



Recreational Vehicles

RV Buying Mistakes to Avoid

There are many factors to consider before buying a recreational vehicle.

Whether you're a first-time buyer or familiar with the RV lifestyle, you should protect yourself from making a buying mistake that you will regret later.

Significant research before visiting the lot can streamline the process of bringing an RV home. If you're interested in a pull-behind camper, make sure your current towing vehicle is compatible in terms of connection and capacity. Some larger recreational vehicles require a fifth-wheel hitch as a towing system, which can be an expensive upgrade for a pickup with a traditional receiver setup.

Once you have chosen the manufacturer, style of RV, floor layout and necessary features, visiting the dealership becomes much less stressful.

Check out some other mistakes to avoid when preparing to buy a recreational vehicle.

DON'T BUY TOO SMALL

There is a fine line between owning an RV that's too small for your belongings and family members and buying one



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that is far too spacious. When browsing the interiors of campers, try to visualize how you will use the space. Think of the items you plan to bring along and how many people can fit comfortably inside.

Keep in mind that each person will require enough storage space for numerous articles of clothing and their favorite camping activities.

NOT INSPECTING A USED MODEL

If you find a deal on a used vehicle that seems too good to be true, it probably is. Be diligent when inspecting the RV from top to bottom. If you're unfamiliar with typical signs of degradation, it's critical to hire a professional mechanic to give it a thorough examination. They will

look for mechanical issues, signs of water damage and malfunctioning electrical components.

If a recreational vehicle doesn't meet their standards, it's a safe bet to move on to another vehicle. The inspection may cost you up front, but it can mean huge savings down the road in both money and convenience.

ALWAYS GET A WALKTHROUGH

Make sure to receive a clear walkthrough of an RV before formally purchasing the model. While the bells and whistles may be the driving force behind your buying decision, if you are untrained on using them, the experience can be inhibited.

Ask your salesperson to show you the basics like starting the refrigerator to more technical jobs like lowering the stabilizing bars or connecting to a towing vehicle.

Be a Good Neighbor

Traveling to various destinations is an excellent way to view the country while rubbing shoulders with a variety of people.

The relationships you build can ultimately become life-long friendships with those who share your enthusiasm for recreational vehicles. However, to form a wholesome bond, you must know how to be a good neighbor as you travel to different campgrounds.

You should maintain your camping spot in the same way as your home's appearance. Be vigorous when keeping the area clean by picking up after yourself, disposing of garbage properly and emptying your tanks appropriately.

With a little diligence when respecting campground etiquette, the social experience of camping is more enjoyable.

CAMPFIRE SAFETY

Building a campfire is a staple of most camping trips, but without following the proper precautions, you risk the safety of yourself and neighbors. Remember these safety tips from the National Fire Protection Association.

- Fires should be at least 25 feet away from any structure and anything that can burn
- Never use gasoline or other flammable or combusti-



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ble liquids to start a fire

- Always have a hose, bucket of water or shovel and sand nearby
- Make sure the fire is completely extinguished before leaving the site

Enjoy this traditional aspect of the camping experience with great caution and care.

WATCH YOUR PETS

If your pets come along for camping trips, it's essential that they are well-behaved and respect your neighbor's property. Check with local parks for leash laws or to find out whether animals are permitted before settling in.

Once onsite, you should

consider using a leash even if the campground doesn't hold restrictions. Being in control of your furry friend limits the chances that they will wander to a fellow camper's site or intimidate smaller a neighbor's smaller pets.

It's also necessary to pick up after your pet to help keep

the area clean.

NIGHTTIME ETIQUETTE

As the sun goes down, it's time to turn down the noise and enjoy the experience inside your RV. Make sure to shut off your exterior lights, as they could disrupt a sleeping neighbor.

Should you Rent an RV?

If you're considering buying an RV and taking cross-country trips with your loved ones, you should know that the investment may require more diligence than you expected.

From expensive maintenance to making traveling more complex, the camping lifestyle involves strict responsibilities to ensure the experience is positive.

A beneficial way to begin your camping tenure is to rent a recreational vehicle to find out what you should expect. Investing in a new or used RV before understanding the lifestyle may leave you with expensive payments or difficulty selling a model that you've realized isn't for you.

Before heading to the dealership and spending big bucks on a camper, check out a few reasons why renting can be beneficial as you become accustomed to a home on wheels.

FIND OUT WHAT YOU NEED

Modern recreational vehicles are packed with innovative features and cutting-edge technology. Unfortunately, these state-of-the-art options also impact the asking price of specific models. Renting before



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buying allows you to find out what your family needs while out on the road rather than purchasing high-end additions that you can do without.

Consider renting an RV loaded with luxury items to find out how important they are to your camping experience. By doing so, you will have a clearer view of the type of camper you need when it's time to buy.

LEARN HOW RECREATIONAL VEHICLES OPERATE

An RV requires tremendous maintenance and service that often arises while traveling. Renting a recreational vehicle provides a chance to learn how the unit operates before you're making significant payments in addition to repair bills.

You should brush up on your

knowledge about the electrical capacities of the unit, how to discharge the water properly and how to make small repairs yourself. Hopefully, your rental facility will offer an orientation to show you the basics of safely living on the road.

WHICH LAYOUT?

RVs come in many shapes, towing methods and layouts.

Choose a rental that provides you with enough space and analyze how well you utilize the different rooms. Use the rental period to discover if a designated living room should be facing the door or if you would rather have your kitchen area as the focal point, or whether you'd prefer more storage space to more living space.

Full-Time RV Living

The RV Industry Association reports that across the country, there are 10.5 million American households that own a recreational vehicle.

While many use their camper for weekend vacations or extended getaways, the association states that 1 million people live in a camper full time.

The freedom of this form of mobile home allows people to travel to new opportunities or exotic locations without worrying about a mortgage or a permanent residence.

Life on the road does introduce unique challenges that some may not be prepared for. When considering making your RV a full-time home, make sure the vehicle is properly maintained and a comfortable size for your daily routine.

Find out the challenges that commonly arise when living on the road before embarking on a lifetime of camping.

MANAGE SMALL LIVING QUARTERS

If you're moving from a spacious home into the close quarters of a recreational vehicle, adjusting to the limited room can take time. To maximize storage, try to only pack necessities and consider how to get rid of the rest of



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your belongings.

If you feel that you will only participate in the lifestyle for a few years, it can be beneficial to rent a storage unit for your belongings, rather than selling.

It's also essential to respect the privacy of your companions. Try to give them space throughout the day by enjoying time outdoors or spending a few hours in another room.

BUDGET

While living in your recreational vehicle full-time will eliminate numerous utility bills and mortgage payments, you should consider your budget before hitting the road. Ensure you have enough capital to see the country and enjoy the exciting opportunities that will arise when traveling.

If finances are a concern, consider finding a job that is

performed remotely. Many positions allow workers to set their own hours, leaving plenty of time to enjoy the camping lifestyle.

MAINTENANCE ON THE ROAD

Mechanical or cosmetic issues are inevitable during long-term camping excursions. Dedicate a weekly maintenance routine to inspect your RV for wear or

tear, and signs of significant problems.

Make sure to check that the tires are filled to the manufacturer's specifications, and the tread is in a safe range to travel.

You should also quickly address any sign of water leakage both inside and from the roof above. If you're unfamiliar with making repairs yourself, it's critical to find a nearby RV repair shop.

Costs of Owning

Buying a recreational vehicle is an investment. Whether you choose the convenience of a motorhome or pull a new camper with your existing towing vehicle, the initial cost can be significant to many budgets.

However, don't think the expenses stop there; maintaining an RV lifestyle is tied to numerous financial responsibilities that may surprise you.

When financing a new or used vehicle, it's good practice to become pre-approved for a loan before visiting the lot. This will provide you with knowledge regarding which models you can afford and give you negotiation power when making a deal.

You should also consider contacting your automotive insurance provider to find out how the new addition will impact your premium pricing. Knowing what to expect about the initial purchase cost helps budget and sets a standard for a price range that makes sense.

Before signing a rental contract and making a recreational vehicle your own, consider these associated costs that arise while traveling.



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RV PARKS AND CAMPGROUND FEES

If you plan to park your RV among different campsites around the country, you should expect to pay a rental fee. In addition to renting the spot, you may need to come up with extra cash to access electricity and waste-water facilities.

It's a good idea to plan ahead by calling campgrounds

to reserve your spot before you arrive. Some may require a deposit to secure a campsite and charge a cancellation fee if you are unable to reach the destination at the expected time.

OPERATION COSTS

One of the most significant expenses imposed on recreational vehicle drivers is the cost of fuel. According to

Consumer Reports, the best fuel economy of any RV can be up to 20 mpg. Of course, older models may see a decrease in their performance. If you're towing a trailer with a standard pickup truck, you should expect the fuel range to lessen while it's pulling a heavy load.

You must also factor in expensive repairs and maintenance to ensure your journeys

are free from breakdowns.

FIND DISCOUNTS

You can offset some of the costs associated with owning an RV by looking for discounts to accommodate your lifestyle. Many RV membership groups offer price breaks for campgrounds around the country. Also, campsites often advertise discounted rates for veterans or senior citizens.

Staying Safe while Driving

Many who enjoy life on the road live in a more carefree manner, which is enhanced by the freedom and excitement of traveling to new places.

Life still happens, however, so it's important to maintain a healthy lifestyle and be prepared for emergencies.

Do you and your travel companions have a plan for when an issue arises back home or if you face a medical problem? You already know the importance of staying connected to your loved ones while traveling. Still, it's essential to maintain communications with your primary caregiver. With modern technology, services like telehealth are a great advantage.

Before you leave your life behind for a more fulfilling journey, ask your provider how to stay in touch. Video chats are an excellent way to discuss your medical concerns and receive advice or even get prescriptions that can be picked up throughout the country.

RUSHING BACK HOME

Many RV enthusiasts plan for emergencies back home by bringing along carry-on suitcases that can easily be packed. This peace of mind is suitable for rushed trips that must be made on an airplane or by train. When traveling in



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this manner, ensure that your recreational vehicle will be safe on-site until you return.

For more celebratory reasons to head back home like weddings or births, you should plan your route based on expected and unforeseen time frames. For instance, if you know a loved one may be giving birth in the foreseeable future, it's a good idea to begin

making the trip home a few weeks in advance.

VEHICLE EMERGENCY

Depending on where you stay, a breakdown can be a disaster on the road. If you are miles from the nearest repair shop or emergency service, you may find yourself stranded for extended periods. To lessen the discomfort while

you wait for help, ensure your RV is packed with plenty of non-perishable foods and drinks.

You should also perform regular inspections to your onboard fire extinguisher. In case of a small flame breakout, you can limit the damage your investment experiences, before the fire department arrives.

PROTECT YOURSELF

Make sure your door locks are in good working order and engage them whenever you are asleep or away from the vehicle.

If you must stay away from a secure campground overnight, such as in a commercial parking lot, it's critical to park underneath a working street-light.

Must-Have Accessories

While modern recreational vehicles are often packed with innovative safety and monitoring systems, some base or older models may lack the cutting-edge features.

Fortunately, multiple accessories can be installed to an existing rig by a professional repair service. You may also save a few bucks by choosing a base model and equipping it with add-ons down the road.

It's essential to find an authorized service center to make customizations or repairs throughout the life of your RV. In some cases, unlicensed modifications may cause warranty issues or affect the performance of the vehicle, so check into this first.

When you're on the lot, ask your salesperson about their on-site facilities. Most will offer a parts department to buy authorized accessories and a service center to install the components.

Check out some awesome gadgets that will enhance the RV experience. If your local dealers doesn't stock the parts you're looking for, ask if they can order them before you plan to hit the road.

HOLDING-TANK MONITORING SYSTEMS

Limit the frustration of spending time in your recre-



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ational vehicle by investing in a quality holding-tank monitoring system. When you don't know the capacity of your gray or black tanks, water can quickly backup in your shower or toilet.

You can probably already imagine the challenge of being low on fresh water when you're miles away from a camping spot.

Talk to your salesperson about the best setup for your

vehicle as some systems are prone to facing fouled-out sensors or unreliable readings.

GPS

The tremendous stature of an RV makes driving it through busy downtown areas difficult enough, it's even more challenging when you get lost. Avoid experiencing a stressful situation by buying a GPS unit. Its satellite navigation will make it easy to follow

the correct roads to your destination.

Look for units that offer real-time updates regarding automobile accidents or traffic backups to prevent being slowed down.

TIRE PRESSURE MONITOR SENSORS

RV owners should be adamant about the condition of their vehicle's tires. When operating with low pressure,

you're not only losing fuel economy, but it can lead to a nasty breakdown. If your camper isn't equipped with a tire-pressure monitoring system, you will likely spend countless hours checking and refilling your tires throughout a long journey.

Eliminate the nuance by hiring an expert to install TPMS in each tire, so the exact air pressure is displayed in the cabin.