



Guidance on Buying a Static Caravan for use on Private Land.

This document is to provide some practical advice on the buying of a static caravan for use on private land. It is not a definitive guide.

Somewhere to put it.

It goes without saying that you need somewhere to site the static caravan, and you need to check on any planning permission you may need. There are also the practical matters of how to get the caravan onto the land and connecting to services for water, sewage and electricity.

Choosing the right van

The choice of caravan will be determined by various factors:

- How many people will be using it.
- The purpose of use: long term residential, seasonal use, temporary use, etc
- Budget

Most static caravans are 35' x 12', though they can go up to 40'x13' or down to 28'x10'. Obviously the larger the caravan the more space but at a higher cost.

The majority will have either 2 or 3 bedrooms, with a pull-out bed in the lounge area.

The quality of static caravans varies, just like cars, eg Fords – BMW's – Rolls Royces. Better caravans have free standing furniture.

Budget

You can pay anything from a few thousand pounds up to £20,000 or more for a used static caravan for use on your own land. Remember to factor in transport costs. These are large units and need a specialist transport company.

The age of the caravan will have a significant effect on the price. There is no registration of static caravans as for vehicles, and you will mostly be relying on the word of the dealer. As in all industries there are unscrupulous dealers around, so take care. As a minimum ensure the age of the caravan is recorded on the sales documents. Some manufacturers allow you to check the serial number with them, if it is legible.

Winter use.

You may want some winterisation of the caravan, such as

- Double glazing, or
- Double glazing and central heating
- Additional insulation, though it can be hard to know the exact specification for a used static caravan.
- Full compliance with BS3632 for residential use caravans. Static caravans for holiday and seasonal use only have to comply with a lower standard BS EN1647.

It is possible to live in a caravan in the winter without double glazing, though you will use more heat and have an increased risk of condensation.

Condition

Carry out a careful visual check of the caravan, both inside and out.

Upholstery and carpets tend to wear the most. Carpets can however easily be renewed.

Check for signs of damp – patches on the ceiling or stains on the walls, particularly beneath the windows. Look at the skylights to make sure they are not cracked or damaged.

Stamp on the floor inside the entrance door, in the bathrooms and wc's. Water leaks often result in soft floors, which then need repairing or renewing.

Have a look at the chassis. Some are galvanised but many are painted steel and if they have been exposed to salt water (many holiday parks are on the coast) extensive corrosion can set in. Some surface rust can be expected, but heavy corrosion can weaken the chassis.

Payment

You will generally be expected to pay a non-refundable deposit at the time of agreeing to buy the caravan. The balance is generally required before delivery. You may be able to agree to withhold part of the payment until the caravan arrives at your premises, but before offloading.

Delivery.

You need to consider very carefully how to get the caravan onto your property. These caravans are much larger than most other vehicles on the road. Lorries are typically 8' wide, caravans are mostly 12' wide. This is the width of the caravan body and doesn't include overhangs for gutters, roof overhangs, etc.

Measure the access width and remember to look up to check for overhanging tree branches, eaves of buildings, etc. Remember to consider the road(s) leading to your property as well. Is there enough width to allow the lorry to swing onto your land and around tight bends.

Sometimes the caravan can be off loaded outside your property and towed in.

If in doubt, consider a transport survey.

When the caravan is off loaded you will need to move it to the final position. Generally, this is done with a tractor or 4 wheel drive vehicle. The caravan will have a towing hitch. The caravan wheels are small and so only designed for moving short distances on firm even ground.

The transport company will do everything they can to ensure the caravan reaches your property without damage. Damage caused by their error is normally the responsibility of the transport company. Where access roads and entrances are not suitable, any damage caused will be your responsibility.

Siting

The caravan should be sited on a firm base, concrete or hardcore / shingle. Ideally a specialist firm should be used to site the caravan in accordance with the National Caravan Council Code of Practice 501. The essential elements are:

- Jack the van until the wheels are clear of the ground.
- Ensuring the caravan is level from side to side and end to end. (Doors and windows may not operate correctly if the caravan is not level).
- Providing sufficient chassis supports (typically 12).
- Chaining the caravan down.

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