

It seems like when we purchase an RV we overlook something, forget to check something, or possibly we were not properly informed about something. Whatever the case may be you don't realize it until after you buy it and then it's too late. If you already own an RV you know what I'm talking about and this article won't be of much help. If you don't already own an RV read on and learn some things to consider before you buy.

A good example of this is a couple I once had shopping for a travel trailer. The one thing they were sure of was that they wanted bunk beds for their three young children. I had several floor plans available on the lot, with bunk beds, to choose from. I showed them the first model and a few moments later they were convinced that this was the trailer for them. The husband liked the pass through storage compartment that could accommodate his fishing gear and the wife fell in love with the interior colors and décor. They purchased the trailer and I saw them at the dealership after they used it for the first time. They told me all about their first trip and how fun it was, but said they wish they would have given more thought to the floor plan before they bought it. The living room was on one end of the trailer, the kitchen was in the middle, and the bunk beds and bathroom were on the other end. She told me the kids were constantly going from one end to the other and she could never get anything done in the kitchen.

This is just one example, but I'm sure you get the picture. Sometimes we get caught up in the excitement and make hasty decisions that we regret later. Purchasing an RV is a major investment, similar to buying a house. It is after all your home away from home and we need to slowwwww down the buying process and make informed decisions.

I'm not really sure where to begin. I guess the best place to start is with the dealership. You need to find a reputable RV dealer that is willing to take care of you after the sale. If at all possible talk to someone that has dealt with them before. A reputable dealer wants your business and they want you to return to them for future business. I have been in many dealerships that I wouldn't hesitate to do business with and I have been in others that I couldn't leave soon enough. Don't be afraid to ask them to give you a tour of the dealership. Look at the service department. Do they have certified technicians? Do they have the capability and facilities to do routine maintenance and warranty work on the units they sell? Look at their Parts and Accessory department. Do they offer a good selection of parts and accessories? Do they have a good selection of RVs to choose from? How long have they been selling certain manufacturer brands?

A reputable RV dealer will in most cases have a reputable, professional sales staff to assist you. If you feel comfortable with the dealership and would like to look at some of the RVs on the lot it's time to find a salesperson. This is not difficult because they will usually find you first. It is extremely important that you feel comfortable with the sales person. If you don't, ask to speak to someone else. Don't be afraid to help the sales person help you. What I mean by this is, tell them what your needs are, what you want and how you plan to use it. If you're going to buy a towable RV and you already have the tow vehicle ask them to explain the weights to you and to show you which RVs are in

your weight range. A knowledgeable sales person can be a real asset, especially if you are new to RVing. If you prefer to look by yourself ask them for their business card and write down any questions you have so you can ask them later.

I mentioned a moment ago that you should have some idea of what your needs are, what you want, and how you plan to use it. This is extremely important. Review manufacturer brochures and websites for pertinent information that can assist you in making informed buying decisions. Here are a few things to consider before you buy.

- What type of RV is best suited for you and your family?
- What type of floor plan will work best for you and your family?
- Do you plan to travel cross-country with the RV or is it going to be set up at one location and left there?
- If you're going to be towing the RV is the tow vehicle capable of handling the weight of the RV and do you have the proper hitch work to safely tow it?
- How many people will be in the RV and what are the sleeping requirements?
- Is there enough seating space?
- Do you need a slide out(s) for additional living space? If you get slide outs how is the RV interior affected when they are in the stored, travel position?
- Is there enough outside storage, and are the storage compartments large enough to accommodate what you plan to take?
- Is there enough closet, cabinet and drawer space for all of your personal belonging?
- Are there enough cabinets and drawers in the kitchen? Don't forget about the pots and pans.
- How much counter space does it have in the kitchen? Is it enough?
- Where is the dinette table in relation to the range, oven and the refrigerator? Does it make sense?
- How does the bed feel when you lay down? Is it long enough and wide enough?
- Can you walk around the entire bed or is it built into the corner of the walls?
- Are there windows where you want windows?
- Is the refrigerator large enough?
- Can you reach the microwave?
- Is the A/C ducted throughout the unit? If not will it cool the entire unit?
- Do you prefer a split bathroom where the shower is separate, or a bathroom where everything is together?
- Can you stand up in the shower?
- Is the bathroom large enough?
- Can you sit on the toilet?
- How much fresh water can you take with you? Is it enough?
- How large are the gray water and black water holding tanks? Are they large enough for the way you plan to use the RV?
- How much LP gas does it hold? Is it enough for how you plan to use the RV?
- Is the RV too big or too small for your needs?
- If you want a motor home **drive it before you buy it.**

- If you're towing a vehicle behind the motor home what are the weight limits?
- What type of electrical service does the RV have, 30 Amp or 50 Amp?
- Do you need a generator?
- If equipped with a TV where is it located in relation to the seating arrangements?
- How many TV outlets do you want?
- Do you need a phone jack?
- Does the RV have an awning? If so, where is it situated, does it interfere with any storage compartments or windows etc?
- How long is the warranty on the RV? Do you need extended coverage to protect your investment?
- How is the RV constructed?
- If it's a travel trailer / 5th wheel do you prefer a corrugated aluminum or fiberglass exterior? How hard is it to keep clean?
- If you're buying a motor home do you want gas or diesel? Which type is more practical for how you plan to use it?

This list is not all-inclusive but it should help you make a more informed decision before you purchase an RV. Another important consideration is the options on the RV. When a dealer orders an RV they order the options that they feel will help sell the RV based on their experience. On the other hand they can limit the options to make the price more appealing, but it may be some options that you really want or need. Sit down with your sales person and review what options are on the RV and what options are available. If you found a floor plan that you really like but it's not equipped the way you want have the dealer order one for you. I know that waiting is difficult, but remember slowww down, it will be worth the wait to get the RV you really want.

For more information on how to buy an RV check out our "How to Buy an RV, Before you Buy it" e-book or my new paperback book "The RV Book" at www.rveducation101.com

Happy Camping,
Mark

Mark Polk is the owner of RV Education 101. He also hosts the RV Savvy segments on RVTV, which airs on the Outdoor Channel. RV Education 101 is a North Carolina based company that produces professional training videos, DVDs and e-books on how to use and maintain your RV. Our goal is to make all of your RVing experiences safe, fun and stress free. www.rveducation101.com