

HOW TO BUY AN RV

Step One: VISUALIZATION

The best way to start your RV search is to determine what you want the RV to do for you. Begin by asking yourself some basic questions. Why do you want an RV? What is your motivation for getting into RVing or for upgrading if you already own one? Visualize. Take some time. Create a picture of you and your family in an RV. Get a clear vision of how it looks to you. You need to determine what you want before you start searching. How will you use your RV? When do you plan to use it? Do you think you will do destination RVing (extended stays in one place) or RV touring (short stays covering long distances)? Where do you plan to go? How many people will travel with you? Will you be cooking in or eating out? How can owning an RV enhance your enjoyment of some of your current activities? Do you see yourself driving a motorhome, towing a trailer, carrying a truck camper or commuting to a parked RV at a seasonal location? If you do carry or pull, do you have a suitable vehicle, or will you need to upgrade?

It is very important to get the right RV for your particular circumstance initially and, thereby, avoid making a mistake that is usually costly to correct. Begin by developing a vision of how, when, & where you will use your RV.

Think about what you want owning an RV to do for you. Think about your dream RV vacation; think about the weekends you have available to use an RV. Visualize the places you would like to go on those weekends. Contact people who will travel with you in your RV and discuss optimal sleeping accommodations. Think about the percentage of time you will spend on the road versus time in a RV resort or campground.

Now that you have your own picture of what owning an RV looks like, put it in writing. Take a piece of paper and write down exactly what you want your RV to do for you-your RV Mission.

Congratulations, you have just created a mission statement for purchasing your RV. And that's important because with a defined mission to refer to, you have a solid basis for making wise decisions.

Next, with your mission in mind, develop a written agenda of all the attributes your preferred RV should have. Your list should be broken down into two priority lists: List one should include all the items that you must have in order for the RV to do what you expect it to do for you (based on your picture). These items are all "needs" and cannot be compromised without altering your mission. For example, if you need to sleep six people, a four-sleeper will not work. You need a six sleeper. You cannot compromise on sleeping capacity without altering your original mission from traveling with six people to traveling with only four people. On the next page write down your "Must Have List." List two should include all the features you would like your new RV to have. These are items that you could do without if you had to. These are your "wants." These items can be compromised and your RV will still perform the required task you are buying it for in the first place. On the next page write down your "Nice To Have List."

Now that you have a detailed list of what you need and want your RV to have in order to accomplish your defined mission, determine what type of RV best fits your picture. Do

you think a Motorhome, Travel Trailer, Fifth Wheel, Pop-up, or Truck Camper would work best for you? A basic rule of thumb is, the more time you plan on spending traveling on the road, the more a motorhome makes sense. Conversely, the more time you spend in one location, the more sense a towable RV makes.

Type Casting Here's a rundown of the basic types of RVs available:

RVs YOU DRIVE

Class A Motorhomes

Built on an "A" Rail Chassis, these motorhomes are little more than a steel frame before the coach manufacturer adds the body and interior. When completed they are often the "elite" of RVs. Available with gas or diesel power, A's are usually between 25' and 40' in length.

Class B Motorhomes

Class B motorhomes or van campers are built on a conventional van chassis complete with body. B's are generally smaller than the other motorhomes with a maximum length of (usually) no more than 21'. One great advantage is a small enough size to be a reasonable second-car-and-RV combination. Small size, however, is a limiting factor in RV performance; especially for longer stays and living comfort for larger people.

Class C Motorhomes

Also known as mini-motorhomes, C's are built on a specially designed chassis with a conventional van cab. C's usually have a bunk or storage area which extends out over the cab. Typical sizes are from 20' to 31'. Many folks feel that driving a C is more familiar due to the conventional cab and lower riding height. C's often provide superior sleeping accommodations due to the added bunk over the cab. This feature makes class C motorhomes a favorite when children will be traveling.

RVs YOU TOW

Folding Camping Trailers

Also known as pop-ups or fold-downs, camping trailers are the least expensive type of RV. Typically extending from 20' to 25' in length when open, today's pop-up can provide nearly every feature of a full size travel trailer including shower, hot water and air-conditioning.

Travel Trailers

Travel Trailers are available to fit tow capacities of many of today's SUV's, vans and pickups. Sizes generally range from 17' to 36'. Many models feature expanding living space "slide-outs." Travel Trailers provide the option to unhitch and use your tow vehicle for sight-seeing or side trips, as well as use for everyday transportation.

Fifth Wheels

The term “fifth wheel” refers to the type of towing hitch used to pull these trailers. A fifth wheel hitch uses a design similar to a tractor-trailer. Noted for superior towing performance, fifth wheels are the RV of choice for most full-time and extended-time RVers. Compatible sized and models are available for most trucks, from half tons to medium duties. Sizes range from 19’ to 40’, many with slide-outs available.

RVs YOU CARRY

Truck Campers

Carried on the back of a pickup truck, these versatile campers are easily loaded or unloaded. They make your everyday pickup truck into a full-fledged RV and back again.