



# Guide to... BUYING USED

It's a major investment, but you don't have to break the bank to hitch up your dream caravan – you just need to enter into any such transaction well prepared. Here are our top tips for buying a brilliant used tourer!

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## First steps to buying used

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... and next, it's time to step inside the caravan and give the interior a thorough once-over

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CUT OUT  
AND KEEP  
GUIDE!



Also available as a FREE ebook – see  
[www.practicalcaravan.com/know-how/](http://www.practicalcaravan.com/know-how/) to download yours!



USED  
TOURERS

NEW  
TOURERS

MOTORHOMES

# FIRST STEPS TO BUYING A USED VAN

Purchasing a caravan involves a significant outlay, even when you are buying pre-owned, so it pays to do some careful research before you part with your cash, says David Motton

A





A CARAVAN is a substantial purchase, and even a secondhand van is likely to cost you several thousand pounds – hardly small change – so it's well worth taking your time, researching your purchase carefully and only handing over your hard-earned cash when you are sure you have the right van.

## 1 Why buy used?

There are many reasons to purchase a pre-owned leisure vehicle, rather than a new one. The most obvious is price. As soon as a caravan is towed away from the forecourt, it starts to lose value.

This steady loss in value is known as depreciation. While it has a negative effect on the first owner, it will benefit the second or third owner – you get exactly the same vehicle, with the same layout, features and performance, but at a much reduced cost.

So just how much could you save by buying used? Well, the rate at which a used caravan depreciates will vary, depending on the make, model and condition.

There's also another upside to buying used that you might not expect: owners of pre-owned caravans and motorhomes tend to be happier with their purchase.

In the *Practical Caravan* and *Practical Motorhome* Owner Satisfaction Surveys, owners of used vehicles generally reported fewer faults. We suspect this is due to the first owner identifying niggling problems and having them fixed under warranty.

However, talking of warranties, that's one of the disadvantages of buying used.

A new tourer is very likely to come with a manufacturer's warranty lasting around three years, and a separate warranty for the bodyshell lasting six years or more.

Choose a used vehicle that is outside the warranty period, and repairs will be down to you. Unless, that is, the dealer you are buying from offers a warranty. Warranties lasting for at least three months are quite common, unless the caravan in question is particularly old and tatty.

Alternatively, you could arrange to have your own aftermarket warranty cover.

## 2 Choose the right layout to suit you

The best way to get to grips with the variety of tourers that you'll find available is to go to one of the big shows, or visit your nearest large dealership.

There, you will be able to take a good look around at a variety of vehicles at your leisure, and get a much better feel for what would suit you best.

Fundamentally, there are two matters to consider. First, you are going to need enough berths for the number of people you plan to holiday with. Then, take some time to think about how you will actually be using the tourer.



**A** Visit local dealers so you can take a look at a wide variety of brands and models

**B** Finding your perfect caravan involves planning your strategy first **C** It's a good idea to spend time at one of the big shows, where you can see plenty of layouts **D** Financing might be worth investigating **E** You'll need to look at lots of vans, but it's time well spent

The more hours you expect to spend inside the vehicle during the day, the more important the lounge area will be. Likewise, if you are going to eat most of your meals in there, a practical and well-equipped kitchen is going to be absolutely vital.

Think about the size of the caravan, as well as the layout. A large tourer might look ideal on the forecourt, but does it make a safe and sensible match for your car, and does your licence allow you to tow the caravan? For more details on this, see our *Know-how guide to Towing*, downloadable from [www.practicalcaravan.com/know-how](http://www.practicalcaravan.com/know-how).

## 3 Make and model

Caravanners can be very loyal to a brand, but take a look at a variety of makes to be sure your loyalty isn't misplaced.

It's also worthwhile perusing our Owner Satisfaction Surveys, to find out more about the most reliable vans and the best places to buy them from.

## 4 Where to buy

Dealerships will have a wider choice of models for you to browse, and the facility to service the vehicle before you purchase it. They are also likely to offer a warranty.

Private sellers are typically cheaper than a dealer, but they won't be in a position to offer you a warranty. This means that you'll need to be very sure about the condition of the van before you commit to buying it.

Another source of used leisure vehicles that you'll come across is the online auction. These sales sites can be extremely tempting, particularly when the bidding is well below the true market value. But we would advise against buying any caravan unseen, however tempting the price tag might appear to be.

## 5 Paying on finance

Financing your purchase is often easier than paying one lump sum, but be careful not to spend more than you mean to.

Think about your monthly income and outgoings. How much is left to pay for the caravan? Don't forget to budget for annual servicing, insurance and storage if needed.

Dealers will offer finance packages, but compare the interest rates with a personal loan. A few minutes online will give you a clear idea of how much you'd have to pay each month if borrowing from a bank rather than arranging finance through a dealer.

Carefully consider the size of the deposit and the whole cost of the loan, not just the monthly payments.

## 6 Your rights

If your tourer develops a fault, where do you stand? You'll be in a much better position if you buy from a dealership.

First, the chances are that it will have a warranty. Second, your legal rights are stronger. Under the Consumer Rights Act 2015, any goods (in this case, your caravan) should be of satisfactory quality, fit for purpose, and as described.

The term 'satisfactory quality' is the key here. What is and isn't satisfactory will vary, depending on the age and condition of the vehicle you're buying. A 10-year-old tourer can't reasonably be expected to be of the same quality as a new one.

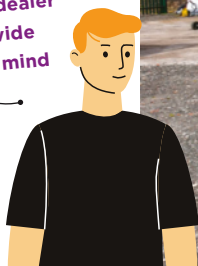
For more information about your rights as a customer, see p98.

## 7 Conclusion

Buying pre-owned can be the perfect route to an affordable, high-quality van. Just carry out your research before you make your final decision about the purchase, and then go into it with your eyes open.



Buying from a  
reputable dealer  
can provide  
peace of mind



# TAKE THE RISK OUT OF BUYING USED

Buying pre-owned can save money, but increases the danger of being ripped off or losing out. Here are John Sootheran's top tips to minimise that risk

CARAVANS ARE ONE of life's bigger buys. This means that a carefully considered used purchase can save you a lot of money, but it will also expose you to the very unwelcome activities of the unscrupulous sellers and scammers out there, especially if you are buying from a private vendor.

A few years ago, I spent a lot of time dreaming about car purchases, scanning the trade magazines for my perfect motor.

I soon became adept at spotting scams. It wasn't rocket science – they were simply too good to be true: a bargain price, always a tale of woe, and often abroad.

The vendor usually had a very English name, too: Amelia or Caroline, say, and a rather surprising number of them were doctors. All contact was by email: 'Send the money,' they'd write, 'then we'll deliver the car'. All in strangely flawed English!

More recently, I saw a caravan advert along the same lines. A beautiful Hobby, worth £20,000+, for £6000. The story?

An acrimonious divorce, an aggrieved wife wreaking revenge by flogging her ex's pride and joy. And oh, the van was in Holland.

Well, what a stroke of luck, I was visiting that town next week – could I pop by and pick it up, and pay cash on delivery?

Of course I couldn't. The van didn't exist, except in pictures, and when I dropped the woman's profile photo into Google Images, it turned out that she was actually a model from a Brazilian toothpaste advert!

## Beware the scammers

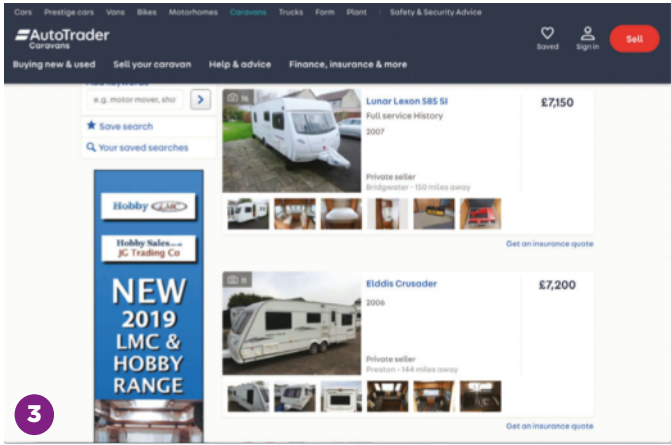
These examples show how far scammers will go to relieve you of your hard-earned cash, and how sophisticated they are. The need for vigilance is real. It's not just scams that are a danger to private buyers: vans can have undiscovered or undisclosed problems that could cost you a packet.

However, if you follow our top tips for buying used, you should be able to find an absolute peach – and at a bargain price.





**1** Typically, a used caravan can be bought from a major dealership with full facilities, from a smaller dealership (often to be found on former petrol station forecourts) or from a private individual via a small ad or a portal such as eBay or Gumtree. If you are buying from a dealership, aim to pay for all of your purchase, or even just the deposit, on a credit card. This ensures your entire outlay will be covered by Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act (between £100 and £30,000). Different legislation offers protection above this amount.



**2** Large dealerships have reputations to protect, so buying from one is seen as being a pretty safe bet. Check out our annual Owner Satisfaction Awards to find dealers that have impressed other readers.

**3** Private purchases are covered by the principle of *caveat emptor* (buyer beware): the responsibility for checking any purchase's suitability or condition lies with the buyer. You'll have little comeback if something proves to be wrong.

**4** Private sellers often throw in lots of extras with the sale, but with dealerships, you'll have

to negotiate fairly hard. They can make money on your part-exchange, finance, the new caravan and the extras that they sell you, so negotiate on all of these to get the very best deal.

**5** Don't forget to double check that your tow car can safely and legally pull the caravan you are thinking about buying. Next, consider the layout very carefully. Is it right for you and your family? Sounds obvious, but getting basic decisions such as these wrong can prove costly.

**6** Meet the vendor at their home to view the van, not in a random car park or service station.

Negotiate with dealers to get the best bargain



**7** Research similar vans for sale, to get a rough idea of the price you should pay. Print out a screen grab to check the caravan you're viewing is the same year as that stated in the advert.

**8** Online forums can offer a great deal of very useful advice and in-depth detail about problems to look out for with specific ranges and models.

**9** View the caravan in daylight and when it's not raining. Give the exterior a good once-over, looking for evidence of problems such as dents and damage, cracks, scratches, filler and mismatched paintwork.





**10** If you're operating on a tight budget and don't want to pay for an independent expert to check out your prospective purchase, do make sure that you give the van a thorough inspection yourself.

This should include all of the electrics (when plugged into the mains and on leisure battery). Ask the vendor to chill the fridge before you arrive. Likewise, request that the space and water heating system is on when you arrive (especially with Alde heating, which takes longer to warm up). You'll soon know if everything's working as it should.

Check tyre wear, all of the exterior lights, hitchhead mechanisms, the handbrake and the spare wheel.

Then step inside the van to scrutinise taps, showers, toilet flush mechanisms, and the hob, oven and grill.

**11** The paperwork is also important – be sure to inspect the most recent service documents to check for any advisories.

**12** Inspect all of the windows closely. Are any of them scratched or misted up?

**13** Remember, any van that's been used for one two-week holiday once a year, rather than five UK tours and a trip to Spain, will have experienced much less in the way of wear and tear, but might have suffered from spending long periods immobile in storage.

**14** Have a CRiS check done on the tourer. This compares the vehicle's VIN number with a database listing stolen, damaged and written-off vehicles.

The 17-digit CRiS number is displayed on at least seven of the windows, and stamped onto the chassis. Thieves often try to remove the number by grinding or scratching it off. Walk away from any caravan with CRiS damage. Find out more at [cris.co.uk/cris-check](https://cris.co.uk/cris-check).

**15** Check all of the van's ownership and service



*It's worth paying for an independent expert to check out your prospective purchase – they will be able to spot potential issues that you might not notice*



documentation. Has it been regularly and properly serviced? Was the servicing carried out by a reputable technician? Ask who has done the servicing when you call the seller, then check them out online.

**16** Examine the age of the caravan's tyres. You'll find this information on the tyre wall. It comprises two numbers – say, 17 18 – which denotes that the tyre was made in week 17 of 2018.

In this case, the caravan's tyres – however much tread depth remains – should be replaced before April 2023, when they will reach five years of age.

**17** Check the caravan's condition matches its declared age and usage.

**18** Check the floor for delamination. You should be able to feel if the outer veneer of the plywood floor has bubbled up. Take a look inside cupboards and under beds and sofas, too.

**19** Damp is the hidden caravan killer. Does the van smell damp when you enter? Heavily fragranced interiors might be hiding something. Look for any signs in corners, including those under the beds and in lockers. In addition, check back through the paperwork for any note of damp that's previously been picked up by a professional tester.







**20**

Investigate the van's electrical connector. Is it going to be compatible with your tow car?

Check for any visible damage to the connector



**21** Check out the roof of the caravan for signs of damage; likewise, make sure you also look underneath it for any potential problems with the chassis and floor.

**22** Do all of the van's accessories work? This includes such things as the motor mover, air-con, auto-levelling, alarm, tracker and satellite dish.

CUT OUT AND KEEP GUIDE!



**23** How old is the van's leisure battery and is it a reputable brand? Is the gas bottle included?

**24** Are any remote controls supplied and if so, are they working?

**25** Are all of the keys available, and do they work properly?

**26** Remember, if you intend to bring your new purchase home, you'll need a numberplate for it!

**27** Use any problems you find, and the associated repair costs, to negotiate on price. Take a pen and paper to make notes, and factor in the time and travel repairs will incur, as well as lost touring time.

**28** Always remember the golden rule: if a deal looks too good to be true, it probably is! And never get involved in sales with vans which are 'abroad at the moment' - it's a scam.



Don't forget to take a numberplate with you when you're planning to buy a caravan, to allow you to drive it home



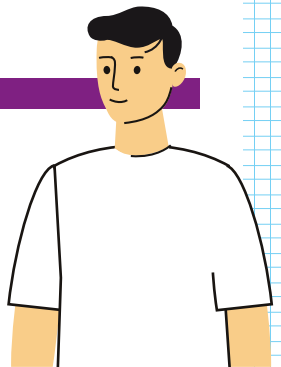
**SUMMARY**

Buying a used caravan is a really great way to save money, and you'll find there are some brilliant bargains, if you take your time and you're prepared to walk away.

Apply our advice and your purchase should be as safe as any can be. The price of buying from a private vendor should reflect the fact that you have little or no

comeback - we'd say a minimum 15-20% less than a large dealership price.

But remember, buying your next van from a passionate caravanner, who feels their beloved van is worth more than a dealership will offer them, can often be a great way to get your hands on an absolutely top-class bargain tourer!





# BUYING ADVICE

Want to know what to look for when viewing a used caravan?  
John Sootheran has a handy checklist to help you consider key points

THERE ARE SOME crucial choices and checks to make when picking your next caravan, which will help you come to the right decision – first time!

Take detailed notes while you are assessing the van and use any repairs that are required to negotiate the price down.

Don't be seduced by any stylish touches if the practicalities of the caravan aren't right for you. You'll quickly come to regret it.

Ask the owner about the caravan's use. Does it sound feasible and realistic, or is it a sales pitch? Be slightly more wary if it sounds like the latter.

Before travelling to view, and even if you're not intending to, ask the vendor if you can have the caravan checked over by an NCC AWS-approved technician (although this is advisable).

If they have anything to hide, they probably won't get back to you to arrange your viewing.

## WINDOWS

### Check for condensation

forming on the interior of double-glazed windows.

Also, see if there's any crazing or scratching caused by over-enthusiastic cleaning.



## KEYS

### Are all the keys present?

There's a hassle factor in getting new ones, even if the cost is negligible.

## HITCH HEAD

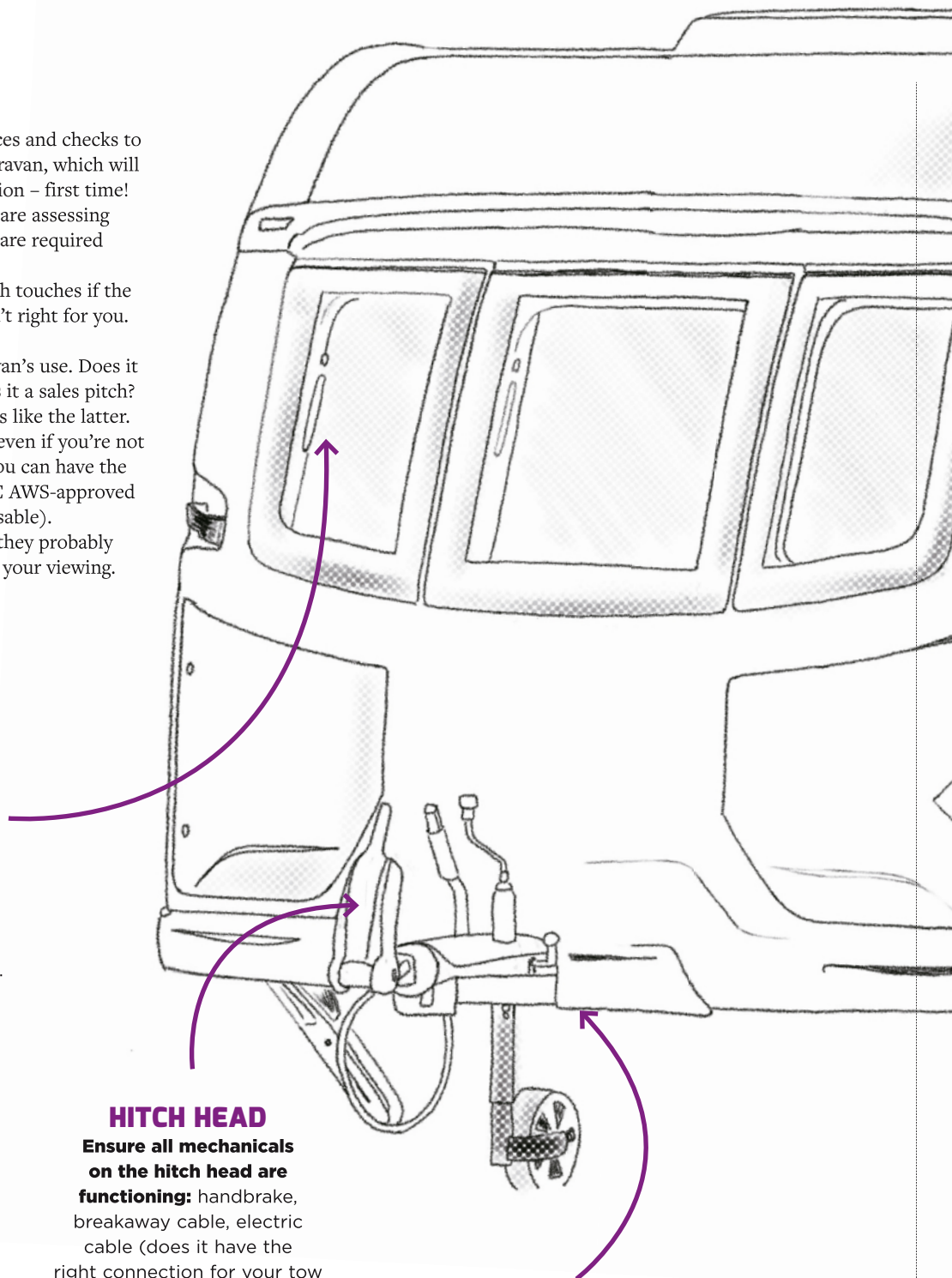
### Ensure all mechanicals on the hitch head are functioning:

handbrake, breakaway cable, electric cable (does it have the right connection for your tow car?), jockey wheel, stabiliser and towball-release handle.

Also note if there are any annual AWS service stickers here. These are dated, and denote top-quality servicing.

## FRONT PANEL

Inspect for damage, because this gets the bulk of the dirt and debris that is thrown up by the tow car.







# PART 1 EXTERIOR TIPS

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GUIDE!



## WEIGHT PLATE

**Check the weight plate** (next to the door) to see if it's compatible with your tow car. The MTPLM and MiRO are indicated. Novices should seek a caravan with an MTPLM that's no more than 85% of their tow car's kerbweight.

## CHASSIS

**Have a look under the caravan** at the chassis and axles, to see if there's any damage or corrosion, or anything loose. Galvanised Al-Ko chassis shouldn't corrode. While you're there, check for corner-steady damage, plus auto-leveller or motor mover condition, if they're fitted.



## MAJOR REPAIRS

**Ask if the tourer has had any major repairs or accidents.** There might be evidence of this on the receipts.

## TYRES

**Ask the owner** when the tyres were changed, then check the age on the side of the tyre wall. This is two two-digit numbers in a small lozenge, for example: 15 17. This example would indicate that the tyre was made in the 15th week of 2017. Allowing for some shelf-time at the tyre fitter's, you should be able to work out how honest the vendor is being, and, of course, the age of the tyre. Bear in mind that caravan tyres should be changed after five years, irrespective of wear.





## BATTERY

**Ask about the leisure battery age,** and how it has been charged and cared for.

Someone who uses an intelligent trickle charger clearly cares about their battery. A poorly maintained battery could cost you £100 to replace.

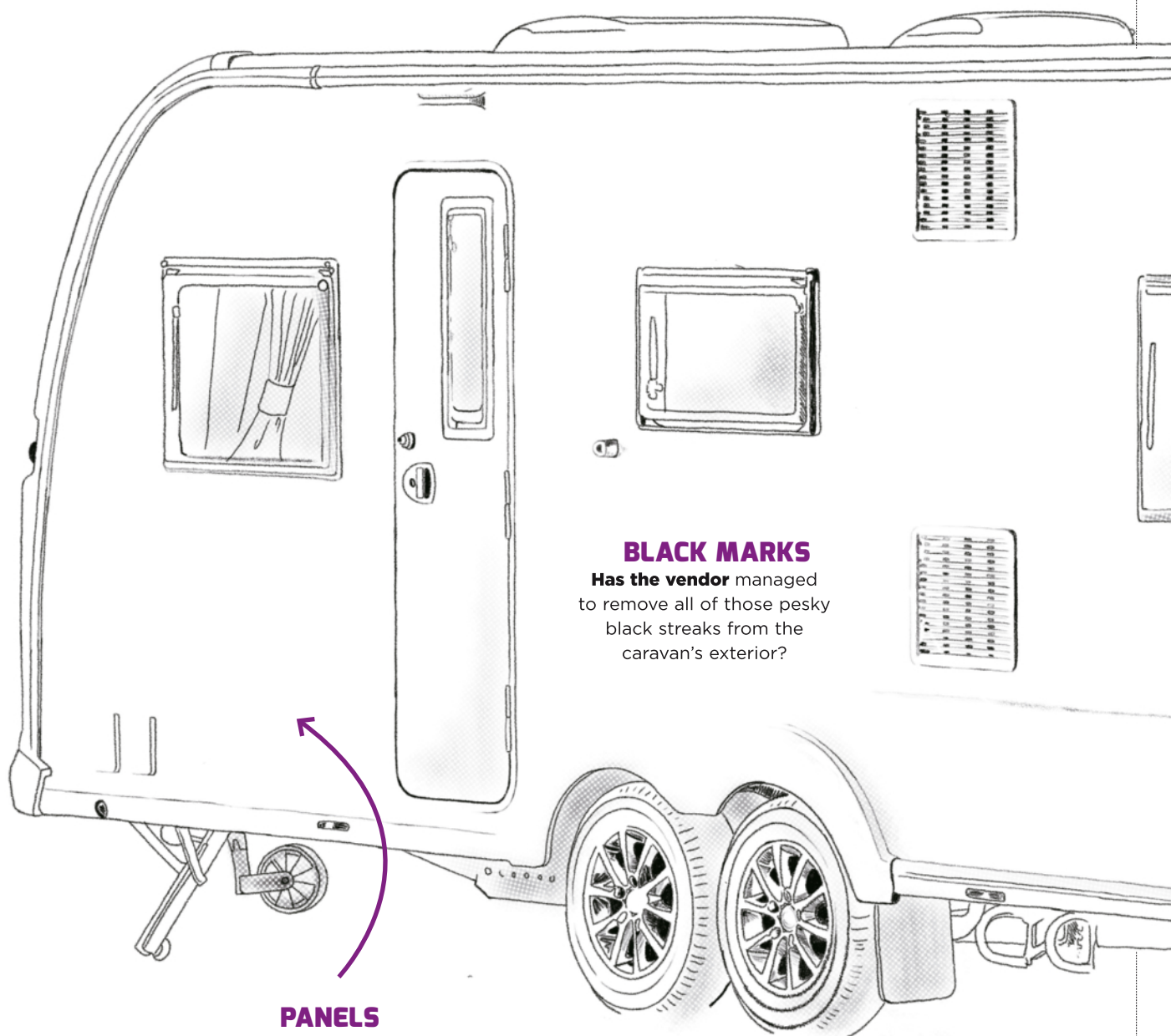
Ask the owner to charge it before you arrive. The battery meter should read 12.7-12.85V when fully charged, and is completely depleted at 11.8V. If the vendor is a serviced-site user and you're going off-grid, you might need to upgrade the leisure battery to 100 or 110Ah.



## DOCUMENTS

**Ask to see all paperwork** including invoices, service reports and receipts, tyres, batteries and so on. All self-respecting caravanners hoard this stuff for when the time comes to sell. Are there any advisories on the latest service report?

**'Take detailed notes while you are assessing the caravan and use any repairs that are required to negotiate the price down'**



## BLACK MARKS

**Has the vendor** managed to remove all of those pesky black streaks from the caravan's exterior?

## PANELS

**Scour GRP panels** for hairline cracks. They are quite common, especially on older caravans.



## UNDER THE POLISH

**On older caravans, look for 'chalking' of the GRP panels.**

This is where the surface layer of the glass fibre has eroded and can be chalky or dusty. A good polish can help disguise this and protect the surface, if the van is just too big a bargain to miss.



## SAFE STORAGE

**Where and how was the caravan stored?**

Premium CaSSOA site storage suggests it's been cared for and invested in. Was it under cover? Is a top-quality cover, like those from ProTec or Specialised, included in the sale?

## SECURITY

**Does the alarm work?**

If the caravan has a tracking device, contact the provider and check that it works. You will need to re-register and perhaps reactivate the system. A year's monitoring can cost £50-£200.

## ROOF

**Check the roof for damage:**

hailstones and aluminium-skinned roofs are particularly bad bed-fellows and can result in potentially expensive damage.

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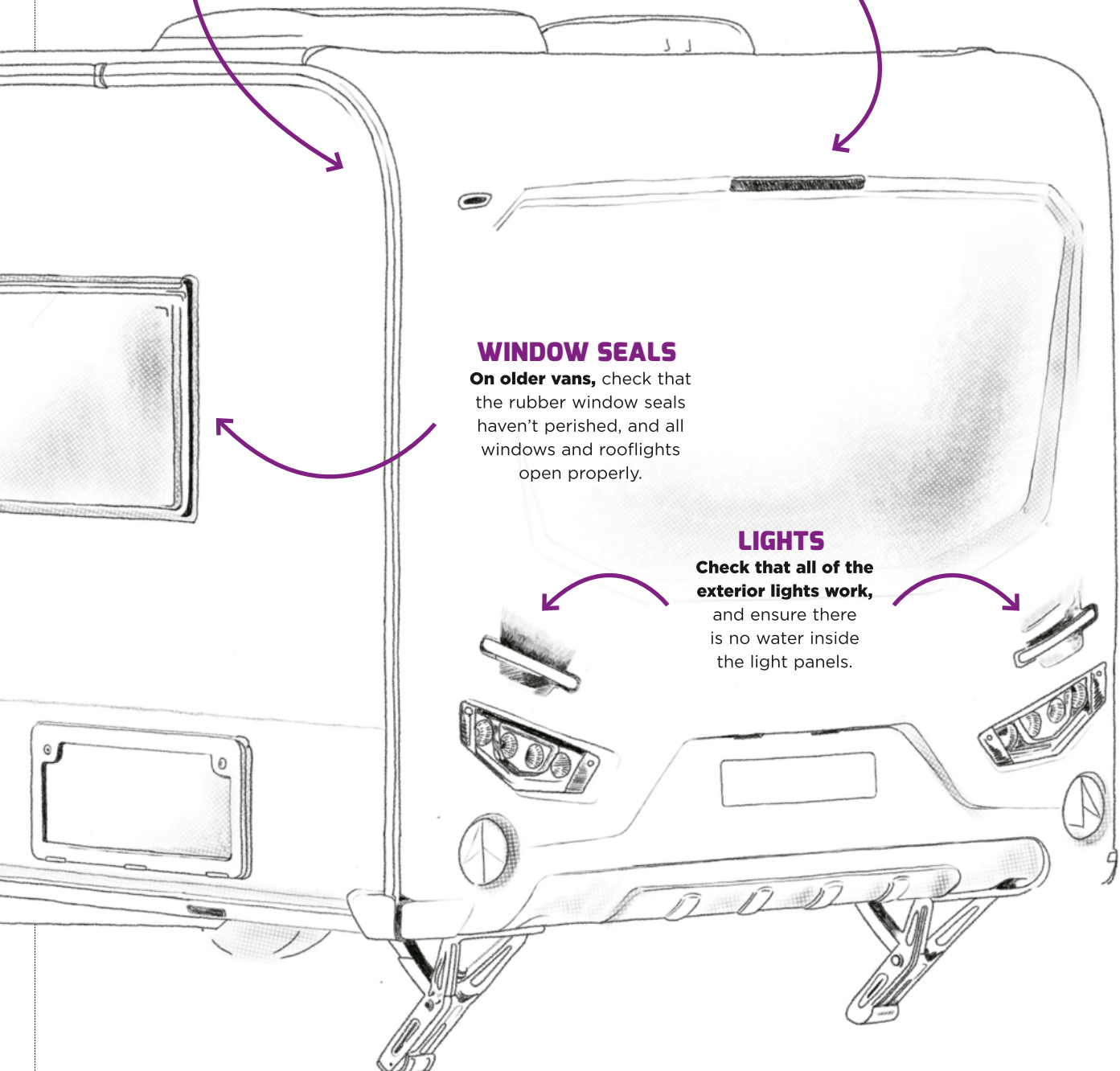


## WINDOW SEALS

**On older vans,** check that the rubber window seals haven't perished, and all windows and rooflights open properly.

## LIGHTS

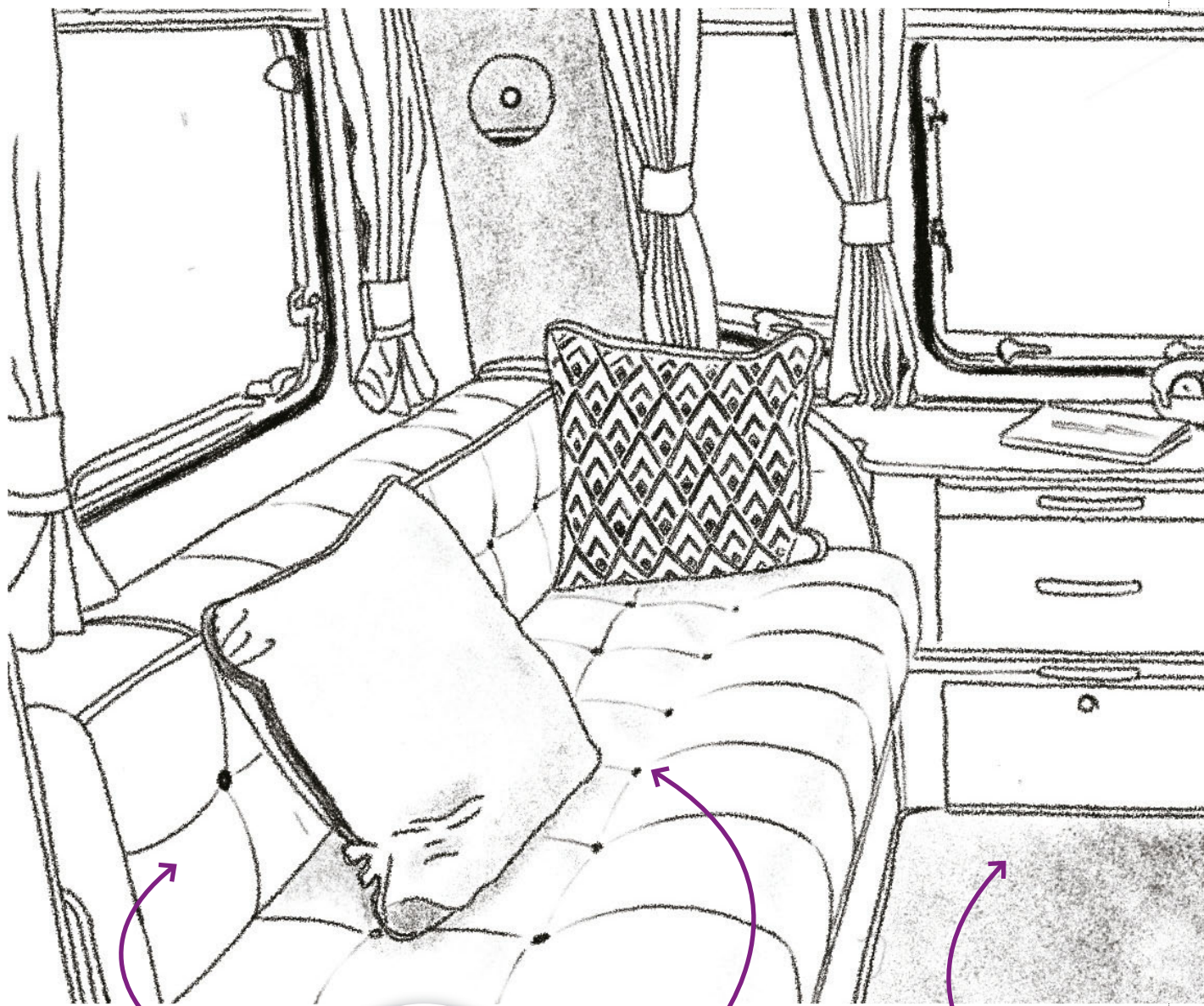
**Check that all of the exterior lights work,** and ensure there is no water inside the light panels.





# BUYING ADVICE

If you plan to purchase a caravan from a private vendor, John Sootheran's handy checklist can help you consider key interior points before you buy



## FIRM SUPPORT

**Ensure foam cushions** in the upholstery haven't sagged or slumped from repeated use. Upholstery should retain its bounce and springiness, returning quickly to its original shape.



## BED TIME

**If the sofas will become beds** for kids or guests, are they long enough? Take a tape measure and check.

## CUSHION COVER

**Caravan upholstery is generally very durable** but bad batches can creep through. Look for wear on edges. I once saw a luxury brand with stylish PVC piping on its sofas. The van was newish but well used, and the PVC had started to crack and peel; it looked a mess. Replacement upholstery could run into thousands of pounds.

## ON THE CARPET

**Investigate the condition of the carpets**

Anyone can spend a day tarting up their van for sale, but dirty and damaged carpets are harder to hide, and are a sign that the caravan hasn't perhaps been cared for as well as the vendor is suggesting.





THERE ARE CRUCIAL choices and checks to make when you pick your next caravan.

Take notes while you assess the van and use any repairs that are required to haggle on price.

Before viewing, and even if you're not intending to, ask the vendor if you can have the van checked by an AWS-approved technician. If it turns out that they have anything to hide, they probably won't get back to you to arrange your viewing.

## PART 2 INTERIOR TIPS

CUT OUT  
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GUIDE!



**'The upholstery should retain its bounce and springiness, returning to its original shape'**

### TABLE TOP

**Set up the freestanding dining table**

Can the family sit around it comfortably? Does the console top extend properly?



### TRUST YOUR NOSE

**How does the caravan smell** when you first step inside?

If it smells damp or fusty, walk away or take extra time with your damp checks. Be wary of over-fragranced caravans, or ones with the door and windows all open when you arrive. If they're baking bread, just run!



### CURTAIN UP

**Do all of the blinds pull out and retract properly?**

### IN GOOD TRIM

**It might be superficial, but check that all decorative trims are properly fixed.**

Modern caravans have lots of colour-coordinated panels and styling touches to enhance their elegance, but these can come loose.

### DINNER FOR TWO

**Can you all get around the dining table** when it's set up in the lounge? Can two of you dine/snack easily at the extended console table? Is the dinette big enough for you all? A slightly-too-small dinette is a big waste of essential space.





### SUITS YOU

**It might be cool and chic** but does the layout suit your caravanning lifestyle? Will you be making up the bed each evening? And is it easy to do? Check the bed base slides out easily. Do the sofa bases need to be turned, and can you do it?



### ON THE RADIO

**Check that the radio/MP3** player is functioning as it should.

### MIND THE GAP

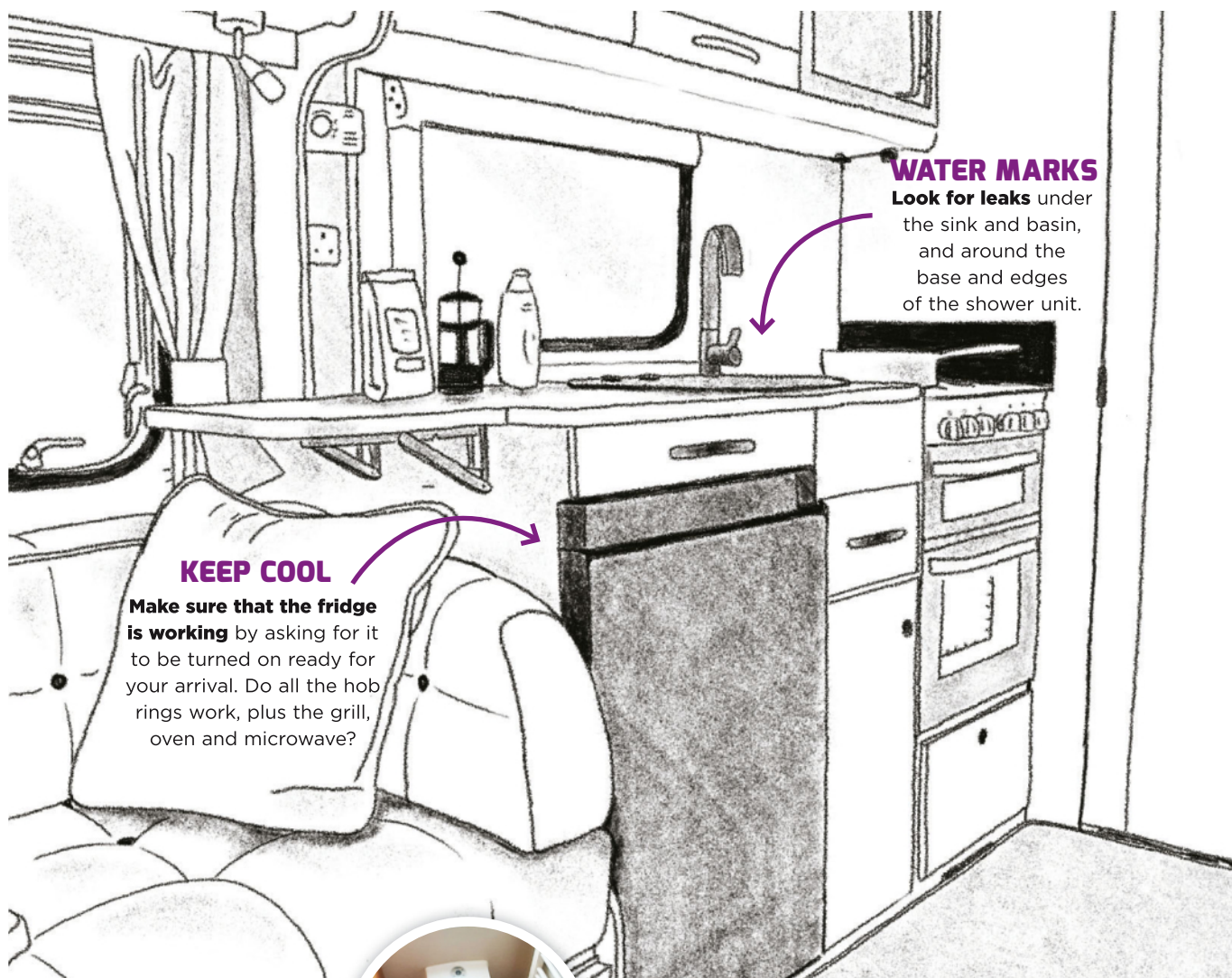
#### Panel fit is crucial

as it indicates the rigidity and structural integrity of the van. Look for (uneven) gaps between cupboards and wall panels. A millimetre or so is generally acceptable, but if it's bigger than that, it might be wise to walk away, or at least have the van checked over professionally.



### CHARGING UP

**Are there sufficient plug points** and USB charging points in the van?



### WATER MARKS

**Look for leaks** under the sink and basin, and around the base and edges of the shower unit.

### KEEP COOL

**Make sure that the fridge is working** by asking for it to be turned on ready for your arrival. Do all the hob rings work, plus the grill, oven and microwave?



### RENEW THE LOO

**You might want to consider a toilet renewal kit** from Thetford. These include a new seat and lid, plus a fresh cassette. They cost around £100 to £150.

### HEAT AND LIGHT

**Check the heating and facility control panels work** by asking the vendor to turn on the water heater before you arrive, and the Alde heating, if it is fitted. Blown-air heating can be checked easily for heat and circulation.

### IN THE CORNER

#### Check for damp

in all of the key places around windows and in corners, including under beds/sofas and inside the overhead lockers.

### PLAN AHEAD

#### Future-proof your purchase

by considering how fast your kids are likely to grow in the next two or three years. Will the bunks/beds be big enough if your early-teen becomes a six-footer in 18 months? Should you go for a twin-lounge layout now? You might as well be ignored from the far end of the van!





### LIGHTEN UP

Check that all of the interior lights are in good working order.

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### ON THE MATTRESS

**What condition is the mattress in?** Has it had a protective cover on?

Replacement caravan mattresses typically cost anywhere from £150 to £400. You might want to factor that in.



### BACK TO BASICS

**Do the hydraulic dampers** on the bed bases work properly? Can you lift them up easily?



# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

You can buy with more confidence when you're aware of your rights as a consumer. Here's what you need to know before any purchase

WHEN YOU'RE MAKING a major purchase, such as buying a caravan, it's important to know your rights if something goes wrong.

## The Consumer Rights Act 2015

The Consumer Rights Act (CRA) is designed to make consumer law easier to understand, so customers can buy and businesses can sell in confidence, knowing where they stand.

First coming into force in 2015, the Act consolidated 12 pieces of consumer-related law (including the Sale of Goods Act and Supply of Goods and Services Act), aiming to reduce that to three sections – Consumer Protection Regulations, Consumer Contracts Regulations and the CRA.

The latter covers the supply of goods, including the sale of caravans, motorhomes, accessories and related services.

It also follows the processes for when those goods fail to perform to the contract, including the following:

- There is a short-term right to reject a product, but this has to be exercised within a period of 30 days, for goods that fail to conform (that is, goods that are seriously defective).
- There are also first-tier remedies. These require a trader/dealer to repair or replace goods deemed to be faulty. If any non-conformity is not resolved after one repair, or one replacement, or if a new non-conformity arises, there are second-tier remedies.
- Second-tier remedies can be a price reduction, for example, if you decide to keep the product despite its faults. Or you can reject and claim a refund, partial or full. In that case, the dealer might be able to make a reduction for use.

The 30-day period runs from whichever is the later of the transfer of ownership, or possession, or delivery.

Consumers have a right to remedies both within the initial 30 days and after it.

**'There is a short-term right to reject a product, but this has to be exercised within 30 days, for goods that fail to conform (that is, goods that are seriously defective)'**

If goods do not conform to contract within the first six months, consumers are entitled to request their repair and/or replacement, because any fault will be presumed to have been in existence at delivery.

You cannot insist on a replacement where it would be disproportionate in terms of the costs of providing any repair.

## Advice from the NCC

We spoke to Jo Chubb from the NCC; here's her advice.

■ "Leisure vehicles are very emotional purchases. You have to try to take the emotion out of the buying process.

"I always liken purchase of a leisure vehicle to getting married with a pre-nup. You're buying into a lifestyle, and it's fantastic. However, you have to put your sensible head on, in case things go wrong further down the line.

■ "Typically, we find that many customers discover things like the CRA after something has gone wrong. Good advice is to have general knowledge of your rights as a consumer before you begin to look for that dream vehicle.

"A good place to start is to visit the websites of bodies such as the Consumers' Association and Citizens Advice, for useful, friendly, simple guides.

"The 'buyer's remorse' scenario inevitably comes into play from someone buying without thinking it all through.

"If there are any niggles you're not sure about, ask the dealer. Don't feel you have to sign on the dotted line on the day. The dealer will be grateful for this down the line.

"Check with your family, sort your finances and so on, do whatever it takes to eradicate that niggle. Remember, this is a very big investment.

"The Approved Dealer Scheme is relatively new. However, we have strict criteria. For example, anything that a dealer sells (caravan or motorhome) has to be NCC Approved and/or have an equivalent European rating."

## Key points

- If anything goes wrong, liability lies with the dealer, rather than the manufacturer.
- There is no such thing as a non-returnable deposit. Under the Consumer Contracts Regulations, if a sale fails to go through, the dealer can keep the deposit, but only as much as it can evidence as an actual cost to it.
- Shows are great places to buy a caravan. They are ideal for taking advantage of good special offers and so on. However, it is important to make sure that you do your homework beforehand. Do not impulse buy at a show!
- Don't forget to refer to the *Practical Caravan* Owner Satisfaction Awards – the only ones of their type in the market. These annual awards are based on reader feedback and will direct you towards the best dealerships.
- The NCC can only deal with complaints involving an NCC member (however, it can point you in the right direction for further help if you need it).
- In addition, it only deals with complaints in writing. The reason for this is obvious – there needs to be a written record of who said what and when they said it.
- Worst case scenario? Visit your solicitor.



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