



Buying the First RV

The call to get on the road is getting louder each day. It is time to start making plans for the near future. Buying the first RV requires research and patience.

Decision Time: Motorhome or Trailer

Decide if you want to travel (Class A or C motorhome) or stay a season in one location (fifth-wheel/trailer). Forget about the extra space that a fifth-wheel or a trailer provides if you have to back it into a parking space every few days or weeks.

Statistics show that the highest percentage of change RVers make in the first few years is a switch from one type to the other. If you are a travel bug, don't even think about trailers or fifth-wheels, go motorhome. Without experience driving a big rig, start with something in the motorhome 33 ft. range or smaller.



If you are traveling alone and not thinking about a full-time adventure in the beginning, the Class B+ vans might be the right choice.

The best bang for the full-timer buck, if one of the drivers has experience, is a 10-year old 40 ft. high-quality motorhome. Full body paint is important for the long-term. The layout is paramount if you are planning to travel full-time. Slide-outs are a nice addition along with a washer/dryer.

Another important feature is storage space. Having full basement compartments, automatic levelers, and newer tires are on the top of the list for motorhomes. Ensure that the salon is laid out to suit you, the TV in the right place, not too many sofas, etc.

Please resist the urge to redecorate until at least six months down the road; you cannot recoup the money spent if you decide to change vehicles.

If you are thinking about buying used, know that a Class C motorhome is built on a much cheaper chassis (truck) than a Class A, so construction is not as solid either. If you buy new, there are some quality Class Cs now available.

Once the basic decision has been made (motorhome or 5th-wheel), search RVT.com and RVTrader.com. RVUSA.com is another site to explore. Use the NADA.com database to get a price range. Also decide on gas (much cheaper original cost and at the pump) or diesel (more power, longer life) for the engine choice; do your research first about maintenance.

For help justifying the cost, read this article, www.rversonline.org/ArtFAQ3.html, for tips about how much you should pay for your RV.

Choose about three models you like, then get serious about finding one from a private owner. Here are a list of websites to peruse:

- RVOnline.com
- RVNetwork.com (Escapees forum)
- rv4salebyowner.com
- rvsfsbo.com
- classyrv.com
- NADA.com

Important: Purchasing an RV without an “independent” RV maintenance person giving it a thorough checkout definitely comes back to haunt you. Visit NRVIA.org for a national RV inspector search engine. This site searches the USA for certified RV Inspectors.

If a certified inspector is not available near you, mobile RV repair services are everywhere. Most reliable RV repair facilities have someone who can handle the inspection. This service can be free (hoping to get the repair work) or up to \$300. **Do Not Ship This Step.**

Have the current owner drive it to the facility (liability reasons) or have the inspector come to your location. If you decide on a motorhome, it is a good idea to have an oil analysis done as well. This can tell you a lot about the current state of the engine.

If you wind up on a dealer’s lot (last choice), have a mobile service stop by for an hour. ALWAYS plan to attend this, never accept the salesperson’s word. Be careful with warranties, do your research. Don’t assume anything while at the dealer’s lot.

Get EVERYTHING in writing. Be prepared to deal with sales personalities, do not let them intimidate you. Succeed in getting the best value by not signing on the dotted line before doing all your research. If you need to, put a small deposit down on the rig until you decide if it is the right one for you.

Buying That First RV ... Long Distance

You have looked online (RVTrader.com, RVT.com, and other FSBO sites) and found several RVs that you like. The layout looks good for you, the price range is right, it has hydraulic levelers, powerful enough diesel engine, big enough TV, quality built, enough slides, and includes most of what you wanted; it just happens to be in Arizona, California, Utah ...

There is a new organization available to assist you. They certify, and help you search for, RV inspectors. Go to NRVIA.org and use the search field to find an inspector in that area. [RV Inspection Connection](#) is one of the companies available that is comprised of NRVIA certified inspectors. Find out everything you need to know about what they include in their inspections.

Pricing starts at \$295 and includes photos. Take a look at the reports they generate here. Have this inspector go look at the RV and check it out. Changing RVs within the first year or two is very expensive.

When the inspector finds the right RV, make a deal with the owner (Intent to Purchase) and either drive there to pick the motorhome up or have it driven to you by a professional. An [RV Purchase Option Agreement](#) is helpful to complete the deal. Use this example and create your own agreement, or use as is.

Another option: Your new RV could be delivered to an RV driving school, meet it there, take the course and drive away. See [Driving-Schools-BootCamps](#) for a list.

The RV inspector makes sure you do not get a lemon, so you cannot lose there. You might also want to get a fluid analysis to ensure the engine is in good condition. The inspector should be able to help you there. The first RV sets the stage for a great full-time experience. Get the right one for you.

Having the RV inspected by a professional is always a good idea no matter where you buy it; even if the inspector is a local RV repair person.

Finding the Perfect RV – Resources to Help

Once you find the perfect RV make and interior layout, use the following resources to check for value and quality:

- [RV Consumer Group](#)
- [RV Guide](#)
- [RV Reviews](#)
- [NADA Guides](#)
- Free Forums on the Internet that discuss specific RV make and models

If you take advantage of the resources included here, all the information needed to purchase the right recreational vehicle is at hand. Make the best deal possible and join us on the road for the adventure of a lifetime.

The RV Lifestyle Collection by Margo Armstrong



Click on the Covers for Info

