

Recreational Vehicle GUIDE



Tips for Buying a New RV

Investing in a recreational vehicle is as close as it gets to traveling in the comfort of your own home. Today's options are packed with incredible features and spacious rooms, offering a comfortable journey for the entire family.

Before you plan on making a purchase, you should determine which type of RV is right for you. Typically, there are two different options to choose from – a motorhome or a towable. Motorhomes offer an all-in-one travel experience. They are a power-train-and-chassis combination, meaning you'll navigate the roadways behind the wheel of the RV.

Towable options require a separate vehicle with the right towing capacity. When choosing this style, make sure your current truck or SUV has the towing power to properly pull the RV you purchase. If you don't already own a vehicle powerful enough for hauling, you'll need to budget for the additional expense.

WHEN YOU'RE FINANCING

Unless you're paying cash, you must decide the best route to finance the recreational vehicle which works best for your budget and purpose.

According to Lending Tree, since an RV is considered a luxury item, an excellent credit score is crucial. Before attempting to finance, you should receive a credit report to ensure your number is high and any past issues have been resolved.

You may choose to finance a loan through a lender you already have a standing relationship with or head to an RV dealer to discover their options. Dealerships have many connections with banks or companies who are familiar with this type of loan; it's a good idea to weigh your options. Also, visit your local banks or credit unions to get pre-approved for the purchase. It can give you a little more bargaining power.



© ADOBE STOCK

NEW VS. USED

When making the sizable investment associated with recreational vehicles, it's a good idea to buy from a reputable dealer. Whether you choose new or used, they will stand behind their RV better than when buying from a private party.

Here are some benefits and disadvantages you'll discover when you buy new:

Pros:

- Purchase a top-of-the-line RV with a full-manufacturer warranty.
 - Customize the color, trim, room layout and buy exactly what you want.
- Cons:**
- The investment for a new RV is considerably higher than a lightly used option.
 - New vehicles carry higher insurance premiums.
- These are factors to consider when buying used from a dealer:

Pros:

- Save money initially and pay for upgrades down the line.
 - It's possible to find an incredible model which is no longer in production.
- Cons:**
- Used RVs depreciate considerably compared to new vehicles.
 - The manufacturer warranty may have expired; check with dealer for extended warranties.



Know Your RV's Limitations

To have a fun and safe trip in your recreation vehicle, it's crucial to understand its limitations. When traveling, you will likely encounter potential hazards regarding an RV's height, width or weight. Stay alert while driving to avoid dangerous situations that could cut your trip short or cause expensive repairs.

KNOW YOUR HEIGHT LIMITS

You may have no problems with clearance levels in your local area; perhaps each overpass or bridge is clearly marked with height limitations. But traveling in an RV is about creating memories in new and exciting places. Some of these new areas you explore may not be so gracious to drivers and leave their overhead obstructions unmarked.

Make sure you understand the exact height of your RV – including the air

conditioning unit if it is mounted on top. If you second guess having enough room to pass safely, don't chance it; try and find an alternate route to get to your destination. It's also a good idea to be wary of pulling your RV into lines at the drive-thrus of banks, fast-food restaurants and gas stations. The risk of serious damage to your vehicle or structures can put a quick stop to your vacation.

KNOW YOUR WEIGHT LIMITS

DMV.org suggests the storage capac-

ity in most RVs offer a number of possibilities for proper weight distribution. Be careful to not overload and ensure the weight on both left and right sides are equal. It can be easy to tell if an adjustment is necessary while turning and maneuvering in traffic. DMV.org also reports that dangerous consequences like a tire failure is possible when an RV is overloaded. They recommend weighing your vehicle on a commercial scale before departure and pay attention to proper inflation pressures stamped on your tires.

KNOW YOUR WIDTH LIMITS

When purchasing an RV, the allure of a plush and spacious interior can make you fall in love and invest in the model. Don't forget to consider how these large cabins affect the overall size of a vehicle.

In fact, the American Automobile Association reports most states require recreational vehicle to be under eight-and-a-half feet wide or less to travel legally. If your vehicle is larger, you may have to carry an over-size-load limit.

Keep Fire Safety in Mind

Just like in your home, it's crucial to have a fire-escape plan in place while traveling in an RV.

An RV requires many flammable fluids and electrical circuits to properly operate. Unfortunately, a fire can break out whether you are moving or parked, so safety and planning is a must.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, an estimated 20,000 RV fires break out every year. To avoid becoming a statistic on your travels, make sure to have your vehicle inspected by a professional service center before hitting the road.

Keep reading for more safety tips:

WHY MAINTENANCE IS IMPORTANT

Complete these pre-trip maintenance tips from the United States National Park Service will ensure your vehicle is ready for the road:

- **Check your brakes:** If one of your brakes is not functioning correctly, it may create enough friction to ignite a tire or brake fluid.

- **Tighten electrical connectors:** Unfortunately, the roads you travel will not always be smooth, movements from uneven highways or potholes can loosen important electrical components.

- **Look for leaks:** If flammable liquids are leaking in the



© ADOBE STOCK

engine compartment, fire may be imminent. Ensure hose connections are secure and leaking issues have been resolved.

- **Stock your RV with three fire extinguishers.** Keep one in the kitchen, bathroom and outside in an unlocked com-

partment of a tow vehicle.

- **Ensure all smoke, carbon dioxide and propane detectors are functioning and located in proper areas.**

- **Have at least two escape routes and an escape plan.**

The NPS reports about three quarters of highway

vehicle fires are due to mechanical or electrical failures. Do your part to ensure your RV is road-ready before putting other drivers at risk.

IF THERE IS A FIRE

In addition to knowing the fire-escape routes, passengers

should also know how to dial 911, this includes on-board children.

If a fire is small and manageable, you should attempt to extinguish it but if it large or coming from an unknown source, get everyone out and call for help.

America's Best RV Parks

If you have your heart set on viewing America from an RV, don't forget to stop at some of the country's best RV parks.

Traveling in a recreational vehicle gives owners the possibility of saving money on hotel rooms by resting at sites with like-minded travelers.

If you're new to the lifestyle, the camaraderie amongst RV drivers will be something you'll appreciate.

Plan your trip around visiting one of the top RV parks in America, as recommended by the Travel Channel.

HORSE THIEF LAKE CAMPGROUND **Hill City, South Dakota**

This family-owned operation offers fire rings at each site and even a small heated pool. It's lack of fancy amenities are easy to overlook when you consider how close it is to some of South Dakota's most historic landmarks.

After relaxing for the evening, you can hit the road to visit Moun. Rushmore, which is only 12 miles away.

Crazy Horse Mountain and the Mammoth Site and Museum are also close by. Get a taste of history when staying at this amazing campground.

YOSEMITE PINES RV PARK **Yosemite, California**

Best known for its beautiful waterfalls, Yosemite National Park is a favorite destination for RV travelers. While the grounds in the park do support recreational vehicles, they stick to their historic roots – no hook-ups. To experience the majestic valleys, meadows and sequoias of Yosemite with several amenities, head to the Pines RV Park just 22 miles down the road.

The resort is incredibly popular amongst traveling families as they feature plenty of activities children love. Let the kiddos exert their built-up energy by panning for gold at a mine and visiting an alpaca petting farm.

ZION RIVER RESORT **Virgin, Utah**

Close by to the Zion National Park, this resort includes full hook-ups, concrete parking pads, grills and free Wi-Fi.

After spending a relaxing night at the attractive campsite, pack your bags and hike the sandstone cliffs of the park. The resort is also very near the north rim of the Grand Canyon, one of the most popular tourist attractions in the country.



Plan for Service on the Road

While you can't predict if or where your recreational vehicle may break down during a road trip, knowing where authorized service centers are located on your route can save many headaches.

Don't trust your RV repair with just anyone. They are complex machines with many moving parts that must work together. Allowing someone without the proper experience to make a repair may result in expensive corrections and worse, serious safety risks.

Protect your investment by trusting it to service centers who are well-versed in recreational vehicles and what makes them tick.

PLANNING YOUR ROUTE

When choosing your destination, do your research to find qualified service centers along the way. The National RV Dealers Association offers a helpful tool on their website to locate dealerships that employ RV Master Technicians. These professionals have been thoroughly trained and educated about resolving mechanical issues in recreational vehicles. It is also a good idea to bring along a map with these locations marked. In case of a breakdown, you will know exactly how far you are from help.

LEAVE ROOM IN YOUR BUDGET

During any road trip, an emergency fund is important. However, for a cross-country trek in a recreational vehicle, it is crucial. Repairs to these



© ADOBE STOCK

large motorhomes can be costly and may cripple a vacation fund. One way to combat unexpected issues is to have an expert thoroughly inspect your vehicle's components

before hitting the road. Hopefully, your trip will go off without a problem, but you will have peace of mind knowing you have the extra funds, just in case.

INSURANCE AND TOWING

If you find yourself stranded miles away from an authorized RV dealer, you might need to be towed. Talk to your insurance agent about their policy

on the issue. Many will offer reimbursement up to a designated number of miles. Be sure to receive an invoice from the towing company to turn in and receive compensation.

Exciting RV Technology

Just like passenger vehicles, RVs are gaining huge advancements in technology, offering more safety and comfort features for those inside. Whether you're looking to purchase a new recreational vehicle or upgrade your current road warrior, there are many conveniences and luxury packages to consider.

ON-BOARD NAVIGATION

One of the most frustrating experiences during an RV road trip is getting lost. Especially when driving these sizable vehicles, sometimes getting back on track by accessing smaller roads can be a real challenge. Do yourself a favor and equip your rig with an on-board navigation system.

Modern GPS tools provide you with real-time updates regarding road conditions. You will know in advance of stalls in traffic due to accidents or road construction. Keep your wheels rolling by finding alternate routes and get to your destination without any issues. Choosing an RV-specific GPS will alert you of hazards like hills, sharp corners or low tunnels and bridges. They are an incredible convenience to keep your recreational vehicle out of tricky situations.

USB PORTS

While you may consider your recreational vehicle as a place to unplug from your everyday responsibilities, the fact is that sometimes you'll need to charge one of the many devices you rely on. Installing USB ports throughout the interior will ensure you have charging access without disrupting the function of appliances. Having a fully charged cell phone in your vehicle is also a great



© ADOBE STOCK

addition for safety. In case of emergency, you will have a way to call out for help.

BACKUP CAMERA

Once you back up a large recreational vehicle with the assistance of a camera, you'll wonder how you got along without it. These systems are

typically easy to install, add incredible safety and lessen the frustration you will experience. Keep your investment and those behind you safe by allowing a certified-service center to install a quality backup camera.

NEW SAFETY FEATURES

When visiting an RV dealer-

ship, ask if these incredible safety features are included in prospective models.

• Adaptive cruise control:

The smarter cruise control feature assists drivers by staying a safe distance from other vehicles on the road.

• **Electronic stability control:** During an extreme steer-

ing situation, individual coach wheels will automatically apply the brakes to help keep the vehicle stable.

• **Collision mitigation:** With sensors and a monitoring system, drivers are alerted of upcoming hazards. Active brakes are automatically applied to avoid disaster.

Go Solar



© ADOBE STOCK

Installing solar panels on homes is extremely popular thanks to the money and energy savings. Did you know you can equip a recreational vehicle with powerful panels to charge your batteries?

Making the conversion to solar power is best left to a professional. They will have the expertise to determine the best types of panels to use based on the locations you frequent. It

will also depend on the grade of your roof as to which will perform most efficiently. If you purchased a recreational vehicle to go off the grid, a solar conversion can take you to the next level.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Whether you rely solely on solar power or as a backup power supply, these systems provide RV enthusiasts with more options on where to camp. When you aren't required to recharge your batteries by plugging into hook-ups, the possibilities are endless.

You will also enjoy independence from the maintenance a generator requires. Solar panels simply soak the sun and, with the help of an inverter,

transfer the power to your batteries. No fluid or filter changes necessary.

CAN YOU GO TOTALLY SOLAR?

This is a question is best left to the expert who will install the panels on your recreational vehicle. Based on its size, dependence on electricity and your driving preferences, they can deem the perfect system for your needs.

Going completely solar may be a sizable investment as numerous panels and components are required to work efficiently. Keep in mind, the conversion will pay for itself as you save money on gas and generator maintenance.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

While there are many advantages to a solar-powered RV, there are some down sides to consider. A sizable install can cost big bucks and, unless you spend ample time in your recreational vehicle, the initial investment may take years to recover.

Be honest about how you will use the RV when planning for a solar conversion. Small systems can be a great addition to weekend warriors who want to be off the grid for an overnight stay. Enthusiasts who spend most of their time in a recreational vehicle will gain more benefits from a system large enough to provide electrical independence.