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I’m really excited to finally be publishing this post on the blog! I’ve been wanting to do something like this for a while, and I can say that I am extremely pleased with it. But before we get in to this, I need to say a massive THANK YOU to all my readers who helped make this post possible, without all of the replies I got to my outreach in April there would be nothing to post – so be proud of yourselves!

I’ll tell you what it’s all about now...

I thought it would be a great idea to have a post written for the audience, by the audience. Where everyone can learn something. So I decided to think about what I would want to know if I was starting over.

I contacted all of you via the social channels and the email list asking one question; “What do you know now that you wish you knew before you bought your first caravan?”, and I had a really positive response. More than 30 people responded with their golden nuggets of know-how which I have compiled into this list of 20 things (some where along the same lines so I had to cut some out).

You’ll notice below most (if not all) of the points below I have written a note with extra information or resources you may find useful relating to that point.

So here it is, the post written by you, for you!

1: Richard Abraham

I wish I knew more about caravan insurance, specifically whilst travelling in Europe. Turns out that not all caravan insurance automatically covers you for touring overseas. I found out the hard way after a little bump in Bruges. I went to claim and of course, I wasn’t covered! An expensive mistake but not one I will make again!

Josh’s note: Great point Richard! It is so important to check with your caravan insurer. If you are not covered look elsewhere for cover, [compare caravan insurance prices](#)

2: Stephen Moakes

The importance of matching your car to the weight of your caravan. My 1st caravan was the biggest and best I could find but it was too heavy for my car! I thought it was all about engine size and torque not about weight. Seems silly now but wish I had known before buying my 1st caravan!

Josh’s note: You’re spot on Stephen. The best way to find out if your car is capable of towing a certain caravan you should head over to [Towsafe](#) where you can do an outfit match online. I also wrote a post about towing weights which [you can read here](#) and a post about and a post about selecting a tow car which [you can read here](#).

3: Albert S.

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For me it was my lack of research. If I could do it over I would definitely give myself a chance to assess what is available on the marketplace. I went for an Avondale as my first caravan, I didn't know that they were no longer building them (not that it would have changed my mind about the van). It is not a problem though as I am waiting to pick up my shiny new Coachman.

Josh's note: Very true Albert, it is always worth taking your time to take a look at what is available.

4: Rachel Bard

My husband and I rushed into the purchase of our first caravan. We found a really nice little 2001 Elddis for a fantastic price online. We contacted the seller and arranged a viewing and within 5 minutes of arriving were shaking the seller's hand and paying him a deposit. It wasn't until we got home after picking it up 2 days later that we realised we hadn't really checked it over thoroughly so we took it into our local dealer. Unfortunately they found damp under 2 of the front windows. She lasted us 2 years before we had to find her a new home. But we certainly learned our lesson, we take a damp meter with us on ever viewing now.

Josh's note: Thanks Rachel. I hear things like this all the time. Private sellers may not always know if their caravan is damp, and if they do, not everyone is forthcoming about it! Taking a damp meter with you on your viewings is a great idea (if you don't own one you can [buy one here](#)). Glad to hear you still managed to have a couple of good years with the van though! If you haven't seen them already you should take a look at a couple of posts I wrote; [how to perform a damp test](#) and [100 point checklist](#).

5: Angela Wilson

What caravan are worth / how to put a value on a caravan. I think we paid over the odds for our first caravan (to the tune of over £500) but we really had no idea what they are worth.

Josh's note: I know what you mean Angela. Putting a value on a caravan can be tough, knowing if someone is charging too much is important. I actually wrote a post about this not long ago where I share how I value caravans, you can [read it here](#).

6: Neil

The extras accessories needed for the car dual batteries, anderson plug, 12 pin trailer plug etc etc etc as this is our first van.

Josh's note: You're not alone Neil. In fact, [this post I wrote](#) about the equipment you need is one of the most viewed pages on the blog.

7: Simon Adams

I wish I'd have known more about the differences between towing a single and a twin axle, specifically how much more stable it is to tow a twin axle. I sold my first caravan which was a single axle in favour of

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a twin axle and really enjoyed towing the twin axle more than I did the single. I find that it doesn't sway about as much and having 4 wheels on the ground makes me more comfortable too.

Josh's note: It is true, having 4 wheels on the ground is more stable than the 2 wheeled single axle caravans. But don't let that put you off single axles, if your tow match is good then you shouldn't really experience much snaking.

8: Ray Hargrave

If I had known that the towbar electric sockets on caravans were changed I could have got my towbar electrics upgraded.

Josh's note: Good point Ray! Since 2009 all UK built caravans have been brought in line with EU standards and are now fitted with a 13 pin plug instead of the old twin 7 pin sockets. You don't necessarily need to have your towbar electrics changed (although it is an option). You could just [buy an adaptor](#) which converts the 13 pin on the caravan to a 7 pin for your car ([or the other way round](#)).

9: Benjamin Holdsworth

We bought a 6 berth caravan as our first so that our children and grandchildren could use it. Biggest mistake ever! We compromised what we wanted in a caravan to suit our children and grandchildren but they used it a grand total of 0 times in the 2 years we had it. We ended up trading it in against our current 4 berth which suits us just fine. Moral of the story... buy a caravan for you, not for someone else.

Josh's note: This is so much more common than you would think Benjamin. I agree, you should buy a caravan for your direct family, the people who will be going with you, not the “maybes”.

10: Geoff A.

I spent the first 4 years of my caravanning life carrying around butane gas. Someone on a site asked me why I didn't use the superior propane gas instead? I had never heard of this propane stuff, but it turns out I had been paying more and carrying around more weight than I needed to all these years.

Josh's note: Ah yes the old “propane vs butane” debate. I too am in favour of propane gas, if you want to find out why you can [read this post I wrote](#) about it.

Tea Break: We're halfway! I hope you're enjoying the post so far - if so, please share it with your friends using the socials buttons on the left. Thanks!

11: Greg Richardson

I wish I knew that I could have finance on a caravan. I would have bought something newer if I had known.

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Josh’s note: Remember finance (AKA hire purchase) is only available through a dealership with a Consumer Credit License. The difference between taking finance on a caravan as opposed to getting a personal loan is that with finance the loan is secured against the asset, which in this case is a caravan. Whereas a personal loan is usually unsecured or is secured against your property or other substantial asset. The main finance provider for the caravan industry is [Blackhorse](#).

12: Stephen Moakes

The second thing I wish I knew was about draining down your tanks and pipes in the winter as having to replace all my taps, pipes and filter when serviced in April after winter storage was a costly mistake too!

Josh’s note: You may notice this is Stephen’s second point, but they were both very good so I had to include the two of them. The process draining down your tanks is part of what is known as “winterisation”. Winterising your caravan is what you do at the end of your caravanning season before you put your caravan into storage for the winter. The very first podcast episode I recorded for the How 2 Caravan blog was focused on the winterisation process, you can [listen to it here](#).

13: David

I was really surprised at how well second hand caravans hold their value. I bought a 10 year old caravan and a year later sold it for £100 less than what I paid for it.

Josh’s note: This is very true. Especially in the last 5 years, since the credit crunch more and more people are turning to caravanning as a holiday choice. This causes more demand which in turn means prices holding steady. The other reason caravans hold their value is because of how unique they are. Tens of thousands of a particular model of car are made, but caravan manufacturers probably only ever produce hundreds of each model.

14: Barry L.

The first caravan we bought was a little 2 berth with a dedicated end bathroom. It was a lovely little caravan but we got fed up of making the bed. We decided to take a trip to the big caravan show in Birmingham where we were overwhelmed with the number of different layouts there were! We didn’t know that “fixed bed” caravans existed. We traded in our 2 berth and got a lovely Swift 570.

Josh’s note: There really are so many different layout options. If you want to get a look at everything in one place it is a great idea to go the Caravan show at the Birmingham NEC, it is held twice annually, in February and again in October.

15: Simon Schofield

We bought a German caravan as our first. It was nice, but it was really lacking in facilities. It didn’t have a cooker and the interior design was very bland. We thought this was just how caravans were, but then we

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noticed that all caravans built in the UK were different from the ones built in Germany. The British built caravans have everything you could possibly want, a home from home.

Josh's note: It is not just German caravans that are different, French, Slovenian and most other caravans built in Europe (besides the UK) don't have ovens etc. I have found that European caravans are insulated very well compared to the earlier British built ones. Although, recently British caravan manufacturers have realised that insulation is an important factor and most now meet Grade 3 Thermal Insulation requirements.

16: George S.

I wish I knew more about how the warranty on a new caravan works. The first caravan we bought was brand new. Both my wife and I caravanned with our families when we were younger and knew we enjoy it, so we decided a new caravan was no risk for us. After the first 18 months we had a few issues that we wanted sorted under warranty. What we didn't realise is that in order to keep our warranty we had to have the caravan serviced every year. I suppose it makes sense as it is the same with cars, but we just didn't think about it that way. We had to fork out for the bits to be sorted out.

Josh's note: Very good point George! The terms of the warranty are rarely made clear by the supplying dealer. Any new caravan that comes with a warranty for longer than a year are going to require an annual service at an approved service center in order to keep the warranty intact. It is also worth knowing that not all warranty is transferable. What I mean is that if you buy a 2 year old caravan that has a few years left of the manufacturer's warranty it may or not be transferable to you. To be sure it would be wise to contact the manufacturer direct.

17: David Somers

I suffer from a bad back, my caravan weighs around 1,400kg with everything in it. My wife and I spent 2 years manually pushing it into position on our driveway. Then we discovered caravan movers! We had one fitted and have never looked back. Best £1,000 we ever spent.

Josh's note: Caravan movers are a God send. Even if you don't have a heavy caravan, a caravan mover would make your life a whole lot easier. For those who don't know what they are; caravan movers are powered by your leisure battery and are fitted to the chassis of your caravan. They have mechanical rollers which are capable of driving your caravan forward, backward and turn 360 degrees. The main big caravan mover brands are [Truma](#) and [Powrtouch](#).

18: Basil Green

We found a fantastic deal on 2 year old caravan, it came with all the accessories and a mover fitted. It was £4,000 cheaper than all of the other caravans of the same model and age that were being advertised at the time. Naturally were keen to arrange a viewing. When we contacted the seller he told us that he had had a huge amount of interest and would hold it for us if we could send him a £500 deposit. Something told me

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to hold fire and think on it. Am I glad I did? Yes! The advert was later marked as a scam and removed from the website we first saw it on. On reflection it should have been obvious seeing as the deal was clearly too good to be true.

Josh’ note: You hit the nail on the head Basil, if it looks too good to be true it probably is. You can read more about scams related to buying a selling caravans online [here](#).

19: Linda Dowton

We joined the Caravan Club after seeing them at the Camping and Caravanning Show, it was the best decision we ever made. We get access to all the best sites and have made so many new friends. We joined our local centre and attend all the rallies.

Josh’s note: The Caravan Club is an excellent organisation, the most trusted in the whole industry. As you said, you get access to all of the high quality sites and it is a great way to meet like minded people.

20: Colin Terrydale

I wish I had learned more about how to use my caravan before our first trip in it. Naivel, we travelled 300 miles South to a lovely site in Devon. When we got on site I managed to connect my mains and water but I couldn’t get anything to work. Thankfully, a kind gentlemen on the pitch opposite had noticed me scratching my head and offered to help me out, it was very embarrassing.

Josh’s note: There really is a lot to know isn’t there. I would recommend reading through your handbook before journeying out for the first time, or have a friend who know’s what they are doing give you some pointers. Lots of caravan dealers will go through a “handover” when you pickup your caravan. The handover is like a crash course on how to use your caravan.

Summary

... And 2,600 odd words later that’s it! I hope you enjoyed it! I really enjoyed reading your replies and compiling this post for you. It is packed FULL of great information and tips, even if you are a seasoned caravanner I am sure you’ll have picked up some tips.

Over to you

What do *you* know now that you didn’t know before you bought your first caravan?

We don’t need to stop at the 20 points above, you can leave your own answers in the comments section below.

If you have any questions about any of the points, be sure to let me know in a comment below.

Thanks for reading, I’ll speak to you in the next post / podcast.