



Recreational VEHICLE GUIDE

4 Reasons to Hit the Road

As the recreation vehicle industry continues to zoom to new heights, drivers and passengers alike are experiencing the country's roads as true adventurers.

Enjoying the RV life means being able to take control of your own trip. Stop when you want, go when you want.

Unlike many other forms of vacation and travel, you are not at the mercy of countless outside factors that can delay your trip or compromise your timeline. If this sounds ideal to you, it's time to give up the planes, trains and automobiles this travel season and trade them in for the RV experience.

Here are four reasons you should consider hitting the road in an RV this summer. And make no mistake, this list applies to spring, fall and winter too!

COMFORT & AMENITIES

Traveling in an RV means comfort and privacy. Depending on the gadgets and accessories you add to your vehicle, it also can mean pure luxury. What's better after a long day of major mileage than pulling into an RV camp and resting in the comfort of your own bed?

SEE AMERICA

Mountains, sunsets, rivers and oceans — your RV offers the perfect vehicle from which to take in America's natural wonders. The flexibility that RV travel provides also



© FOTOLIA

allows you to veer off course if there is a specific destination you would like to see. From Napa Valley to the Boston Harbor, and every stop in between, taking in the sights from your RV is the ultimate road trip experience.

EXPERIENCE FAMILY TIME

Close quarters means plenty of opportunity for bonding time as a family. RVs allow you convenience and reliability, as well as the opportunity to re-connect with those around you. Imagine yourself behind the wheel of your RV while your family rests comfortably in the back enjoying

games, singing and laughing together. Does it get any better than that?

SAVE MONEY

Yes, the initial cost of buying an RV can be considered a major investment, but look at all the expenses you'll be cutting during your road trip.

There is no need for hotels or fancy restaurants. Stock up on groceries before your trip and you'll be eating — and lodging — all within the comfort of your home on wheels. Check in with your local RV dealer for a great deal on a new or used RV and watch the savings start to roll in.

A Booming Industry

After recovering from the Great Recession, the RV industry is back and generating near-record revenue for manufacturers and dealers.

Americans are scooping up their second homes on wheels to take in the sights, sounds and sunshine of summertime travel in the United States.

The growth doesn't look to be braking anytime soon. The RV capital of the world, Elkhart County, Ind., lays claim to being the U.S. location where most American RVs are built. With 10,000 Baby Boomers hitting the retirement age of 65 every day, Elkhart's assembly lines look to be busy for many years to come.

THE NUMBERS DON'T LIE

According to the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, February 2016 reports showed that nearly 36,000 wholesale orders of new RVs were shipped, totaling the best February sales numbers in nearly four decades.

Why the jump? Increased employment and greater consumer discretionary income are the driving forces behind the explosive 2016 selling season. In the first two months of the year, RV shipments exceeded 67,000 units. This marked an 11.4 percent increase from the same period in 2015, according to the RVIA.

CUSTOM FEATURES

Today's models aren't exactly your grandfather's RVs. These



are decked out with fancy features and space, resembling the inside of a high-end apartment. You can order a shower with a seat or stackable washer and dryer.

How about heated, massage-enhanced reclining seats for both the driver and passen-

gers? If you can dream it, you can likely have it added to your RV for ultimate comfort. With features like these, it's no wonder Americans are flocking to their local RV dealers.

REPEAT CUSTOMERS

Drivers are taking advan-

tage of low interest rates and even lower fuel prices to make their journey into RV ownership.

And once they're there, they are not turning back. Many of today's RV customers are actually repeat customers who buy new vehicles every

three years or so.

Just like the car-buying experience, drivers like to stay up on the latest and greatest features that makers bring to market. This keeps the RV industry turning over new sales — both new and used.

Find a Deal on a Used RV

One factor to consider when deciding on a used RV is reliability. Just like buying a used car, you want to be confident that your money is being spent on a quality product. The required research is your responsibility.

Buying a used RV that is still in good condition can save you major cash. According to the website RVers Online, after factoring in depreciation, financing, maintenance and other costs, a three-year-old RV can cost about half the price of a new one. But making sure your potential used RV is up to snuff should be your first priority.

WHAT TO BUY?

There are many different kinds of RVs, so finding one that fits your needs is easy. Motorhomes come in Class A, B or C and offer the most space, but other options include travel trailers, fifth-wheel trailers and pop-up trailers.

Obviously, larger RVs contain more parts and could cost more to maintain over time. What fits your needs? Does a larger Class A make more sense for your travel plans than a fifth-wheel trailer? Once you know what to buy, you can spend more time doing homework on what to look for when it comes to red flags that could sway your buying decisions.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

When it comes to buying your next used RV, there are certain questions you should ask the vehicle's current owner or dealer. They include:

- What is the overall condition of the RV and why is it being sold?
- Can I review the warranties and maintenance records?
- Can I test-drive the vehicle with the seller onboard to answer any questions?

If you experience any issues while driving the RV, be sure to ask for specifics about how long the problem has been occurring and what the owner or dealer is willing to do to make sure it is corrected before you buy. Remember that as the buyer, you are in control of the negotiations, so don't be afraid to ask plenty of questions.



Airstreams and Ramblers

Some brands are true global powers. With thousands of loyal followers across the world, Airstream and Holiday Rambler are two examples.

Clubs of those two industry leaders cruise into fairgrounds every summer for highly attended rallies that draw loyalists and fans from all corners of the world.

Airstream and Holiday Rambler super fans spend this time socializing, attending workshops and raising money for their respective charitable endeavors.

Even if you're not a driver of either vehicle, you can attend part of these rallies to learn more about these classic recreational vehicles and the lifestyles that come with driving them.

AIRSTREAM

The 59th Airstream International Rally will be in Lewisburg, W. Va., at the State Fair Campgrounds from June 28 through July 5. The Wally Byam Caravan Club International organizes the event and gets its name from the Airstream founder.

Take a trip into Lewisburg to check out the rally and learn more about the brand. You will be able to converse with longtime drivers and take tours of both new and historic Airstreams.

The first Airstreams were developed in 1931 with the goal of creating a lightweight travel trailer. They are known



© FOTOLIA

for a sleek, unique appearance that is created by inner and outer layers of aluminum stretched over their frames.

HOLIDAY RAMBLER

An event similar to the Airstream assembly also takes

place in the middle of the summer, offering adventurers and curious community members the chance to fuse. The Holiday Rambler International Rally routinely draws more than 300 vehicles to its event, which was sched-

uled this year for April 3-8 in Yuma, Ariz.

Holiday Rambler Corporation was founded in 1953 and manufactures various classes and types of motor homes and towable vehicles. The company's use

of aluminum frames helped it gain popularity in the 1960s.

Community work and charity are crucial to the club's makeup. The group has donated thousands of items to shelters to help the underprivileged.

Routine Maintenance Tips

Making sure your RV is operational is the most important factor of ownership. If you neglect the major systems and parts of your RV, you compromise the amount of time it will be able to run at its peak.

As with any major investment, you want to protect your money through responsible ownership.

An RV is made up of many of the same components as any other vehicle, and it requires the same level of attention and maintenance to keep things running smoothly. Read on for our tips on engine and battery care, as well as tips on safely setting up camp once you reach your destination.

ENGINE CARE

Just like in your car or truck, the engine of your RV must continuously be checked and maintained for a long lifespan. Look over your engine before, during and after every long road trip.

Your assessment should start with the engine compartment, including the nuts around the carburetor, manifold and fuel pump, to ensure they are in working order. The drive belts on the fan and alternator must always have the proper tension, so check your owner's manual for recommendations and specifications.

BATTERY CARE

A humming engine is only useful if your battery is in good shape. Clean your battery often by brushing away any



© FOTOLIA

corrosion or dirt from the connections. Also, make sure your connections are tight with good electrolyte levels.

Be sure to check the alternator for dust or caked-on dirt. Make sure your engine wiring is secure and out of the way to prevent it from getting too hot or melting. These issues can

cause major damage to your engine and pose a safety threat while driving, so it's worth your time to identify and resolve them.

SETTING UP CAMP

There also are some simple maintenance and care tips to keep in mind when it comes

time to stop driving and set up camp. They include:

- Don't forget to apply your parking brake to ensure your safety and the proper functioning of your slide-outs and awnings.
- Plug your electrical shore power cord into the campsite receptacle, making sure to

match the amperage requirements of your RV.

- Attach your potable RV drinking water hose to the tank on the side of your unit and run the other end to the campground water supply; make sure to check for any leaks before leaving it unattended.

Identify and Fix Tire Issues

While cruising down the highway to your next adventure, the last thing you want to happen is to experience a tire issue. From slow leaks to dangerous blowouts, not all tire problems are created equal.

But even the most minor issues can lead to major damage and potentially dangerous driving situations.

The good news is that many blowouts and leaks are fully preventable with a bit of driver diligence and routine maintenance.

It's up to you to check your RV regularly for signs of tire wear and tear, especially if you're taking yours out on long road trips through varying terrain.

MAIN REASONS FOR BLOWOUTS

Most blowouts are due to improper inflation, worn tread or an overloaded RV. With the proper preparation for your trip and an understanding of how to check for these common mistakes, you can prevent many blowouts.

This means having your tires checked by a professional or simply taking a 15-minute walk-through yourself, checking air pressure and the physical condition of each tire before hitting the road for each trip.

Check for cracks on the sidewall that can be caused by weathering or UV exposure. This is normal.

You also can regularly clean your tires with mild soap, water and a soft brush to help



© FOTOLIA

remove some of the buildup that can cause cracks.

Don't forget to keep your tires covered when your RV is not in use. This will help prevent ozone and UV damage from the sun.

CORRECTING INFLATION ISSUES

Blowouts can occur if your tires are under-inflated or over-inflated. Checking your tire pressure regularly can help prevent this. Perform a month-

ly check of tire pressure. Don't forget to also check your tire pressure once you make it to your destination.

While gauging your pressure, keep an eye out for nails or other objects that may have

gotten stuck in your tires during past excursions. Experts recommend that you have the tire dismounted and plugged from the inside instead of trying to install a plug from the outside.

Top Gadgets and Appliances

If you're like many Americans, your home is equipped with "smart," tech-enabled devices and appliances. Why not do the same for your home on wheels?

RV makers are loading their vehicles with the latest and greatest tech on the market to make driving them a fully integrated experience.

Since you can't take all your favorite appliances with you on the road, there are a plethora of technological gadgets that can make you feel right at home while you're cruising toward your next destination.

PORTABLE WASHING MACHINES

Washing your clothes on the go just got easier. There are many compact portable washing machines on the market that allow you to keep your clothes clean in the luxury of your RV. Many of these machines weigh less than 50 pounds, making them easy to stow on your camper during your trip.

Not only storage friendly, these compact gems can help save you time and money required to find laundromats or community campsite facilities. If you're roughing it in the wilderness during your adventure, what better way to add a modern comfort to your experience?

ELECTRIC PRESSURE COOKER

For a couple hundred dollars, you can find a programmable electric pressure cooker that can provide you an all-in one food preparation option on the road. Instead of going out to eat, use your new cooker to slow roast, steam, brown or saute your food in the woods.

These versatile cookers are perfect for cooking a whole meal or preparing a tasty soup, all without taking up too much space in your kitchen. After all, space is everything when it comes to enjoying your RV trip.

POWER HUB & CHARGING STATIONS

What's the point of immersing yourself in the beauty of Mother Nature if you can't share a selfie? We're kidding, of course, but we all know the feeling of vulnerability that accompanies a dead smart phone battery. Track down a power hub or charging station with multiple docks. These devices can keep all your phones and tablets fully charged so you can keep your network updated with posts and Tweets of your trip.

