once this happens stop and go a little forward to align the caravan and start reversing again.

THESE TIPS ARE PROVIDED BY NGONYAMA CAMPER RENTALS PTY LTD IN THE INTEREST OF SAFE OFF-ROAD TOWING.

Happy towing

NGONYAMA TEAM

(C)2009

