

# Buying advice

Practical tips and information to help you make the right choice when choosing your new – or newer – motorhome

## Picking up your new 'van

*Gilbert Park draws on his latest and previous handovers to offer some top tips for collecting your motorhome*

You've paid the money, arranged the insurance and tax and the day has finally arrived for you to pick up your new (to you) motorhome. Exciting!

We've been through this a few times with new 'vans and those that have had previous owners, bought from dealers and even an online auction site. No matter where you bought it there are several things you can do to make the handover give you real value for money.

Take a pen, paper, torch, camera and wear clothes that will let you explore under the 'van and in all the recesses. Be prepared to ask questions and be up front about any problems you find.

The first thing is to arrive early



Exploring the controls for the heating system with John from Choose Leisure



During the handover, have a good look under all parts of the 'van

for your appointment, well fed and watered. Be prepared to spend two to three hours doing the handover. I have been rushed in the past with another 'van, by a salesman who didn't know how it worked. Later I regretted the poor handover.

Be patient and honest and ask the person/salesman doing the handover to go and find the answer if they don't know it when you ask. In all, our most recent handover, including pictures, took just over three hours.

Many features are controlled by clever computers, so make sure that you understand these and that the instruction manuals are there. A few



A part of the fridge door lock was missing; this was quickly found and replaced



hours later you may remember that you can do something but can't remember how to do it. Ask the handover person to set it up for you. For us it was to set the alarm/unlock system so that the entry light came on when the remote unlocked the 'van from outside.

If the 'van is being handed over by a technician, then some maintenance tips can be gleaned. This time we learnt about using white grease (a PTFE spray) that doesn't attract dirt and dust to lubricate the step mechanism.

You also might find some things are missing. The fridge has a small, plastic, brown spacer that allows ventilation when it is locked. It was missing but the technician noticed and quickly went to get and fit the missing part.

Look in all the cupboards with your light. I wish I had done this with one of my other 'vans. I might have noticed a screw going through lighting wires! The first time the light was switched on there was a horrible smell of burning and then the fuse blew.

On the subject of fuses, make sure you know where they all are (there are five fuse boxes in our new motorhome) and that some spares are provided.

Check that everything works in the cab. I once had a new 'van in which the radio aerial was broken by the wing mirror clamp. The radio didn't work, but nobody had noticed.

In the same 'van the reversing >



camera had been fitted with the image reversed. I reversed into a post because of this!

Find out all of the safety precautions and make sure they have all the manufacturer's wrapping (to prevent accidental use) removed. The smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms on our new 'van had pull-tabs on the battery that must be removed to activate them.

Be prepared to inspect the underneath of the vehicle. Unfortunately, all of the ramps were in use when I arrived; however, a trolley was found that allowed me to look underneath. This was invaluable. I was shown where the main valve for the LPG tank was and how to remove the cover to find it; useful when I go through the Channel tunnel.

I also had a good look around. What became apparent was that the winding down mechanism is behind the offside rear wheel, some distance in. A special tool is needed, stored in the toolkit under the front passenger seat. The wheel is also in the midline of the 'van.

I'm not sure I could change a flat tyre on the rear offside because I don't think I can easily lower the spare, get the tube out, etc, due to the lack of height. I could jack the 'van up using the small jack in the tool kit, but it would be dangerous to go under the 'van with just that for support. It'll be a job for the roadside assistance organisation.



Looking at the spare wheel and its remote tyre pressure monitoring tube made me realise that I couldn't change a flat tyre on the rear nearside – help from a roadside assistance organisation would be needed

When inspecting the underside of the 'van, I did ask where the jacking points were. It was suggested that I look in the instruction book. I wish I had done so then because, four days late, guess what? I had a tyre with a screw in it.

Fortunately, we were near a tyre company and, yes, the first question it asked was did I know where the jacking points were? Out came the book and we found them. Easy, the sun was shining



Make sure you know where your jacking points are. Finding them on a wet, windy and cold night on a motorway might not be too easy



Just four days after picking up the 'van we had a screw in the tyre

and we were not in a rush. Imagine a busy motorway, at night in the pouring rain in a hurry to get to a site!

One other thing that I didn't understand was the reversing camera and nor did the handover person. It works fine in reverse but I can also switch it to be on when going forwards.

In a previous 'van I found this invaluable at times, especially when driving in France. The instruction book is not the world's greatest piece of clear instructions. One of my pet subjects with motorhomes is they have stickers everywhere, warning about this and that. Not a single 'van I have seen has a sticker that tells you the height, width and length. As soon as you are on the road, the one thing you need are these dimensions for low bridges, petrol stations, roadworks and the like.

As part of the handover we were offered two nights at a nearby campsite, which is a brilliant idea.

We've already arranged to go back to Choose Leisure – the dealer we bought our new motorhome from – after six weeks to collect some spare keys and for some other little jobs to be done and the habitation area checked. As I write, it won't be too busy but, as you'd expect, there are a few niggling faults. **MMM**



## NEED ADVICE?

Send your motorhome buying questions to **MMM**. To make sure you get the right advice, please include as much detail as possible on your specific question • Budget • Desired layout • Size restrictions • Contact details or where you live • Any other relevant information

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