



# FACTSHEET

## BASE VEHICLE CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CHOOSING A MOTORHOME

When choosing a motorhome that best suits your lifestyle, there is a lot more than just the fittings and interior décor to think about.

There are other important, perhaps less glamorous, things to consider.

### **Tare weight**

The tare weight is the finished, but un-laden weight of a motorhome. It includes all the parts that go into building the motorhome, but not yourself, your belongings, water or any other items you would typically carry with you.

### **Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM) and Gross Combination Mass (GCM)**

The base vehicle that your motorhome is built upon is given two important load ratings by the manufacturer — GVM and GCM.

The GVM is the maximum weight of the base vehicle plus the weight of the motorhome body and everything inside. This doesn't include any weight that is towed, like a trailer.

The GVM is an important piece of information. If your vehicle GVM exceeds 6 tonne, you then require a class-2 license to drive it, as opposed to a standard car license. It is also the maximum weight your motorhome can legally be if you were to be pulled over and weighed.

GCM is the maximum combined weight of a towing vehicle (base vehicle, motorhome body, item being towed). It is important to be aware of the GCM if you plan to tow a trailer, car or horse float, etc.

### **Payload**

Payload is the difference between the GVM and tare weight of your motorhome. It is the amount you can legally carry in your motorhome including water, belongings and passengers. Not many motorhome buyers give this much consideration, but payload is an essential consideration. Especially seeing as exceeding the capacity of your motorhome could result in a fine, unsafe driving conditions or an insurance claim being rejected. Many motorhomes have a payload as little as 300kg. That's only two people, some water and a few belongings. Remember, the higher the payload, the greater the capacity to carry more with you.

## Warrant of Fitness (WOF) versus Certificate of Fitness (COF)

If your motorhome has a GVM of less than 3,500 kg, then you only require a warrant of fitness (like a standard car or van) from a Land Transport-approved garage. Vehicles exceeding 3,500 kg (most motorhomes) require a Certificate of Fitness. A COF must be renewed every 6 months and costs more. You can get a COF from Vehicle Testing New Zealand (VTNZ) or Vehicle Inspection New Zealand (VINZ). As a result, a COF can be less convenient. Keep in mind though, that a GVM over 3,500 kg will in most instances, provide a higher payload capacity.

## Braking systems

If you intend to enjoy long periods of time in your motorhome, then you may want to tow a trailer or small vehicle.

Having the use of a small car or motorbike gives you the ability to zip around freely without uprooting camp. Most vehicles can tow 750 kilograms without requiring a braking system on the item being towed. That's not usually a problem if you plan to tow a trailer; however, for a car (unless you put it on a trailer) you need a vehicle that can tow it without a braking system. Only a small number of motorhomes can tow an un-braked trailer heavier than 750kg.

## Warranty

A standard warranty in New Zealand is for 100,000 kilometres or 3 years, whichever comes first. If you buy a New Zealand built motorhome, you will get the benefit of back-up throughout the country for parts and servicing — this is not always available for imported motorhomes, with some companies supplying a simple insurance policy that may not provide original parts and support. Others will make you apply for re-imburement from the international vehicle manufacturer if something goes wrong.

## Other considerations

- Torque - the amount of torque your engine has determines how easily your vehicle can handle hills. These days, engines are often smaller, but have, what's known as, a 'flat torque curve.' Rather than experiencing surges in power when you accelerate, an engine with a flat torque curve produces more torque as you press down the accelerator.
- Walk-through - this is where the floor in the cab is flat, allowing you to walk from the cab to the main part of the motorhome.
- Transmission - approximately 90 per cent of modern transmissions are automatic with 5, 6, or sometimes 7 gears.
- Rear or front-wheel drive - rear-wheel drive vehicles have much better traction. This can be a major benefit on wet grass and other slippery surfaces.

These are some of the practical things to think about before buying a motorhome. To ensure that the vehicle you choose is fit for purpose, make sure you fully discuss your needs with your dealer and, if possible, other motorhome owners.

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