

Recreational Vehicle Guide



Home on the Road

Americans can spend big bucks on a vacation home. These properties — complete with year-round bills and upkeep even if it is only occupied a few months each year.

Consider investing in a recreational vehicle to enjoy a low-maintenance vacation home you can store in your driveway.

Owning an RV rather than a vacation home prevents you from being tied down to one location. It gives you the opportunity to travel to exciting places and witness the beautiful views America offers.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

If money is not an object, you can find RVs that come stocked with the same furnishings as your home. Marble countertops, big-screen televisions and even electric fireplaces are all possibilities in today's top-of-the-line recreational vehicles.

However, if you're on a budget, you can still channel the interior decorator inside you to create an attractive space in which to enjoy the country.

• **Mood lighting:** Adding LED lights to your RV's interior instantly adds a level of coziness. Countertops and tables provide a great ambiance when



paired with LED lights. You also can find battery-powered candles that can be placed anywhere.

• **Tile backsplash:** Any kitchen will benefit from an inspired backsplash that connects the counter to the cabinets, and RV kitchens are no different. Put together a creative design that adds some flair to your area. Consider using an adhesive-backed faux-tile backsplash for an affordable option.

• **Decorate:** Spruce up your space by adding stylish rugs, curtains and even pictures to your interior. Display the places you've been by creating a souvenir wall that features signs or knickknacks you have acquired on your journey.

WHERE TO TRAVEL

According to the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, there are more than 16,000 public and privately owned

campgrounds nationwide. This makes it easy to find a place to stop for the night or weekend.

In some areas, you will find luxury RV resorts that feature incredible amenities such as golf courses, spas and even tennis courts. Public campgrounds are usually more affordable and typically offer beautiful views, hiking trails and other outdoor opportunities.

Check your route for camp-

grounds before you hit the road.

FREEDOM TO ROAM

A recreational vehicle makes it possible for you to experience amazing beaches and mountain ranges and learn firsthand about different cultures around the country. Unlike a conventional vacation home, an RV creates a comfortable living space without strings attached.

Popular RV Resorts

If you're planning to take to the road in your RV this year, you should know about some of the best RV resorts America has to offer. These campgrounds are packed with fun for the whole family and each provides a unique view of the country.

The Department of Motor Vehicles reminds us that driving while tired can be just as fatal as drunk driving. It is imperative to have a plan to safely reach your desired resort safely. Find a suitable rest area on the route to your destination in case you need a few hours to re-energize.

Consider staying at one of these RV hot spots on your travels this year.

RED BLUFF, CALIFORNIA — DURANGO RV RESORT

This incredible resort is an amazing place to set up camp. It offers more than 150 sites that rest on the Sacramento River. If you can't find enough to do at the community pool, clubhouses or outdoor fireplaces, the resort also provides you with electricity, Wi-Fi and cable television.

This resort is also awesome for your canine co-pilot. After your pooch enjoys running around the 45-acre dog park, clean up at the automatic dog-washing station.



KEY WEST, FLORIDA — BOYD'S KEY WEST CAMPGROUND

Key West is one of Florida's most popular tourist vacation spots. Boyd's is located just a few miles from downtown, making traveling by bus or cab an easy task. After you have

seen all of Key West's hottest tourist spots, head back to this beautiful campground to relax on the beach or in the pool.

This resort also offers free wireless internet and a marina. You may want to plan a trip around Key West's busy tourist

season, as the 250 available sites are often completely full, making it seem a bit crowded.

FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA — AZTEC RV RESORT

Another beautiful place to

stay in Florida, this gated community gives campers a peaceful area to enjoy their visit. Located just minutes from the popular Pompano Beach, the Aztec Resort offers two tennis courts, two heated pools and a putting green. With all the

amazing amenities, you should have no problem finding the perfect activity for your family.

The gated community also is packed with overnight security services, giving you peace of mind in this home away from home.

New vs. Used

Have you decided you're tired of paying big bucks for hotels and flights on your family vacations? If so, you're probably considering investing in an RV. These vehicles offer enough room for several people to relax, sleep comfortably and travel the American highways.

Before buying an RV, you should be pre-approved for a loan. Remember, the amount you have available doesn't have to be the number you spend.

Be honest with yourself when setting a budget and keep in mind maintenance, insurance and travel costs. An RV that you can comfortably afford will allow you to experience more of America's great attractions.

Once you crunch the numbers and have a solid budget, you must ask yourself whether you should buy used or new. Both have pros and cons. It is up to you which option makes the most sense for your situation.

BUYING USED

For those just embarking on the exciting journey of RVing, a used model might make for the perfect choice. RVs depreciate quickly, and you can typically get a great price on a model that has already proven itself on the road.

A well-maintained used RV gives new drivers a more inexpensive way to learn about life on the road and get a feel for towing.

While a used RV might require more maintenance, it is likely that any mechanical issues from the factory have been resolved. Buying from an



authorized RV dealer gives you peace of mind that other issues have been fixed and can even come with an extended warranty.

All in all, buying used makes sense for those who are new to RVing or veterans who intend

to only use it for a few weeks out of the year.

BUYING NEW

Few things are more luxurious than a brand-new RV. Buying new gives you the freedom to make it your own by

deciding which options are important to you. This is where a veteran of the road has the advantage. While a rookie can make mistakes by purchasing options that cost more and might be unnecessary, a seasoned driver will know exactly

which amenities are needed rather than simply desired.

The downside to buying new is the sticker shock of a new RV, especially when you consider that an RV begins depreciating in value as soon as you drive it off the lot.

Water and Your RV

Having enough water while in your RV is crucial. It's not only important to keep yourself hydrated, but it's also necessary for hygiene and toilet functions. Learn the basics of how water works in your RV and how to get rid of waste.

WORKINGS OF WATER

Monitor your water tank's limited supply carefully so you have a sufficient amount while away from a fill-up source. You will benefit from bringing bottled drinking water to reserve your tank's precious water storage capacity.

While traveling or camping outside an RV park, you will only have access to the water your tank can carry. Check with your owner's manual for the proper amount of weight your RV can support and figure in the water weight. A water tank uses a 12-volt system to pump water to your faucets, shower and toilet.

When camping in a park, take advantage of the supply of city water. This alleviates the demand of relying on your tank. Keep in mind that the city supply may create more pressure than your RV can handle, so a pressure regulator might be necessary.

GETTING RID OF WASTE WATER

Every time you use your water supply, the water becomes waste that needs to be dumped when its capacity is reached. Generally, there are two tanks that will need attention. The gray tank fills with water from showers and sinks. The black tank holds the waste flushed from your toilet.

Be sure you're connected to the proper sewer outlet at your campsite. Your RV features handles or valves that allow you to drain each tank individually. Be sure to empty your black tank first. This allows water from the gray tank to clear out any remnants of sewage that may be left in the drainage hose.

Black tanks can benefit from being filled with a few gallons of clean water after discharge. This allows for more flushing power at your next discharge, keeping the tank cleaner.

Waste water must be discharged at appropriate stations. Not only is dumping on the ground against the rules in most RV parks, it also is illegal in many states.



Know Your Batteries

A motorhome is basically a house on wheels. There are many different styles on the market that feature different sizes, gadgets, classes and fixtures. Regardless of which motorhome you choose, you should understand how the battery system works. It is a unique setup that differs greatly from a regular vehicle.

A motorhome relies on two different styles of batteries to operate properly. A regular automotive battery will be used to start the engine. Check with your dealer to find the proper battery for the engine's specifications.

One or several deep-cell batteries are required to power your RV's electrical functions. Without them, lights and appliances would not be able to operate.

Learn more about how these two separate systems provide you with the power needed to enjoy your cross-country travels.

STARTING BATTERY

As with any other engine, a power source is required. Your starting battery is typically on a different circuit than the deep cycles. You may notice "CCA" and a number listed on top of the battery. The American Automobile Association defines Cold Cranking Amps (CCA) as an electrical measure of how much current the battery can provide for 30 seconds at a temperature of 0 degrees Fahrenheit.

If you find yourself away from your dealer and have the need for a new starting battery, make sure the replacement meets the specifications of your current bat-



tery. Fortunately, battery language is generally universal. You can easily find a replacement by matching the Battery Council International's (BCI) group code and cranking amps listed on top of a battery.

DEEP-CYCLE BATTERIES

These specialty batteries are commonly called golf-cart batteries in the auto industry. They are used to slowly discharge power to items in your RV that require electricity. They also feature a CCA num-

ber, but this is not important for your vehicle as it will have no purpose in starting. This number is only useful for different applications of the batteries, such as in boats and golf carts.

Instead, look for the RC, or

Reserved Capacity, rating. This designation shows you how many minutes a deep-cell battery will discharge 25 amps until it requires recharging. It can then be slowly recharged, usually when you hook up at a campsite.

Driving an RV

Road trips are a favorite American pastime, and taking long trips in the comfort of a recreational vehicle makes them even more enjoyable. Becoming familiar with driving such a long vehicle may take some effort. It is crucial to learn valuable safety tips while you are mastering your motorhome or hauling a travel trailer.

Depending on where you live and how big your motorhome is, you might need special certification before you can hit the road. Check with your state officials to learn the unique RV driver's license requirements. Even if your state doesn't require you to become certified for a recreational vehicle, you might benefit from taking a hands-on training course.

The size of these vehicles can be intimidating to most Americans who are used to driving passenger cars. Practicing driving in a controlled setting is a great way to learn the basics of driving an RV while keeping yourself and others on the road safe.

BE AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS

An RV's long body can make it difficult to change lanes or spot drivers following too closely. It is important to keep track of vehicles behind, in front and to the sides of your motorhome.

This can be made much easier by utilizing extended mirrors, windows and even cameras on some models. Always be cautious when changing lanes as blind spots are much larger in an RV.

PRACTICE BRAKING

The size of a recreation vehicle makes stopping much different than a passenger vehicle. If you are towing a travel trailer, it will have a brake system that is wired into your towing vehicle's brakes.

It is dangerous to ride the brakes when towing, as it allows unsafe levels



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of heat to affect braking performance. Conserve the amount of braking you do by decelerating before exiting an off-ramp and keeping a safe driving distance from vehicles in front of you.

CHECK YOUR TIRES

Due to the weights RV tires must support, it is crucial to keep them in peak condition. The Department of Motor Vehicles recommends checking

your RV's tire pressure at least once a week.

Properly inflated tires make driving a recreational vehicle much easier and safer.

Understanding RV Insurance

Most states require at least liability insurance for all registered vehicles, including RVs. However, you have additional options when choosing how you want to insure your home on wheels. The perfect coverage depends on how often you use your RV and how you choose to protect it.

The Department of Motor Vehicles recommends obtaining price quotes from at least three different agencies when searching for RV insurance.

Comparing different prices and options is the best way to make sure you're getting the most bang for your buck. It's important that you don't jump at the lowest price right away. Instead, consider the price of deductibles, what they'll cover and your comfortability with the agency.

An RV can be an investment, and you want to be sure it is sufficiently covered by a trustworthy insurance partner.

MOTORHOMES AND TRAVEL TRAILERS

Insurance providers will generally only offer RV insurance if a motorhome has its living quarters permanently attached. According to the DMV, these are the fixtures they look for.

- Cooking appliances.
- Refrigeration.
- Bathroom.
- Heating and/or air conditioning.
- Drinkable water and 110-125-volt electrical system.

Travel trailers are treated differently than motorhomes, since they are a non-motorized model of a recreational vehicle that is typically towed. You can still find suitable cov-



erage if yours features a cooking facility and sleeping area.

COVERAGES

Expect to find many different types of available insurance coverage. Some are not required to legally insure your vehicle but can add extra peace of mind. Here are some

basic and unique coverages reported by the DMV:

- **Liability:** This will help you cover the costs caused by an accident that damages someone else's property or causes injuries.

- **Comprehensive:** A non-collision type of coverage that assists with costs due to

damages from events such as storm damage, fire and theft.

- **Collision:** This is important to the integrity of your RV. It will help pay for repairs or even replacement after an accident.

- **Vacation liability:** This specialty coverage is used when there is damage caused

to another RV or someone experiences an injury in yours. It will apply if your recreational vehicle is being used for vacation purposes rather than traveling on the road. You might benefit from this option if you spend a lot of time parked at a campground or RV resort.