



# Motorhome **BUYERS GUIDE**

Things to look for to help you make the correct purchase decision.

# Welcome to the great lifestyle of Motorhoming!

**You're about to follow your dreams of a lifetime discovering what this great country has to offer but what do you need to look for when purchasing a motorhome?**

Motorhoming is a great lifestyle that appeals to numerous people worldwide. Australia is such a vast country and has so much to offer in regards to locations to visit from the beautiful sapphire coast line to the arid red centre it is truly a diverse landscape.

Not all motorhomes are created equal and not all are created with Australia's harsh environment conditions in mind and the specific demands of self-contained living.

This guide has been written to educate, guide you and ensure that you do your homework, the more research you do the better equipped you will be to make the right purchase decision for you.

Purchasing a motorhome is a significant investment and it is easy thinking you are saving money by buying a cheaper motorhome, only to find you have made an expensive mistake as the bargain is far from ideally suited to your needs.

Use the pre-purchase motorhome checklist on the back page to help you discover what type of motorhome you are after then escape to wherever the open road takes you.

Happy Motorhoming.



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# Questions to ask yourself

**Right now you will probably only have some preconceptions about motorhoming. Some that you have collected from friends who already own a motorhome or maybe you have gone on a holiday and rented a motorhome before. You need to understand the benefits of purchasing a motorhome that is made in Australia specifically designed and built to comply to Australia's design rules and the unique conditions that are on offer here.**

## **Is the motorhome you are looking at really going to suite your needs?**

### **How will you be using your motorhome?**

This will determine the size of motorhome that you will need. Will it be for weekends only, long trips or at some stage will you be living in it long term.

### **How many people will be travelling in the motorhome most of the time?**

When we say most of the time, forget the visitors (friends or grandchildren) that you may choose to take away as you can accommodate them if needs be, however think of yourself first. How many seatbelts and sleeping berths will you require?

### **What type of motorhome?**

There are three types of motorhome 'types' available for purchase.

**A type** – Units that are built on a dedicated motorhome chassis. Often referred to as a "stripped" chassis, they are a specially constructed motorhome base with all the mechanical components in place. From this the motorhome body is constructed around the stripped chassis, then fits the interior.

The benefits of this are that the floor is at the same level throughout the motorhome, allowing the driver and passenger seats to be swivelled and used as seating – creating a more spacious motorhome.

**B type** – This type of motorhome is based on a cab chassis, using an existing cabin and bare chassis. The motorhome body is constructed on the chassis, fully integrated with the cabin section. This type of motorhome does not have a bed over the cab chassis, it is usually more aerodynamic in look than the C type motorhome. With usually a direct access into the cabin, most cabin seats can be swivelled to form part of the main living area depending on floor plan layout and design.

**C type** – This type of motorhome is based on a cab chassis, using the existing cabin and bare chassis.

The motorhome body is then constructed on the chassis, fully integrating it with the cabin section.

This type of motorhome also has a section over the top of the cabin – termed the 'cabover' or 'luton peak' (where people can usually sleep). The cabover can be used as a double bed/ single bed or converted to an entertainment unit, ensuring maximum use of space within the motorhome. Type C motorhomes also have direct access from the driving area to the motorhome and usually the cabin seats can be swiveled to form part of the main living area depending on floor plan layout and design.

**Campervan** – A campervan, sometimes referred to as a camper, is a motorised vehicle that provides transport, cooking, dining facilities and sleeping accommodation, designed for recreational travel.



Type A



Type B



Type C



Campervan

### What licence do you require for the motorhome?

Standard car licence(STD), light rigid (LR) licence or medium rigid (MR) licence.

The licence requirement is determined by the gross vehicle mass (GVM) of the motorhome. Don't let obtaining a LR or MR licence put you off from the larger motorhomes – obtaining the licence is easier than you think. However having said that most motorhomes these days can be driven on a standard car licence.

- Up to 4.5 tonne GVM can be driven on a standard car licence (STD)
- 4.5 tonne to 8 tonne GVM can be driven on a light rigid licence (LR)
- 8 tonne to 12 tonne GVM can be driven on a medium rigid licence (MR)

### Find out about the industry

Identify the long term established brands in the industry with reputations and the knowledge to build motorhomes which meet your needs. Those companies that are members of state and national organisations such as the Caravan Industry Association of Australia (CIAA) and state associations follow all the design rules to comply with Australian Standards.



### Does the motorhome comply with Government Statutory requirements?

This is important; Will you be able to register your vehicle? Will it comply with all Australian and New Zealand safety and self containment requirements so you and your family are safe whilst travelling? If not compliant how will you go when trying to claim through your insurance company if an incident arises?

### What warranty is on offer for the motorhome structure, chassis and appliances within?

Check the warranty of the products that you are going to purchase, when a large warranty is on offer check to see if the company has been around for many years or if it is a fly by night company that won't be around to honour their warranty when you need it.

### What after sales program is on offer?

Are you able to ring the dealer network or manufacturer to get help with your product after they have sold their product to you or are you going to be left in the dark not knowing how to operate things or how to seek warranty if required.

### What is the likely resale on the brand of motorhome you are considering?

Look at the quality of finish, how practical the motorhome is on the road, strength – does it look good but when you drive it out of the dealership/manufacturing plant will it fall apart? Check under the motorhome sometimes what you can't see such as galvanised under bodies are most important so as to protect your vehicle from the harsh Australian and New Zealand roads conditions on offer.

### What is the storage like?

Can you take away and store securely items that enhance your motorhome adventure eg: fishing rods, bikes, BBQ, camping chairs, fold up table, additional fridge/freezer, golf clubs, tennis rackets or your particular hobby items easily or is this motorhome perhaps not for you.

Are there enough cupboards or draws inside to put all your pots and pans, food items, bathroom items.

Is there pass through storage for large items that you might like to bring along.



**Identify the long term players in the industry with reputations and the knowledge to build motorhomes which meet your needs.**

### **Talk to experienced motorhomers.**

A good way is to join a motorhome club. Has your selected motorhome brand got a club available to join? Can you join up without a motorhome and then go to events to ask those that have already chosen the motorhome lifestyle what it's all about.

Is the club represented at national shows can you go and chat with a friendly club member at leisure. People that own motorhomes are one of the best people to source information from, they will give you honest advice. They are already 'living the dream'.

### **What is the total cost of ownership? On road costs, dealer delivery.**

Has the full cost of owning a motorhome on the road been explained to you? Have you added extras such as bull bar, electric awnings, generators etc that you want to enhance your motorhome lifestyle, has this been factored in?

### **What extra costs are you up for?**

### **Where is the main bed located?**

Do you want to make your bed every day or would you prefer to have the bed already made? Do you want to be able to walk around the bed to make it? Are you happy to climb up a ladder to the main bed?

What type of mattress is available for your comfort? After all, a good night's sleep is paramount to a happy traveller. Some people like firm beds and other people like soft beds – what is your preference?

### **Are genuine manufacturer's spare parts readily available in this country?**

If not where will they have to come from – and what are the associated costs and time involved in doing this? Will you end up stuck in the back of Bourke for days on end waiting for parts to be sent in? Do they have an online shop readily available to despatch parts to a location convenient to you?

### **Is your motorhome designed for self-contained camping?**

The ability to find and stop your fully self-contained motorhome far from the hustle and bustle of a town in an idyllic spot sounds very inviting, however some motorhomes do not have the resources to be able to cater for this. How many litres of water for storage of fresh water, grey water and black water? Does the motorhome have solar panels, regulators, chargers, generators etc.

Are the motorhome batteries on a separate circuit to the chassis batteries so that the chassis batteries do not go flat.

### **What is the design of your kitchen; is it practical, does it have storage for pots, how big is the fridge, is their storage for tall cereal boxes?**

Determine your cooking style, will you cook in the kitchen all the time, outside your motorhome on a BBQ or go out for dinner? This will help you select the type of space, cooking equipment and storage required for you.

### **Does the bathroom have a dry bathroom (separate shower, toilet and vanity) or wet bathroom (shower, toilet and vanity are combined), what is the storage like?**

Will you shower in your motorhome all the time, will you stop at caravan parks/friends/relatives and use their facilities and only use the motorhome facilities sometimes? This will help you decide what combination is right for you.

### **Does your motorhome have heating and cooling. What fuel source does it use? Gas, 12volt, diesel, 240 volt.**

If you are living in your motorhome full time, you will want to consider if the motorhome has insulation. The more insulation you have the more economical it is to run your power source. Consider a diesel furnace heater to keep you warm, cost of running this is relatively low and perfect if you are inclined to legally free camp. Is there an air conditioner for the hotter months do you have the facilities to run the air conditioner.

### **What kind of entertaining area is available?**

Is there room to entertain your friends that you meet along the way or a lounge to relax in to read the paper or a good book or watch a movie?

Consider how you will spend your time on the road and how you like to relax at home, is there enough space for you to relax in your own area of the motorhome to enjoy a bit of your time.

### What construction techniques are used?

Make sure the motorhome is fully insulated for heating, cooling and for noise reduction, nothing worse than being in a tin shed when it is raining. Are the construction techniques strong enough to stand up to Australian and New Zealand road conditions. Imported products are made for their road conditions not Australian or New Zealand. Ensure that your motorhome will pass the test of time.

### Does the seller have a dealer and service network country wide, that are suitably qualified to carry out repairs?

If something was to go wrong does the company chosen have a service network around the country able to assist you close by?

### Luxury extras?

Have you considered how you are going to be able to power all the 'extras' that you have decided to purchase? Chances are if you have it at home you probably don't want to do without it on the road. So if you wish to legally free camp, consider battery capacity, solar panels and generators.

### Floor coverings and practicality?

Luxurious carpet may look wonderful however think practical. You will be going in and out the motorhome door at various camping grounds, you need flooring that is easy to clean and maintain. If you want carpet think fastened but detachable carpet matting at least you can pull it out to shake it and clean it.

### It is what you CAN'T see that you should be worried about.

Does the manufacturer offer inspection tours of its Motorhome production line? A few manufacturers will NOT offer such tours because they are not confident enough to stand behind the construction standards and overall quality of their products. And it's these same manufacturers who only offer 12 month /10,000kms Warranties, which are totally inadequate and completely unreasonable in view of the \$ money outlaid!! Travel around Australia on a 4 to 6 month trip and run up 20,000kms or so and be out of Warranty is absolutely ridiculous.



# Motorhome terminologies to become familiar with

Below are some common terminologies regarding motorhomes that you should familiarise yourself with, you may encounter them during conversation with other motorhome owners, service technicians and salespeople.

**Black Water** – Is the waste held in toilet tanks, which are also known as black water tanks. Can be in a separate holding tank or in a removable cassette tank.

**Cassette Toilet** – Is a type of toilet built into the motorhome with a removable tank which is accessed through a small opening from the exterior of the motorhome. When the cassette is full, the tank can be carried, like a case to a toilet or dump point, most these days are on wheels to make it easy to wheel along.

**Chassis** – The truck and driveline on which the motorhome is built.

**Compressor Fridge** – Is a portable fridge which normally have the option to run from 12 volt and can also be plugged into a standard 240 volt power socket either via an external or internal AC adaptor.

Portable compressor fridges come as either a unit you can use as a split fridge and freezer at the same time or as a unit that can be operated as all fridge or all freezer.

**CP** – Stands for Caravan Park.

**Deep Cycle Battery** – Can be a lead-acid Gel or AGM, absorbed glass matt battery. A lead-acid battery designed to be regularly deeply discharged using most of its capacity. It is built to withstand frequent charging and discharging.

**Dump Point** – This is a disposal place for motorhome,

caravan and boat owners to empty toilet (black water or grey water) waste.

**Freedom Camping** – to use the motorhome without being connected to mains water or shore power. Self sufficient.

**Fresh Water** – This is drinkable water from mains tap.

**Fully Self-Contained Vehicle** – Is a motorhome that has just about all your creature comforts you would expect to live comfortably. In general it will have: a toilet, shower with hot and cold running water, holding tanks for fresh, black and grey water, kitchen facilities for cooking, food and clothing storage, deep cycle batteries, sleeping arrangements suitable to your needs and eating and entertaining quarters. Some also have washing machines, microwaves, solar panels, and for the large motorhomes dryers and dishwashers.

**Generator** – A device providing 240v power supply from a mechanical engine.

**Grey Water** – Is the waste water from sinks and showers.

**GVM** – This is the Gross Vehicle Mass. Which is the maximum allowable total mass of a fully loaded motorhome, consisting of the tare mass the tare mass (weight of the motorhome) plus the total load including water, fuel, clothes, equipment and passengers cannot exceed the GVM rating.

**GCM** – This is the Gross Combination Mass. The total laden weight of the motorhome plus the maximum laden weight of an attached trailer or car is not permitted to exceed the GCM rating.

**Inverter** – An inverter is a device which uses 12v

power from a battery supply and converts the 12V to a limited supply of 240V. The inverter is limited by the supplying battery's voltage and its own output rating, as a 200w rated inverter will not power a 2400w kettle.

**LPG** – Is Liquid Petroleum Gas, which is a gas stored in bottles to power appliances such as gas stoves and water heaters and fridges, etc. LPG is a propane gas, where LPG autogas is a propane/butane gas and can not to be used for the operation of appliances.

**LWB** – Stands for Long Wheel Base.

**Mains Power** – Is the 240v electricity supplied to a motorhome through a 15 amp lead connected from a power outlet point.

**Pump Out Toilet** – Is a common type of toilet usually fitted to very large motorhomes. They have an in-built tank for flushing water and hold around up to 500 litres of treated black and grey water. This can be then "pumped" into the sewerage system at dump points.

**RV** – Stands for Recreational Vehicle it is more an American term, however it is gaining more acceptance for motorhomers in Australia.

**Shore Power** – See Mains Power.

**Stabiliser** – A support device to aid in stabilising the motorhome when parked, not to lift or raise the chassis.

**Two-way Fridge** – Is a fridge that operates on 240v electricity and LPG gas

**Three-way Fridge** – A fridge that operates on 240v electricity, 12v electricity while the motorhome is travelling or on LPG when 240v or 12v is not available.

# Pre-purchase Motorhome Checklist – Does it tick all the boxes?

Easy to use and help you to make the right motorhome choice

## Motorhome Make and Model

Licence type			
Motorhome type A, B or C/Campervan			

## Business Info

Been in business since			
Warranty Offered			
Compliance			
Industry Members			
After Sales program			
Service network, Australia & NZ wide			
Club available so you can interact with like-minded people, talk before you buy			

## Storage

Storage Available for all your toys – external number & size			
Storage available – internal for your clothing, hanging space			

## Bedroom & Bathroom

Main bed location & type			
Dry or wet bathroom			

# Pre-purchase Motorhome Checklist – Does it tick all the boxes?

## Kitchen Facilities

Size of fridge/Freezer – type AES or MES			
Cook top – Gas? Electricity?			
Storage for groceries & pots & pans			

## Entertainment

TV? DVD? iPod dock?			
Speakers in rear of motorhome			
Outside entertainment unit, with TV/DVD, speakers, 12v & 240v outlets			
Type of TV aerial, satellite dish?			

## Safety

Fitted with gas detector			
Fitted with fire extinguisher			
Fitted with smoke alarm			
Fitted with child restraint if required			
Lap sash seat belts or lap only			

## General

Awning included manual or electric			
Outside shower, hot & cold water			
Self-contained camping?			
Entry step? Included? Electric or manual			
Have you spoken with someone that owns this brand of motorhome?			