

Thinking of Buying a Motorhome? Read our 'Top Tips' to help you find the perfect van whether from a dealership or a private sale.

1. Visit a dealership. Take time to look at various styles of vehicles and actually spend time sitting in each type, whether it's a coachbuilt or panel van. Never eliminate a particular style just from looking in magazines - how they feel when you sit inside can be completely different. If you are unable to visit a dealer (due to Covid restrictions for example), then do you have friends or family with motorhomes? – find out what they like and dislike about their motorhome. On-line groups and forums can also be a good place to research, although opinions are likely to be wide and varied. When you have decided which type of motorhome is right for you, consider hiring one with a similar size and layout first – this is the very best way to find out if it really does suit you. Some dealers offer a 'try before you buy' scheme where you can reclaim some of the cost of your hire when you purchase a vehicle from them.



2. Write a list. Make a list at home of the types of places you will be going in your motorhome and the luggage that you would like to take with you. Will you be doing long trips abroad to Europe or do you plan to island hop around the Hebrides? Do you want a vehicle you can park easily in a town centre or are you happy to park/camp on the outskirts and use a bike or public transport to get around? Do you need roof racks for canoes, or large storage areas for golf clubs or hillwalking kit? If you spend time thinking of these things at home, you can take your list with you when looking around and work out where/if it will all fit. Dealers can advise on whether accessories can be fitted to tailor the vehicle to your needs, or they may recommend an alternative vehicle.



3. Check the servicing history. Before placing a deposit on any second-hand vehicle, whether buying privately or from a dealer, always ask to see the most recent habitation check and damp report. Most people know that the base vehicle (i.e. engine and chassis) should be regularly serviced, but so should the habitation area of the motorhome (i.e. gas and electrics). Critically, in coach built motorhomes, the seals that hold the motorhome together can sometimes leak, allowing water ingress to cause damp and structural problems. You normally cannot see or smell damp until serious damage has occurred and only a competent engineer with a specialist damp meter can identify tell-tale signs. We strongly advise that you never place a deposit on a vehicle without seeing a recent damp report and if damp has been identified, check what has been done to stop the problem getting worse. Small sections of damp are quite common and can usually be easily remedied by a professional motorhome technician so it isn't necessarily a major problem- but do continue to have a damp check each year as part of your annual habitation service.



4. Make sure you get a thorough handover. When collecting a new vehicle, you should be given a comprehensive handover (ours normally take 1-2hrs depending on the customers prior knowledge) and you should see all the appliances working i.e. hot running water, air con units or heating systems. In older vehicles this is particularly important. Highland Campervans provides buyers with a handover video, which allows you to watch the instructions as many times as you want (and since Covid allows handovers with minimal contact). If this isn't provided, it's a good idea to record your handover on your smart phone – this makes it much easier to remind yourself of how everything works once you've driven home!



5. Does it have a warranty? Check that any warranties provided cover both the base vehicle (engine) plus the habitation area (water heaters etc). Some of the modern heaters cost over £1700 so you don't want to find out two months after you buy a vehicle that the warranty supplied only covered the engine area. If you buy a new motorhome from a dealer you will also be covered under the Consumer Rights Act. Extra reassurance comes if your dealer is a member of the NCC Approved Dealership Scheme. Brokerage vehicles are usually cheaper to buy, but they often don't come with the same immediate level of warranty protection and consumer rights. However, independent warranties are usually available to purchase as an extra from the broker – again these vary in what they do and don't cover, so check the small print to make sure you are getting all the protection that you need. If you buy privately there is no post-purchase protection so really do your research and remember – if it sounds too good to be true – it probably is!



6. Factory or custom build? It is often tempting to consider commissioning a custom van conversion or even converting one for yourself. Indeed there are a myriad of campervan converters to be found in the small ads of the motorhome magazines and many self-build conversion kits advertised on websites such as Ebay. Our advice if thinking to custom build, is to ensure you fully price out the project from start to finish. Think about how long you intend to keep the vehicle and consider if your custom design misses out any key features that might make it harder to re-sell (re-sale prices for van conversions are also typically much lower than factory built vehicles). Costs for component parts quickly add up and if outsourcing work the labour costs aren't cheap if you use properly qualified technicians. Make sure that you or your converter are familiar with the relevant British and European safety standards for leisure vehicles and that your safety critical items such as the gas and electrical systems are properly installed and certified. Failure to do so may invalidate your insurance. Ensure that the added weight of your conversion will not exceed the maximum weight of the base vehicle and that the finished vehicle will qualify as a 'leisure vehicle' under DVLA rules. As you can see - there is a lot more to consider than first meets the eye. In many cases, buying a new or used motorhome built by an NCC approved manufacturer gives greater reassurance that the vehicle will be safe, compliant and retain a good re-sale value.

7. If in doubt, ask! We pride ourselves on our helpful and honest approach at Highland Campervans and we like to ensure that if you buy a vehicle, it's going to be the right one for you. We will never put pressure on you to make a snap decision and we love to hear back from our customers who have been off exploring in their new vehicle.



External Advice

There are also lots of external sources of advice if you are thinking of purchasing a motorhome, campervan or caravan. We have listed some very helpful websites below which may help guide you through the decision making process:

[MMM - Out & About Live](#)

[The National Caravan Council](#)

[The Camping and Caravanning Club](#)

[The Caravan and Motorhome Club](#)

[Practical Motorhome](#)