

BUYING A USED MOTORHOME

PROBLEM: My wife and I have owned 5 Airstream trailers since 1978 and I have the “fever” for a motorhome. We like the Land Yacht series 26’ and 30’ motorhomes, my question is could you point out some important aspects of a motorhome that could result in major dollars in replacing or repairing after we purchase it? For example, I wonder about things like the air bags and shocks, after how many miles of average driving should these be replaced, and what transmission did Airstream use, etc. Anything you can point out will be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

ANSWER: Here is a very good site that can help with buying a Land Yacht. (www.rvforsaleguide.com/motorhome.htm). If you get a unit from the 90s it will usually have a Chevy engine, chassis and truck transmission. From about 2000 on you will get a Workhorse usually with a Vortec engine. The transmissions are usually solid and relatively trouble free as long as they are adequately cooled. A unit with an add-on cooler, in addition to the built in one, will keep the temperatures low and extend the operating life. The Land Yachts in the 26 and 30 foot range are low in weight and are likely to have minimum transmission wear. The engines are also relatively trouble free and just need regular oil changes and maintenance. A unit with good maintenance service records is always preferred. Any good mechanic can do a thorough check of the running gear and the fluids. Air bags and shocks are relatively inexpensive and easily changed by your local auto mechanic.

The appliances are essentially the same as in your trailers. The one area that can really cost big bucks is damage due to water leakage. This does not necessarily show up in a careful examination of the interior. Small leaks will allow rotting and eventual delamination of the body skin or roof. I have a friend who has that problem right now on a slide-out and the estimate for repair is \$4500 to \$5000. Motorhomes are constantly vibrating and putting a strain on joints and screws. I would suggest you get this checked by a Service Shop that specializes in finding water leaks. On the East Coast I have used Parkview RV for this and have had them test my Class A unit for leaks. They pressurize the coach and then look for bubbles on the outside and roof. They use the Sealtech 430R. Their charge for the test is \$100. Check <http://www.rvleaks.com/> for the location of other dealers. You get a report on the leaks and can either have the dealer fix them or do it yourself.

To summarize, the running gear and appliances are very similar to a tow car and trailer. The potential biggest and costliest problems could be those caused by water leaks. In addition, check all of the mounting hardware throughout the Coach interior and exterior especially missing or loose screws on cabinets. Also, check for any manufacturer recalls on the unit and make sure they were done. Good luck.