

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE:

INTRO TO RVING

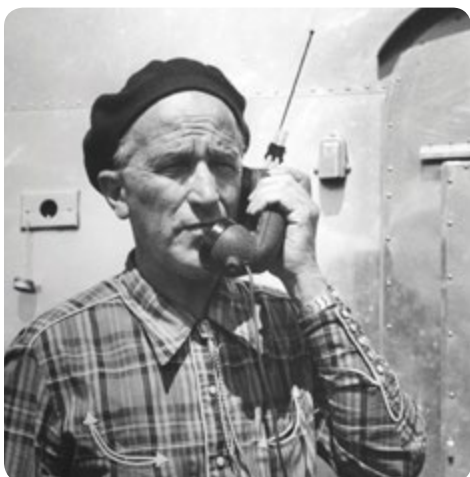


AIRSTREAM



WHY RV?

RVing turns any journey into its own kind of destination. If you've never traveled in an RV before, get ready to experience a road trip unlike any other. With the freedom to stop and explore whenever the mood strikes, the freedom to pack up and go, the freedom to change your mind, you'll discover new places and probably even something about yourself. And if you have some experience with RVing, you already know what's so magical about it. We're here to help you learn how you can make it a part of your life.



A LITTLE AIRSTREAM HISTORY

Our founder, Wally Byam, built the first Airstream travel trailer in 1929, two years before he founded the company we know today. Wally believed in living a life of adventure and traveling with all the comforts of home – wherever your wanderlust might lead. His spirit of exploration lives on in the products we build and the way we build them, and his legacy has helped turn Airstream into an American icon.



WHAT'S IN THIS GUIDE?

In our Intro to RVing Guide, you'll discover how to choose and purchase an RV that fits your lifestyle, travel plans, and budget. You'll find ideas for taking your first road trip. You'll learn the basics of RV maintenance, so you can take care of your investment – and enjoy adventures on the open road for many years to come. Finally, you'll see some of our favorite parts of the RV lifestyle, so you can get inspired to start living it yourself.

Ready to get started? Let's go! —————→

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FINDING THE RIGHT RV



Types of RVs

TOWABLE RVs

As their name implies, towable RVs must be hitched to a tow vehicle. The type of tow vehicle you'll need depends on the size of the travel trailer. One big advantage of towable RVs is that you can unhitch your tow vehicle for a quick run into town or to check out the local area – you don't have to bring the entire RV along, which makes parking and maneuvering much easier.

Types of Towable RVs

TRAVEL TRAILER

Travel trailers are a popular RV choice thanks to their large variety of floor plans, models, sizes, and features. Some models have slide-outs, which increase living space when you're parked at your campsite, and many have kitchens, bathrooms, and sleeping space, depending on their size.

FIFTH WHEEL

Fifth wheel RVs are larger and taller than conventional travel trailers, with a raised front section that creates a sort of "second floor." Like travel trailers, they're towable, but you'll need a pickup truck with a special hitch – because of their design, fifth wheels can't be towed with an SUV or a van.



Types of RVs

MOTORIZED RVs

Motorized RVs don't require you to have a tow vehicle – the driver's seat is right inside the RV itself. They offer the convenience of already being inside your home away from home the moment you unbuckle your seatbelt. No hitching and unhitching is required when you arrive at your destination or when you're ready to leave.

Types of Motorized RVs

CLASS A

Class A RVs are the largest class of motorized RVs. In a Class A RV, you can expect to find a separate bedroom, a full kitchen, a living/entertainment area, central heating and air conditioning – even a washer and dryer in some cases. Their homey, spacious living quarters and high-end finishes make them popular with full-time RVers.

CLASS B

Class B RVs are the smallest motorized RV type, and they're a perfect fit for one or two people who take shorter trips. Their smaller size means the floor plans work harder: the lounge space often converts to the sleeping space, and the bathroom may be a wet bath (the shower and toilet are in the same space). But that doesn't mean they're short on features. You'll find plenty of luxury amenities and high-end finishes in a Class B RV. They're also easy to drive and park, and you'll get good fuel economy.

CLASS C

Larger than Class B but smaller than Class A, Class C RVs offer a middle ground. In Class C RVs, you'll find an over-cab area that usually serves as your sleeping quarters, freeing up the rest of the interior for living space. They offer plenty of room for longer vacations, but they're not usually big enough for full-time living.

How many people will you be traveling with?

An important consideration when choosing your RV is how many people will typically be hitting the road with you – or, more specifically, how many beds you'll need.

The choice for the most flexibility: Travel Trailers

Travel trailers can fit a crowd of nearly any size. Some have just enough space to comfortably sleep two people, while others have beds for up to 10, some of which serve other uses during the day. This much flexibility means your options are nearly endless, so you can focus on the features and amenities you're looking for.



Perfect for a couple or duo: Class B or C Motorized

Traveling as a duo? A Class B or C motorized RV might be the perfect fit for you. At Airstream, we call them touring coaches. They typically sleep two people and offer additional seating space for entertaining friends and family.



What amenities do RVs offer?

ENTERTAINMENT

Depending on your travel plans and your lifestyle, you may want an RV with all the comforts of home, one with just the basics, or something in between. Whatever you're looking for, you're sure to find an RV that fits the bill.

Entertainment features

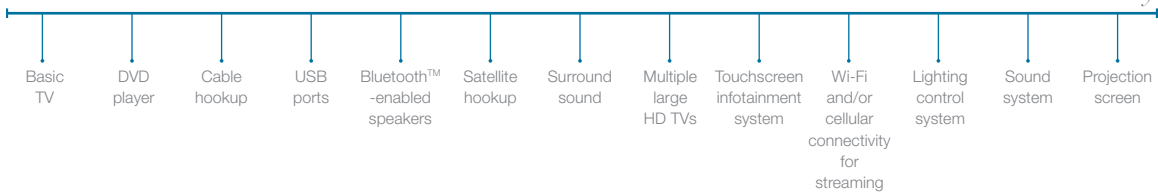
RVs offer many of the same entertainment features you enjoy using at home. Depending on the RV's price point, you'll find everything from basic TVs and DVD players to impressive entertainment systems with surround sound.

Remember that some entertainment features don't come standard but can be added on at an additional cost. If you're looking for a specific amenity, be sure to tell your dealer so they can advise you about your options.



Basic

Luxury



What amenities do RVs offer?

CONVENIENCE

Convenience features

Most RVs have some kind of cooking or meal prep area, which may include a refrigerator, sink, stovetop and/or microwave, and counter space. Kitchen options increase with size and cost, so if cooking is important to you or you're considering full-time RV living, you can find just about anything you have at home: ovens, freezers, dishwashers, large microwaves, stoves, and refrigerators, and ample storage for pots, pans, and pantry items.

Onboard restrooms are a common feature, and they're available in many different kinds of RVs. Small RVs typically have a wet bath, meaning the showerhead, toilet, and sink are all together in one waterproof room. RVs with more space may have a separate shower enclosure, and the whole restroom might offer a more residential feel. In the largest, most luxurious models, you'll find spa-like restrooms with upscale finishes.



OTHER POPULAR CONVENIENCE FEATURES INCLUDE

Infotainment centers

Navigation systems

Blindspot monitoring and
backup cameras

Charging ports or stations
for phones, tablets, and
computers

Dedicated storage space

What amenities do RVs offer?

COMFORT

Comfort features

You'll find many of the comforts of home are also available in your RV. Curtains, blackout shades, or blinds are often available to increase privacy and to help darken the interior for sleeping.

Smaller RVs might have convertible beds – for example, the dinette you use during the day converts to a sleeping area at night. This allows you to make more use of smaller space.

In more luxurious RVs, you'll find extra comfort in the bedroom, which may offer a high-end mattress and linens, and a dedicated entertainment system. The living space will also feature more residential furniture, like reclining chairs and plush sofas.

Many RVs offer climate control systems and water heaters, so you can stay comfortable no matter where you travel.



Get matched to the right RV

With so many kinds of RVs to choose from, you may want some help narrowing down your options. That's where the Airstream Match tool comes in! Airstream Match is a decision tree that helps guide you to the travel trailer or touring coach that's right for you. After you've seen your result, you can click on the product to learn more – or keep exploring other Airstreams.

Find Your Travel Trailer →

Find Your Touring Coach →



BUYING YOUR RV



Before you go to the dealership

Have an idea of what kind of RV you want

After you've gotten a sense for which type of RV you want – travel trailer, Class B touring coach, and so on – check out some different models and their floor plans. This preliminary research will give you a starting point and lend some structure to your visit, plus give your dealer a sense of what you're looking for so they can point you in the right direction.

Know your needs

Be prepared to share with your dealer a little bit about your lifestyle and travel plans. For example, how many people will you usually be traveling with? If you're looking at travel trailers, do you already have a tow vehicle, and if so, what's its capacity? Are you interested in full-time RV living, or will you use your RV mostly for weekend getaways?

It's also a good idea to make two lists: one of must-haves and one of nice-to-haves. This can help you prioritize what's most important to you. But be sure to keep an open mind. Once you've toured several RVs, you might realize certain features are more or less important than you thought.



Before you go to the dealership

Determine your price range

Whether you plan to take out a loan or pay with cash, it's important to establish your budget before you get to the dealership. When figuring out what you can afford to spend, don't forget to factor in the ongoing costs of RV ownership, like insurance, maintenance, and storage.

Some RV loans have payment terms that are more similar to mortgages than auto loans – that is, the length of time you have to repay the loan is much longer. This may translate to lower monthly payments. Talk to your lender to see what kind of loan makes the most sense for your situation.

Get pre-approved for a loan

If you're taking out a loan to pay for your RV, consider getting preapproved before you visit a dealership. This not only demonstrates to the dealer that you're serious about buying, but it also gives you an edge when it comes time to negotiate the purchase price.



What to ask your dealer

CHECKLIST

You're bound to have lots of questions during your dealer visit, but here are a few you'll definitely want to get answered. Remember: this is your time to get the information you need to make an educated decision – don't be afraid to ask questions!

What's included in this RV?

This helps you learn which features come standard and which are optional. Adding optional features can increase the price, so it's important to know which features fit in your budget – and which don't.

What does the warranty cover?

Whether you're purchasing a new RV or a used one, find out what the warranty covers – and for how long. You may also want to ask if an extended warranty option is available so you can decide whether one makes sense for you.

What to ask your dealer

What does your service plan look like?

Just like your car, your RV will eventually need service, whether it's routine or due to an issue. Make sure you understand what your dealership can help with, including how long repairs usually take.

What do people like most about this RV?

This is a good opportunity for your dealer to show you the coolest and best parts of the RV you're looking at. These are the features that help differentiate one brand or model from the next, so don't skip this question!

How does [insert feature here] work?

Don't be afraid to ask questions about even the smallest details – your dealer is there to help. They should be able to demonstrate how many of the RV's features work, too, so feel free to ask them to show you.

Airstream shopping guides

We've put together two shopping guides – one for our Travel Trailers, another for our Touring Coaches – to help you find out more about our models and prepare for a visit to your Airstream dealer. Get the guides to learn three ways each Airstream stands out and which three features to make sure you see in person.

Touring Coach Shopping Guide →



Travel Trailer Shopping Guide →



A dark-colored Mercedes-Benz Sprinter van is parked on a paved surface at a marina. In the background, several sailboats are docked at a pier. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark purple filter. The text "YOUR FIRST TRIP" is written in large, bold, white capital letters on the left side of the van.

YOUR FIRST TRIP

Planning your first trip

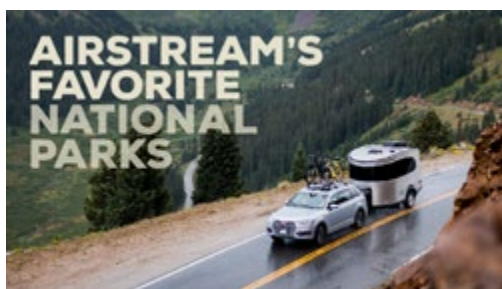
Where to stay

RV campgrounds, national parks, luxury resorts – when it comes to choosing somewhere to park your RV for the night, you'll find there are lots of options. You'll also find a huge variety of amenities offered by different parks and campgrounds, so you can choose exactly the kinds of services or perks you want – or don't!

Where you decide to stay might also be influenced by the type of RV you have. Some RV parks and campgrounds have size limits, for example, and some RV resorts allow only Class A RVs or only motorized RVs. But no matter what kind of RV you have, you'll be able to find plenty of places that fit your needs.

Want to connect your RV to water, electricity, sewage, and other conveniences? Find a park or campground with hookups. If you're looking for a more off-the-grid experience, you can find that, too – camping without hookups is known as boondocking, and there are lots of resources online for learning how to plan one of these adventures.

Many RV parks offer amenities that go beyond a dedicated campsite and hookups. You can find resorts with pools, restaurants, bike paths, and other entertainment options.



LOOKING FOR TRIP IDEAS?

Whether you're interested in national parks, farms and wineries, or just about anything in between, we have lots of resources and guides that can help you plan the perfect getaway.

Find Planning Guides →

Before you go

Make a packing list

In the excitement of your first trip (or any trip, for that matter!), it's easy to accidentally leave something behind. That's why making a packing list is a good idea, especially if you'll be gone for a while or you're going somewhere more remote. Your packing list will go way beyond clothes – think about the items you'll need for your everyday routines, from cooking to sleeping to laundry to showering. Plus, consider the kinds of activities you want to do while you're away, and be sure you've packed the necessary accessories or gear. And you should always have an emergency kit on hand, no matter the length of the trip or your destination.

Do some basic safety checks

Visually inspect your tires, and check your tire pressure, battery, and fluid levels. If your RV is towable, ensure that it's properly and securely hitched to your tow vehicle. Walk around your RV to make sure any accessories are safely stowed – if you have an awning, extendable stairs, or slide-outs, are they retracted? If your RV has antennae or a satellite dish, are they lowered? Check that all doors are secured, and if there are any large items inside your RV, be sure they won't cause damage if they shift around during your travels. For towable RVs, check to see that the brake lights are connected and working properly.



AIRSTREAM CARE ➔

Airstream owners can access pre-trip checklists (and so much more) from their smartphone with our Airstream Care app.



Driving and towing tips

LEAVE LOTS OF SPACE

Braking in an RV (or with one in tow) is a longer process than braking in a passenger vehicle. Leave plenty of room between yourself and the car in front of you.

BE AWARE OF YOUR SIZE

Know how tall and wide the clearance of your RV is so you don't get stuck under a bridge or between two trees. And give yourself ample time to change lanes before an exit so you can do it safely.

MAKE SLOW TURNS

Taller vehicles have a higher center of gravity, which means you have to be extra careful when making turns or driving around sharp curves.

MAKE WIDE TURNS

The longer the RV, the wider the turn needs to be. Always check your mirrors before making a turn to make sure a pedestrian or another vehicle isn't in your path.

Driving and towing tips

USE CAUTION WHEN BACKING UP

This is often one of the trickiest things to learn to do well. Just go slow, and take advantage of your mirrors, backup cameras, or other visual aids. Rely on your traveling companions or RV park neighbors to spot you, too.

GO SLOW

Taking an RV trip isn't a race, and because part of the beauty of RVing is enjoying the journey, there's no need to speed across the country. So take your time, and arrive at your destination safely.

CONNECT THE HITCH PROPERLY

If you have a towable RV, you may notice trailer sway, or your vehicle and trailer moving side-to-side in a way that makes you feel like you might lose control. Sway can be caused by a trailer that's hitched improperly, a strong gust of wind, or a weight imbalance. Be sure to ask your dealer about proper hitch connection – they can help set you up for towing success.

MAINTAINING YOUR RV



RV maintenance

Regular service visits

Take care of your RV by keeping up with scheduled maintenance, and your investment will last you for years to come. There are also plenty of ways you can keep your RV in peak condition between service visits. Before every trip, check your tires, batteries, and fluid levels. And always make sure you're properly maintaining your RV's waste water system, including taking good care of your hoses.

You can find important information about maintenance in your owner's manual and on your manufacturer's website, so be sure to review both.

AIRSTREAM SERVICE – REQUEST AN APPOINTMENT ➔

Want to schedule service or maintenance for your Airstream? You can request an appointment at the Airstream Factory Service Center or with your local dealership – all on our website.



RV maintenance

RV winterization

Winterizing an RV simply means preparing it for storage during the months you won't be using it – typically, during the colder months of winter. Knowing how to winterize your RV ensures it's ready to go when springtime returns and you have the urge to hit the road. It can also save you from having to make costly repairs.

There are general guidelines that apply to winterizing all RVs, like draining the water system and water heater and adding antifreeze. But yours might have special requirements or additional steps. Some RVs even have their own settings or controls for winterization. Refer to your owner's manual for specific instructions for winterizing your RV, and follow the steps carefully. Consult your dealer or the manufacturer if you have any questions.



WINTER CAMPING

Planning to keep using your RV during the winter? Find cold-weather trip ideas and more in our Winter Camping Adventure Guide.

Get the Guide ➔



BEST PARTS OF RVING



Spending quality time together

When you travel by RV, the journey truly becomes part of the trip. Instead of rushing to get to the airport on time, getting stuck in the security line, and then watching a movie on the plane, you can spend quality time with your friends or family from the moment your vacation starts. You don't have to wait until you reach your destination to relax and enjoy yourself. You also have so many entertainment options right outside your door, like stargazing, roasting marshmallows, fishing, biking, hiking...it's a whole different experience from staying in a hotel.



Making friends along the way

The RVing community is a special one, full of people who share your wanderlust, spirit of discovery, and thirst for adventure. Part of the fun of staying at campgrounds is meeting these likeminded travelers, hearing their stories, and sharing your own. Plus, RVers with more experience than you can offer advice or help if you have first-timer questions or need advice. You can chat with new friends about their favorite routes, stops, sights, and RV parks and campgrounds. Before you know it, you'll be the one newbies are turning to!



Having the freedom to design your own experience

One of the best parts of owning an RV is having the ability to travel in whatever way suits you best. Are you a planner who likes to have every route marked and every stop selected before you hit the road? Or do you live for spontaneity and enjoy the thrill of letting your getaway unfold moment by moment? Either way, RVing lets you take the kind of trip that works for you. That's the beauty of traveling on your own terms.



Explore the world of Airstream

Whether you love quick weekend trips or you're interested in long-term getaways, there's an Airstream that's perfect for your travel style. Go to the Airstream website to learn more about our travel trailers and touring coaches and discover what they have to offer. See photos and floor plans, check out features and specs, watch videos, download guides, and more.

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