



THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO BUYING AN RV



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INTRODUCTION:

Is RVing Right for You?



An RV offers you the perks of exploring the open road with all the comforts of home. You can take a cross-country trip and know exactly what type of lodging you will have at every stop along the way or a trip to a local campground with friends and enjoy a stress-free long weekend. However you choose to use an RV, you will find that it becomes an integral part of your camping memories with family and friends.

Before you jump into purchasing an RV, it's important to fully educate yourself. You can use this online guide to quickly begin researching pricing points, annual costs and maintenance fees associated with owning an RV.

Read on or download our PDF to learn more about RVing basics. Check out our [campground search](#) and the [KOA RV sites](#) you can visit across the country — and our helpful [appendix with a glossary and checklists](#) at the end of this guide. Let's go!

CHAPTER 1:

What Exactly Is an RV?

It's important to understand the differences in recreation vehicles, especially when it comes time to register your vehicle. Although these terms — among others — are often used interchangeably, there are some notable differences.

Motorized RVs are categorized according to their class — Class A, B or C. Other types of recreational vehicles include towable RVs, fifth wheels, pop-up trailers and toy haulers.



The exact definition of an RV varies from state to state, so always check with your local DMV before making your choice:

Motorized RVs

What classifies as a motorized RV?



- **The Class A motorhome serves as the standard template for modern RVs.** Usually equipped with six wheels, the vehicle offers a full cab that includes the driver, front passenger and the complete interior of the RV itself. Passengers can easily move about, even while the vehicle is in motion, to take advantage of any of the internal amenities. When it comes to RV camping, this option provides everything in one convenient package — but all this luxury comes with a price tag. It's not uncommon to see Class A RVs selling for more than \$1 million, but basic models can be found starting around \$70,000.



- **Class B motorhomes look like and can sometimes start out as vans.** With newer, more inclusive models on the market, retrofitting is less common. But RV manufacturers can convert vans into Class B motorhomes by raising the roof height, installing new hardware and even adding to the overall length of the chassis. Designs and layouts can vary between manufacturers and even between individual models, so inspect the Class B RVs you're considering before finalizing your purchase. In most cases, these vehicles are available at prices ranging from \$40,000 to \$125,000 on the new market.



- **The Class C motorhome resembles a truck more than a van.** With an overhanging section that extends beyond the roof of the front cab, which usually provides room for a bunk overhead, this model is also instantly recognizable. The main advantage to the Class C RV is the added amount of space and amenities — like larger kitchen appliances — when compared to the Class B, so many RVers view this as a midrange entry. It's also priced accordingly, too, so expect to pay anywhere from \$50,000 to \$120,000 if you're shopping in this category.
- **If you're trying to get maximum performance out of your RV, there is a fourth class: The Super C.** These vehicles feature a similar design to the standard Class C but with one significant exception: The Super C utilizes the same type of engine that is seen in 18-wheelers of today. Not only are they great for traversing rough terrain, but they can easily tow your car or even another truck down the highway. The massive engine will add a significant amount to your final price tag, so be prepared to pay as much as \$200,000 for a brand new, top-of-the-line model.

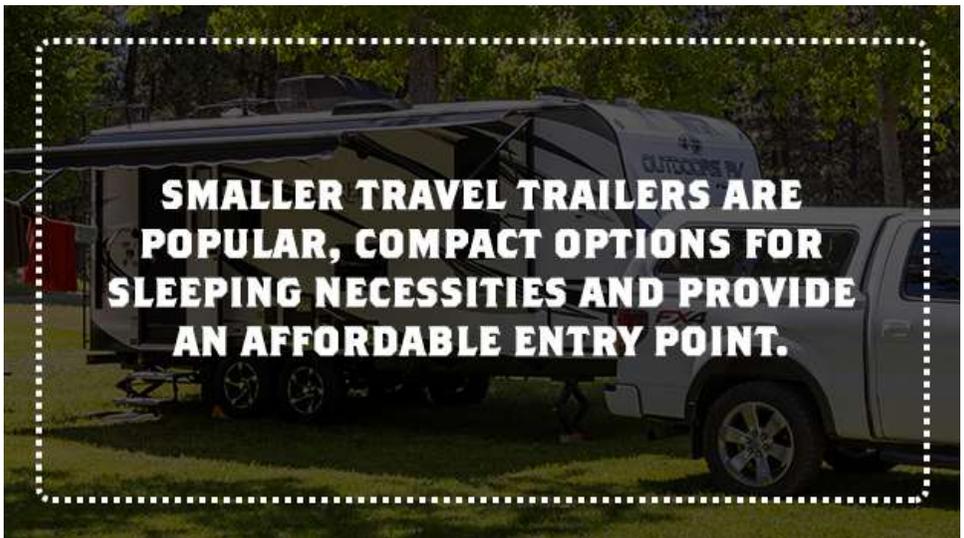


Towable RVs

Like motorized RVs, towable RVs provide exciting opportunities to experience the RV lifestyle, and they're a great way to start out. Here are some options to consider:



- **Fifth wheels make great options for truck owners.** But they tend to run on the expensive side. If you're equipped to make the investment, and own a truck to accommodate an in-bed hitch for towing, they're reliable and heavy-duty. Prices start at \$20,000 and up.
- **Sometimes referred to as tent trailers or pop-ups, folding camping trailers are less expensive options.** These trailers can fold for easy towing and simple setup while still allowing for the comforts of home inside.





- **Towable travel trailers come in a range of sizes and prices.** For example, smaller travel trailers are popular, compact options for sleeping necessities and provide an affordable entry point. Large towables offer more comforts, but tend to come with a larger price tag.
- **Sport utility RVs (toy haulers) provide doubly beneficial uses.** While the front serves as a living space, the back is meant for hauling dirt bikes, golf carts and other types of grown-up toys. You can expect to pay anywhere from \$15,000 to \$40,000 or even more in the case of a fully loaded and customized toy hauler.



- **Truck campers are made to fit in the back of most heavy-duty pickup trucks on the market today.** A considerably cheaper option, most pick-up campers cost between \$10,000 and \$20,000, depending on size and amenities.

CHAPTER 2:

Purchasing an RV

If you are new to the world of RVs, take some time to weigh all your options. It's important to avoid making any huge decisions without understanding the different features, price ranges and specific nuances of your new vehicle, and it's equally important to find an RV that meets all your needs.

RVs come in all shapes and sizes to accommodate a wide range of needs and budgets, so don't be intimidated by the different options and varying price ranges that you may see. Asking the right questions when looking to purchase an RV can help you to determine if the investment is right for you and what will fit your needs and your budget.

How Do You Plan to Use Your RV?

To help select the best RV for your use, identify how you plan to use it. Consider the following:

- **What do you want to use your RV for?** The best RV for frequenting national parks isn't necessarily the same as the best RV for weekend trips, so it's important to find one that matches your expected usage.
- **Who will be joining?** Your RV is a long-term investment, so it's important to consider who you plan to share your RV adventures with. Will it just your household, or will you need to accommodate larger groups?
- **Consider making a checklist of your ideal RV features.** This list is useful when you're looking for interior amenities and other desirable features. If you want to take a shower with hot water or cook food on a regular basis, you'll be eyeing models that include full bathroom facilities and a built-in oven or stove. Many RV owners love having a full kitchen inside the RV as it gives them an easy way to cook and prepare meals, even in the event of inclement weather. If you can learn to live without such luxuries, you could reduce

the overall purchase price or spend your money on other upgrades or enhancements. Many types of RVs can also be easily updated to include these features, so you can invest in the additions that you want over time.

- **There are also plenty of gadgets, such as outdoor grills and solar showers.** These options can eliminate the need for an indoor shower or cooking surface. These items give you the luxuries you're used to without tacking on hundreds or thousands of dollars to the final price tag when you're buying a motorhome.
- **If you plan on traveling during the summer months or to warmer climates in general:** Purchase an RV equipped with AC. A few extra fans might even help with the overall airflow and prevent the cabin from becoming too stuffy or hot during extended trips. Although it's not guaranteed, an educated buyer can spot good sales in the summer, when some dealers might have leftover inventory from last year that they're looking to part with. AC will allow you and your family to relax comfortably indoors and take a break from the heat on warmer days.
- **For frequent trips to colder, snowy climates, you will want an RV that has a good heating system.** You will want to make sure that any RV you are purchasing has an adequate heating system, especially if you plan on traveling in colder climates. Some RV enthusiasts even insist the winter is the best time of year to buy a travel trailer. As opposed to summer, where deals can be spotty from dealer to dealer, the winter tends to bring sales down in colder climates. Savvy shoppers in these regions can get the best RV for their money during this time.

How Many People Are You Accommodating?

RVs are a great way for families and friends to travel and spend time together and some of your best camping memories will be made in your RV. Everyone who will use your RV should feel comfortable — otherwise, even the most exciting excursion won't be much fun. You might want to consider these tips:

- **Account for everybody who'll use your motorhome.** You won't have to plan for the unexpected guests and visitors you'll encounter during your time on the road, but you'll

want to have an available seat — and bed — for every permanent member of your group.

- **Expand your packing list to accommodate any extra guests.** Additional bedding, toiletries and snacks are a must when traveling with a full entourage, but you'll also need space for their belongings, too. One of the great things about RVing is that it provides much more storage space than other forms of travel. However, it's easy to run out of storage when coordinating travel arrangements for a large group, so make sure to purchase an RV that has plenty of space for your expected crew.
- **Consider how you can use external living space.** While the exterior space is subject to the campground you're at, some amenities, such as external awnings or extendable slides, can increase the overall amount of comfortable living space. This can be a great way to make the most of your RV when parked at a campground and relaxing with family and friends.

How Often Will You Use Your RV?

Full-time or part-time? How often you use your RV will also help determine which variety will serve your purposes best:

- **Some lifestyles are better suited for full-time RV ownership than others.** Recent retirees will likely have plenty of time to enjoy a motorhome to its fullest extent. Busy entrepreneurs who need to stay close to their office might not have such freedom. This is such a big factor when it comes to RV ownership that many will base their entire purchase decision on this alone.
- **Consider your location as well as the areas you plan to visit.** The summer is often a great time for traveling in an RV and enjoying the great outdoors, but the cold of winter forces many motorhomes to the confines of their owner's garage for several months out of the year. Think about the seasons you'll plan to use your RV based on weather and conditions. RVs are a great way to travel but be sure to consider the strategic planning and scheduling involved in an RV trip.

- **Check out our up-to-date database of campgrounds around the nation.** These sites combine ease-of-access with the traditional feel of camping in the great outdoors, which is ideal for the busy professional or the novice RV enthusiast with a tight schedule.

Should You Buy New or Used?

Many consumers struggle with the process of how to pick the right RV. Apart from choosing between a Class A, Class B or Class C RV, would-be enthusiasts also need to decide whether to buy new or used.

A new RV will have the most up-to-date features and no mileage, while a used RV will come at lower price but with use and mileage from a previous owner.

The prices for new RVs vary and are subject to local market conditions, chosen amenities and additional dealer fees. Average costs for a new RV hover around \$45,000, but high-end RVs and fifth wheels can cost upwards of \$75,000. Some motorized RVs can cost upward of \$1 million for a brand-new model that is decked out with all the amenities.



You can reduce your costs by shopping the used RV market. Prices have been known to fluctuate greatly, so it's recommended to check with an up-to-date source, such as [NADA Guides](#), to verify the current market value of your options. This site can be used when shopping for new and used RVs to ensure you're getting a fair deal.

Buying a used RV can be a great way to get the features you want at a lower price.

RV Rentals: Should You Rent Instead of Purchase?

Some folks are opting for a third choice — renting — to fulfill their dreams of RV ownership. Those who plan on using their RV sparingly can save significant money using rental RVs. Moreover, short-term rentals give you the luxury of testing out different models before committing to a full purchase.



Ultimately, new RV enthusiasts who spend time on the road in a rental are better equipped to choose a travel trailer or how to pick the right RV for their needs. Based on their experience renting RVs, they will be able to determine the type, size and features fit their requirements.

Frequent RV renters may also find that the accumulative costs of repeated rentals will add up, so buying makes sense when trying to minimize your costs in the long run. However, the large amount of cash needed up-front as well as possible installment payments and ownership costs, may make renting a better option for some even in the long-run. The choice to continue renting or to purchase your own RV will ultimately depend on your planned usage and the resources that you are willing and able to invest.

KOA works with numerous brands and agencies to ensure all RV enthusiasts have a chance to experience the lifestyle. Feel free to inquire about the key tag discounts we offer for rental companies such as ROUTE 66 RV Network, El Monte, Road Bear, Cruise America, Cruise Canada, Canada Dream, Frasierway, Lazydays, Jucy and Apollo — this program saves you 10 percent off camping when you stay at a KOA.

Is RV Sharing a Better Option?

RV sharing is identical in concept to businesses like Airbnb — which became the world's largest hotel chain without owning a single hotel or resort property — brand-new sites such as [Outdoorsy](#) have developed that cater specifically to RV enthusiasts.

**RV SHARING IS IDENTICAL IN CONCEPT
TO BUSINESSES LIKE AIRBNB.**

This is an easy and straightforward way to get started in the world of RVing without having to empty your savings account. It also spares you the burden and expense of long-term RV ownership, which is costly in its own right.

Given the relative newness of the RV sharing market, it's important to use caution when exploring these sites. Don't worry about rewards programs or other incentives sites might offer. Instead, look for companies that offer insurance for the owner and renter, roadside support and proper DMV screening such as [Outdoorsy](#). It might seem like a lot, but this level of security is a necessity when working with vehicles as valuable as modern motorhomes.

Companies like [Outdoorsy](#) offer all this and more, making RV sharing between owners and renters a safe and stress-free process.

CHAPTER 3:

Understanding True Ownership Costs

While the initial price tag of the RV is important, there are other costs to consider as well. Performing your initial research should give you enough information to establish a budget.

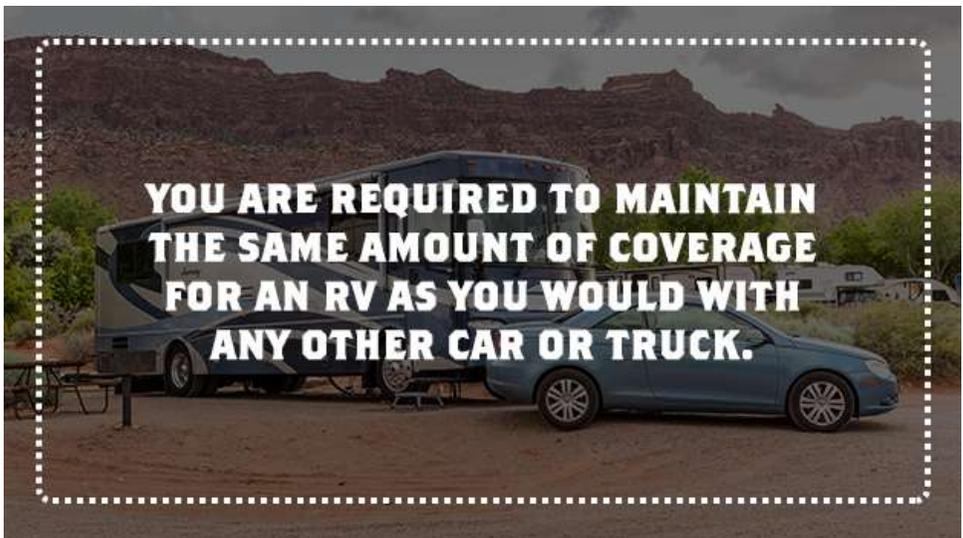
Upfront and Long-Term Costs

When tallying the overall total of your purchase, remember that you'll need to pay for more than just the initial price of the RV. Insurance costs, registration fees and taxes should all be assessed before committing to a purchase. You'll also want to consider the costs of fuel, including gasoline for your RV and propane for heating and cooling. These prices are constantly fluctuating, but they tend to increase during the summer months.



Here's a closer look:

- **You'll encounter registration and taxes on your new vehicle.** Such costs vary from state to state, so check prices in your area before committing to a purchase. Many DMVs provide this information and, in some cases, [registration fee calculators](#), on their individual websites.
- **You're responsible for insuring the RV.** You are required to maintain the same amount of coverage for an RV as you would with any other car or truck. Exceptions are made for RVs that are towable but not drivable, but insurance is still a good idea to provide coverage if needed. Your exact insurance premiums will vary according to numerous factors, including your driving record, the insurance company you choose and even your home address, so it pays to shop around and consider all your options before deciding on an insurance provider.



- **Don't forget to include the price of fuel.** While the national average for unleaded gasoline most often hovers between \$2.00 and \$3.00, the cost of diesel runs slightly higher. This price is also subject to factors like seasonal demand, regional availability and even international relations that have resulted in skyrocketing fuel costs in the past.

Do You Need or Want a Hitch?

For towable RVs, you'll also need to purchase a hitch.

- **Some RVs include a factory-installed hitch.** These are suitable for towing trailers, cars or boats behind your RV, but those who are serious about the pastime often opt for an aftermarket hitch. Expect to pay anywhere from \$100 to \$1,000 for a standard hitch.
- **Fifth wheel hitches are mounted to the bed of a truck and are considerably more expensive.** These range in price from \$500 to \$2,500 or even higher in some cases, but they're necessary for towing larger motorhomes and trailers that don't have their own engines.

Camping, Maintenance and Storage Costs

Researching the upfront costs of RV ownership is necessary to determine if you can commit to the purchase in the first place, but it's important to consider the long-term, cumulative costs, too. This includes campground fees, maintenance and repair costs and storage costs:

- **At KOA, we pride ourselves on affordability.** Whether you want to experience a secluded wilderness with your loved ones or partake in the festivities and activities offered at our locations, it's easy to find something for everyone at the various KOA parks and campgrounds around the country. To make it even easier to check pricing and reserve your stay, many of our local websites provide accurate pricing details.

- **Long-term maintenance is another concern of RV ownership.** Much of this cost can be avoided by renting, but many agencies adjust their prices to accommodate for some of these fees. If you own your RV outright, you can expect your annual maintenance costs to fluctuate from year to year and even month to month. You'll also pay more for a luxury motorhome as opposed to a standard model, so include these figures when totaling the vehicle's final price tag.



- **You'll also need to store your RV when it's not in use.** There are plenty of options available, including temporary ones like RV covers and pop-up shelters as well as permanent structures. If you lack the space to store the vehicle on your own property, local storage facilities — many of which provide indoor, temperature-controlled environments — make great options.

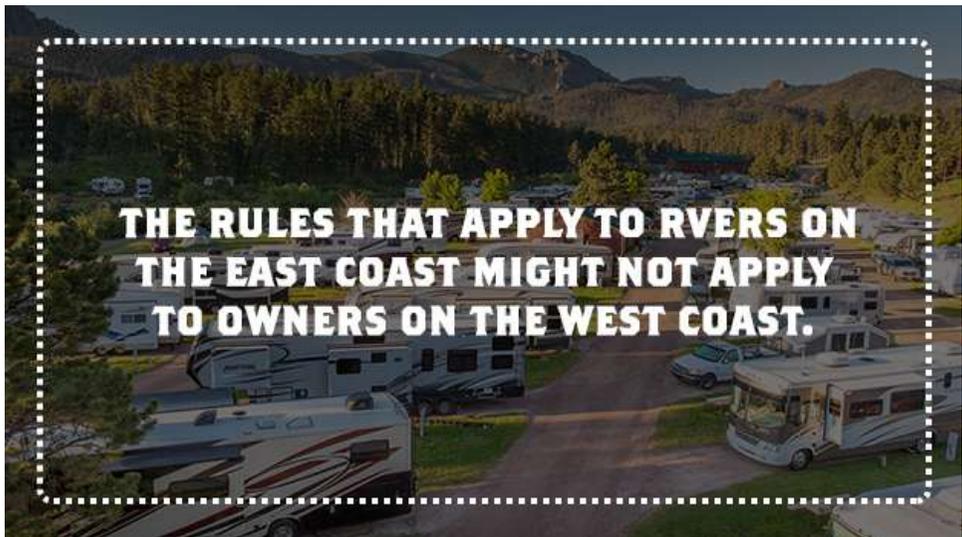
CHAPTER 4:

Laws and Other Items to Consider

Living the RV lifestyle is a huge responsibility, but with a little education you can be a responsible RV owner and operator. Apart from the initial financial investment, there are also various regulations that apply strictly to RVers. Knowing and understanding state-specific traffic laws, community parking ordinances and even the rules of local storage facilities are all a part of living the life.

State-Specific Traffic and Road Laws

Members of the RV community are found across the country and even around the world. As a result, the rules that apply to RVers on the East Coast might not apply to owners on the West Coast. Complicating the matter even further are newly introduced ordinances, rule changes and revisions that are bound to occur at any time. Although it's nearly impossible to remember every specific law from state to state, there are some general rules and standards to keep in mind:



- Most states maintain a **height limit of 14' for all RVs**, but restrictions of 13'6" are quite common.
- The length of your motorhome or trailer is likely limited to 40' or 45'. Motorhomes that include a separate trailer are generally limited to a total length of 50' to 65'.
- Nearly every state requires the presence of both a safety chain and breakaway switch for securing your RV. Separate brakes are usually required for trailers more than 3,000 lbs.
- Some states, like Maryland and Massachusetts, do not allow the transportation of LP gas between certain points, primarily within tunneled highways. You'll want to plan alternate routes if your RV uses LP for any appliances or features.
- Many state and local ordinances don't allow long-term RV parking on the street in front of your home.

Remember, these laws and regulations are in place to ensure the safety of you, your passengers and the other drivers on our nation's roadway. Failure to follow these laws could result in fines or, in the case of repeated or serious violations, loss of driving privileges.

Local Parking and Storage Laws

Just in case the rules of the road weren't enough, you'll also have to operate in compliance with any **local parking laws, ordinances or restrictions**. These can vary even more than state laws, so familiarize yourself with the local rules of any neighborhoods you're planning to visit.



Some communities do allow overnight RV parking on some streets, but **other cities are cracking down** on this practice. Many state-designated rest areas feature parking that is reserved specifically for RVs, but availability is often limited.

Long-term RV storage is also a finicky subject. While some states allow the storage of personal RVs on your own property, certain communities or homeowners' associations might have their own rules. Others might require a covering or even a permanent structure to house your RV during its downtime. Parking an RV in a restricted area or failing to abide by these regulations, regardless of your prior knowledge of local rules or ordinances, might result in a hefty ticket.

Planning your RV parking and storage ahead of time will make traveling in your RV – and your off-season – much more enjoyable.

CHAPTER 5:

The Buying Process

Purchasing an RV is an exciting investment, and armed with the right knowledge and planning you'll be off having adventures in your new RV in no time.

Navigating the buying process is daunting, especially for those who are new to RV ownership, but you can minimize your stress and avoid some future headaches by developing your own plan. This lets you outline any specific features you're looking for or questions you may have while ensuring you're prepared to deal with payments, financing options and dealer negotiations.

What Can You Afford?

Although you might be tempted to spring for a brand new, fully-loaded RV, it's better to avoid getting in over your head. Taking on payments you can't afford or paying too much for an RV you could've had for a fraction of the price is bound to leave a bad taste in your mouth. There are also financial repercussions to consider, too.

Limiting your options to something affordable is the key to making the most of the lifestyle, but there are some strategies you can use to stretch your dollar a little bit **further and make sure your money is well-spent**.

How to Get the Best Deal

Most RV dealerships are open to negotiations. Instead of accepting the advertised sticker price, don't be afraid to throw out an offer of your own. Many dealerships expect some amount of haggling, so they inflate their advertised price to accommodate. Regardless, it certainly doesn't hurt to ask for a deal or discount.

MOST RV DEALERSHIPS ARE OPEN TO NEGOTIATIONS.

Also, **check your credit score** before visiting your local dealership. Prospective buyers with higher scores will typically have lower interest rates, which will result in a lower price tag in the end. Those with lower credit scores or bad credit can still secure loans or financing, but they'll pay significantly more due to higher interest rates.

Don't forget to factor for depreciation, too. A brand-new RV or motorhome can lose up to 30% of its original value as soon as it leaves the dealership, so you'll want to consider this before agreeing to a long-term loan. You certainly don't want to end up owing more on your loan than the RV's future sale price, so it's important to do the math before committing to a bank or dealership.

Feel free to **ask questions during your time at the dealership**. Inquiring about hidden fees is a great way to avoid any pricing discrepancies when it comes time to finalize a contract. Asking to pay in cash can help you reduce the overall price tag of the RV.

If buying used, ask about a specific model's previous usage so you understand your vehicle. Verifying the motorhome's repair history, odometer and paperwork is also helpful when trying to get the best possible deal.

Typical Financing Options

Although many novice buyers and RV owners are intimidated by the financing process, it's really like financing a car or house. Instead of purchasing your dream motorhome outright, you're simply receiving assistance — usually in the form of a loan — from a bank, credit union or dealership.

Once again, your exact options will vary based on regional availability, your credit score and the guidelines of the institutions in your area, but most RV loans are for a period between 10 and 15 years. Some extended contracts are available, particularly for options exceeding \$50,000.



Many lenders give you a choice between a shorter term with bigger monthly payments and a longer term with lower premiums. Not only does this let you choose the plan that works best for you and your financial situation, but it ensures you're not getting in over your head right from the start.

Some loans and financing plans have other options, too. Flexible repayment programs give you the luxury of making larger payments whenever you have the extra cash, which ultimately trims the overall length of your agreement. Make sure to ask about any nuances before agreeing to a loan or plan.

CHAPTER 6:

Where to Start Your Search

Those who are new to the RV lifestyle might be confused when it comes time to begin the search for their dream motorhome. Given its traditional appeal as well as the popularity of the Internet, starting your search is easier than ever before!

Manufacturers, dealers and enthusiasts alike have long used RV tradeshows as a way of maintaining their connectedness, browsing the latest models and negotiating sales. [America's Largest RV Show](#) — an event that's held annually in Hershey, PA — is an example of just how popular RV shows have become.

Dealerships are often the go-to source when beginning a search, but some would rather explore the options with the help of a manufacturer's website. All of the top brands maintain some sort of online presence, including Casita, [Jayco](#), Airstream, [Pleasure-Way](#), Lazy Daze and [Winnebago](#), so you can get a clear picture of your current market options.

Buyers and renters are also increasingly taking their chances with private owners. While there are plenty of good deals when going this route, it's important to be careful when negotiating with an unknown seller. Always take the time to verify their reputation as well as the condition of any vehicle you're considering before agreeing to a purchase.

CONCLUSION:

Making the Transition to the Open Road

When the accessibility and attractiveness of the open road drive you to your next adventure, make sure you consider the preparation and planning needed to make your trip an enjoyable one.

Bringing along a comprehensive set of tools is a good idea, but they're of little value if you can't properly diagnose the problem. You might have the perfect location planned out, but this isn't helpful if you show up during the off-season or without the correct attire. Education and planning help prevent these types of challenges while giving you further insight into this unique way of living, and you might pick up some handy tips that can help you make a permanent transition to RV living and life on the go.

Many RV enthusiasts have been known to adapt and maintain the lifestyle on a permanent basis.

Retirees and road warriors alike have foregone the luxuries of stationary living for the luxuries of life on-the-go, and many are perfectly content in doing so. Many RVers use their vehicles for escaping winter and seeking accommodations in warmer climates. Others find more enjoyment in doing the opposite, which lets them enjoy sports such as snowboarding or skiing while vacationing.

“One of my favorite parts of RVing is the freedom to go wherever you want and know you have a comfortable place to stay. It makes exploring new places easy and it's always fun to take road trips with family and friends - especially when you can all stay and travel together in the same vehicle. It gives you the chance to explore nature without having to totally rough-it - who doesn't love warm showers and campfires in the same place?”

While there are significant investments and trade-offs involved with the RV lifestyle, both with money and time, the rewards are well worth it. Increased freedom, more time spent with your loved ones and the ability to view the passing countryside from your RV window are pleasures many enjoy.

Buying or renting an RV, researching a destination and setting off on your trip might feel like a daunting experience. But with the assistance of technology and the exhaustive support system of fellow RV enthusiasts to call upon if needed, the community is just as welcoming today as ever.

There's no right or wrong way to enjoy RVing. It's about what you make of it and what you want to achieve. If you're ready to join us, check out our [RV park offerings](#) and [search our campgrounds](#). We're looking forward to meeting you!

APPENDIX:

Glossary and Checklists

Glossary

America's Largest RV Show: An annual event and tradeshow that is held annually in Hershey, PA.

Auxiliary Battery: Many RVs and motorhomes rely on a separate battery for powering 12-volt equipment and appliances.

Breakaway Switch: A device that is designed to automatically stop a trailer if it becomes unattached from a towing hitch during transportation.

Class A Motorhome: The largest and most common type of motorhome for RVing across the U.S.

Class B Motorhome: These are the smallest of all motorized RVs, and they are built on the chassis of a common van or minivan.

Class C Motorhome: These are more comparable to traditional trucks than vans or buses. They feature an overhanging section that extends beyond the roof of the front cab, which usually accommodates a bed.

Class Super C Motorhome: A highly specialized, performance-oriented RV that is meant for serious RV enthusiasts.

Diesel: An alternative fuel to the unleaded gasoline that is used in cars and vehicles. Motorhomes with diesel engines typically feature greater performance and efficiency.

Fifth Wheel: A type of RV that is non-motorized and attaches to the bed of a truck for transportation.

Fifth Wheel: A type of RV that is non-motorized and attaches to the bed of a truck for transportation.

Grey Water: Another term for the wastewater generated by using sinks, baths, toilets and other appliances in your RV.

Height Limit: Most states impose a maximum height limit on all RVs and motorhomes. This is to ensure compliance with the clearances of any local bridges or tunnels.

Hitch: A device that is used to attach a non-motorized RV or trailer to another vehicle.

Length Limit: Most states impose a maximum length limit on all RVs and motorhomes to ensure the safety of every driver on the road.

LP Gas: Liquefied petroleum gas, known as LP, LPG or propane, is often used to fuel small stoves and other appliances.

Motorhome: An alternate term for RV. Although this is typically used to describe a motorized vehicle, it is often used interchangeably to describe all types and classes of RV.

RV: A standard abbreviation for the term “recreational vehicle,” it is often used interchangeably with terms like motorhome, fifth wheel and travel trailer.

RVer: Also known as an RV enthusiast, this describes a person who is interested in RVs and the RV lifestyle.

Toy Hauler: Another name for RV or travel trailer, toy haulers are often reserved for hauling dirt bikes, four-wheelers and other recreational toys.

Travel Trailer: A small- to mid-sized trailer. Since most travel trailers do not feature an engine of their own, they require towing from another vehicle.

Van Conversion: A van that has been converted into a motorhome or RV. There are endless possibilities and customization options for van conversions.

Getting Started Checklist

If you're pressed for time, feel free to use our handy guide to getting started in the world of RVing. Even if you're already knowledgeable on the subject, it's helpful to print this short checklist for any friends or family members who are considering the lifestyle:

1. Research the current market of new or used RVs to determine what you can afford. Don't forget to plan for extra costs like registration, insurance, fuel, maintenance and long-term storage.
2. Obtain financing from your preferred financial institution, dealership or lender.
3. Find your dream RV, motorhome or towable vehicle. There are plenty of resources to help you achieve this, including websites, local classified ads and even TV commercials.
4. Make the proper arrangements with your dealer. Whether you're having your RV delivered or planning to pick it up yourself, now's the time to make your intentions known.
5. Set up your RV as soon as possible to ensure its condition and functionality. Even if you aren't planning a road trip in the near future, it's important to identify any potential issues and notify the dealer immediately.
6. Find a campground and try it out for yourself! There are plenty of **KOA locations to choose from**, or you can find your own unique spot in the great outdoors.
7. Become acquainted with your community. You've probably already met some great folks during the initial phases of researching, buying and testing your RV, but you'll meet even more during your future travels. Thankfully, there are plenty of RV clubs, gatherings and events that make it easy to become a part of the RV community.

Pre-Owned RV Checklist

If you opted for a pre-owned or rental RV, it's a good idea to give it a thorough inspection before setting off for your destination. This helps ensure you're getting your money's worth, but it also means a safe trip for everyone involved. Take a few minutes to run down our list and verify each one — it might even save a life:

1. The first step is to inspect the external condition of the RV itself. Check for any large dents, surface cracks or leaks in the walls as well as the roof. Doors, windows, vents and skylights require proper sealing or caulking, so verify the condition of these fixtures, too.
2. Check the condition of any outdoor accessories, including steps, ladders, mirrors, lights and awnings. Ensure fuel doors are closed and caps are in place at all times. If your RV has a fold-out, expansion or slide, use this time to verify its operability.
3. Examine the undercarriage for any leaks, frame damage or aftermarket welds. Verify the condition of axles, suspension system, brakes and holding tanks for water and waste.
4. Ensure all leveling jacks and stabilizing legs are in working order. If you notice any damage, including any legs that “stick” during deployment, it might be time to hit the garage for repairs. You can also take this time to verify the condition of the RV's wheels, including tire pressure, tread and the presence of a spare.
5. Inspect any exterior storage compartments to make certain they're secure, waterproof and clean. You don't want to arrive at the campground without your luggage, so it's important to verify the presence of working locks and to look for signs of water damage or excess wear.
6. Verify the condition of utility systems, including all connectors, switches and wiring systems. This includes any hookups for television, telephone, satellite dish, fresh water, grey water and electrical connections.
7. Check your fuel sources, including batteries, propane tanks and generator levels. Recording this information is a good idea for future maintenance needs.

8. Examine all the trailer coupling components, including the tongue, king pin, breakaway switch, safety chains and other connectors. Verify the presence of a trailer wiring harness and plug if you plan to pull another vehicle or trailer behind your RV.

9. Perform a thorough inspection of the motorhome's engine compartment. Make sure to verify fluid levels and examine the overall condition of filters, hoses, belts and other components.

10. Take a tour of the RV's interior. Any major signs of wear or damage, either in the rear cab or within the cockpit, could be indicative of more serious issues.

First Trip Packing List

Although it's easy to stress over what to pack for an RV trip, this is actually one of the easiest and most enjoyable parts of your entire outing. There are some things you want to be sure you have, however. For example, bring attire that is appropriate for the weather and the activities you plan to do. You'll also want to be armed with some basic tools — as well as the knowledge to use them — in case you find yourself in a jam.

We already provide some [useful RV packing tips for beginners](#) on our website, but here are some additional tips to make the most of your RV excursion:

1. Organize Your Tools and Spare Parts

You don't have to be a mechanic to be an RV enthusiast, but it helps to have a working knowledge of the different systems and components of your vehicle. While there are dedicated RV mechanics, dealerships and even fellow RVers who might offer a helping hand, a blown tire or overheating engine could leave you stranded miles from civilization. Adding some fundamental tools and know-how to your packing list for your motorhome could save you significant time and expense.

A basic toolkit would include enough items to cover many common issues.

A socket set with various sized sockets and extensions, a selection of combination and crescent wrenches, pliers, screwdrivers, a large flashlight, safety goggles and work gloves are absolute necessities. Other useful tools include a tire gauge, ball peen hammer, 12-volt test light, wire brush and a pry bar.

If you have advanced knowledge of automobiles, you can add tools that are specific to your trade or area of expertise. Additional items to consider include rope, zip ties, shovels, extra weather-stripping and rubber gaskets, wire brushes and a tube of silicone. These can be used around the campsite to bolster your comfort as well as inside the RV to repair minor damage or patch small cracks.

To ensure the integrity and longevity of your internal amenities and systems, consider including a water filter or pressure regulator to control the flow of water, sewer kits for preserving your RV's bathroom and surge protectors to safeguard any electronic equipment.

2. Food and Clothing

Summer vacations and locations with warmer climates call for lightweight and light-colored clothing, sunglasses, hats and appropriate footwear. Make sure to bring along items like sunscreen, umbrellas for blocking the sun or rain and a cooler to keep your food fresh. Some RVs include refrigerators of their own, but day trips in the sun can be brutal without a personal or small cooler to bring along.

While the warmer months are the most popular time for RVing, diehard enthusiasts are known to enjoy the hobby all year-round. Some purposely seek out warmer areas as the seasons change, but modern RV amenities make it possible to camp comfortably in colder climates.

There are some vital RV packing tips to consider when camping in the winter, but your overall packing list won't change too much. Warm, thick clothing, cotton hats and gloves and water-resistant boots are a must. For snowy recreation, don't forget to pack your skis, snowboards or snowshoes, too. If you happen to own a sport utility RV, you can even pack your snowmobile inside for a trip up north.

As far as RV camping food ideas and food packing tips go, there are plenty of options when traveling and camping with an RV. You might prefer full meals, which can easily be accomplished with the amenities available in modern motorhomes. Most of the prep work, such as seasoning, marinating, cutting and separating, can even be done at home before setting off on your trip. Other road-friendly options include light and handheld snacks, such as trail mix, potato chips and sandwiches.

3. Cleaning Supplies

You probably want your RV to be clean, so there are also essential RV cleaning products you need to pack.

Standard window cleaners and surface cleaners will work well here, but there are some specialty items to consider. Compact vacuum cleaners are great for motorhomes that don't feature built-in cleaning systems. For vehicles that include a full bathroom, don't forget the toilet bowl cleaner and shower spray, too.

A wet/dry mop combines both functions, so you'll save space with just one tool that serves a dual purpose. A doormat will keep dirt from tracking too far into your home away from home. Microfiber cloths and cleaning wipes are quick-reach items in case of spills and germs.

4. Other Useful Tips

Before finalizing your RV departure checklist, try to think of some of the **items that are frequently overlooked**, and bring things that can be used in multiple situations. For example, bandanas can be worn, used as cleaning rags or wrapped around a wound in an emergency. A flint and steel are more reliable than a lighter or matches when it comes to starting campfires, and pre-treated sticks are ideal for roasting marshmallows and hotdogs — just don't forget the buns!

If you are new to camping, you might want to take a moment to ensure you're not over-packing. It's a common problem among newbies, and it can result in spoiled food, unnecessary weight and wasted space.

Typical items to drop from your packing list include video games, DVDs, extraneous clothing and foods that require a lot of campsite preparation.

Remember, traveling in an RV gives you the luxury of packing less. The features and amenities included in modern RVs are meant to provide comfort on the road without having to bring along lots of extra stuff.

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