

used rv buying guide

Used RV Buying Guide: How to Find the Best Pre-Owned Recreational Vehicle for Your Adventures

used rv buying guide is an essential resource for anyone looking to embark on the exciting journey of RV ownership without breaking the bank. Buying a used RV can be a fantastic way to experience the freedom of the open road, explore new places, and create lasting memories with family and friends. However, navigating the world of pre-owned recreational vehicles requires some know-how to avoid common pitfalls and ensure you get the best value for your money. Whether you're a first-time buyer or upgrading from a smaller camper, this guide will walk you through everything you need to consider when purchasing a used RV.

Understanding Different Types of Used RVs

Before diving into the search, it's important to understand the variety of used RVs available. Recreational vehicles come in several styles, each designed to suit different lifestyles and travel preferences.

Class A Motorhomes

Class A RVs are the large, bus-like motorhomes that offer luxury and ample living space. They are perfect for full-time RVers or families who want the comforts of home on wheels. When buying used Class A RVs, pay close attention to engine condition and mileage, as these can significantly impact long-term maintenance costs.

Class B Camper Vans

Class B vehicles are compact, van-sized campers ideal for solo travelers or couples who want something easy to drive and park. Their smaller size means less storage but greater maneuverability. Used camper vans often retain value well, but always check the condition of the engine and interior amenities.

Class C Motorhomes

Class C RVs are the mid-sized option, recognizable by their over-cab sleeping area. They strike a balance between space and drivability, making them popular among families. When shopping for a used Class C, inspect the frame and slide-outs carefully, as these components can be costly to repair.

Travel Trailers and Fifth Wheels

If you already own a tow vehicle, used travel trailers or fifth wheels can be a great choice. They offer flexible living spaces without the expense of a motorized vehicle. Check the hitch, tires, and undercarriage thoroughly, as these wear out with use and can be expensive to replace.

Key Factors to Consider When Buying a Used RV

Purchasing a used RV is different from buying a car or truck; it's a home on wheels with multiple systems that need to work harmoniously. Here are the critical factors to keep in mind.

Inspect the Mechanical and Structural Condition

The engine, transmission, and chassis are the backbone of any motorized RV. Ask for maintenance records and have a trusted mechanic perform a pre-purchase inspection. For trailers, check the frame integrity and axles. Additionally, inspect the roof for leaks, cracks, or any signs of water damage, which can lead to costly repairs down the line.

Evaluate the Interior and Appliances

Since you'll be living in this space, the condition of the interior matters a lot. Look for signs of mold, mildew, or water stains, especially around windows and seams. Test all appliances—fridge, stove, furnace, and air conditioning—to ensure they function properly. Don't forget about plumbing fixtures and electrical outlets; these are often overlooked but vital for comfortable travel.

Consider the RV's Age and Mileage

While age isn't the only factor, it can indicate the potential for wear and outdated technology. Mileage is particularly important for motorhomes, as higher mileage may mean more engine wear. However, a well-maintained older RV can be a better buy than a newer one that's been neglected.

Check for Previous Damage and Ownership History

Ask for a vehicle history report if available, and inquire about any accidents or major repairs. A thorough background check can reveal hidden problems and help you negotiate a fair price.

Understand Your Budget Beyond the Purchase Price

Used RV ownership involves ongoing costs such as insurance, maintenance, storage, and campground fees. Factor these into your budget to avoid surprises after the purchase.

Where to Find Quality Used RVs

Finding the right used RV requires exploring multiple avenues and knowing where to look.

Dealerships Specializing in Pre-Owned RVs

Many dealerships offer certified pre-owned RVs that have undergone inspections and come with limited warranties. This option provides peace of mind but may carry a premium price tag.

Online Marketplaces and Classifieds

Websites like RVTrader, Craigslist, and Facebook Marketplace are popular platforms for browsing a wide selection of used RVs. When buying online, always arrange for an in-person inspection or hire a professional to assess the vehicle before finalizing the purchase.

RV Shows and Expos

Attending local or regional RV shows can be a great way to see many models in one place and talk directly with sellers. Some shows include used RV sales with special promotions or financing options.

Private Sellers

Buying from an individual can often yield a better price, but it requires more diligence on your part. Always meet in person, verify ownership documents, and consider hiring an RV inspector.

Tips for Negotiating the Best Deal on a Used RV

Negotiation can feel intimidating, but with some preparation, you can secure a great deal on your used RV.

- **Do Your Homework:** Research comparable models and prices to understand

the fair market value.

- **Point Out Flaws:** Use any needed repairs or cosmetic issues as leverage to negotiate a lower price.
- **Be Ready to Walk Away:** Sometimes the best bargaining tool is the willingness to say no if the deal doesn't feel right.
- **Request Extras:** Sellers might include accessories, extra parts, or a full tank of propane to sweeten the offer.

Preparing for Your First RV Adventure

Once you've bought your used RV, there are a few important steps before hitting the road.

Get Familiar with Your RV's Systems

Spend time learning how to operate the electrical, plumbing, and heating systems. Understanding these basics can save you headaches during your travels.

Plan a Short Test Trip

Before embarking on a long journey, take a weekend trip close to home. This will help you get comfortable driving and living in your new RV, revealing any issues that need attention.

Join RV Communities

Connecting with other RV enthusiasts through clubs, online forums, or social media groups can provide valuable advice, travel tips, and support.

Exploring the world in a used RV opens doors to unforgettable experiences and a lifestyle that embraces adventure and flexibility. By equipping yourself with knowledge and patience, your used RV buying journey can lead to the perfect home on wheels for many happy miles ahead.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the most important factors to consider when buying a used RV?

When buying a used RV, important factors to consider include the vehicle's overall condition, mileage, age, maintenance history, type and size of the RV, and whether it meets your specific needs and lifestyle.

How can I inspect a used RV before purchase?

Inspect a used RV by checking the exterior for damage or leaks, examining the roof and seals, testing all appliances and systems (plumbing, electrical, HVAC), inspecting the tires and chassis, and taking it for a test drive to assess performance.

What are common issues to look out for in used RVs?

Common issues include water damage, mold, faulty electrical systems, engine or transmission problems, worn tires, leaks in the roof or windows, and malfunctioning appliances or plumbing.

Is it better to buy a used RV from a dealer or a private seller?

Buying from a dealer may offer more security, warranties, and financing options, while private sellers might offer lower prices. It's important to weigh these factors and thoroughly inspect the RV regardless of the source.

How can I verify the maintenance history of a used RV?

Ask the seller for maintenance records, service receipts, and any warranties. You can also request a vehicle history report using the VIN to check for accidents, title issues, and service history.

What should I budget for besides the purchase price of a used RV?

Beyond the purchase price, budget for insurance, registration, maintenance and repairs, upgrades or modifications, campground fees, and fuel costs.

Are there specific RV brands or models known for reliability in the used market?

Brands like Winnebago, Airstream, Jayco, and Forest River are often praised for their reliability and build quality. Researching specific models and reading owner reviews can help determine the best fit for your needs.

Additional Resources

Used RV Buying Guide: Navigating the Market for the Best Value and Quality

used rv buying guide serves as an essential resource for prospective buyers aiming to make an informed decision in a market that can often seem overwhelming. Whether you're an adventure enthusiast or someone seeking a mobile lifestyle, purchasing a used recreational vehicle (RV) offers a practical and economical way to enjoy the open road without the steep depreciation hit of a new model. However, the process requires careful evaluation, understanding of key features, and awareness of potential pitfalls. This article delves into the critical aspects of buying a used RV, exploring market trends, inspection tips, and value considerations to help buyers confidently select a model that fits their needs and budget.

Understanding the Used RV Market

The used RV market has experienced significant growth over recent years, driven by increased interest in outdoor travel and a shift toward remote work lifestyles. According to industry reports, the pre-owned RV market accounts for approximately 70% of total RV sales, underscoring its importance for buyers who want affordability and choice. Unlike new RVs, which depreciate rapidly within the first few years, used vehicles offer a better return on investment if selected carefully.

Types of Used RVs

Before delving into specific purchase criteria, it's crucial to understand the various types of used RVs available:

- **Class A Motorhomes:** These are large, bus-like vehicles offering extensive living space and luxury amenities. They tend to retain value well but come with higher maintenance costs.
- **Class B Motorhomes (Camper Vans):** Compact and easy to drive, these are ideal for solo travelers or couples. Their smaller size often translates to better fuel efficiency.
- **Class C Motorhomes:** Mid-sized and recognizable by their over-cab sleeping area, these offer a balance of space and maneuverability.
- **Travel Trailers and Fifth Wheels:** Towable units that require a separate vehicle. They provide flexibility in terms of vehicle choice but can be more challenging to tow and park.

Each category presents unique advantages and disadvantages, influencing factors such as fuel consumption, storage requirements, and suitability for different travel styles.

Key Considerations When Buying a Used RV

Purchasing a used RV is more complex than simply choosing a model and making a payment. It requires a thorough assessment of mechanical condition, interior features, and historical usage to avoid costly surprises.

Inspection and Mechanical Evaluation

An in-depth inspection is perhaps the most critical step in the used RV buying process. Mechanical issues can quickly escalate into expensive repairs. Buyers should focus on:

- **Engine and Transmission:** For motorized RVs, verify the engine's health, oil levels, and transmission performance. Request maintenance records and consider a professional diagnostic.
- **Chassis and Suspension:** Look for signs of rust, wear, or damage that could affect road safety and ride quality.
- **Brakes and Tires:** Check for even tire wear and brake responsiveness. Tires on used RVs can be costly to replace if neglected.
- **Electrical and Plumbing Systems:** Test all electrical components, including lights, outlets, and appliances. Plumbing should be free of leaks and water damage.

Some buyers opt to hire certified RV inspectors to conduct a comprehensive review, which can be a worthwhile investment for peace of mind.

Age, Mileage, and Usage Patterns

Age and mileage are often indicative of wear and tear but should be interpreted alongside usage patterns. An older RV with low mileage and regular maintenance may offer better longevity than a newer model used intensively. Additionally, consider how the previous owner used the RV—whether for short weekend trips or extended travel—as this impacts overall condition.

Financial Factors and Pricing Insights

One of the most attractive features of buying a used RV is the potential for substantial savings, but pricing varies widely based on type, condition, and market demand.

Depreciation and Resale Value

RVs typically depreciate around 20% to 30% in the first year and approximately 5% to 10% annually afterward. However, well-maintained models from reputable brands can retain value better. Researching comparable listings and historical pricing trends can help buyers identify fair market prices.

Additional Costs to Consider

Beyond the purchase price, prospective owners should factor in:

- **Insurance:** Rates vary depending on RV type, age, and driving history.
- **Storage:** Secure parking or storage facilities can incur monthly fees.
- **Maintenance and Repairs:** Older RVs may require more frequent servicing, especially for appliances and mechanical parts.
- **Upgrades and Customizations:** Some buyers invest in updating interiors, installing solar panels, or upgrading HVAC systems.

Evaluating total cost of ownership ensures the purchase aligns with long-term financial plans.

Negotiating and Finalizing the Purchase

Armed with inspection data and pricing benchmarks, buyers are positioned to negotiate effectively. It's advisable to approach negotiations with a clear understanding of the vehicle's condition and the seller's motivation.

Working with Private Sellers vs. Dealers

Each option has pros and cons:

- **Private Sellers:** Often priced lower but may offer less buyer protection and no warranty.
- **Dealers:** Typically provide certified pre-owned options, financing, and warranties but at a premium price.

Regardless of the source, always request a vehicle history report and a written contract detailing the terms of sale.

Test Drive and Trial Use

A test drive is indispensable, allowing you to assess handling, braking, and comfort. For travel trailers or fifth wheels, towing behind your vehicle during a test run is ideal to evaluate compatibility and drivability.

Essential Features and Upgrades to Prioritize

When assessing used RVs, pay attention to features that enhance convenience and safety:

- **Heating and Cooling Systems:** Vital for comfort in varying climates.
- **Kitchen and Bathroom Facilities:** Quality appliances and plumbing can affect usability and resale value.
- **Storage Space:** Adequate cabinetry and compartments improve organization on the road.
- **Safety Features:** Include smoke detectors, carbon monoxide alarms, and emergency exits.

Modern upgrades such as solar panels, backup cameras, and Wi-Fi boosters increasingly add value and appeal.

Throughout the used RV buying process, a methodical, informed approach dramatically reduces risk and increases satisfaction. By balancing technical evaluations with lifestyle compatibility and financial considerations, buyers can uncover hidden gems in the pre-owned market that offer years of road-ready adventure.

[Used Rv Buying Guide](#)

used rv buying guide: Used Motorhome Buying Guide Carl Cunningham, 2020-08-10 Are you in the market for buying a used RV? Do you want to purchase a motorhome but aren't sure what to look for? Do you need a helpful guide for how to buy a camper for your next family vacation? Do you want to save money on your RV purchase? You need this used RV buyer's guide! My book, Used Motorhome Buying Guide, will teach you everything you need to know about how to purchase a used RV, motorhome, travel trailer, or camper of your dreams. Your new motorhome should fit your needs as best as it can. You deserve to travel in comfort and style. Armed with the knowledge of how to get the best deal when buying a used RV, you can save precious money and time. This book will give you vital advice and guidance on how to buy a used motorhome. I am a travel writer by trade but a nomad by choice. Traveling the country by RV is one of the best ways to truly experience nature and adventure. I have lived in my share of different types of recreational vehicles, all with their own pros and cons. With this nomadic lifestyle comes the challenges of repairs and maintenance of a home on wheels. This book is the culmination of what I have learned about the best practices of how to buy a used RV. The first section of this book is all about the basic factors of RVs. It is important for you to understand all the basics surrounding motorhomes. I help you understand the different types of motorhomes, the features of each type, and the benefits. We also look at the features to expect in an RV and factors to consider before deciding to buy a used RV. I help you compare the benefits of buying a used RV versus buying a new one. This way, you have a clear perspective on your options. In the second section of the book, you are introduced to RV inspections. When purchasing a used RV, the value you get depends on your inspection process. We help you prepare a detailed checklist of everything you desire in an RV. For you to find an RV that matches your needs, you must start by preparing a detailed list of all your needs and expectations. From this list, I help you figure out the features that are the most important and the ones that are not necessary. In the third section, we focus on testing the features of the RV and authenticating the legality of the ride. For anyone looking to buy a used RV, this is one of the most important sections. You can't get a good deal unless you know how to inspect the used RV and test the features. The book outlines the tricks and tips used to detect faults in the plumbing and electrical systems of the RV. We look at the best way to test drive a used RV and the features to focus on during test drives. We detail the secrets used by RV dealers to hide problems and how to uncover any hidden issues. In the fourth section of the book, we look at all the legal matters that affect used RVs. I help you understand the possibilities of buying an RV that is involved in crime or accidents. We look at some of the ways you can authenticate and verify the legality of an RV. Finally, we look at the risks and precautions involved in buying used RVs. Generally, this last section just helps sum up all the dangers involved in buying used RVs. If you are looking to purchase a used RV, a new RV, or to learn more about RVs, this book is for you. I am sure you have learned a lot, and you are on the path to find the best ride for you and your family. As a BONUS, I have provided you with a detailed checklist to take along with you as perform your pre-purchase inspection. Instructions on obtaining a printable checklist are included. You will want to click Buy Now and add this title to your collection and I promise to save you money, headache and frustrations from buying a lemon.

used rv buying guide: Complete Rv Buying Guide a to Z Bruce Bowers, 2017-10-19 Complete RV Buying Guide A to Z Budget Friendly Guide to Buying Used Motorhome If you are reading this, I can safely assume that you are interested in purchasing an RV sometime in the near future. I am also certain that you would like to know who I am and what and why I am an expert in the field of RV. Fair enough! My name is Bruce Bowers, at the time of this writing I am 68, my wife Jill is 67, we both are retired and been living our dream RV life for last 5 years. But that is not why I wanted to write this book. I started my career as a banker years ago, but in just two years I knew banking was not my cup of tea. I loved being outdoors, and somehow landed a job at an RV dealership in Austin, TX. Since then till I retired I have managed and operated multiple RV

dealerships in TX, LA, and TN. I get asked these 8 questions often from people. What is the right RV for me? Is buying a used RV a good idea? Are used RV's reliable? Can buying a used RV be a money pit? What are the best and most reliable brands out there? How would I know if the used RV I am buying is mechanically safe and sound? How can I protect my investment? Where or who should I buy from? In this book, I answer these questions and cover a few more important topics that most first-time RV buyers I think should know about. I took great care not to make this book read like an owner's manual or a technical bulletin. But I wanted this book to explain few basic rules, tips and tricks of buying the right RV the very first time. If you are thinking about buying an RV in the near future, I think I can help you decide on the right one. Just remember RV is a significant investment and you should do a lot of homework before making a decision just as you do before buying a home. Here Are Some Of The Things I Covered In This RV Buying Guide: Advantages Vs. Disadvantages Of an RV Various Types Of RV's And Motorhomes What Are Class A, B & C Type RV's Difference between Camper, Travel Trailers, Fifth wheel and Motorhomes Features And Factors Of Each Type To Consider Financial Decision Making Process Pros And Cons Of Extended Warranty Tips And Tricks To Get Best Out Of Your Warranty New RV Vs. Used RV Cost And Expenses To Consider When Buying A Used RV How And Where To Buy An Used Or New RV Most Popular And Reliable Motor Home Brands In North America How To Upgrade Your RV On A Budget (Accessories And Add-Ons) What And How To Take Proper Care And Maintenance For Your RV Various Camping Options And Campsite Ideas Feel free to look at the table of content for a full preview before hitting the Buy button, this way you will know what I covered in the book and if that is the type of information you are looking for before actually paying for it. Welcome to the exciting life of RVing, I know you will love the freedom of the open road and blue sky. Enjoy!

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self-sufficient. RV Recycling and Waste Disposal: Proper ways to dispose of trash and sewage. Green RV Brands: Companies offering eco-friendly options. Chapter 10: The Future of RVing Technology in RVs: New innovations and smart RV systems. Trends in RV Travel: What's changing in the RV lifestyle. The Rise of Electric RVs: How electric vehicles are shaping the future of RV travel. Conclusion Final Thoughts: Why RVing is a lifestyle worth pursuing. Inspiration for the Road Ahead: Motivational closing words for new RV owners and travelers.

used rv buying guide: Nomad's Guide to Budget RVing Barrett Williams, ChatGPT, 2025-05-11 Unlock the secrets to the ultimate adventure with Nomad's Guide to Budget RVing! This transformative eBook is your gateway to an exhilarating life on the open road, all without breaking the bank. Whether you're a seasoned traveler or a curious newbie, this guide offers invaluable insights into living the RV lifestyle on a shoestring budget. Start by reimagining the possibilities of a nomadic existence in the opening chapter and debunk common myths that hold you back. Learn to select your perfect home on wheels, whether it's a snug van or a spacious motorhome, and uncover tips for affordable purchases that fit any budget. Dive into crafting a realistic travel budget that prepares you for hidden costs and helps prioritize luxury without sacrificing comfort. Discover innovative DIY hacks and essential tools for setting up your RV without splurging. Navigate the challenges of the open road with confidence by finding free campsites, cooking on a budget, and maximizing fuel efficiency. Secure sustainable income with remote work opportunities, while exploring mobile business ideas that support this thrilling lifestyle. Chapter by chapter, learn the art of minimalist living, maintain your RV efficiently, and stay safe and connected on your journey. Network with fellow travelers, engage with local cultures, and give back while minimizing your carbon footprint. From thrilling adventures to relaxing comfort, this guide covers it all. Dive into the heart of your travels with practical tips on maintaining both your RV and your well-being. Nomad's Guide to Budget RVing equips you with the knowledge to travel smartly and sustainably. Let your journey be as enriching as it is budget-friendly. Embrace freedom, explore the unknown, and redefine what it means to live abundantly on the road. Your great adventure awaits!

used rv buying guide: A Beginner's Guide to RV-Living for Families Michelle Mann, 2025-09-10 Are You Ready For An Adventure? Discover Why Millions Of People Have Chosen A Life On The Road... And How To Become One Of Them. Do you love traveling and seeing new places? Are you bored with your current sedentary lifestyle, looking for something thrilling and adventurous? Have you thought about transitioning to a full-time RV living, but don't know where to start? Life on the road has never been more appealing: over one million Americans are currently living full-time in an RV, traveling across the country and having the time of their lives. These modern nomads have tapped into something most people crave: a simpler, more fulfilling way of life. Imagine having the freedom to go wherever you want, whenever you want. Imagine waking up to beautiful sceneries, without that dreadful morning rush. Imagine having A LOT of free time to spend with your children, family and friends. Well, you don't have to only imagine it. RV living, or RVing, comes with many benefits, but what attracts people the most to this lifestyle is its cost efficiency. Living in an RV is cheaper than living in regular housing. You don't have to pay expensive rent. You don't have to worry about mortgages and down payments. Bills are fewer, and maintenance is simple. However, there are certain things you should consider before starting this adventure. If you're seriously thinking about transitioning to this lifestyle, you must have a ton of questions. And here are all the answers. In A Beginner's Guide to RV Living for Families, you will discover: The pros and cons of living on the road -- discover whether this lifestyle is the right one for you A detailed guide on how to choose your first RV, including a list of different types of motorhomes and a price guide Tips on how to make an income while RVing -- discover a variety of online jobs and businesses you can explore, and how to make the most of workamping Helpful strategies for RV living with kids and pets -- how to ensure quality education and healthcare for your children, as well as a list of equipment and accessories you'll need for your pet A thorough manual on RV maintenance, including how to connect RVs to campgrounds A guide on the cost of utilities, and how to lower the cost of your bills even more Numerous tips and hacks for life on the road, shared by those who have been living it for

many years And much more.

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used rv buying guide: *Buy a Used RV for Sale at a Bargain Price* Dagny Wasil, 2018-03-24 If you're thinking about buying a used RV then this book can help you successfully achieve that goal while protecting your time and finances in the process. Why buy a used RV? For starters ... to save money (a lot of it). Although there are other reasons too. This book gives a step-by-step plan for researching, selecting and buying an RV (motorhome, Class A, B or C, trailer-camper, popup or other) at a great price. Whether you're someone who wants to simply enjoy vacations in an RV, or live in one full or part-time, this book can help you find and buy a used RV that perfectly suites your tastes, matches your particular goals, and fits your individual budget. This is a quick-reading, yet highly detailed money-saving guide: -- How to find an RV that perfectly suites your tastes and particular preferences ... no matter what your budget-- Why anyone's first RV should never be brand new ... and why you may never want to ever buy a new one-- New versus used RVs - a comparison (you may be surprised by some of these facts)-- The #1 (mistaken) reason why uninformed buyers choose a new RV over a used one-- Advantages and disadvantages of buying both new and used RVs -- What you should always do to learn about different types of RVs on the market (especially if you're brand new to RVing)-- Comprehensive explanations of different RV class and types (and which is currently holding the most value in today's market)-- Which class of RV you really want to consider buying if you're thinking about trading in for another RV within 3 years-- One type of RV that may be challenging (and possibly even dangerous at certain times) to drive on any road (Buyers need to be aware and do careful research when it comes to this one)-- Questions to ask yourself before deciding which type of RV is perfect for your needs and goals-- The TOP website to use (and how to use it) when researching the RV market-- How to know the TRUE market value of the RV you want-- Avoid overpaying for any RV by following this one simple rule-- Where and how to search online (websites to use when searching for RV deals)-- Questions to always ask a seller over the phone BEFORE going to look at the RV they're selling (These may save hours of wasted time)-- Items to ALWAYS bring with you when going to inspect any RV-- RV Exterior Inspection: (appearance and condition) - step-by-step guide & comprehensive checklist (PDF printout available)-- RV Interior Inspection: (appearance and condition) - step-by-step guide & comprehensive checklist (PDF printout available)-- 2 simple rules about RV tires (keep you safe and possibly save a good bit of money in the process)-- How to properly conduct an RV test-drive (and why it's so important prior to making any offer)-- A really simple plan to get a great deal on the used RV that is perfect for you (no awkward or pretended negotiation skills needed)-- The #1 KEY to knowing the current market value of any used RV-- What to print out and bring with you before negotiating a sale price for any RV with the seller-- How to begin the negotiation for an RV (and why you NEED NOT EVER be afraid to talk about what you're willing to pay for it)-- The best way to get the seller to abandon their inflated (and often unrealistic) asking price in favor of your below-market offering price-- Safely and securely paying for the RV (No direct cash - do this whether buying from a private seller or dealer)-- The fastest (and possibly least-expensive) way to get RV insurance after purchasing With Buy a Used RV for Sale at a Bargain Price, you can find the right RV for both your needs and budget. And you can do it with complete confidence -- knowing how to research RVs and truly understanding the worth of any RV on the market BEFORE making an offer on it. Buy the right RV. Buy it in great condition. And get a great deal using this book!

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