

## Buying a Used Caravan

Buying a second-hand caravan can save you money, but it requires extra diligence to avoid hidden problems. Here's what you need to know to make an informed purchase:

### Supplementary Documents required

- VSB1 Revision 6 Road Vehicle Standards (Available on the Caravan Help website).

### 1. The Paperwork

- ☐ VIN Matches chassis and registration Papers

### 2. Define Your Needs and Lifestyle

- ☐ **Travel Goals:** Will you use the caravan for short weekend trips, long vacations, or full-time living?
- ☐ **Family Size:** Ensure the caravan has enough sleeping spaces and seating for everyone.
- ☐ **Destinations:** Consider whether you'll travel on highways, explore off-road locations, or stay in caravan parks.
- ☐ **Frequency of Use:** Determine how often you'll use the caravan to balance cost with features.

### 3. Exterior

#### Towing and stabilising

- ☐ Check the tow hitch operates smoothly and locks securely
- ☐ Check the hitch is compatible with your vehicle
- ☐ Check for damage and rust
- ☐ Check if the jockey wheel raises and lowers with ease
- ☐ Test jockey wheel bearings
- ☐ Check the stabilisers and ensure they're easy to deploy

#### Roof

- ☐ Check for leaks or poor seals
- ☐ Check for fading paint, rust and scratches
- ☐ Check tv aerial
- ☐ Check ladder to roof
- ☐ Check air conditioner unit
- ☐ Check solar panels
- ☐ Ensure there are no signs of sagging, damage, or potential leaks.

#### Walls

- ☐ Check for stone damage, rust and bends
- ☐ Check straightness of wall and chassis
- ☐ Check seals around windows. Doors and vents
- ☐ Look for dents, scratches, rust, or cracks.
- ☐ Check the panels for discolouration to spot previous repairs
- ☐ Look for any holes in the panels (no matter how small)
- ☐ Check for out of place stickers or graphics as this can be a sign of hidden damage
- ☐ Check the seals around windows, doors, and joints for wear or leaks.

**Windows and lockers**

- ☐ Check all windows for scratches, cracks and condensation
- ☐ Open windows to check they aren't blown
- ☐ Check the window seals for splits or faults
- ☐ Make sure there are no cracks in the external locker boxes
- ☐ Check the locker door locks all have barrels
- ☐ Look inside all lockers and check the hinges are all intact
- ☐ Check for any suspicious smells in lockers
- ☐ Check all the seals for locker doors are not split.

**Chassis and A frame**

- ☐ Signs of rust, cracks and scrapes
- ☐ Unusual sounds when you rock the caravan
- ☐ Look along side to make sure its straight
- ☐ Any sign of rust on chassis
- ☐ Check undercarriage for rust (most will be galvanised steel)
- ☐ Look for any splits in the a-frame cover
- ☐ Check for rust, bends, or cracks in the chassis. (this applies the brakes when you brake in your car)
- ☐ Check that there is a breakaway cable and that it's not damaged
- ☐ Check the hitch head mechanism operates as it should
- ☐ Check the jockey wheel bar is not bent and can be wound up and down
- ☐ Make sure the tyre on the jockey wheel is in good condition

**Awnings and Canvas**

- ☐ Seals in good condition
- ☐ Awning opens/closes easily
- ☐ No sign of mould on any canvas
- ☐ Visual signs of damage/repairs

**Wheels and tyres**

- ☐ Make sure all the tyres are in date
- ☐ Check tyres for cracks or bulges
- ☐ Check the tread (1.6mm minimum)
- ☐ All the wheels should be the same (it can cause serious damage whilst towing)
- ☐ Tyres in good condition
- ☐ Tread
- ☐ Wear indicators
- ☐ Even wear
- ☐ Previous repairs or punctures

**Brakes and Bearings**

- ☐ Check brake pads/shoes
  - ☐ Check hand brake if installed
  - ☐ Unusual sounds when caravan rolls slowly
  - ☐ Type of brake system
- Check bearing movement

**Suspension**

- ☐ Inspect shock absorbers for wear
- ☐ Check compression
- ☐ Unusual sounds when being used
- ☐ Check for oil or other liquids around the shock absorber
- ☐ Check for rust

**lights and electrics**

- ☐ Check the brake lights, road lights and side lights all work
- ☐ Make sure the indicators and reverse lights work
- ☐ Check the light clusters for cracks, water or condensation
- ☐ Check the 12-pin plug is present and not bent
- ☐ Check the 12-pin plug is not corroded
- ☐ Check the cables and sockets are not exposing any wires
- ☐ Inside the battery box ensure the battery terminals are not corroded
- ☐ Check external power points and aerial works

**Water Tanks**

- ☐ Water Tanks – how many
- ☐ Size of water tanks
- ☐ Inspect wear on bottom of water tank

**Gas Bottles and Connections**

- ☐ Does the gas work
- ☐ Check seals and connectors
- ☐ Check date stamp on gas bottle for age
- ☐ Gas bottles correctly fitted and stamped

**Pop Tops**

- ☐ Easily raise and lower the roof
- ☐ Check for leaks and holes
- ☐ Check for wear on canvas and seals
- ☐ Struts for pop top in good condition

**4. Interior****Frame**

- ☐ Knock the walls to check for hollow spots and cracks
- ☐ Look at overall shape of interior frame for bends

**Water Ingress**

- ☐ Any presence of a musty smell
- ☐ Check for water stains around walls and windows
- ☐ Check to see if any leaks have been plugged
- ☐ Check for soft walls or ceilings, and a musty smell.
- ☐ Use a damp meter to detect hidden moisture.

**Insects**

- ☐ Check for signs of insects and rodent presence around kitchen and sleeping areas

**Seals**

- ☐ Inspect and feel the seals in all walls and windows
- ☐ Check how the furniture is connected to the walls

**Appliances**

- ☐ Check gas connections
- ☐ Test hotplate and oven
- ☐ Check water connections
- ☐ Test taps and water flow
- ☐ Check seals
- ☐ Check fridge
- ☐ Test electrical sockets
- ☐ Test Air Conditioner
- ☐ Inspect electrical tags for compliance and age

**Bathroom**

- ☐ Check if shower, toilets, taps and sink work
- ☐ Check plumbing for leaks
- ☐ Check to see if hot water works

**Lights and Electrical Components**

- ☐ Test lights
- ☐ Check solar panels and all parts of the system to see if they work
- ☐ Test TV Works
- ☐ Test radio works
- ☐ Check resource monitor is accurate, does it show water and power?
- ☐ Does satellite TV (VAST) receive a signal
- ☐ Do all remotes work correctly

**Kitchen**

- ☐ Check cupboards for Mold
- ☐ Check hinges and knobs
- ☐ Inspect fire extinguisher for use and age
- ☐ Open cupboards, drawers, and doors to check for damage or wear.
- ☐ Cupboard doors open/lock properly
- ☐ Test hinges and locks.

**Flooring**

- ☐ Walk across the floor to ensure it's firm and not spongy.
- ☐ Check floor for level

**Plumbing**

- ☐ Ensure there's no sign of leaks or blockages.
- ☐ Check taps, water pumps, and the toilet.

**Roofing**

- ☐ Roof hatches open/lock properly
- ☐ Windows open/lock properly
- ☐ Other appliances – working
- ☐ Screens/curtains in good condition

**5. Confirm the Paperwork**

- ☐ Check registration is current
- ☐ Check ownership documents
  - Ensure the seller is the legal owner and has proof of purchase.
  - Match the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) on the caravan to the documents.
- ☐ Check service history
  - Review maintenance and repair records to understand the caravan's history.
- ☐ Check warranty
  - If applicable, check whether any manufacturer or extended warranty is transferable.
- ☐ Check the Personal Property Securities Register (PPSR)

**6. Test Tow the Caravan**

- ☐ Hitch the caravan to your vehicle and take it for a short drive
  - Check stability while towing.
  - Ensure no excessive swaying or unusual noises.
  - Test the braking system while towing.

**7. Verify Legal Compliance**

- ☐ Confirm the caravan meets local road safety standards.
- ☐ Check that the weight of the caravan is within your vehicle's towing capacity.

**8. Ask About Accessories**

- ☐ Find out if the caravan comes with extras like
  - Awnings, water carriers, or leveling ramps.
  - Solar panels, batteries, or gas bottles.
- ☐ Ensure these items are in good condition and included in the price.

**9. Budget for Repairs and Upgrades**

- ☐ Be prepared to spend on minor repairs, such as resealing windows, replacing Tyres, or updating upholstery.
- ☐ Check the condition of safety essentials like smoke alarms, fire extinguishers, and gas detectors.

**10. Negotiate the Price**

- ☐ Use any issues found during the inspection as leverage to negotiate a lower price.
- ☐ Research similar caravans online to understand the market value.

**11. Buy from a Trusted Source**

- ☐ **Private Sellers:** You may get a better price, but there's less legal protection. Be cautious and conduct thorough checks.
- ☐ **Dealers:** Offer more protection and may include warranties or after-sales support. Check their reputation through reviews and ratings.

**12. Trust Your Instincts**

- ☐ If the seller avoids answering questions or refuses inspections, consider walking away.

**13. Post-Purchase Checklist**

- ☐ Insure the caravan immediately after purchase.
- ☐ Schedule a professional servicing with Caravan Help to ensure everything is in good working order.
- ☐ Familiarise yourself with towing and maintenance before your first trip.

**Disclaimer**

This material is provided for the purposes of general information and understanding and should be used as a guide only. It should not be used as a substitute for expert guidance or specific advice as offered by a qualified professional.