

Recreational Vehicles



Proper Maintenance

Let's face it, getting to your destination is impossible if your RV refuses to start.

Neglecting proper maintenance can lead to unexpected breakdowns, potentially shortening the lifespan of your vehicle by months or even by years. To make the most of your RV while avoiding costly emergency repairs, prioritize maintenance and preventive care. By doing so, you can enjoy a more worry-free trip into the great outdoors.

ENGINE CARE

Your engine needs regular care to ensure optimal performance. With any engine, you'll need to follow a regular schedule for changing critical fluids. But RVs have their own unique maintenance requirements that are different from a car or truck that's used on a daily basis. That's because recreational vehicles often sit idle for extended periods, and this can create unique issues for their engines.

Conduct manual inspections regularly, paying close attention to the hoses, carburetor, nuts and bolts, alternator, manifold and fan belts. These components are more prone to deterioration when RVs remain stationary, especially if you live in a place with harsh weather patterns. Consult the owner's manual for specific recommendations tailored to your RV's make and model.



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TIRES AND BATTERIES

Regular inspection of RV batteries is crucial to prevent engine failure. Owners should check for corrosion around the connections and ensure they are tight before leaving on any journey – but especially on long ones. Keep the alternator clean

and secure all wiring away from hot engine parts. Monitor battery levels to avoid being stranded at a camp or on the side of the road. Similarly, you'll want to keep a close eye on your tires, since so much depends on them. Monitor them for obvious wear and tear, particularly

after the RV has been in storage. Always keep a spare.

CAMPSITE CONSIDERATIONS

Make sure all awnings and slide-outs are properly functioning before heading out. Be aware of potential damage to

your RV from trees, water hazards or the surrounding terrain when setting up at a campsite. Match amperage requirements when plugging in the camper. Check for leaks after connecting the drinking water hose. Always apply the parking brake for safety.

Insuring Your RV

In most states, liability insurance is not a choice. It's required for all registered vehicles, including RVs.

There are additional options available, however, when it comes to insuring these vehicles. Your best coverage option will depend on how frequently you use the RV and the level of protection that's desired. Here's a deeper look:

MORE THAN ONE QUOTE

To make the best decision, the Department of Motor Vehicles recommends getting quotes from at least three different insurance agencies. Compare prices and options to ensure that you're getting the best value for your money. At the same time, don't immediately opt for the lowest price. Consider other factors such as coverage details, the cost of their deductible and your personal comfort level with the agency. Since an RV is a significant investment, it pays to adequately cover it with a reliable insurance partner.

WHAT THEY COVER

Insurance providers typically offer coverage on motorhomes and travel trailers only if there are permanently attached living quarters. The DMV specifies certain required elements to qualify, including cooking appliances, heating or air conditioning, a

bathroom, refrigeration and an electrical and drinking water system. Travel trailers are sometimes treated differently since they are non-motorized recreational vehicles that are typically towed. You can still find suitable coverage, however, if your travel trailer features designated cooking and sleeping areas.

LEVELS OF COVERAGE

Various insurance coverage options are available to protect your investment. Some aren't mandatory but they may offer additional peace of mind. The DMV lists several basic coverages, including liability, comprehensive, collision and vacation liability. Each is designed to address

specific areas of financial exposure.

For instance, liability coverage helps with costs from accidents that damage property or cause injuries. Collision coverage is crucial for repairing or replacing your RV after an accident.

Comprehensive coverage assists with non-collision

damages like storm damage, theft or fire. Vacation liability coverage is specialized for damage to another RV or injuries that occur in your RV during vacation use, rather than while in regular transit. This coverage is beneficial for those who spend extended periods parked at RV resorts or campgrounds.



Packing Smart

It's important not to overlook essential items when preparing for an RV journey — especially if you are heading to a remote location without easy access to stores.

To avoid any mishaps, create a comprehensive checklist of items that you will need for a safe, comfortable and enjoyable trip.

GETTING STARTED

Begin by including the basics that are needed on every outing. Check off each item as it is packed into the RV or your luggage, ensuring that nothing important is forgotten. Once you have covered the essentials, you can add specific gear such as fishing equipment or hiking boots based on the nature of your individual trip. As you begin packing, prioritize necessities like food, utensils and dishes, cookware, food storage containers and cups.

WHAT TO BRING

Remember to stock up on any necessary medications (including prescriptions and allergy or pain relief), sunscreen, insect repellent and bite cream. Don't forget to pack essentials like towels, sheets, sleeping bags, water bottles and chargers for every trip. It is also important to include chairs, tools, a flash-



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light and trash bags. Remember to bring fuel and extra batteries, as well as bottle and can openers. Lastly, don't forget to pack a cooler, ice, rain gear and water jugs.

SPECIFIC NEEDS

Once you have gathered these essentials, consider the

specific trip and activities you have planned. Factor in potential weather systems that you may encounter, and the conditions on the ground or water. Certain items will always be necessary. For example, if you are heading to the beach, a resort with a pool or a favorite river or lake, pack bathing

suits, beach towels, sandals, life jackets and related beach gear.

Those who fish should ensure they have a hat, rods, bait, tackle and bait. Hikers should include appropriate footwear and a map. As you gain more experience through multiple visits, you may find it

necessary to modify this list. Note that even when returning to the same place, different items may be required depending on the season. For further details and advice, head over to specialty websites or talk to park rangers and experts from local outdoors or sporting goods stores.

Don't Forget Your Tires

You don't want to encounter tire issues while cruising down the highway on your next big adventure.

These problems can range from scary blowouts to a slow leak. Still, it's important to remember that even the smallest issues can lead to significant damage and potentially hazardous driving situations. The good news is that many leaks and blowouts can be prevented with a bit of due diligence paired with regular maintenance.

Regularly inspect your RV's tires for signs of tire wear and tear, especially if you are planning long road trips across difficult terrain. Experts say the main culprits with blowouts are usually worn treads, improper inflation, or overloading the RV. By understanding how to identify these common issues and then addressing them, you can greatly reduce the risk of a blowout. You want to spend your RV time out on the road, not replacing a tire on the side of it.

CONDUCTING AN INSPECTION

Have your tires checked by a professional or conduct your own comprehensive inspection. This should include assessing the air pressure and physical condition of each tire – including the spare. Examine the sidewall of your tires for



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cracks that may have been caused by natural weathering or long-term UV exposure. It's important to note that these are normal occurrences, but they can still lead to bigger issues. To maintain the condition of your tires, clean them regularly using a soft brush,

mild soap and water. That helps remove buildup that could potentially lead to cracks. When your RV is not in use, keep the tires covered. This provides crucial protection against the elements, including UV damage from the sun.

PROPER INFLATION

Monitoring your tire inflation is critical to avoiding blowouts. Regularly check your pressure before you leave and once you reach your intended destination. Additionally, perform a monthly check when the RV is not in use. During the

pressure check, look for any nails or sharp objects that may have become lodged in your tires during previous trips. If you come across something, have the tire dismounted and plugged from the inside rather than attempting to fix it from the outside.

Hit the Road: Visiting Parks

You don't have to go far in your RV to have an incredible adventure.

Among your many exciting options are destinations closer to home like local campgrounds and state parks. When you choose to spend camping time nearby, you can make a positive impact on your community. You might even make some new lifelong friends.

A BIG IMPACT

Taking shorter trips harnesses the huge economic impact that RVs make every year. In fact, a study by the RV Industry Association placed this annual impact at well over \$1 billion dollars. (The industry also creates more than half a million jobs while contributing more than \$10 billion in taxes at the federal, state and local levels.) Camping close to home keeps these dollars in your local area, bolstering the livelihoods of your neighbors. Staying nearby also means you'll have easy access to your local RV supplier and mechanic, in case of any unexpected issues. It's always nice to see a familiar face when something breaks.

WEALTH OF OPTIONS

More than 30 states have national parks with RV camping sites, according to Campendium. These parks offer various recreational opportunities and even group activities for friends and fami-



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ly to enjoy. There are countless locally operated RV parks with their own treasured history and entertainment options. Whichever you choose, they'll provide a wealth of opportunities to explore nearby activities like hiking or fishing. When you camp in the vicinity, you can

take advantage of your familiarity with local amenities.

CAMPING RESPONSIBLY

Campers at both public and private parks have a chance to bolster a sense of community. The next RV enthusiast you meet won't live in some far-away place. Deeper connec-

tions can be made with the parks themselves, too. You'll be a caretaker for a portion of the great outdoors that's practically in your own backyard.

Of course, it's always important to be responsible with natural spaces when you go camping. After all, we have only one planet to live on. Public lands

and waters like these serve as the fundamental infrastructure for the entire outdoor industry. Without them, these jobs and their economic impact would evaporate. So, preserving parks is good for the environment and good for the larger economic well-being of your neighbors.

New or Used?

Want to travel without the hassles associated with the average airport? RVs have the potential to revolutionize the way you vacation.

There's ample space for the entire family to relax and unwind while on the road, and you'll already have convenient cooking and sleeping arrangements once you reach your destination. It's all part of an RV's unique travel experience. Once you decide to buy, however, you'll need to consider various personal factors:

SET A BUDGET

Before making a decision, determine what you can afford to pay. The easiest way to do that is by discussing a pre-approval with a local lender or bank officer. These official letters will indicate the amount the bank is willing to lend for your RV purchase, enabling you to narrow your options between new and used. Armed with this knowledge, you can begin searching for the RV that perfectly aligns with both your preferences and your finances.

DON'T OVERPAY

Note that you aren't obligated to spend up to the approved amount. Overextending yourself during the purchase may limit your



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travel options in the future, since you may not have sufficient funds for extended trips. That's why it's so essential to go over the numbers with a trusted expert and then make an informed decision. Once you've established a sensible budget, you can confidently explore the advantages and disadvantages of buying new or used RVs.

NEW OPTIONS

Purchasing a brand-new RV offers the advantage of traveling with the latest technology and features. You can personalize your vehicle, choosing from various color schemes and amenities. If this is your first RV, however, discuss your pending purchase with experienced owners. They can tell you which accessories are

worth investing in and which ones are unnecessary. Of course, the downside of buying new is the higher price tag.

USED OPTIONS

On the other hand, buying a used RV means that it has already undergone the depreciation process, so the price you pay lines up more closely

with its current value. These vehicles have already proven their reliability on the road. Any factory defects would have likely surfaced as long as the vehicle was properly maintained. Used RVs are often recommended for buyers who are just starting out, since they provide a more affordable starting point to build upon.

Battery 101

Your recreational vehicle is essentially a mobile home. The market offers various styles with different sizes, fixtures and features. Regardless of the type of RV you choose, you'll need a good understanding of how the battery system works.

The battery setup in an RV is unique, with elements that differ significantly from that of a regular vehicle.

TWO DIFFERENT BATTERIES

A recreation vehicle relies on two different types of battery to function properly. The first is a regular automotive battery, which starts the engine. Consult with your dealer to ensure that you have a battery that meets your engine's specifications. The second type of battery required for an RV is one or several deep-cycle batteries. They power the electrical functions of your RV. Without them, your lights and appliances won't operate.

HOW THEY WORK TOGETHER

These two separate battery systems work together to provide the power needed for your cross-country travels. The starting battery, like any other



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engine, serves as the power source. It is typically on a different circuit than the deep-cycle batteries. You may notice the term "CCA" – which stands for Cold Cranking Amps – along with a number listed on top of the battery. CCA is an electrical measure defined by the American Automobile Association, indicating how much current the battery can

provide for 30 seconds at a temperature of 0 degrees Fahrenheit.

Meanwhile, deep-cycle batteries serve the purpose of slowly discharging power to electrical items in your RV. Unlike starting batteries, deep-cycle batteries do not require a CCA number, since they are not used for starting vehicles. Instead, pay attention

to the "RC" (or Reserved Capacity) rating. This rating indicates how many minutes a deep-cycle battery can discharge 25 amps before needing to be recharged.

IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG

Unfortunately, you might be far away from your dealer if something goes wrong with

your battery. Make sure the replacement meets the specifications of your current one. The good news is that battery language is generally universal, making it easy to find a suitable replacement. Simply match the Battery Council International's group code and cranking amps to find a compatible replacement. They're listed on top of the battery.