



10 common questions beginning RVers ask when buying an RV

From the editors at RVTravel.com

Is there a best time to buy an RV?

If you're shopping for a new RV, a good time to negotiate a great price is at the turn of the model year. Dealers and manufacturers want those "old" RVs off the lots. Sad to say, not all manufacturers have the same time frame for when their new models come out. You may have to do a little research, which is easier if you have a specific brand in mind. On a seasonal basis, winter is considered the best time to shop. Sales are down, particularly in the more northern states.

How much of a price reduction can I negotiate with an RV dealer on a new RV?

First of all, never pay Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price (MSRP). This is top dollar, a number pulled out of a hat by a manufacturer. If you pay it, you'll be the RV dealership's sucker-of-the-month. This is a complicated subject, but you should be able to negotiate at least 25-35 percent (or more) off the sticker price if you have patience and know what you're doing.

Can I trust that an RV salesman will tell me the truth?

Not necessarily. He/she will try to sell you the RV and as many add-ons as possible — an extended warranty, insurance, roadside assistance, tire protection, etc., which are high-profit items. Some salespersons are perfectly honest, but others will say just about anything to make the sale and then ramp up the price with additional products, often priced far higher than elsewhere. It's hard to tell the good ones from the bad ones. Most salespeople are paid by commission, so they use whatever techniques they can to sell you an RV. Never buy on your first RV shopping outing, no matter what the pitch. Do your homework. Take your time.

I know the make and model of my RV, but my local dealer wants \$2,000 more than a dealer about 200 miles away? Which should I buy from?

You'll likely find that service issues are more easily dealt with if you buy from the dealer closer to home. While both dealers are theoretically set up to handle warranty work for the manufacturer, RVers report that when they bought an RV elsewhere, they often found themselves waiting in a longer line to get service work done at the local dealer, or even denied service at all. It may not be fair, but that's the way it is. And when buying a new RV, you can pretty much be assured that you *will* encounter warranty service issues — sometimes a lot of them. You'll need to crunch the numbers and see if your money — and time — are worth the savings associated with driving the extra distance.

Will I get a better deal buying an RV at an RV show than elsewhere?

Sometimes, but not always. You will almost certainly find RVs marked down at RV shows, and sometimes significantly, often as much as 30 to 35 percent off MSRP. But in most cases you can get the same price a week or two later at the same RV dealership. It's best to attend an RV show to either start your research or add to it by inspecting your narrowed-down choices side by side. Never go to a show to buy an RV to take home. Salesmen will say whatever they can to make a sale to earn their commission and "spiffs" (bonuses to sell right there and then). Big dealers like Camping World will bring in special salespeople — "all stars" who are experts at turning "lookers" into "buyers." They have every trick up their sleeve to sell you right there and then. Don't fall for their pressure. Overheard at an RV show we recently attended: Salesman to customer: "What can I do to get you out camping with this next weekend?"

What advice do you have on buying a used RV?

Buying a used RV is not really different from buying a used car. In general we are big fans of buying "used." For one thing, a big chunk of the RV's depreciation is over. You might find a better deal from an individual, but you'll need to inspect the unit very carefully and thoroughly. If it's a motorized unit, you should have it checked out by a good mechanic. If you're looking at used RVs at a dealer, keep in mind that the dealer probably has a lot of flexibility built into the asking price. It's still important to inspect the unit thoroughly and get the dealer to fix anything that isn't working correctly before you take possession.

How can I tell if there are any recalls on a used motorhome I'm considering buying?

Check out the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's recall database at <https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls>. RVtravel.com publishes recalls as they are issued. Sign up to receive its free weekly newsletter at <https://rvtravel.com/subscribe>.

How are RVs financed?

Loans for new, large RVs typically range from 10 to 15 years, with some extending even 20 years. Whether the purchase is financed through a bank, savings and loan, finance company, credit union or RV dealer, seven out of ten lenders require less than a 20 percent down payment. Ten percent down loans are more common now than ever. You will see offers of zero down, but never, never buy that way or you will be horribly upside down on your loan from the moment you drive off the sales lot. The better your credit, the wider your options of financing. Our advice is never finance an RV for 15 or 20 years. And, by all means avoid loans longer than 10 years on inexpensive units. You will likely be upside down in your loan for the life of the loan, meaning if you want to sell the RV you will need to come up with cash to pay it off. That could perhaps be only \$5,000, but on an expensive RV it could be \$50,000 or more.

What does “getting upside down” mean?

This term refers to when a buyer makes little or no down payment on an RV (typically a new one) and stretches the payments for a lengthy term. In essence, after a couple of years the value of the RV will have depreciated up to 40 percent or more while the balance on its loan has decreased far less. For example, a two-year-old RV may have depreciated to a value of \$60,000, but its owner may still owe \$70,000 on the loan, meaning he will need to pay \$10,000 just to get someone to take the RV off his hands.

I understand that I can write off the interest on an RV like it was a second home. Is this true?

Yes, as long as the RV is used as security for the loan and it must have basic sleeping, toilet and cooking accommodations. The IRS publishes two booklets that contain helpful information on this subject. Copies of "Publication 936 — Home Interest Deduction" and "Publication 523 — Selling Your Home" are available by calling the IRS at 1-800-829-3676 or online from <https://www.irs.gov/publications>.

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