

### 10 Common Mistakes When Buying a Motorhome

Here are a few common pitfalls to consider when looking for a new motorhome...

1. **Does the layout suit your needs?...** If you are new to motorhomes, it can be hard to know for sure which layout will suit you best until you have experienced a few trips away. For example - a fixed bed might seem convenient, but will this detract too much from your daytime living space? or will you end up struggling to drive a much larger van than you need? Alternatively – you might choose a compact van with a lounge that converts to a bed, only to find that the hassle of assembling the bed each night is an unwanted chore. You can give yourself a valuable insight into which layout works best for you by hiring a motorhome to see how you get on. Some dealers will offer a 'try before you buy' scheme which allows you to reclaim some of the cost of a trial hire off the price of a new van.



2. **Are you buying more than you need?...** For example, many retired couples decide to buy large vans with lots of beds and travel seats to enable trips away with family, especially grandchildren. It is a nice thought, but carefully consider how many trips you might do with extra family members verses how often it will be just the two of you. If a smaller motorhome would suit you best for most of your trips, there are other options that would enable occasional trips with extra passengers such as awnings or 'pup-tents' pitched alongside. Also consider the possibility of transporting occasional extra passengers in a car rather restricting your layout options with forward facing, belted travel seats.

3. **Check the servicing history properly...** Everyone knows that when you buy a vehicle, you should make sure it has an MOT and that the engine and brakes have been regularly serviced. But in a motorhome, you should also look for a habitation service history to show that the 'living area' has been professionally looked after. Habitation checks include safety critical items such as gas and electrical systems as well as appliance function and structural damp checks.

4. **Check your weight...** Anyone who passed a driving test after 1997 is by default, restricted to a weight limit of 3500kg unless they undertake an additional 'C1' heavy vehicle driving test. This weight limit also applies to drivers who reach the age of 70 unless they take an annual medical to maintain the Category C1 licence. Whilst most (but not all) panel vans typically sit at 3500kg or below, it is important to check the maximum gross vehicle weight (normally listed on the V5C) and make sure it doesn't exceed what your licence allows you to drive.



5. **Set your budget...** There is no point having an amazing motorhome if you spend every moment away in it racked with guilt and worry about how you are going to pay for it. Finance deals can be a great way to help spread the cost of a motorhome and may allow you to get a vehicle that is newer with less maintenance costs, so we're certainly not dismissing them. But you do need to set yourself a realistic budget and be prepared to upgrade your motorhome as time and budgets allow. Don't be put under pressure to spend more than you're comfortable with and take your time to read any small print. Investigate other finance options - there may be cheaper options than those on offer by the dealer.



6. **What about storage, maintenance and charging?...** Have you thought about where you are going to park your motorhome? Can it be stored outside your house? (check for any restrictions in your deeds or lease), or have you found a storage facility? If so, is it secure? is there access to a power supply to keep the leisure batteries topped up? If you don't have access to power, will you be happy to move your vehicle regularly to charge it up or can you afford to have solar panels fitted? Have you got a local motorhome service centre who can look after your vehicle? Check that your local service centre is prepared to do warranty work on the particular vehicle that you want to buy. Beware when buying long-distance as you may have to return to the place that you bought it if for warranty work.



7. **Motorhome or Caravan – which one is right for you?...** Are you someone who likes to wake up to a different view every day? Or do you prefer to stay in one place and thoroughly explore the surrounding area. Motorhomes are great for touring, but if you want to stay in one place, it can be annoying to have to unplug the motorhome and secure all loose items every time you want to pop out to a shop or local attraction. Caravans on the other hand allow you to unpack and make yourself at home, nipping out in the car when needed. You may well end up doing both types of holidays at some point, but how do you think you prefer to travel most of the time?



8. **Panel van or coachbuilt? ...** If you are able to store a motorhome under cover, the type of vehicle construction may not be something you need to think about too much. However, most motorhomes spend a great deal of their lives exposed to the elements, so you need to be aware of the different motorhome construction techniques and the potential for damp. Panel van style motorhomes have a metal shell which generally, offer a solid resistance to water and if a window or rubber seal does leak, there is less potential for structural damage. A coachbuilt motorhome however is usually built around a wooden frame joined together with screws and sealant. If water ingress happens on this style of vehicle, you could be facing expensive repair costs and structural damage to your pride and joy.

9. **Beware of scams! ...** Buying a stolen motorhome is easier than you think. When buying a motorhome always undertake a credit check, most dealerships will do this for all vehicles they sell, whether trade-in's or brokerage stock, but you can also pay for your own credit check with a company like Experian. When you view a motorhome, also ask to see the paperwork. Does the VIN number on the vehicle (window & chassis) match the paperwork? Look at MOT's and servicing history – does it all add up and are dates and mileage logical? V5C's show who is the registered keeper of a vehicle, but it doesn't necessarily reflect the legal owner (this could be a finance company for example) – so you need to do credit checks in addition to V5C checks. If buying a motorhome privately, you should meet at the address listed on the V5C. Does the seller really live in that property? Is this really their vehicle to sell?



10. **Consider the long-term aftercare...** So you've seen a new motorhome model that you absolutely love and you know it's right for you. You viewed it in your local dealership, but a quick online search shows a cheaper one at the other end of the country. Do you go for the instant cash saving, or do you think about the long term? Does the vehicle have a warranty? Where will you need to go to have any warranty work done? Manufacturers rarely cover the full cost of warranty repairs leaving the dealer to cover the shortfall, which is why many dealerships will only undertake warranty work on vehicles that they sell. Try to balance any saving in the purchase price against the potential cost of taking the van back to the supplying dealer should warranty issues arise.