

A person is silhouetted on a mountain peak with arms raised, against a sunset sky with a bright sun and mountains.

***Which RV
is for Me?***

The RV World is expanding as baby boomers retire and the general population want the freedom of living off the grid, or at least away from home. There are so many options out there and so many things to think about, so we have put this guide together to help you through the process.

Naturally we are using our own models as examples however you will soon get the 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.

Question Time

What style of Camping are you looking to do?

Are you going to be predominantly staying in Holiday Parks where you use their facilities and plug into their 240-volt power or are you going to be wanting to mostly be off the grid and try to be as self-sufficient as possible?

Or will it be a mix of both?

Motorhome or Caravan?

You need to be careful here as many people you will talk to will have a bias for either or. This can be a really 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. You take the car and caravan away and park up at some seaside campground or the likes. You can disconnect the car and then use it as your run around vehicle. This is very convenient for families who want to take the kids exploring on short trips.

Generally caravanning becomes a little more difficult as we get older. Towing a large caravan takes confidence and you really need to know how to back well. Often as people retire they 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 you Caravan however they allow you to manoeuvre much better into small spaces.

We will get into more detail about Caravans a little later.

Should I Choose a Motorhome?

The Capital cost of a Motorhome is usually more however in comparison to a car and caravan together they can be a similar cost.

We are finding as people age Motorhomes are much more popular. They are easier to maneuver, they generally have a larger payload and over-all they are easier to drive. Often the ladies will not be happy to tow and manoeuvre a caravan however they are happy to drive the Motorhome.

So you need to make the decision of Caravan or Motorhome?



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 believe there are three main configurations which we would like to highlight.



Question Time

Do you want a permanent bed or are you happy to make the bed up each night?

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 the bed every night. Like all positives though they do come with a negative. The bed does take up a lot of space and if you are purchasing something between 6 - 8 meters long then the bed does eat up quite a bit of your overall interior.

Ideally if you are purchasing a Motorhome with a permanent Island Bed then you want to make sure your front drivers 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.

This example has both a permanent double bed and the front driver and passenger seats rotate so they can be used as part of the living area. The dinette in this option also makes into an additional double bed.



The U Shape Lounge - Cabover



This model Motorhome is very popular with rental companies. Usually they are 6 Berth which makes it very convenient for families. You will find -

- There is a large permanent double bed above the cab. This area is called the Luton.
- The centre dining area doubles during the day for dining and also for added passengers whilst travelling. If you have young children then this is the area within your motorhome for car seats to be mounted. At night time this dining area can convert into a double bed.
- The U shaped lounge in the rear can be used as a lounge or dining area during the day and also converts to a double bed at night. This Motorhome is well suited for families as there are 6 seat belts and lots of options for both sleeping, dining and relaxing.
- Usually this model motorhome has a good sized kitchen featuring both a hobbs and oven.



The Drop Down Bed - Cabover



It's like having the best of both Worlds. In this 4 berth you will find -

- A large permanent double bed above the cab. This area is called the Luton.
- The centre dining area is fixed and generally doesn't make into a double bed. This is the area where additional passenger will sit when travelling. If you have young children then this is the area within your motorhome for car seats to be mounted.
- The beauty about this model is that you have the U shaped lounge in the rear for daytime use and then the bed which is hidden in the ceiling drops down for night time use. This is a very clever use of space.
- Usually this model motorhome also has a good sized kitchen featuring both a hobbs and oven.



Be Aware

There are quite a few European models which feature a drop down bed as an additional bed at the front. Often they are oversold and maybe not suited for two grown adults. We recommend when looking at these models that you take the bed for a test run and make sure it ticks your boxes. We have found that many of these beds are quite small and although they can be well suited for children they may not be so well suited for tall adults.

With some models, the drop down bed at the front can obstruct your entry and exit from the Motorhome when it's in the lowered position.

Other Options

There are many other bedding configurations. The French bed against a wall is quite popular for Motorhomes less than 7 meters. Again take the bed for a test drive especially if you are tall. We believe the bed is a very important part of your decision making process right down to how easy it is to make.

Right Side or Left Side Door

Some people make a big thing of this. From our experience it comes down to commonsense. Yes ideally it would be nice to have the main door on the left side. If a right side door is a major obstacle then you really will restrict the number of Motorhomes you are likely to look at in half. Most European brands have the main cabin door on the right side, however there is always a passenger door open to the left.

If you have a right side door then it just means you try and pull completely off the road. If that is not an option then use the left side passenger door if you are parked on a busy street. In normal circumstances drivers always exit on the right side, so as mentioned, it really comes down to commonsense. We don't believe you should turn your mind off to 50% of the options out there because the door is on the right. Some of the nicest finished Motorhomes are coming out of Europe, so don't limit your options.

What are the Essentials?

Well the first thing you need to think about is whether you are going to mainly stay in a camp ground, 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 minimum of a 150 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 for the shade and coolness. This will have a huge impact on your ability to recharge your batteries.



TV - DVD

There are many sizes and options available. Ask your dealer what's going to work best for the space you have available. Also make sure it has an inbuilt DVD and USB port.

Satellite Dish Options

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.

Also think about whether you want Sky TV or not. Some TV's have this facility built in whilst with others you need a Cam Card to take the Sky Card. Varying Satellite dish options include -



Oven and Cook Top

Before you purchase it's always a good idea to think about how you are going to cook and how much space you are wanting to give up for bench space. Many European models have smaller kitchen areas and some don't have ovens. So you need to think about whether you want an oven or just a hobs with a grill. Some people use just a hobs and an outdoor barbecue. There are lots of options but these are important decisions especially if you decide that you will take an outdoor cooking option, but the weather is not good, and you are expecting to cook a BBQ in the rain.

12 Volt Only Refrigerator

The 12 volt fridge will only run off your house batteries. Many rental motorhomes only have a 12 volt option as they are travelling most days and the engine will recharge the batteries. The disadvantage of 12 volt only is when you are parked in the same spot for multiple days, with no engine running. Solar will obviously assist and so will additional house batteries. You will need lots of solar to keep your batteries charged and if you get overcast days then potentially your house batteries will run flat.

3 Way Refrigerator

The Automatic 3 way fridge is the ultimate way to go. You get the benefit of your battery running the fridge whilst you are driving, the fridge works off 240 volt power if you are plugged in at home or at a camp ground, and then you can use gas when freedom camping. An Automatic option will self-select depending on whether you are driving or parked. We do recommend that you turn your gas off whilst travelling.

Cook Top and Grill



Cook Top and Oven



Your Refrigerator

Your refrigerator is one of the most used things within your motorhome. There are many refrigerator options, however most fall into a 12 volt category or a 3 Way Fridge. Here are the differences -

Typical 3 Way Fridge



12 Volt Fridge



What sort of Caravan should I purchase?

There are a multitude of Caravan brands on the market however these can be broken into three categories. There are the Touring Caravans which are mainly being imported from the UK and Europe. These are generally constructed lighter which means you need a less substantial tow vehicle. There's the New Zealand and Australian Caravans which are generally built for Touring and off road conditions. These tend to be heavier which means you need a more substantial tow vehicle. And then there's the larger imported 5th wheelers where you need a specialized tow vehicle. We will cover in more detail the first two categories.

Australian and New Zealand models

These caravans you will find are generally heavier and higher off the ground in comparison to many UK and European Caravans. They are known to be robust and suited to outback conditions. That's a big advantage if you are going off the beaten track and want to negotiate gravel roads, fords and the likes.



Some New Zealand models are more suited to touring however they are still quite a bit heavier than those coming from the Northern Hemisphere.

The disadvantage of these models is that you usually need a more substantial tow vehicle. On the flip side they generally have a good payload.

UK and European Models

Touring Caravans especially from the UK are constructed light in weight. This is quite deliberate, so they are more maneuverable, easier to tow and you don't need such a substantial tow vehicle. The only negative here is that the payload (what you can put in it) can be quite light.

There are other Caravans from Europe which are quite spectacular. We import the high end Dethleffs Caravans from Germany. The "Exclusiv" models are just beautiful inside. The chassis is upgraded and they give a much higher payload. These are also ideal for permanent living.

There are many different caravan configurations. Most these days have a permanent Island or French bed.



Warning - Before Your 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 car and the weight in which you are allowed 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 can detach from your car whilst towing. It's wise to talk with a recognised 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.



The 13 Pin Plug gives your caravan -

- 1. Rear tail and stop lights**
- 2. On Car Charging - (charges your house battery whilst travelling)**
- 3. Alco Trailer Control - ATC. This is an advanced safety feature available on many modern caravans**



Electrical

240 volt electrical

Check out what works on 240 volt power and what works on 12 volt. The more appliances that run on 12 volt the better, as you are not so reliant on being plugged in.

12 Volt electrical

Make sure you have at least one 12 volt charging point or USB port so that you can charge your digital devices. Most things in your RV need to be 12 volt otherwise you can't use them if you are off the grid.

Inverter

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 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, vacuum cleaners, hair dryers and the likes, then check how much power they need to operate and whether your Inverter will be sufficient. Sometimes an Inverter will blow a fuse when it's overloaded which can become quite frustrating.

Slide Out

Slide-outs on both Motorhomes and Caravans are great in that they give you a huge amount of additional space. Generally we have found slide-outs to be very reliable in the vehicles we have sold. Always look for an awning which slides and retracts automatically to keep rain off the slide out when it's extended. Also make sure as a safeguard, if you have to park on an uneven surface, that your slide out is not running uphill so that rain could potentially flow into your RV. Yes they are sealed, however because your slide-out is a moving component it is hard to completely weather proof them, hence try to park at least on flat land.



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.

The Sales Process

As more and more RV's hit the road then 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 they are selling and that it's not a parallel import with no manufacturers warranty.

The most important thing to check is that your new RV comes with a full manufacturers warranty. If you are purchasing new then you expect the full warranty for both the vehicle and the body. Eg: if you were to purchase a Winnebago Airlie on a Fiat Ducato then you will be looking for the manufacturers warranty on the chassis and engine plus the Winnebago warranty for the body and componentry.

If you are buying 2nd hand then these warranties should be passed on at the time of purchase.

After Sales Service

This is probably one of the most important aspects of your purchase. No matter how careful we are something is bound to go wrong at some stage. It may be a cupboard latch is forced and breaks or you 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.

At DeLuxe we only do warranty work and servicing on vehicles that we have sold. We now have hundreds of RV's on the road that we have sold to happy customers. We like to give priority to our own customers and offer excellent customer service. We often hear stories where it can take up to six weeks to have warranty issues even looked at. This can be very frustrating.

Brett Smith is our designated After Service Manager



Buying Privately

Buyer Beware is the best approach when buying privately. Your RV is unlikely to come with a manufacturers warranty. You have options of requesting a mechanical check through a local service agent, the AA or Vehicle Testing Station. Often this is well worth the cost of doing so that you have some peace of mind. Maybe ask the seller to stand behind the RV for 3 months incase something goes wrong with it.

Parallel Imports

If an RV seems cheap and it's being sold by a non recognized dealer for that brand, then the chances are it has been imported as a parallel import.

This means it comes with no manufactures warranty for the vehicle. It also means no manufacturers warranty for the body or the componentry. Again it's buyer beware. Most RV's that are parallel imported arrive with the wrong electrical plugs. Check for electrical warrant of fitness's, gas certification and of course self containment. These little things that you may need, can be very frustrating to attain and can also be very expensive.

Be aware that some 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.

In Summary

Usually buying your first RV can be a 6 - 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 a good idea to join the NZMCA. You will receive loads of benefits and be able to stay at their 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 is able to assist with this also and come up with a couple of options for companies that specialize in RV 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 Group of companies. 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. Today DeLuxe not only has the backing of its own RV business but it also has the backing of its large property development company which creates residential subdivisions. When you deal with us we like to think that you are dealing with one of our family. With 5 family members heading up the company you are bound to come into contact with one of us during your DeLuxe experience.

The bulk of our RV stock is located in Blenheim however we also have stock on display in other parts of the Country. Greg and Gary are the the 2nd generation of Smith's to manage the company with the 3rd generation of Brett and Laura moving into managerial roles within DeLuxe Group and Anthony as part of the DeLuxe Property Group.

The DeLuxe Property Group has been responsible for developing the 170 section lifestyle subdivision of Marlborough Ridge, the urban 110 section developments of Covent Gardens and Nottinghill and the latest 190 section development of Rose Manor.



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