



The Ultimate Checklist Before Buying a Van

Below is a checklist of the main items covered in this Purchase Tips section. While this is a fairly comprehensive list, it is not all inclusive.

Do your due diligence. This is a major purchase for most people and you want to make sure it is as stress free and thorough as possible. That said, do not get into analysis paralysis. You will make some mistakes, understand that, and focus on the most important areas for you and your use. Enjoy the vanlife and get ready to start your new adventure! I would love to see what you decided on! Send me a pic... And feel free to shoot me any questions. I personally **love** vanlife!

- **#1** - important: Do a [vehicle history report](#) to see if there is anything of concern.
- Layout fits your lifestyle and goals? Sit where you will be sitting most of the time. Do you like the view? Can you get onto the bed and sit up if that is something you want to do?
- Is the mileage low enough to get full use out of the van before spending time/money in the shop? How many miles do you anticipate putting on before reselling. What resale value do you want?
- Did the van start as a passenger van and if so, what did they do to address the side airbags running the length of the van?
- Are the cabinets built well? Do the doors and drawers stay shut during turns? Are they easy to open? How are they fastened to the wall? Are they secure?
- Are the outlets where you need them?
- [Calculate](#) how much power you will be using by the type of appliance and duration of use. You will need to know your power consumption when you look at batteries and solar.
- From your power calculation in the step above, double or triple that number. This is a good target for how much stored energy you need at a minimum. That is the battery capacity you want to target. If the battery capacity is less than your daily usage, you will run out of electricity.
- What is the wattage of the solar panels? The solar panels need to be enough to charge the batteries. The amount needed will be dependent on how much you drive and how much sun you get. A minimum of 200 watts is needed, but I recommend 400.
- Is there a battery to battery charger? This charges the house batteries while driving.

- Is the inverter one of good quality? Recommend [Battle Born](#) or [Renogy](#).
- Is there sufficient water for your use?
- How frequently and easy is it to fill the fresh water and empty the grey water?
- If you are in a cold weather area, is the water protected from freezing? Putting it inside the van is enough protection for most, but if you have water under the van, make sure it is protected from freezing.
- Is there a source for heating that is not the van's heater? Does it work?
- If there is an AC unit, does it work or need service? Will you be able to use shore power if needed?
- If there is a shower, is there enough ventilation to minimize the chance of mold? Does the shower have any leaks?
- Is the hot water heater functioning? Is it of sufficient size? Does it consume a lot of energy (more than 1500 watts)? Is the battery size sufficient or will it drain the battery?
- Are the vents in a logical place to provide air flow? Do they work? It is best if they both draw air from the inside out and outside in. Is there a screen on it to prevent entry of bugs?
- Are there any other additional signs of water leaks?
- Are all entry points and holes on the van roof to the inside of the van properly sealed with lapping compound and glands (for the wires)?
- Do the lights all work? Are they in zones or do they all turn off and on together? Are they LED? Can you dim them? Dimmable lights are a nice feature.
- Does the van have sufficient insulation including insulation that would not hold water if there were a leak and promote mold growth?
- Is the flooring in good shape? Are areas that are potentially exposed to water leaks adequately sealed to minimize damage? Is the main flooring in good shape and of a material type that will withstand the constant in and out traffic in a small area? Is it insulated underneath?

Finally is there anything that you saw that you cannot live with? Do not settle. You may need to adjust, but this is your very small home for either short trips or long term living space. Make sure you like it and if there are things that you need to change, make sure it is practical to change and you have correctly budgeted the time and money to do so. *Bon courage!*