

Types of RVs

Recreational vehicles combine transportation and temporary living accommodations for travel, recreation and camping. RVs cover a wide range of interests and budgets. At one end of the spectrum, there are folding camping trailers that sell for a few thousand dollars while at the other end you can find luxurious motorhomes that feature all the comforts of home and come with a pricetag to match.

Before you buy or rent an RV, it pays to gain a basic understanding of how RVs are categorized. The RV world is generally divided into two broad categories: motorized RVs and towable RVs. Motorized RVs combine a motor vehicle chassis and living quarters in single unit. Under motorized RVs, you'll find class A, class B, and class C motorhomes. Towable RVs are designed to be towed by a [car](#), van, SUV, or pickup truck, but are small enough so as not to require a special highway movement permit. Under towable RVs, the accepted sub-categories are travel trailers, folding camping trailers, fifth [wheels](#), and truck campers.

Motorized RVs

Class A motorhomes are generally the top dogs of the RV world. Units range in weight from 15,000 to 30,000 pounds and stretch from 30 to 40 feet in length. Describing them as "motorhomes" is no exaggeration. Class A units come with almost every creature comfort you would expect in a home, minus the front lawn. They are frequently constructed on custom undercarriages or on a 3-10 ton truck chassis. Many Class A motorhomes also feature an automatic slideout. At the touch of a button, motorhome owners can extend a portion of their RV's exterior wall outward to expand their living space. Class A motorhomes usually provide cooking facilities, a refrigerator, heating, air conditioning, a self-contained toilet, water tanks (fresh water, grey water, black water), faucets, sinks, a LP (propane) gas supply, a separate 100-125 volt electrical system, and a full array of appliances and entertainment features. They can sleep up to eight people, depending on the model and the floor plan. Of course, all those features don't come cheap. Even low-priced models often top \$100,000, and the upper end of the price range approaches \$500,000.



Class B motorhomes, also commonly known as [van](#) conversions, are the smallest fully enclosed motorhomes. They are constructed on a van chassis with elevated roof lines but no modifications to the length or width of the original chassis. Class B motorhomes generally weigh 6,000 to 8,000 pounds and are 17 to 19 feet in length. Although living space is limited, Class B motorhomes receive high marks for economy, versatility, and handling. When not RVing, many Class B owners make use of their units as family vehicles. Class B motorhomes usually provide cooking facilities, a refrigerator or an ice box, heating, a self-contained toilet, a fresh water tank, a waste water tank, a faucet, a sink, convertible/folding beds, a LP (propane) gas supply, and 110 VAC and 12VDC electrical outlets. Class B motorhomes can sleep from two to four people depending on the model. Prices range from \$40,000 to above \$100,000.



Class C motorhomes, sometimes referred to as mini-motorhomes, are scaled-down versions of Class A motorhomes. They range in weight from 10,000 to 12,000 pounds and stretch from 20 feet to 31 feet in length. Class C motorhomes are generally constructed on a larger [van](#) chassis. The driver compartment is similar to a van, with a large box in the back. Class C motorhomes usually come with a sleeping bunk above the cab, in addition to a bedroom in the rear of the unit. Like their Class A big brothers, many Class C units feature a slideout to quickly extend the motorhome's living space. Class C units usually provide cooking facilities, a refrigerator, heating, air conditioning, a self-contained toilet, water tanks (fresh water, grey water, black water), faucets, sinks, a LP (propane) gas supply, a separate 100-125 volt electrical system, and a full array of appliances and entertainment features. Class C motorhomes can sleep up to ten people depending on the model and the floor plan. Prices range from \$50,000 to around \$150,000.



Towable RVs

Travel trailers come in a variety of sizes, ranging from a small bedroom on [wheels](#) to the equivalent of a Class A motorhome without the [engine](#) and transmission. Travel trailers may be as small as 10-feet long or as big as 35-feet long. Many feature a slideout to quickly extend the unit's living space. Travel trailers must be pulled by a separate tow vehicle. For most travel trailers, tow vehicles must be equipped with a load distributing hitch and other special devices designed to control the sway of the trailer.



Nonetheless, most full-size sedans, vans, [SUVs](#), and pickup trucks are up to the job. Moreover, manufacturers have been introducing lighter weight models in recent years to reduce the burden of towing. Travel trailers usually provide cooking facilities, a refrigerator, heating, air conditioning, a self-contained toilet, a shower, water tanks (fresh water, grey water, black water), faucets, sinks, a LP (propane) gas supply, and a separate 100-125 volt electrical system. They can sleep up to eight people depending on the model and floor plan. Prices range from \$10,000 to \$100,000.

Folding camping trailers are the least expensive RV. Also commonly referred to as tent trailers or pop-up trailers, folding camping trailers are designed from the ground up to be lightweight and inexpensive while providing many of the conveniences found in a basic travel trailer. Because of their relatively small size, folding camping trailers can easily be towed by a typical mid-size [car](#), and even compact cars in some cases. A folding camping trailer can be thought of as a large, expandable tent built on a trailer. Most modern models incorporate a rigid roof and a lift system to expedite setup. Because the sides collapse for towing and storage, the units take up very little space when not in use. Folding camping trailers usually provide cooking facilities, a refrigerator or an ice box, heating, a fresh water tank, a waste water tank, a faucet, a sink, convertible/pull-out beds, a LP (propane) gas supply, and a separate 100-125 volt electrical system. They can sleep up to six people depending on the model and the floor plan. Prices begin at around \$4,000 and can go as high as \$25,000.



Fifth-wheel trailers are similar to larger travel trailers, but they have an extension on the front of the box that extends over the tow vehicle and a horizontal plate that looks like a wheel (hence the name "fifth wheel") that rests on the tow vehicle for support. This hitch arrangement requires special equipment on the tow vehicle. Typically, full-size pickup trucks serve as tow vehicles for fifth wheels and are outfitted with a fifth-wheel hitch. The hitch arrangement makes towing easier by placing the trailer load in the center of the tow vehicle instead of behind it. The extension on the front of the box also serves as a bedroom in most fifth wheels. Still more living space is afforded by slideouts that come as a standard feature of many fifth wheels. Fifth-wheel trailers usually provide cooking facilities, a refrigerator, heating, air conditioning, a self-contained toilet, a shower, water tanks (fresh water, grey water, black water), faucets, sinks, a LP (propane) gas supply, and a separate 100-125 volt electrical system. They can sleep up to six people depending on the model and the floor plan. Prices range from \$15,000 to \$150,000.



Truck campers, sometimes referred to as pickup campers or slide-on campers, consist of a camper body loaded onto the bed of a standard pickup truck. Usually the tailgate of the pickup is removed and the camper unit is clamped to the truck. Because truck campers can be loaded and unloaded with relative ease, they are popular among weekend RVers. Truck campers usually provide cooking facilities, a refrigerator or an ice box, heating, air conditioning, a self-contained toilet, a fresh water tank, a waste water tank, a faucet, a sink, a LP (propane) gas supply, and a separate 100-125 volt electrical system. They can sleep from two to six people depending on the model. Prices range from \$5,000 to \$30,000.

