

Tips on Buying Caravans & Recreational Vehicles

There are a variety of caravans, pop-tops, campers, motorhomes, campervans, slide ons, fifth wheelers, camper trailers, tent trailers and tents available on the market, and the process of purchasing any of these exciting products can be quite daunting.

There are a number of things you should consider when making your caravan or RV purchase decision:

Lifestyle

- How do you intend to use your caravan, RV or tent? Short trips, family holidays, remote or rugged travel or extended retiree touring?
- How many people will need to be accommodated? Consider children, grandchildren, friends, growing or shrinking families.
- What level of comfort do you desire?
- What are you prepared to spend? Don't forget to take into account all the add-ons and extras which may be required.
- Is it worth hiring the product you are considering before committing financially?

Requirements

- Would you be prepared to consider an alternative option should your budget be a limiting factor. For example would you consider a tent trailer instead of a caravan which often allows more space for the kids and can contain similar luxuries to a caravan?
- Would you consider spending more on added comfort and luxuries should you be travelling for extended periods and lash out and buy a bigger caravan or motorhome?
- Does your current vehicle have the towing capacity needed or would you need to purchase another vehicle?
- How many beds will you need and what type? Consider an end double bed, an island bed or single beds, air mattresses or swags.
- What do you require in a kitchen?
- Do you need a toilet and shower or would you prefer to use the facilities provided at a caravan, holiday or tourist park?
- Can your caravan, RV or tent be set up quickly and with ease?
- Is your caravan or RV simple to position and level?
- At rest stops do you want to access your unit?
- Is the ceiling high enough for the taller person travelling?
- Can you access storage compartments with ease / is there enough storage?

Designs

- Consider the centre of gravity when towing.
- Do you want something that is less wind resistant?
- Can it be stored easily when not in use?

The Manufacturer

Ensure the manufacturer meets all Australian Standards and Australian Design Rules. This will ensure you don't have any problems registering your vehicle or applying for insurance claims in the event of an incident or accident?

Chassis and Suspension

The quality of the chassis and springs, in both materials and construction, are critical to the longevity of your caravan or RV's life. Ensure they are built for roads you intend to travel on.

Tailgate and Doors

Seals in good condition will help prevent water and dust from entering your unit and will save you a lot of time cleaning which you would like to prevent when on holidays.

Tyres and Rims

Ensure all tyres including those on the vehicle, caravan, trailer and RV tyres are of good quality and in good condition. Good trailer tyres can often be used as spares for your vehicle and make towing easier and travelling safer.

Trims – Canvas and Awnings

Awnings allow for more living space, shelter and with walls added can provide protection from the sun, wind and rain and provide a great deal of added comfort when travelling. It is important to consider that you have the right quality canvas for the purpose of its use, for example roofs require heavier duty canvas than walls. Remember, the extra weight awnings and annexes can add to your unit.

Bedding

A range of mattress types can be included. Inner spring mattresses are often more expensive than foam mattresses however last years longer and often provide more comfort. Which ever mattress you prefer ensure the travel cover of your camper trailer is deep enough to accommodate it.

Optional Add-ons

A huge range of optional add-ons can be included when purchasing your caravan and RV, or fitted afterwards. It is important to keep track of the extra weight of all of the add-ons as this can affect longevity and safety. Add-on's can include, but are not limited to: stone guards to protect your caravan or RV from the damage from rocks & stones being flicked up when driving; tool boxes (ensure not to exceed manufacturers weight specifications); boat/roof/bike racks; electric brakes; storage boxes; solar panels, etc.



On or Off-Road Caravans and RV's

With all the types of caravans, motorhomes and camper trailers manufactured in Australia only a small portion of these manufacturers warrant their products for proper off-road use. Features of off-road RV's include:

- Withstanding knocks and bumps
- Chassis designed for off-road conditions
- Steel components treated to prevent corrosion
- Stronger framework built from timber, galvanised steel or aluminium
- Heavy duty suspension systems
- The caravan or RV is raised slightly higher from the ground than on-road models
- Chequer plates fitted for added protection
- Places included for spares such as wheels, water tanks and extra gas and jerry can holders
- Energy efficient features included for travelling to remote areas.

Interior Design

There are three main layouts within caravans and RV's which are most commonly used to help distribute weight evenly. Layouts include - rear kitchen with front bed; rear bed with front kitchen; mid kitchen with either front or rear bed

Don't forget to look at and understand the differences and advantages of other design aspects of your RV including:

- Windows, doors, floors and walls: It may be worth considering when looking at windows whether they are tinted or not and if they can be locked. Tinted windows reduce heat, glare and UV rays while windows with locks increase security and reduce insurance premiums. Good doors will reduce the transfer of cooking fumes and steam throughout your unit and will also add extra security, while easy to clean floors and walls may save you many hours of cleaning when trying to enjoy your holiday.
- Bathrooms and toilets: Ensure that bathrooms and toilets are covered with appropriate material which will prevent any water damage from occurring. Appropriate materials to prevent water damage include ceramic tiles, vinyl tiles, lino or entire fibre glass bathroom units.

Storage

Caravans and RV's are full of ingenious designs to make the most of the limited storage space available. It is worth ensuring you are able to secure everything down when you are on the road to prevent damage should an object become free.

Safety Features

Some of the safety features worth considering when purchasing your caravan may include, but are not limited to: smoke detectors, over pressure relief valves on gas cylinders, fire extinguisher, fire blankets, residual current device – also known as an earth leakage detector, gas leakage detector, water purifying filter, security locks on doors, window locks, a jack, spare tyres and tyre changing accessories.

Drivers Licences & Towing Courses

Depending on the weight and size of your motorhome you may be required to obtain either a light rigid or medium rigid drivers licence. You are not required to hold a special drivers licence to tow camper trailers, tent trailers or caravans however you may find participating in a towing course an invaluable experience.

Investigate

Dealerships:

- Visit the [Supplier Directory](#) for a list of dealerships and manufacturers that can help you find the caravan or RV of your dreams.
- Shows and Events: Attend the [NSW Caravan, Camping, 4WD & Holiday Supershow](#) held at Rosehill each year, or the [Penrith Caravan, Camping & Holiday Expo](#) or [South Coast Caravan, Camping & Holiday Expo](#) held at Penrith and Batemans Bay in September and November respectively for a diverse range of products to browse and choose. Or attend the annual Recreational Vehicle Run Out Sale for the chance to grab some great bargains.

Hire before you buy

Hiring will provide you with the ability to change your mind or to proceed with the purchase confidently. View a range of [hire companies](#) in the [Supplier Directory](#) where you can hire product to test prior to making your final purchase decision.

