



# Recreational Vehicle Guide

# Keeping your RV Clean

Long road trips can get messy. With a consistent, comprehensive cleaning routine, you can keep your RV looking like new as you head out on the highway.

That way you can focus on what's really important: Spending quality time with your friends and family members on your travels.

Too busy to maintain a clean RV? Scheduled packed with too many family activities and stops along your road trip? Here are three simple ways to keep up on RV cleanliness.

## CLEANING ROUTINE

Establish a regular routine to help your RV stay in tip-top shape. Treat your RV like your home, with consistent dusting and vacuuming while you're on the road. Equip your RV with an onboard vacuum system to make this part of cleaning a breeze.

Clean your bathroom a couple times per week, especially while you're on the road.

If traveling with your friends or family, be sure to enlist their help in your cleaning duties. Build a chore chart for younger travelers to teach them the importance of cleaning and hard work. Items on the chore chart can be taking



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out the trash, sweeping the floors and cleaning out the refrigerator.

## DEEP CLEAN

A regular routine of dusting and vacuuming is great, but don't forget to deep clean every once in a while. Bust out the cleaning sprays and give

your surfaces some elbow grease.

Find sprays with no harsh chemicals and remember to open your windows to let ambient air circulate throughout your cabin space.

Sanitize the bathroom and kitchen areas, where germs are most likely to be present.

Wipe down windows and wash the exterior of the RV when you have time.

## LOCAL DETAILERS

Your best friend in between traveling will be your local detailer. Ask your dealer if they offer detailing services or if they recommend a compa-

ny in your area. Detailers can get your RV looking like new again in just a couple of hours.

Establish a relationship with a local detailer who does quality work and you'll always have a go-to place for RV detailing and cleaning services, saving you valuable time and effort.

# RV Safety

Just like other vehicles on the road, RVs are safe as long as you're vigilant and careful while driving or pulling them.

As an owner and operator, the responsibility of maintaining your RV or motorhome comes down to you.

You should understand your owner's manual to know what the manufacturer recommends for tire replacement and other general maintenance routines. Without this knowledge, you could be putting your passengers at risk.

There are also many electrical components to your RV that are critical to maintain. Follow the tips below to get the most out of your RV long-term.

## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

If you're new to the RV lifestyle, you know there is a considerable difference between driving it and driving your car. Before heading out on a long road trip, you should spend time getting to know the basic mechanics and driving requirements of your RV.

Start slowly by traveling local roads. This can help you get used to keeping your RV between the lines and sharing the road with other drivers.

Backing up with an RV hooked to your vehicle can be one of the toughest tasks for



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inexperienced drivers. Get plenty of practice backing up your RV so you can handle the task without any issues at the campsite.

## BUILD AN INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Here are some things to inspect before you leave for your trip. You should also

consider looking them over quickly every time you make a stop for rest, food or gas.

- Hitch
- Tow vehicle
- Tires
- Propane tanks

## GET REGULAR SERVICE CHECKS

Schedule routine service

checks with your local professional service center to keep up on general mechanical maintenance. Technicians can help keep your RV operating correctly, keeping you and your family safe on the road.

You may not consider fire to be a danger but according to the National Fire Protection Association, an

estimated 20,000 RV fires break out every year. Other issues that can impact your travels include engine problems, tire troubles and low fluids.

Form a positive, long-term relationship with your local RV service company so you can keep your vehicle running for years to come.

# Trust Your Local RV Experts

If you've ever researched RVs online, you know there are many bells and whistles to consider. You may come away confused at what type of RV actually fits your budget and family's needs.

Put away the laptop and head to your local RV dealer for a real, customized shopping experience. There, you can actually step inside an RV to get a feel for the space and design. This will help you not only realize what you want in your next RV, but what you might not necessarily need as well.

RVs come in all shapes and sizes, so depending on your local experts is the best way to go when trying to make a smart shopping decision.

Read on for questions you should be asking your local dealer.

## What type of RV should I be looking for?

If you're new to RVing, you may consider going with the most basic of Class A vehicles. This will help you get your feet wet on the RV lifestyle. Your local sales professional will ask questions to find out how often you'll be driving your RV, where you'll be trav-



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eling and how much space you need.

Be prepared before you walk into a dealer by having a game plan for your new RV. That way you're not thrown off by basic questions.

## What brand should I consider?

This is a great question to

ask, especially if you're open to considering multiple brands. Your local dealer will have information on all of the different manufacturers, including the ones with the best warranty packages.

Your budget may dictate which brand you ultimately settle on, but it's good to get a gauge from your local dealer

on what is available.

## What is standard and what add-ons are available?

Before signing on the dotted line, make sure you understand what comes with the RV standard and what you'll have to add on to your bill. If you're happy with the

standard options for the price, ask what "perks" your dealer may be able to throw in. You never know unless you ask.

Don't forget to clarify what the warranty includes. What does it cover and for how long are some basic questions to ask around the warranty of your new RV.

# History of the RV

The RV has become one of the most popular vehicles on the road for adventure-seekers. Families large and small love enjoying the open road together as they check out some of America's most scenic spots and stay in various campgrounds across the country.

But the RV hasn't always existed. It wasn't until 1915 that the motorhome became part of our history.

According to Smithsonian Magazine, that's when the prominent Conklin family from New York set out on their 25-foot, eight-ton conveyance had been custom-built by Roland Conklin's Gas-Electric Motor Bus Company to get them comfortably to San Francisco.

Tabbed "the Gypsy Van" by onlookers, this massive vehicle attracted crowds and media as it traveled across country over the next two months in the fall of 1915.

## THE FIRST RV

The Smithsonian Magazine lists the RV's onboard luxuries as "an electrical generator and incandescent lighting, a full



kitchen, Pullman-style sleeping berths, a folding table and desk, a concealed bookcase, a phonograph, convertible sofas with throw pillows, a variety of small appliances and even a roof garden."

Imagine how this vehicle heading down the highway would have turned the heads of people used to smaller, more compact vehicles. That's exactly the reaction the

Conklins received.

The New York Times published several articles about the Conklins, calling their vehicle a "sublimated English caravan, land-yacht, or what you will," featuring "all the conveniences of a country house, plus the advantages of unrestricted mobility and independence of schedule," according to the Smithsonian Magazine.

## WHY THE RV?

During the early 1900s, many Americans were on a mission to find relaxation and a reconnection to the great outdoors. One hundred years later, we find ourselves in a similar mindset, driving the popularity of RVs to an all-time high.

Today's 34-foot Class A motorhome with multiple TVs,

two bathrooms and a king bed is an updated version of the Conklin's "Gypsy Van." RVs provide the chance to leisurely travel while also taking advantage of the great outdoors.

With Americans looking to get away from their devices and electronics, our love of RVs doesn't appear to be a trend that will end anytime soon.

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# Find a Great Local Repair Center

A good RV mechanic can be your new best friend, especially if you're relatively new to driving and maintaining your RV.

If mechanical and electrical issues are outside your area of expertise, then finding a qualified, quality mechanic should be one of the first things you do before hitting the open road. That way you know who to call when it comes time to maintain or repair your new pride and joy.

Preparation is key here. It's always better to have an RV mechanic in mind before you need one, so you're not frantically searching during a time of need.

Here are some tips for finding — and keeping — an expert RV repair professional.

## TRUST THE REVIEWS

Thanks to technology, you can easily find a local RV repair center with a simple online search. Type in "RV mechanic near me" in your search bar to pull up local results, no matter where you're currently located.

Check for reviews and past customer commentary to help guide your decision. Even if a well-reviewed mechanic is a bit more expensive, it's probably worth it given his or her having great validation from past customers.



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## THINK CERTIFIED

Serious RV mechanics are certified by various reputable institutions to give their customers more confidence in their work. You'll want to drop off your RV with a shop that is up to date on the latest techniques and technology.

Before entrusting a repair

shop with your RV, ask them about their certifications. When they received them and what they cover are great follow-up questions.

## READ YOUR LOCAL PAPER

RV repair centers often partner with local newspapers for

wide-reaching advertisements that explain and promote their services. Look out for special sections on summer travel that may attract RV business advertisements.

From tiny garages to big dealerships, you'll likely find what you're looking for in your local paper.

## SIMPLY ASK AROUND

Do you know people who have driven RVs for years and years? They are great sources for qualified local mechanics.

When in doubt, turn to the RV community with your questions. They are a tight-knit bunch of RV enthusiasts willing to help a fellow driver in need.

# Prepare for your Trips

One of the smartest things you can do in preparing for your RV trip is thoroughly researching road conditions and weather.

Knowing what kind of construction and weather issues you'll be dealing with is extremely important and can make the difference in keeping your passengers safe.

There are several websites that report road conditions, closures and construction, including the U.S. DOT Federal Highway Administration website that shows a map of the states. You can easily click on any state to check current road conditions.

Type out a one-page trip planning brief that you can reference at any time on your trip. You can include a map of your general route, as well as the names and numbers of repair companies along your planned trip.

Be as prepared as possible so you can keep your attention on making fun, safe memories with your friends and family members.

## **AVOID BAD WEATHER**

Staying up-to-date on weather that could potentially impact your trip is always a good idea. Rain, snow or tornadic activity can put your passengers in danger, espe-



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cially if you don't know it's coming.

It's important to be as prepared as possible to deal with whatever Mother Nature throws your way. For some quick weather resources, you can visit NOAA.com or Weather.com. They offer comprehensive search tools to

help you pinpoint accurate forecasts for the areas in which you are visiting.

Pay attention on your stops to the conversations happening at local restaurants or truck stops.

Trust that the locals will know of any impending bad weather.

## **INTERNET ACCESS**

The internet and social media can help you stay apprised of key information during your trip.

There are multiple ways to stay connected to technology on the road. See if your local internet provider offers hotspot devices that can keep

you connected during your travels. You can hook multiple phones or computers up to these portable devices to stay connected to the internet.

If you have a laptop or tablet, take advantage of the free WiFi at rest stops, truck stops or restaurants to stay as up to date as possible.

# Insurance Tips

Properly insuring your RV is one of your most important responsibilities before you take it out on the highway. Finding good full coverage insurance can give you peace of mind when taking your friends and family on a fun trip.

Make sure your insurance covers every aspect of your RV trip. Be sure to research road services that specialize in RVs. Only a few road service companies will tow the trailer, too. You don't want to leave all of your possessions in a trailer on the side of the road.

## TYPES OF RV INSURANCE

When it comes to RVs, there are various insurance classifications, including motor-homes, camper vans and even bus conversions. These are typically organized by classes: Class A, B and C.

Here's a brief breakdown:

**Class A:** Various models such as the luxury coach, converted bus and motor coach.

**Class B:** Small RVs with no cab-over. These can include cargo van type designs, travel trailers and camper vans.

**Class C:** Vehicles that use a standard cargo van as the driving portion of the RV with the camper portion extending over the cab area.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Be sure to work with a local agent to get a good breakdown on your options. Here are a few questions to think about as you research different insurance policies in your area:

- How much does the policy cost?
- Will your insurance cover towing your motorhome, your truck and your trailer?
- Does the policy cover personal items?
- What kind of roadside assistance is included with the policy?
- Can I get a discount by combining my RV policy with other home or auto policies?

## HOW MUCH DOES INSURANCE COST?

Depending on your model of RV, you could pay as little as \$500 for annual coverage, although the average premium is generally around \$1,000 to \$1,300 for a vehicle used 140 days per year, according to the insurance company Trusted Choice.

Costs vary per state, so check with an agent in your area for an accurate, localized quote. When shopping for an RV, be sure to build enough money into your budget for quality insurance.

