



Caravan Coach

BUYERS INSPECTION CHECKLIST

www.caravancoach.co.uk

Purchasing a used caravan can be an exciting way to explore the great outdoors without breaking the bank. However, it's crucial to perform a thorough inspection to avoid hidden issues that could end up costing you more. This comprehensive checklist will guide you through the key areas to inspect before making a decision.

Disclaimer:

The information in this guide is intended for general informational purposes only. It does not constitute professional advice. You should only perform the inspections if you have the appropriate skills and knowledge. Some checks involve safety-critical components and may pose risks if not performed correctly. The author assumes no liability for any injuries, damages, or losses resulting from following this guide. Always consult a qualified professional if you're unsure or lack experience.

EXTERIOR INSPECTION

1. Chassis and Framework

- Inspect for rust, damage, or signs of previous repairs.
- Check welds and joints for cracks or loose connections.

2. Bodywork and Panels

- Look for dents, scratches, cracks, or any entry points for water ingress.

3. Roof and Seals

- Examine the roof for cracks, leaks, or weak seals, especially around vents, skylights, and joints.

4. Solar Panel (If Fitted)

- Ensure the panel is clean, free of defects, and securely fitted.
- Test the solar panel's output to ensure it's charging the battery correctly.

5. Windows and Skylights

- Check that windows and skylights open and close properly.
- Ensure the support props function correctly.
- Check the condition of latches and handles.
- Look for discoloration, stress cracking, or moisture between double-glazed panels.

6. Doors

- Ensure doors open and close properly.
- Check seals for signs of water ingress.
- Test the operation of locks and catches.

7. Locks and Keys

- Verify all locks operate correctly with both keys.
- Check the condition of the keys—Tristar flip keys are prone to breaking.

8. Wheels and Tyres

- Inspect tyres for wear, cracks, or bulges on the sidewalls.
- Check tread depth to ensure it exceeds the legal limit (typically 1.6mm in many regions).
- Confirm the load and speed ratings on each tyre match the caravan's specifications.
- Check the tyre's manufacturing date (typically found as a 4-digit code, e.g., "2219" for the 22nd week of 2019).
- Inspect wheel rims for bends, cracks, or corrosion.
- Ensure wheel nuts and bolts are secure and show no rust or damage.

9. Awning and Driving Lights

- Test all external lights for proper operation.
- Look for signs of water ingress in light housings.

10. Accessories

- Inspect accessories like TV and Wi-Fi aerials for damage or poor fitting.

11. Security Features

- Test the alarm system and ensure it functions properly.
- Verify the condition and operation of alarm fobs.

12. Motor Mover (If Fitted)

- Ensure the isolation switch key is present.
- Check the condition and operation of the motor mover and remote control.
- Inspect mounting brackets for signs of damage.

13. Trailer Electrics

- Inspect the electrical plug and cable for damage or corrosion.
- Note the pin configuration (7-pin or 13-pin) to ensure compatibility with your vehicle.

14. Hitch

- Inspect the coupling head and lever for wear or damage.
- Check the draw shaft for straightness and smooth operation.
- Test the stabiliser mechanism, ensuring it provides adequate resistance.
- Ensure the rubber gaiter is securely fitted and lubricated.
- Verify the breakaway cable is correctly fitted, with no signs of corrosion or damage.

15. Jockey Wheel

- Examine the jockey wheel clamp for wear, damage, or distortion.
- Ensure the jockey wheel is perpendicular to the A-frame—misalignment may indicate damage.
- Test that the jockey wheel extends and retracts smoothly.
- Inspect the wheel for cracks, flat spots, or excessive wear.

16. Braking System

- Inspect brake rods and cables for corrosion or damage.
- Test the handbrake for smooth operation and sufficient holding force.

17. Awning Rail

- Check for signs of delamination or damage and ensure the awning rail is properly fitted and secure.

18. Corner Steadies

- Test all corner steadies for damage and smooth operation.
- Inspecting Hitch Components

INTERIOR INSPECTION

1. Damp and Water Damage

- Use a damp meter to check for high moisture levels in walls, ceilings, and floors.
- Look for discolouration, a musty smell, or signs of mould.
- Check the underside of the caravan for rust or damage caused by leaks.

2. Flooring and Carpets

- Inspect for soft spots that may indicate rot or structural damage.
- Check for stains or excessive wear on carpets.

3. Walls and Ceiling

- Look for visible damage, previous repairs, and the condition of seam tape.

4. Furniture and Upholstery

- Check for stains, tears, or wear on upholstery.
- Inspect furniture for structural integrity.

5. Kitchen Surfaces

- Examine for scratches, burn marks, or any signs of damage.

6. Carbon Monoxide Alarm

- Test the alarm to ensure they function properly.
- Verify the installation date—these alarms should be replaced every 5 to 10 years, depending on the brand.
- Ensure the alarm is correctly positioned and securely fitted.

7. Windows, Blinds, and Fly Screens

- Test window blinds and fly screens for smooth operation.
- Test window stays.
- Check window clasps for damage and function.
- Look for missing or damaged parts.
- Look for signs of stress corrosion cracking (chemical attack) in window surface.

8. Drawers and Cupboard Doors

- Ensure smooth operation of all drawers and cupboard doors.
- Check locks and latches to ensure they hold securely when closed.
- Look for signs of damage or overloading.

9. Bed (If Applicable)

- Inspect the bed's condition and support mechanism (e.g., pull-out beds).

10. Shower Tray

- Check the shower tray for cracks or damage.
- Moisture Check Using a Pinless Moisture Meter

MECHANICAL AND UTILITY SYSTEMS

1. Electrical System

- Test all lights, sockets, and battery connections.
- Check for exposed wires or loose connections.

2. Solar Panel (If Fitted)

- Verify the panel is charging the battery correctly and monitor the charge level.

3. Central Control Panels

- Ensure the display is legible and responds to input.
- Check that sensors provide accurate data.

4. Plumbing System

- Test the water pump, taps, shower, and toilet for leaks or blockages.
- Ensure the pump starts on demand and shuts off when not in use.

5. Heating and Cooling Systems

- Check that heating, cooling, and ventilation systems function properly.
- For wet heating systems like ALDE, check the condition and level of the fluid.

6. Gas System

- Inspect the age and condition of the gas hose, looking for cracks or wear.
- Check the connection tightness and condition of visible gas lines.
- Ensure the regulator is set to the correct pressure (typically 30 mbar).
- Verify that the regulator is within its replacement interval (typically every 10 years).
- With the gas on, check for any gas smells in the locker—if detected, turn off the gas immediately and notify the seller.
- Test appliances like the hob, oven, and heater for proper operation.

7. Fridge and Other Appliances

- Test all appliances, including the fridge, microwave, and cooker, to ensure proper functionality.
- Inspecting the Condition of Gas Components

PAPERWORK AND LEGALITIES

1. CRiS Check and Documents

- Verify the seller's ownership and check for any outstanding finance.
- Confirm that all relevant owner documentation is present.
- Conduct a CRiS check to confirm there are no legal issues with the caravan, such as being reported as stolen.

2. Service History

- Review the service and maintenance history to check for previous repairs or issues.

3. Habitation Check Records

- Look for recent habitation checks, confirming gas, electric, and damp tests were completed.

4. Insurance and Warranty

- Check if there is any remaining insurance or transferable warranty.

5. Vehicle Identification Number (VIN)

- Confirm that the VIN on the caravan matches the documentation.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Vehicle Compatibility Check

- Use an online service to confirm your vehicle's compatibility for towing the caravan, ensuring the towing capacity and weight match.

Towing Test

- If possible, conduct a towing test to ensure smooth towing without any unusual noises, swaying, or instability.
- Check stability at different speeds and road conditions.

NEGOTIATION

Use your inspection findings to negotiate a fair price, factoring in any necessary repairs. If multiple issues are found, consider having a professional estimate the repair costs before finalising the deal.

By following this enhanced checklist, you'll be better equipped to make an informed decision when purchasing a used caravan. This thorough approach will help you avoid potential issues, ensuring your investment is a sound one. Enjoy the freedom and adventure of caravan ownership!

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