



YOUR GUIDE TO BUYING USED

You don't need to break the bank to get behind the wheel of your dream motorhome – you just need to enter into any such transaction prepared. Here are our top tips for buying a used 'van!

CUT OUT
AND KEEP
GUIDE!



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Whatever your budget might be, buying a motorhome is a significant investment, and it pays to understand your rights



Also available as a FREE ebook
see www.practicalmotorhome.com/know-how to download yours!

ADVICE

BEFORE YOU BUY...

Purchasing a 'van is a significant investment, even if you are buying pre-owned. So it pays to do some careful research before you part with your hard-earned cash, says David Motton



A motorhome is a substantial purchase – shopping for a used model can save a lot of money, or make your budget go further, so you can buy a bigger or better model.

But even a secondhand 'van can cost tens of thousands of pounds – hardly small change – so it's well worth taking your time, researching your purchase carefully, and only handing over your hard-earned cash when you are sure you have found the right one for you.

1 Why buy used?

There are many excellent reasons for buying a pre-owned leisure vehicle, rather than a new one.

The most obvious is price. As soon as a motorhome hits the road for the first time, it starts to lose value. The same is true when a caravan is towed

away from the forecourt. This steady loss in value is known as depreciation.

While depreciation has a negative effect on the first owner, it will benefit the second or third – you get the same vehicle, with the same layout, features and performance, at a reduced cost.

Just how much could you save? The rate at which a used 'van depreciates will vary, depending on make and model, condition and mileage.

Some brands and certain models are more sought-after on the used market than others, and tend to keep their value better as a consequence.

For example, a motorhome that cost the original buyer £50,000 might be on sale for £40,000 after three years. That's a lot of fuel, pitch fees and bottles of wine that could be enjoyed with the money saved at the time of purchase!

Another upside to buying used that you might not expect is that owners of pre-owned motorhomes and caravans tend to be happier with their purchase.

In the 2020 *Practical Motorhome* and *Practical Caravan Owner Satisfaction* Surveys, owners of used vehicles generally reported fewer faults.

We suspect this is due to the first owner identifying niggling problems and having them fixed under warranty.

Talking of warranty: that's one of the disadvantages of buying used. A new motorhome is likely to have a warranty for the base vehicle, lasting about three years, another for the motorhome itself, and one for the bodyshell, lasting six years or more.

Choose a used vehicle that is outside the warranty period, and repairs will be down to you. Unless, that is, the dealership you



are buying from offers a warranty. Warranties lasting for at least three months are quite common, unless the motorhome is particularly old and tatty.

Alternatively, you could arrange your own aftermarket warranty cover to guard against unexpected bills.

2 Choose the right layout to suit

When you are shopping for a motorhome, you'll find that there's a bewildering choice of layouts, makes and models to that you'll need to weigh up.

The best way to get to grips with the variety of models is to go to one of the big caravan and motorhome shows, or visit your nearest large dealer.

While you're there, you can take a good look at a variety of vehicles and get a better feel for what will suit you. Basically, you are going to need enough berths for

the number of people you plan to holiday with. Then, think about how you will use the motorhome.

The more time you expect to spend in the vehicle during the day, the more important the lounge area will subsequently be. Likewise, if you are going to eat most of your meals in the 'van, a practical and well-equipped kitchen is going to be vital.

On the other hand, if you see your 'van as simply a place to sleep in, and you expect to spend most days away exploring and most nights eating out, you'll probably be happy to forgo some potential living space for the comfort and convenience of a fixed bed.

Think about the size of the 'van as well as the layout. A large model might look ideal on the forecourt, but does your licence allow you to drive it? ➡

‘The best way to get to grips with the huge variety of models is to go to one of the big motorhome and caravan shows, or visit your nearest dealer’

3 Make and model

When you've developed a good idea of the type of layout that suits your style of touring, you will be in a better position to start to research some of the makes and models that fit the bill.

Motorcaravanners can be very loyal to a particular brand, but do take a look at a variety of makes, to be sure your loyalty isn't misplaced.

It's also worth perusing *Practical Motorhome's* Owner Satisfaction Surveys to find the most reliable motorhomes and the best places to buy them from.

4 Where to buy

Dealerships will have more choice, and the facility to service the vehicle before you buy it. They are also likely to offer you a warranty.

Private sellers will typically be cheaper than a dealer, but they won't be in a position to offer you a warranty. So you'll need to be very sure about the 'van's condition before you buy.

Online auction sites can appear very tempting, particularly when bidding is well below the true market value. But we would strongly advise against buying any motorhome unseen, however tempting the price tag might seem.

Most sellers are happy for buyers to view the vehicle before bidding. Even if this means travelling some distance, it's better to take the time to do so, rather than making a costly mistake.

5 What to look for

Wherever you eventually decide to buy your motorhome, make sure that you look over any vehicle very thoroughly before you commit to purchasing it.

At this stage, it's well worth taking a second pair of eyes with you, especially if you have a friend who's a competent home mechanic, or even an experienced motorcaravanner.

Water ingress can be an issue in any coachbuilt motorhome – keep a careful eye out for any sign of its presence. You can use a sign of damp as a bargaining chip, or better still, walk away and find a 'van that displays no signs of water ingress.

So far as possible, make sure that everything is working as it should. Check the lights, electrical components, lockers, cupboard doors and so on.

It's also very important to have a good look through the vehicle's service history. Key questions to consider include whether the 'van has been serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. Is written proof of this being provided?

A comprehensive service history, along with lots of paperwork, is



‘Think about your monthly income and outgoings. How much is left to pay for the 'van? And don't forget to budget for annual servicing, storage and insurance’

particularly reassuring if you are buying your motorhome privately, as is an HPI check (see p93).

You should also consider a Pre-Purchase Inspection from the National Caravan Council's Approved Workshop Scheme – see www.approvedworkshops.co.uk/preownedprepurchase.

6 Paying on finance

Financing your purchase is often easier than paying in one lump sum, but be careful not to spend more than planned.

Before you decide, think about your monthly income and outgoings. How much is going to be left to pay for the motorhome? And don't forget you'll need to budget for annual servicing, insurance, and storage if you don't have enough space at home.



CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE

Dealers can offer finance packages, but compare the interest rates with a personal loan. A few minutes online will give you a clear idea of how much you would have to pay each month if borrowing from a bank, rather than arranging finance through a dealer.

Carefully consider the size of the deposit and the whole cost of the loan, not just the monthly payments. Paying more up front or spreading the cost over a longer period will bring down the monthly payment, but the total spend is likely to be higher.

7 Your rights

If your 'van develops a fault, where do you stand? You'll be in a much better position if you buy from a dealer. First, the chances are that it will have a warranty. Second,

your legal rights are stronger. Under the Consumer Rights Act 2015, any goods (in this case, your motorhome) should be of satisfactory quality, fit for purpose, and as described.

The term 'satisfactory quality' is the key here. What is and isn't satisfactory will vary, depending on the age and condition of the vehicle. A 10-year-old 'van can't reasonably be expected to be of the same quality as a new one.

Under the Act, you have up to 30 days to reject goods for a full refund. After that time, you can ask the dealer for repair or replacement.

For the first six months, any fault is assumed to have been present at the point of purchase, unless the retailer can prove otherwise. After that period of time, it will be up to you to show it was there all along.

In practice, it's best to work with the dealer to resolve any problem and stay on amicable terms if possible. They want you to be happy with your purchase, and return to them when you want to buy another! Legal action is a last resort.

If you buy your 'van privately, it must be 'as described'. But otherwise, you are not entitled to any repair, replacement or refund. So balance the saving you might make over buying from a dealer against the peace of mind of dealer back-up and legal rights. For more, see p98.

8 Conclusion

Buying pre-owned can be the perfect route to an affordable, high-quality motorhome. Just do your research first, and go into the purchase with your eyes open.

ADVICE

INTERIOR CHECKS

Lounge/dinette

There are some important choices and checks to be made when you pick your next used motorhome.

Take notes while you are assessing the 'van and use any repairs that are required to bargain the price down. Before viewing, and even if you're not intending to, ask the vendor if you can have it checked by an AWS-approved technician (www.approvedworkshops.co.uk/preownedprepurchase). If they have anything to hide, they likely won't get back to arrange your viewing.

Trust your nose

How does the motorhome smell when you first step inside? If it smells damp or fusty, walk away or take extra time with your damp checks. Be very wary of over-fragranced interiors, or 'vans with the door and windows all open when you arrive. If they're baking bread, just run!

Tabletop

Set up the freestanding dining table. Can the whole family sit around it comfortably? Does the top extend properly?

Firm support

Ensure the foam cushions in the upholstery haven't sagged or slumped from repeated use. Upholstery should retain its bounce and springiness, returning quickly to its original shape.

Cushion cover

Motorhome upholstery is generally very durable, but bad batches can creep through. Look for wear on edges. I once saw a luxury 'van with stylish PVC piping on its sofas. The 'van was newish but well used, and the PVC had started to crack and peel. Replacement upholstery could run into thousands of pounds.

Curtain up

Do all of the blinds pull out and retract properly?



Tempted to buy your next 'van privately?
Don't miss John Sootheran's handy list
on interior checks you should make

In good trim

It might be superficial, but check all decorative trims are properly fixed. Motorhomes have lots of colour-coordinated panels and elegant styling touches, but these can come loose.



Dinner for two

Can you all get around the dining table when it's set up in the lounge? Can two of you dine or snack easily at the extended table? Is the dinette big enough for you all? A slightly-too-small dinette is a waste of vital space.



On the carpet

Investigate the condition of the carpets. Anyone can spend a day tarting up their 'van for sale, but dirty, damaged carpets are harder to hide, and a sign the vehicle hasn't been cared for as well as the vendor is suggesting.

Bed time

If the sofas will become beds for kids or guests, are they long enough? Take a tape measure and check.

'The upholstery should retain its bounce and springiness, returning quickly to its original shape' ➡



On the radio

Check the radio/MP3 player is functioning as it should.



Charging up

Are there sufficient plug points and USB charging points in the 'van?

Beds/washroom

In the corner

Check for damp in all of the key places around windows and in corners, including under beds/sofas and in overhead lockers.

Lighten up

Check that all of the interior lights are in good working order.

On the mattress

What condition is the mattress in? Has it had a protective cover on? Replacement motorhome mattresses typically cost anywhere from £150 to £400. You might want to factor that in.



Back to base

Do the hydraulic dampers on the bed bases work properly? Can you lift them up easily?

Plan ahead

Future-proof your purchase by considering how fast any kids are likely to grow in the next two or three years.

Will bunks/beds be big enough if your early-teen becomes a six-footer in 18 months? Should you go for a twin-lounge layout now?

You might as well be ignored from the far end of the motorhome!

Heat and light

Check the heating and facility control panels work by asking the vendor to turn on the water heater before you arrive, and the Alde heating, if it is fitted.

Blown-air heating can be checked easily for heat and circulation.



Renew the loo

You might want to allow for the cost of a toilet renewal kit from Thetford. These include a new seat and lid, plus a fresh cassette. They cost around £100 to £150.

Kitchen

Mind the gap

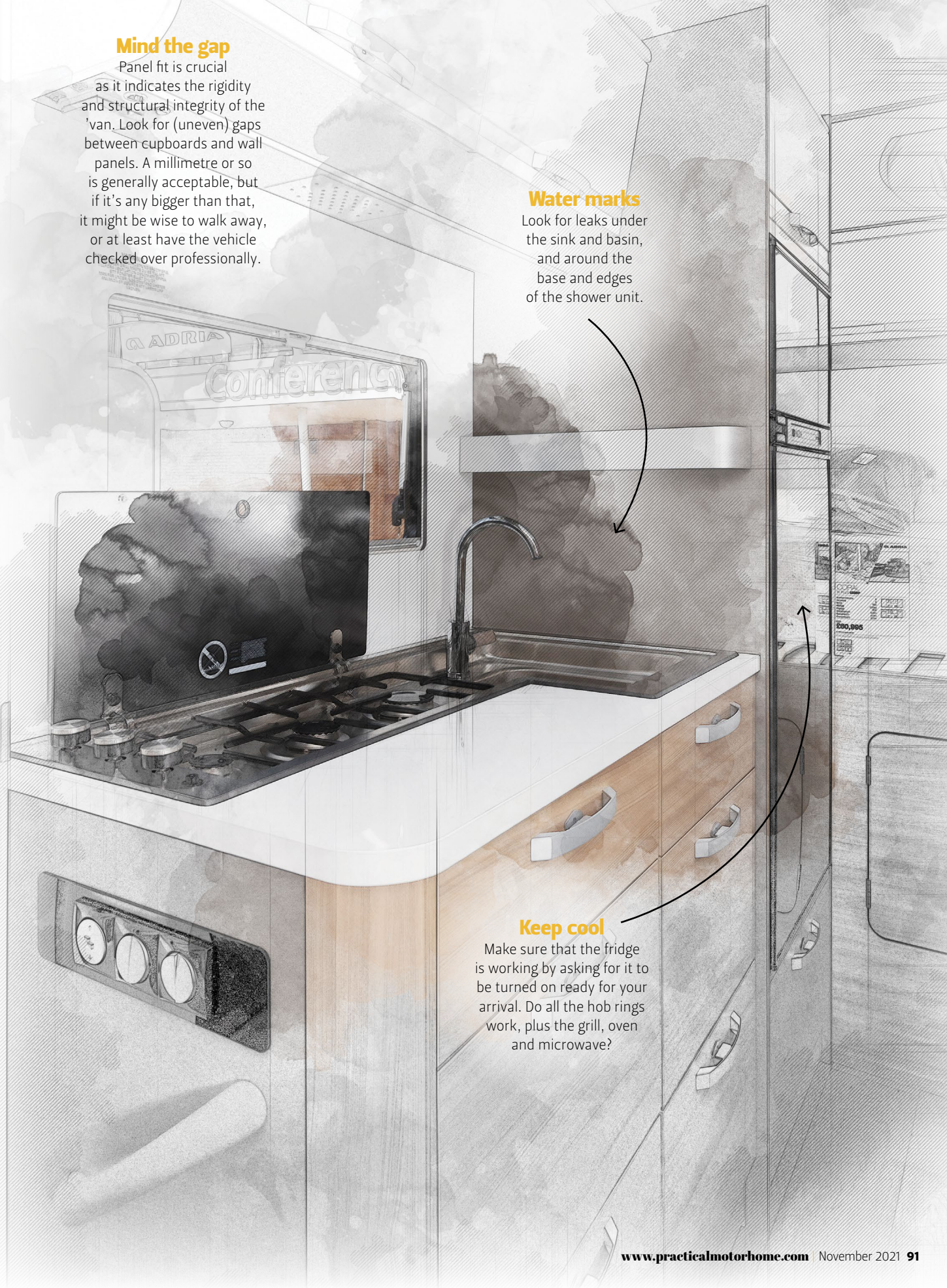
Panel fit is crucial as it indicates the rigidity and structural integrity of the 'van. Look for (uneven) gaps between cupboards and wall panels. A millimetre or so is generally acceptable, but if it's any bigger than that, it might be wise to walk away, or at least have the vehicle checked over professionally.

Water marks

Look for leaks under the sink and basin, and around the base and edges of the shower unit.

Keep cool

Make sure that the fridge is working by asking for it to be turned on ready for your arrival. Do all the hob rings work, plus the grill, oven and microwave?





ON THE ROAD

TAKING A TEST DRIVE

What should you be considering when you take a used motorhome out for a ride? Here's our guide!

So you've found what looks like the perfect motorhome – it's got the layout and berths you want, at a price that's right. But to make sure it's really right for you, you'll need to take a test drive. Here's some advice on what to look out for.

■ Once you've decided on a motorhome to look at and organised the viewing, print out a screen grab to take with you so that you can double check the 'van you're viewing is the same year as stated in the advertisement, and that the bodywork is in the same condition as the photograph.

■ Then, triple check that you have the correct driving licence for the vehicle that you're planning to buy. You can find out more details on the UK Government website by visiting this link: www.gov.uk/driving-motorhome.

■ If you're buying from a dealership – especially one that has multiple branches – you should call to make an appointment and ensure that the vehicle is ready for you.

Have a look online before you go to plan a driving route that will allow you to take in a variety of conditions and really test the vehicle to its fullest (1). Be sure to check that you won't be driving down any narrow roads or under low bridges. Try driving up and down steep hills, including a hill start,



and take a spin around a town to see how the vehicle feels in heavier traffic. Does the clutch feel heavy when you're stuck in queues?

■ Check you're happy with the placing of all the instruments on the dashboard, and that you can reach everything you need to (2). Try out the heating and (if applicable) the cab air-con – does it seem to work as it should? Have a look at any sat-nav system and see that it operates correctly.

■ Ask the seller or dealer if you can start the engine yourself on your arrival (3) – that way you can check that there are no problems with starting the vehicle from cold. Other items that you'll need to check are the steering – if you feel it pulling to one side, the tracking needs to be adjusted. You should also check the amount of play in the steering wheel, and the bite of the clutch. Check that reversing sensors or cameras work as they

'Ask the seller or dealer if you can start the engine yourself on your arrival – that way you can check that there are no problems with starting the engine from cold'

should. Are all of the keys available, and do they function correctly?

■ If you're planning to tour with family, it's a good idea to take everyone with you who will likely be travelling in the motorhome on your test drive. After all, sometimes rear passengers (4) will pick up on movement or discomfort that you can't feel in the front, or that doesn't bother you. Check they have enough room and that their feet can touch the floor.

If you take a dog on tour with you, ensure that there's room for it to be safely and comfortably secured. Check that everyone in the motorhome can easily hear the stereo (and each other), to ensure that everyone will be happy when you're on the road.

■ If you're planning on taking bikes or other large bits of equipment with you, it's a good idea to take them with you on your test drive. Check that you can fit them in any garage and that everything can be safely secured. If there's a bike rack fitted, ensure that



you're capable of lifting the bikes up to it, particularly if it's placed up high (5).

To be extra careful, pre-book a visit to a weighbridge during your test drive and check the vehicle's weights.

■ Triple check that the motorhome's dimensions will fit onto your driveway, and that it's not too tall to fit beneath any overhanging brickwork of nearby buildings. If the dealer is local, you could even try parking it at home.

Can you park close enough to a domestic plug socket to allow you to run it off the mains from time to time? That's not a deal breaker, but will enhance your motorhome experience.

■ If there's no reversing camera fitted, check that you're happy manoeuvring the vehicle in tight situations, such as on country lanes. Some motorhomes have rearward through visibility, but many do not, so you'll need to be comfortable using your mirrors.

Similarly, check that you're happy with the visibility offered through side windows when turning right onto a

major road – sometimes this can be obscured, and the situation becomes more tricky when there's no passenger to inform you about oncoming traffic.

■ Make sure that anyone who will be driving the vehicle during its time with you takes their turn during the test drive – you don't want to buy a vehicle, only for your co-driver to be uncomfortable on the road.

HPI check

Before parting with any cash, you should get an HPI check on the vehicle. This uses the registration number to allow you to get up-to-date information on whether the vehicle is an insurance write-off, has had any numberplate changes, has any outstanding finance on it, and much more. It's worth paying for the most comprehensive check possible. For more details on this, pay a visit to hpicheck.com.



USED 'VAN BUYER

PRELOVED STARS

We pick out some of the best pre-owned models featured in Gentleman Jack's *Practical Motorhome* reports

AUTO-SLEEPER HARMONY

1995-2003

First launched on the previous Boxer incarnation, the Harmony was so successful it transferred to the new Boxer for the 1995 model year.

It had fascia gearchange and was the first motorhome chassis to offer PAS (power-assisted steering) as standard on all right-hand-drive models.

Auto-Sleepers managed to squeeze in four travel seats, a well-equipped kitchen and a washroom complete with a full shower. Blown-air space heating and dual-fuel water heating were standard equipment.

There was a choice of converting the lounge into two easy-access singles, or a rather fiddly-to-make large double. An additional cost-option replaced the overcab lockers with a well-built fold-out high-level double.



■ ESSENTIALS

- Auto-Sleeper Harmony on SWB Peugeot Boxer X/44 five-door panel van
- Built 1995-2003 in Willersey, Gloucestershire
- Overall length 4.88m

■ WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Check that the gearchange is smooth

and the synchromesh effective. Look out for corrosion, and make sure you have an HPI check done.

■ OUR PICK

Buy on condition rather than age, and go for a model that provides the high-level bed.

■ **GUIDE PRICE** £13,000 to £17,000

TRIBUTE COACHBUILTS (ON FORD TRANSIT)

2009-2015

Tributes have always had practical layouts and given value for money. Models were divided by overall length into two series: the 600s and 700s. All are front-wheel drive, with Ford's 2.2-litre Puma engine.

Early models were all Luton overcabs with clean lines, and Auto-Trail offered two upgrade packs: Drivers and Lux. These were soon replaced with a higher basic spec and a new Sports Pack.

Low-line overcabs (model specific) arrived in 2011. The T-715 replaced the high-level transverse bed of the T-725 with a longitudinal low-level French double bed, and a washroom and walk-in shower cubicle adjacent.

All of the models continued until 2015, when the decision was made to switch to Fiat Ducato.



■ ESSENTIALS

- Tribute coachbuilds on Ford Transit chassis-cab
- Built 2009-2015 in Grimsby, north-east Lincolnshire
- Low-profile and Luton overcab coachbuilds
- Overall length 6.2m to 6.9m

■ WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Listen closely when turning off engine. Any clatter might indicate dual mass flywheel is beginning to fail.

■ OUR PICK

T-610 as a compact two-berth, or T-715 for the permanent French bed.

■ **GUIDE PRICE** From £28,000

HYMER B-CLASS (ON FIAT DUCATO/CITROËN C25 & PEUGEOT J9)

1986-1994

Confusingly, what Hymer called B-class have been what we call A-class. With the latter, the converters build their own bodywork onto the chassis from the floor upwards.

The 694 appeared in 1989. Shorter models include the 534 (rear U-shaped lounge), 544 (forward Pullman dinette with sofas opposite) and 564 (forward Pullman dinette ahead of a sizeable washroom). The mid-length 644 added a fixed low-level transverse double bed at the far rear. The flagship 694 was a stretched version of the 644.

The fact that most of these models were left-hand-drive just seemed to increase their desirability.

All had an additional drop-down transverse bed in the cab as standard and, as well as their suitability for European roads, another advantage of opting for a left-hand-drive model was a far better gearchange.



■ ESSENTIALS

- ◆ Hymer B-Class on Fiat Ducato/ Peugeot J9 SWB and LWB chassis-cowl and on Fiat Ducato cowl/Al-Ko tandem-axle chassis
- ◆ Built 1986-1994 in Bad Waldsee, south-western Germany
- ◆ All A-class integral coachbuilds
- ◆ Overall length, 500 series: 5.64m, 644 series: 6.68m, 694 series: 7.24m

■ WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Full service history is desirable, and evidence of recent engine drive belt changes essential.

■ OUR PICK

534 for solos/couples, 544 for families. The 694 is apt for full-timing. If funds permit, go for a late, smooth-sided model with power-assisted steering.

■ **GUIDE PRICE** From £9000



BILBO'S CELEX & NEXA (ON VW TRANSPORTER T5)

2003-2015

Bilbo's has been converting Volkswagen Transporters since 1977, offering a range tailored to UK buyers with the side sliding door on the UK nearside.

Celex has the traditional VW camper layout of twin swivelling cab seats, with a double rock and roll seat/bed located at the rear.

Nexa has two forward-facing travel seats either side of the aisle, which partner the swivelled cab seats to form a lounge-diner or two single beds.

Each model was available in any VW colour, on short- or long-wheelbase variants, and with a high-top or either of the two elevating-roofs.

In 2009, all engines became 2.0-litre common-rail injection turbodiesels, and a seven-speed DSG (direct shift gearbox) was introduced.



■ ESSENTIALS

- ◆ Bilbo's Celex and Nexa on VW Transporter T5
- ◆ Built from 2003 to 2015 in Godstone, Surrey
- ◆ All-steel panel van with side- or rear-hinged canvas-sided elevating-roof, GRP high-top or steel high-top
- ◆ Overall length - short wheelbase: 4.9m, long wheelbase: 5.3m



■ WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Check for recent replacement of engine drive belts and insist coolant is VW's own product. Lift and lower roof to check operation and no mildew.

■ OUR PICK

We'd opt for low-lie side-hinged elevating-roof and use it as our only vehicle, with DSG (auto) if possible.

■ **GUIDE PRICE** From £22,000 ➔

SWIFT RIO

2014-2018

When it first launched in 2014, Rio was very well-received by the motorhome cognoscenti, garnering numerous favourable reviews.

The launch offer was a brace of 'vans, the 320 and 340. The 320s offered two sleeping berths (as two single beds or a transverse double), whereas the 340 had a shorter rear lounge that could be converted to a transverse double bed, and a forward half-dinette providing two extra travel seats.

In 2016, the 310 and the 340 joined the line-up, and the drop-down bed was an option on the 320.

The 310 positioned the parallel-sofa lounge at the front, with a full-width changing room/shower/washroom at the rear. The 325 had a forward half-dinette, with a midships kitchen and washroom ahead of an adjustable-height transverse fixed double bed over the garage.



■ ESSENTIALS

- ◆ Swift Rio on Fiat Ducato low-line SWB and MWB chassis-cab
- ◆ Built from 2014 to 2018 in Cottingham, East Yorkshire
- ◆ Low-profile coachbuilt
- ◆ Overall length – 310/325: 5.99m, 320/340: 6.4m

■ WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

There was a problem with the poor

visibility of the instrument nacelle on bright days. Check that the recall has been carried out – there should have been a rewire so the instrument backlighting operates at all times.

■ OUR PICK

The 320 if the option to sleep in single beds is important, or the 340 if four travel seats are required.

■ **GUIDE PRICE** £40,000 to £55,000

ELDDIS VOYAGER

1990-1995

In the 1990s, Elddis was enjoying huge success with its upper mid-market three-model Voyager range.

All were the same length, with the Voyager II and III placing the entrance door behind the rear axle, whereas on Voyager I it was ahead of it.

Voyager II was the most popular by a small margin and offered four adult berths, plus a travel seat for each.

Voyager III was similar, although it replaced the Pullman dinette with an inward-facing sofa and had only four sleeping berths and two travel seats.

Family favourite was the Voyager I, with an inspired layout featuring six sleeping berths (three doubles) and six designated travel seats. The clever layouts and good spec facilitated all-year-round touring in the UK.



■ ESSENTIALS

- ◆ Elddis Voyager on long-wheelbase Talbot Express chassis-cab
- ◆ Built 1990-1995 in Consett, County Durham
- ◆ Overcab coachbuilt
- ◆ Overall length 6.28m

■ WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Check the cab area very carefully

for corrosion, especially below the windscreen pillars, and under the bonnet, around the bulkhead behind the engine.

■ OUR PICK

For couples, Voyager III; for those who like a dinette, Voyager II; Voyager I appeals to larger families.

■ **GUIDE PRICE** £5000-plus

AUTO-SLEEPER NUEVO

2015-present

Nuevo was first unveiled in 2002 to fill a gap in the range, which was lacking a compact coachbuilt. Currently, the offer consists of two layouts: the EK, with facing sofas; and the ES, with two additional belted seats at the rear.

Both have the same offside wardrobe ahead of the corner washroom with swing-wall shower compartment. The kitchen is common to both, as are the swivelling cab seats.

The original base vehicle was the 130bhp Peugeot Boxer, but for the crop featured here, the default choice was the 150bhp Euro 5 engine, followed by the 160bhp Euro 6.

Currently, the Fiat automatic option with 160bhp engine is £3000 extra, so expect to have to pay a premium for a pre-owned example.



■ ESSENTIALS

- Auto-Sleeper Nuevo on Peugeot Boxer (Fiat Ducato optional)
- Built 2015 to present in Willersey, near Broadway, Gloucestershire
- Overcab low-profile and Luton coachbuilt
- Overall length 5.75m

■ WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Look for a full service history, and for



those buying newer examples, check warranty documentation is present.

■ OUR PICK

If this is to be your 'only' vehicle, the ES, because of the extra travel seats. The Ducato if you want automatic transmission. Don't buy a Nuevo without the Premium Pack.

■ **GUIDE PRICE** From £50,000, although previous generations are much cheaper.

ITINEO A-CLASS RANGE

2007-2013

A range designed to appeal to younger, less well-off buyers with families. These motorhomes were affordable, and weighed no more than 3500kg. The initial range consisted of six models over three lengths.

As with all of the launch range, the compact TD 610 features a forward lounge ahead of the midships kitchen, with two doubles located transversely.

The LB 690 replaces the transverse rear bed of the 610 with a low-level fixed longitudinal bed, while the biggest seller, the CD720, has a low-level island double bed.

The 2009 season saw three new 740 models. The MB 740 had a low-level island double bed at the far end, and the JB 740 replaced the rear double with two longitudinal single beds, whereas the TB 740 provided a high-level permanent transverse double bed.



■ ESSENTIALS

- Itineo A-class range on Fiat Ducato LWB chassis-cowl and on tractor unit with Al-Ko Kober chassis extensions
- Built 2007-2013 in Beaucouzé, western France
- A-class integral coachbuilt
- Overall length 6.1m (TB 610) to 8.0m (MB 800/TB 800)

■ WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

On some models, there are no rearward chassis extensions behind the rear axle. As a result, the floor is unsupported for

a considerable distance. Go to the far rear and check for any 'give' in the floor and listen for groans from there while driving on uneven surfaces. Walk away if you spot either of these.

■ OUR PICK

If you require a full-height garage, go for the TB 610. Otherwise, we think the CD 720 is an outstandingly practical design.

■ **GUIDE PRICE** Previously from £28,500 (TB 610), although none is currently being advertised.

THE LAW

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

You can buy with more confidence when you're aware of your rights.
Here's the what you need to know before any purchase

When buying a motorhome, it's important to know your rights if something goes wrong.

The Consumer Rights Act 2015

The Consumer Rights Act (CRA) is designed to make consumer law easier to understand, so customers can buy and businesses can sell in confidence, each knowing where they stand.

Coming into force in 2015, the Act consolidated some 12 pieces of consumer-related law (including the Sale of Goods Act and Supply of Goods and Services Act), aiming to reduce it to three – Consumer Protection Regulations, Consumer Contracts Regulations and the CRA. The latter covers supply of goods – including the sale of caravans, motorhomes, accessories and related services.

It also follows processes for when goods fail to perform to the contract, including the following:

- There is a short-term right to reject a product, but this has to be exercised within a period of 30 days, for goods that fail to conform (that is, goods that are seriously defective).

- There are also first-tier remedies. These require a trader/dealer to repair or replace goods deemed to be faulty. If any non-conformity is not resolved after one repair, or one replacement, or if a new non-conformity arises, there are second-tier remedies.

- Second-tier remedies can be a price reduction, for example, if you decide to keep the product despite its faults. Or you can reject and claim a refund, partial or full. A dealer might be able to make a reduction for use.

The 30-day period runs from the later of the transfer of ownership, or possession, or delivery.

Consumers have a right to remedies both within the initial 30 days and after it. If goods do not conform to contract within the first six months, the consumer is entitled to

‘There is a short-term right to reject a product, but this has to be exercised within 30 days, for goods that fail to conform (that is, goods that are seriously defective)’

request their repair and/or replacement, because any fault will be presumed to have been in existence at delivery.

You cannot insist on a replacement where it would be disproportionate in terms of the costs of providing any repair.

Advice from the NCC

We spoke to Jo Chubb from the National Caravan Council (NCC); here's her advice.

- “Leisure vehicles are very emotional purchases. You have to try to take the emotion out of the buying process.

- “I always liken purchase of a leisure vehicle to getting married with a pre-nup. You're buying into a lifestyle, and it's fantastic. However, you have to put your sensible head on, in case things go wrong further down the line.”

- “Typically, we find that many customers discover things like the CRA after something has gone wrong. Good advice is to have general knowledge of your rights as a consumer before you begin to look for that dream vehicle.

- “A good place to start is to visit the websites of bodies such as the Consumers' Association and Citizens Advice, for useful, friendly, simple guides.”

- “The ‘buyer's remorse’ scenario inevitably comes into play from someone buying without thinking it all through.

- “If there are any niggles you're not sure about, ask the dealer. Don't feel you have to sign on the dotted line on the day. The dealer will be grateful for this down the line.

- “Check with your family, sort your finances and so on, do whatever it takes to eradicate that niggle. Remember, this is a very big investment.”

- “The Approved Dealer Scheme is relatively new. However, we have strict criteria. For example, anything that a dealer sells (caravan or motorhome) has to be NCC Approved and/or have an equivalent European rating.”

Key points

- If anything goes wrong, liability lies with the dealer, rather than the manufacturer.

- There is no such thing as a non-returnable deposit. Under Consumer Contracts Regulations, if a sale fails to go through, the dealer can keep the deposit, but only as much as it can evidence as an actual cost to it.

- Shows are great places to buy a motorhome. They are ideal for taking advantage of good special offers and so on. But make sure to do your homework beforehand. Do not impulse buy at a show!

- Don't forget to refer to the *Practical Motorhome Owner Satisfaction Awards* – the only ones of their type in the market.

These annual awards are based on reader feedback and will direct you towards the best dealers.

- The NCC can only deal with complaints involving an NCC member (however, it can point you in the right direction for further help if you need it).

In addition, it only deals with complaints in writing. The reason for this is obvious – there needs to be a written record of who said what and when they said it.

- Worst case scenario? Visit your solicitor.



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