

A MOVING winter's tale

When the elements outside add a few interesting challenges to moving day, **Charlotte Crowshaw's** expert tips will ensure you are well equipped to sail through with ease



Moving to France is not just a fine weather endeavour. Working for a company that moves people to and from France all year around, we have encountered the full spectrum of weather, from the wall-to-wall sunshine of the south of France in the height of summer to plummeting temperatures in rural areas in the depth of winter. Moving to France in the winter just takes a little more planning to deal with the added challenges.

It really can't be stressed enough how important it is to choose an experienced removal company, and while this holds true no matter what time of year you're moving, it's particularly pertinent if you're embarking on a winter move. You should find a company that has an intimate knowledge of the country, knows the terrain and has the practical skills to move you from door to door safely in the cold, snow and ice.

We'd advise that any remover you use should be a member of the British Association of Removers (BAR). More specifically, they should be a financially bonded mover who belongs to the BAR to ensure an international guarantee that your advanced payment is

protected should the company cease to trade. Equally, they should be FIDI accredited (the global alliance of international quality removal companies) as a reflection of their operations and service to their customers.

Get booked

First things first: book an appointment for a removal company's surveyor to visit your home. This will enable them to provide an accurate quote based on the volume of items you're taking.

It also provides you with an opportunity to talk to the surveyors about the rigours of moving during the winter months and to discuss any additional factors that need to be taken into account such as access to the new property. You'll need to talk about whether this is restricted or particularly perilous during snow and ice due to gradients, poor roads etc.

Choose a remover with a fleet of modern and well-maintained vehicles as they will have the benefits of speed-sensitive power steering, air suspension, anti-lock and electronic braking systems.

One of the biggest implications of moving to France in the winter

may be delays to ferry crossings due to increased risk of high winds or fog. Once on board the ferry, the vans will sometimes need ferry ties to be applied to secure the vehicle if the crossing is expected to be rough.

Equally, treacherous road conditions can cause further delays to the schedule. This can sometimes mean that removal crew will be required to spend additional nights en route to and from the premises to ensure adherence to tachograph regulations, rest periods and driving hours.

Boxing day

Using cheap and sub-standard packing materials is a common false economy, but your remover should be able to recommend and supply you with professional, durable boxes approved by the British Association of Removers. Sub-standard boxes, when damp, can start to break apart and this can prove remarkably troublesome part way through the move.

Furniture should be protected with the appropriate covers from your remover – these will protect from rain and snow when carried to and from the removal van as well as protecting it once in transit. Having the right covers, blankets and packing materials will be especially important during the ferry crossing.

Any plants which are sensitive to the cold should also be loaded onto the truck last, reducing the amount of time they're exposed to cold temperatures.



Better still, and if the budget will allow, opt for a packing service as part of the removal package. Your removal company should have professionally trained removal operatives to ensure that all of your personal effects make their continental journey in complete safety. All items needing extra care, be these paintings, mirrors or musical instruments, need to be packed in special cartons with protective materials. Always remember: owner-packed goods are not fully insured, whereas those packed by the mover are.

When moving abroad, you may need to place your possessions in storage for an intermediate period

before they are taken to the new property. Again, opt for a removal company you feel confident will store your possessions in safe, secure and dry conditions during the winter.

Share the love

As not all clients need the use of a full-sized furniture van, most removal companies should be able to offer prices for 'part loads'. This means that you can send a small consignment of belongings over to France which goes on a shared vehicle with other customers. The cost will then involve the space pre-booked in the van rather than having to cover the fee for a whole vehicle.

“Ensure the electrics are switched on in the new premises prior to removal day – it's useful to have outside lighting in winter as there are fewer daylight hours”



REMOVALS

Delivery dates will need to be flexible with this arrangement as the removal van will have several deliveries to make. Normally, part loads can be collected and delivered within two to three weeks depending on traffic and weather. Some movers can also arrange collection and delivery of motor vehicles and motorbikes as these can usually be transferred in 'road trains' (vehicles with several boxed trailers).

Moving in

Delivery at the new premises should involve your removal company unwrapping all your furniture items and reassembling items that require non-specialist attention such as beds, dressers and bookcases etc. It is always important to have keys to the new property prior to the delivery day and try to ensure the heating and electrics are switched on in the new premises. It's useful to have outside lighting at the new home in winter as there are fewer daylight hours for the removal vans to be unloaded in.

Depending on your circumstances, it's really useful to have a few essential provisions at hand such as a kettle, tea bags and coffee; in plummeting temperatures, this will be greatly appreciated by everyone involved in the move, especially the removal crew! ■

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