



YOUR GUIDE TO:  
**WHICH RV IS  
RIGHT FOR  
ME?**



[www.deluxegroup.co.nz](http://www.deluxegroup.co.nz)



**We are lucky enough to be living in one of the most scenic countries in the world. Exploring our scenery, nature, towns and cities in an RV is a great way to take in this beautiful place we call home.**

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The RV world is expanding as the baby boomer generation retires and the general population want the freedom of living off the grid, or at least away from home. There are many options out there and many things to think about to ensure you make the right purchase. We have put this guide together to help you through the process.

Naturally we are using our own models and many years of sales and personal traveling experience as examples, however you will soon get an idea of what is likely to work best for you.

The most important thing is to decide what style of camping you are most likely to do and then find an RV which is going to fit your requirements best. We also recommend that you purchase what you would like rather than what others may think will work for you. Buying an RV has many similarities to buying a house, and what works for others may not work for you.

**Question:**

## **What style of camping are you looking to do?**

The first major question that really needs to be addressed at the outset is, are you going to be predominantly staying in holiday parks and using facilities including plugging into the 240-volt power or are you intending to go freedom camping and operate off grid for an extended period of time?

It could be a be a mix of both or somewhere in between? The answer to this question could have an effect on the type of RV that is available and suitable to your needs.

### **Motorhome or Caravan?**

We suggest being careful here as many people you will talk to will have a bias one way or the other. Of course seek advice and have those discussions with friends, but keep in mind your own needs and wants. This can be a hard decision as they both have benefits. Let's look at the benefits of each and hopefully clarify a few things.

### **Is it Caravanning I want?**

From our experience caravanning is more popular with families and people who prefer longer stays in one location. You take the tow vehicle and caravan away and park up at some seaside campground or the likes. Once you have set up camp you can disconnect the tow vehicle and then use it as your run around. This is very convenient for families who want to take the kids exploring or people who like to head out on short day trips in and around the location they are camping.

Generally, caravanning becomes a little more difficult as we get older. Towing a large caravan takes confidence. Often as people retire, they also downsize their homes and having a large caravan on a small section can become difficult. A way around this of course is to install motor movers which adds cost to your caravan, however they allow you to manoeuvre much better into small spaces.

That being said you can also store a caravan in a dedicated storage complex and not on your property.



### **Should I Choose a Motorhome?**

The capital cost of a motorhome usually on face value is considered more, however in comparison to a caravan with a tow vehicle together, they can be similar.

We are finding as people age motorhomes are much more popular. They are easier to manoeuvre, they generally have a larger payload and over-all they are easier to drive. Particularly late model motorhomes, which drive more like a car and much less like a truck. A motorhome also gives much more freedom of movement for exploring places on a shorter timeframe hopping from place to place much more easily. The setup and pack down is much less involved than a caravan.

It is important that with either combination you choose that all the users of the RV are going to be happy to drive should you wish, or the need arises.

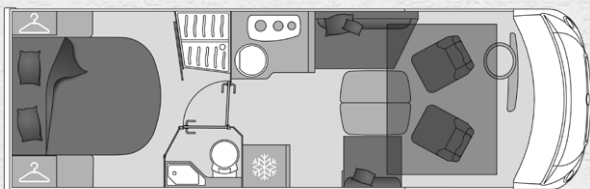


**Question:**

# What Sort of Motorhome Should I Purchase?

The first thing you need to do is look at the varying configurations. There are dozens of different configurations - however, we would like to highlight the three main configurations; permanent island bed, U shaped rear lounge and single bed layouts.

**Example of a permanent island bed configuration**



*This example (right) has both a permanent rear island bed and the front driver and passenger seats rotate so they can be used as part of the living area. The model shown is an A Class which also has a drop-down bed over the cab seats for a secondary bed. In other non A class models the table would drop down and a make up bed can be put together in the lounge area as a second bed, or it could have an electric drop down over the lounge area.*

## Permanent Island Bed Model

Having a permanent bed is fantastic when you park up after a long day. You can lay down and have a nap and there's no hassle of making up the bed every night. Like all positives though they do come with a negative. The permanent bed does take up a lot of space and if you are purchasing something between 6-8 metres long then the bed does eat up quite a bit of your overall interior. However, a rear island bed typically also includes a large rear storage or boot/garage area underneath for all those items you are taking away with you.

This layout type is very common amongst most European motorhome manufacturer brands.

Ideally, if you are purchasing a motorhome with a permanent island bed then you want to make sure your front driver and passenger seats rotate so you can use them when you park up. Or at least make sure you have a big enough dining area for your requirements.



*Pilote GALAXY - G740FC (above)*



Double bed above cab

## The U Shape Rear Lounge

This model motorhome is very popular with rental companies and are often built here in New Zealand. This motorhome design is well suited for families as there can be up to 6 seat belts and berths and lots of options for both sleeping, dining and relaxing. It is also great for backing up to a great scenic view.

There is most often a large permanent double bed above the cab. This area is called the luton.

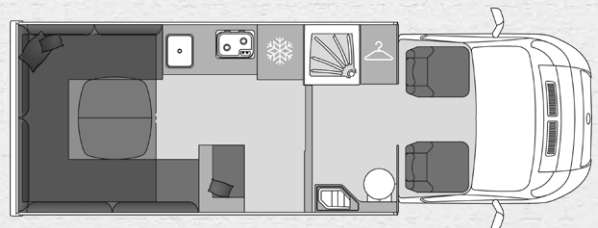
A centre dining area in these models is common and can be used as both a dining area and added passenger seating whilst travelling. This area usually converts to another bed.

The u-shaped lounge in the rear can also be used as a lounge or dining area during the day and will likely convert to a large bed at night.

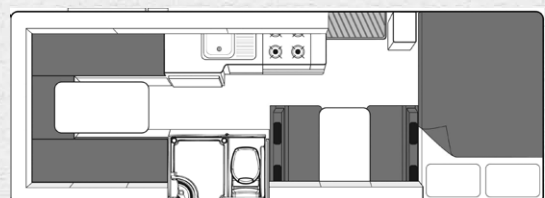
Some European manufacturers do make rear u-shaped lounge models, but these are not as common and often only a 4 berth. The European models that are available typically have an electric drop down bed over the rear lounge which means you don't have to make a bed up every night and can just elevate it out of the way in the mornings.

The downside to the rear u-shaped lounge is you don't get a supersized large boot or garage storage area at the rear. It is often much smaller.

Example of a U shaped lounge configuration



Example of a U shaped lounge with luton bed over the cab



Single beds

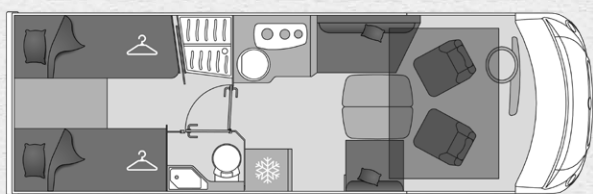


## Single Beds

Single bed motorhome models have been gaining popularity over the last decade. Most European brands will offer layouts similar to the more typical island bed models with single beds instead. Some manufacturers offer the single beds in either a high or low setting. The high setting will typically give you an extra large rear boot storage area, which can be good for storing bikes in. The low bed setting is great for easy access, good for people who may have say hip or knee issues.

Single beds can also be a great option for someone who is exceptionally tall. For example, a Pilote motorhome with single beds has one bed that is 2.05m long while the other side is 1.95m long.

Some single bed models also have an option for a slide out section between the beds, which allows that area to convert into a large king size bed.



Example of a single beds configuration

## Other Options

There are many other bedding configurations. The French bed against a wall, a rear transverse bed, or a drop down bed is quite popular for motorhomes less than 7 meters to help create more living space inside. We recommend taking the bed for a test drive. We believe the bed is a very important part of your decision making process.



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**Question:**

## What are the Essentials?

Well the first thing you need to think about is whether you are going to mainly stay in a campground, freedom camp or both. If you are not going to freedom camp then things like solar power and water capacity will not be so important. However, if you are going to go off the grid for a few days then these are things that become more important. Ideally you want around 20 litres of water per person per day for freedom camping.

As for solar power, ideally you want a bare minimum of a 200 watt panel and a regulator. Obviously, the amount of power that you will generate will depend on the weather and the time of the year.

Also remember if you want to generate power from your solar panel then don't park under a tree in the shade. This will have a huge impact on your ability to recharge your batteries and probably the ability for your satellite dish to lock on if you have one.



### TV's

There are many sizes and options of 12 volt TV's available. Ask your dealer what's going to work best for the space you have available. Most modern TV's for motorhomes run on smart TV software and operate similar to your modern TV at home. There are of course cheaper offerings that aren't smart TV based, but we find you get what you pay for in this space.

Sound bars are also a great addition to a motorhome TV and greatly improve the sound quality. They also have the benefit of being able to Bluetooth to your phone similar to a Bluetooth speaker.



### Satellite Dish

There are many options available. You need to research carefully as to which option will work best for you when it comes to a satellite dish.

There are cheaper ground dishes right through to the fully automatic roof models.

You need to think carefully about your roof height if you are parking the motorhome under cover. This may restrict some satellite dishes from your shopping menu.

At Deluxe RV we offer the OptiSat fully automatic dish, which lays low on the roof and offers very easy functionality.

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## Bike Racks

Bike racks are a very common addition to many motorhome purchases. There is a large variety of bike rack options. The three main considerations are, how many bikes do you need to carry, what is the weight of those bikes combined and do you want a drop down or fixed bike rack.

For motorhomes with larges boot/garage spaces we can also fit the Thule Veloslide bike rack system which is a slide in and out bike rack system for two bikes which locks your bikes in place and store them away inside the motorhome.



# Energy Systems



The topic of energy systems fitted to motorhomes and caravans is complex and often gets discussed too late when people have already purchased the vehicle as they start to understand the subject and their needs. We think it's paramount to discuss various options during the sales process whenever possible as your needs are specific to how you want to use the vehicle and fitting additional solar, inverters and batteries is always easier and cheaper during the initial fit out process. However, changing and upgrading your existing system on a second-hand vehicle is always an option.





## Solar

We recommend at minimum a 200w solar panel for a modern motorhome. Older motorhomes can get away with a little less as their systems typically don't draw as much baseline current. If you are a higher power user or have an inverter, then you will certainly need more solar panels. The great news is that modern solar technology is much more efficient allowing for smaller panels to create more power. So we can now fit a very decent amount of solar on the roof of a motorhome, for very realistic pricing. Essentially, we find that the more solar you have the less you have to worry about battery management, particularly if you are travelling during the winter month when cloud cover hampers efficient charging.



## Inverter

Inverters convert 12v power into 230v giving you the ability to run a traditional home based appliances up to a specified wattage, great for small coffee machines, charging laptops and the like. An inverter can be great if you have plenty of battery power. We would only recommend having an inverter if you have at least two deep cycle AGM batteries and plenty of solar.

Your inverter draws power from your batteries even if there's no 240 volt appliances plugged in, so make sure you turn it off when it's not in use. If you are wanting to use appliances such as toasters, coffee machines, vacuum cleaners, hair dryers and the likes, then check how much power they need to operate and whether your inverter wattage installed will be sufficient.



## Batteries

Battery system offerings for motorhomes have come a very long way in the last four or five years. The base standard within the industry is AGM (Absorbent Glass Mat) batteries, a type of sealed low maintenance lead-acid battery technology. The current upgrade offering within the market is Lithium batteries. Lithium offers a lighter weight battery solution, higher usable capacity, faster charging and longer lifespan. Much like fitting more solar, having lithium batteries means you will worry much less about battery management.

Lithium comes at a higher up front cost of course, but if you compare that to having to replace a few sets of worn out AGM batteries over time then the outlay spread over time can be similar.

It is worth noting that most older motorhomes will require a bit of additional work to fit lithium. Some factory control systems and chargers don't permit lithium and some do. We suggest talking to someone with a depth of knowledge on this if you are planning to make changes.



## Warning for Caravans: Before You Purchase

### Tow Capacity

One of the most important things you need to know before you purchase your new caravan is the towing capacity of your tow vehicle and the weight in which you are permitted to tow with your tow bar.

If you exceed your towing weight and something goes wrong, then your insurance company may instantly reject any claim.

### Correct Tow Ball

It is essential that you have the correct tow ball on your car. There are varying types of tow balls and by having the wrong one fitted can mean that your caravan could detach from your car whilst towing.

It's wise to talk with a certified dealer who knows which tow ball is correct for your caravan.

### Braking System

Different caravans come with different braking systems. Make sure you get professional advice so that you know the caravan you are purchasing is going to be suited for your tow vehicle. Learn about the braking system so that you understand fully and connect it safely.

### Electrical Plug

Make sure before you commit that you know what's involved with your electrical plug which connects between your caravan and your car. There are many options available, and you need to make sure that the plug on your car will marry with the plug on your caravan and that your car is wired correctly.

Many modern caravans today will need the electrical plug not just for rear lights but also for charging the caravan battery and possibly braking. Forgetting about this important factor can create unforeseen additional cost, delays at collection time and frustration.



# Motorhome & Caravan Brands

We always recommend when you are purchasing that you choose a well known brand. It may not necessarily be a well known brand in NZ but at least check that it is well known in parts of the world where it is manufactured. If you are unsure, then do some research and read reviews from other owners. Well respected brands may be a little more expensive to purchase however they also are much more likely to retain their value when you come to sell and may offer better customer service during your ownership. It is also important to check the NZ agent or dealer carries a parts stock or at minimum has access to parts supply.





## The Sales Process

As more and more RVs hit the road you need to make sure that the person or company you are purchasing from is reputable. Do some research and see what their existing customers are saying. Look for reviews, check out their Facebook pages and make sure that what people are saying is positive. Make sure they are a recognized dealer for the RV brand they are selling and that it's not a parallel import with no manufacturer's warranty.

The most important thing to check is that your new RV comes with a full manufacturer's warranty. If you are purchasing new, then you expect the full warranty for both the vehicle/chassis and the body. For example, if you were to purchase a Le Voyageur on a Fiat Ducato then you will be looking for the Fiat manufacturer's warranty on the chassis and engine plus the Le Voyageur warranty for the body and componentry.

If you are buying second hand and within the remaining warranty period then these warranties should be passed on at the time of purchase, as long as the existing owner has met their servicing requirements correctly during their ownership. Some brands also charge a small fee to process the transfer of the warranty balance to the new owner.

**Here at Deluxe we also spend the time with prospective customers during their enquiry to discuss how they are planning to use the RV and run through all the options and set up considerations and costs. On collection day we spend as much time as needed with customers for a handover to ensure they leave knowing how to operate their motorhome correctly and safely.**

## After Sales Service

This is probably one of the most important aspects of your purchase. No matter how careful we are RVs are complex machines, issues can occur.

It may be a cupboard latch is forced and breaks or perhaps you have miscalculated the steepness of a driveway and scraped the rear end. Check with your dealer that parts are readily available.

Ask about the after sales service and see if they have someone dedicated for this position. Make sure that your dealer is not just good at the sales process, but they are equally as good when it comes to annual service checks and after sales issues which may arise. We often hear stories where it can take up to six weeks to have warranty issues even looked at. This can be very frustrating.

At Deluxe we only undertake warranty work and servicing on vehicles that we have sold. We now have hundreds of RVs on the road that we have sold to happy customers. We like to give priority to our own customers and offer excellent customer service.

## Buying Privately

Buyer beware is the best approach when buying privately. An RV over a few years old is unlikely to come with a manufacturer's warranty. You have options of requesting a mechanical check through a local service agent, the AA or Vehicle Testing Station. You can also have an RV service or repair workshop undertake a pre-purchase habitation check. Often this is well worth the cost of doing so that you have some peace of mind.

## Parallel Imports

If a new RV seems cheap and it's being sold by a non-recognised dealer for that brand, then the chances are it has been imported into New Zealand as a parallel import.

This means it comes with no manufacturer's warranty for the vehicle/chassis. It also means no motorhome manufacturer's warranty for the body or the componentry.

Again, it is buyer beware. Most RV's that are parallel imported arrive with the wrong electrical plugs and self-containment changes need to be made to suit NZ standards. Check for electrical warrant of fitness, gas certification and of course self-containment compliance.

These little things that you may need, can be very frustrating to attain and can also be very expensive. Be aware that some parallel imported motorhomes and caravans can have dampness issues. This may not be visible from the outset. We recommend that you do a moisture meter test before purchasing any second-hand RV. It can cost a small fortune to rectify rotting damage.

For the brands we sell at Deluxe we are more than happy to field a pre-purchase phone call to check that the motorhome you are considering purchasing second hand is within our system or whether it is a parallel import.

## In Summary

Often buying your first RV can be a 6 to 12 month process. If you have the time, then it's good to

fully research your options whether you are buying new or second hand. Hopefully many of the aspects we have highlighted in this document will be helpful.

It's also a good idea to join the NZMCA. You will receive loads of benefits and be able to stay at their NZMCA camping spots at very affordable prices. Your dealer should be able to assist with joining.

Also make sure that your RV is fully insured before driving it anywhere. Usually, your dealer can assist with this also and come up with a couple of options for companies that specialise in RV specific insurance.

If you are purchasing a second-hand motorhome from a dealer, then it's likely to come with a 3 month warranty. You may wish to look at purchasing an extended mechanical warranty. This can be a good idea for used models which have done lots of km's.

Again, your dealer should have some options available to discuss with you.



## Deluxe Group and the Smith Family

This publication has been put together by The Smith Family who own and operate the Deluxe RV Group.

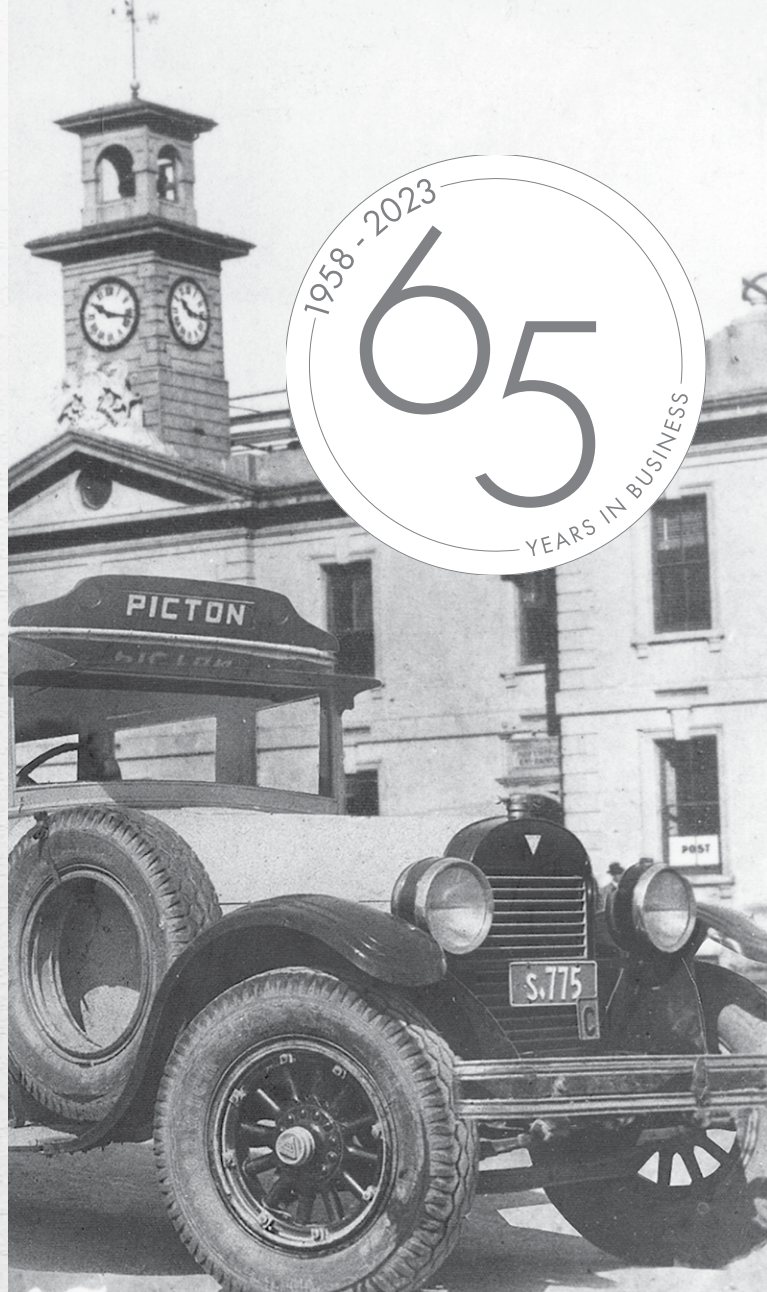
Deluxe is a well-respected brand in Marlborough and throughout New Zealand. Deluxe was established in 1926 serving firstly as a passenger service company in Marlborough, expanding into a South Island wide tour company by the early 2000's. The Smith family originates in Woodend where Brad and Phyl Smith owned and operated a small garage and service station which they later extended to also run a small bus service.

During the 1970's Brad and Phyl moved their young family to Blenheim where they took on a number of business ventures starting with a service station then the Deluxe Motors bus service, before later expanding into a tourism venture in Australia, hospitality and residential property development with sons Gary and Greg.

Today Deluxe RV Group is owned by Gary Smith with Son's Daryl and Brett. Deluxe RV is the New Zealand importer and agent for Pilote Groupe's – Pilote, Joa Camp and Le Voyageur motorhomes and campervans and the Top of the South agent for Kea Motorhomes.

When visiting Deluxe RV, you are certain to meet at least one of the family with Gary overseeing Vehicle Sales and Logistics, Daryl as the General Manager and Brett working as both the Workshop Manager and After-Sales Manager.

The bulk of our RV stock is located in Blenheim, however we also have stock on display in other dealer yards throughout the country.





**Levin RV Centre**  
336 Oxford Street  
Levin  
06 366 0429

**RV Mega**  
101 Hewletts Road  
Mount Maunganui  
07 575 5612

**Deluxe RV**  
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Blenheim  
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