

# Things to check before you buy your used foretravel

Ok, here is the listing. I tried to break it up by sections and to give you a few ideas. Not all of these are my own ideas either as I have pulled this list from many sources prior to my last purchase. Things to do prior to taking delivery of your new Foretravel. John S.

## TAKING DELIVERY

When you go to pick up your coach from the dealer have a thorough checklist of items to check. Do the inspection systematically

- Do not schedule your pick up of your new motor home on a Friday or a day before a holiday. That way the pressure to get it done will be lessened and there will be time for corrections to be made.
- Have extra time built into your schedule.
- Have a place to stay so there is no need to rush the inspection if you're picking up your coach remotely from where you live.
- Make sure that all the documentation and manuals are present.
- Do an inventory and do not forget to get a list of the serial and model numbers for all the warrantee registration
- Operate and test everything and do it by yourself after you are shown.
- Take notes of what you see that bothers you or questions that come to mind.
- Consider video taping the PDI with the sales man so you can review it later if you need it.
- If you don't get satisfactory answers to your question, just ask them again and again until you're satisfied
- Question anything you do not understand. Make sure you do not leave with any unanswered question... Nothing worse than to discover something and then hear the words, "I was wondering about that."
- Do not assume anything has been checked or is working properly. You need to check them yourself, especially fluids and tire pressures... which means bring a suitable tire gauge and it also might be useful to have an infrared gun to check air conditioner and heat performance, including the dash air.

## OUTSIDE WALK AROUND

The outside walk around should take at least one hour and you look for anything that does not look right.

- Roof sealing – Climb on the roof and inspect all seam, gaskets, or any other place that the roof material is cut or drilled. Proper polyurethane caulking should be used to seal all places where the roof has been penetrated.
- Check closely around air conditioners, vents, antennas, sewer vents, and side seams.

- Windows – check closely around each window to make sure it has been properly aligned and sealed.
- Doors – check the gasket used on all doors for proper adhesive and coverage.
- Baggage Compartments – open and close each door checking for alignment and the gasket. All hinges should be tight and secure and the latches should hold the door tightly closed and be easy to open. Look for any signs of moisture that might indicate rain leakage.
- Verify that compartment lighting works properly. Any gas cylinders used for keeping to door open should be properly installed so as not to interfere with items stored in the compartment.
- Engine Compartment Door – open and close the door checking for alignment and latches. Make sure that these latches are positive and properly aligned to keep the door closed during RV operation.
- Generator Compartment/Door – Check out the compartment that holds the generator closely to insure that everything is tight and rattle free because you will eventually spend many hours listening to the operational sounds of the generator and you want to make sure it is as quiet as possible.
- Make sure the exhaust from the generator is not directly under any slide out or window that might be used for ventilation.
- If the generator is on a powered slide, operate it several times to make sure it extends and retracts well.
- Fuel Doors – inspect the fuel doors for proper locking and to verify the operation of the fuel caps. Make sure there are lanyards that hold the cap from falling on the ground while fueling and eventually being lost.
- Verify that you know how to properly fill the fuel tank.
- Utility Compartment – Inspect this compartment closely to understand how each valve or fitting works.
- Understand how the sewer hose is properly stored.
- Understand the proper function of the black and gray water valves. If tank flushing is installed, understand how it operates.
- Locate any water filters and check for proper installation.
- Find and understand the telephone and cable connections.
- If there is an electric cable reel, extend and retract it several times to insure proper operation.
- Understand where the low point drains are for the fresh water.
- Propane – Check the propane compartment to verify that the ventilation downward is proper since propane is heavier than air. There should be no possible way for propane to enter into the RV or any other compartment. Locate and understand the operation of the main shut off valve.
- Battery – Check the battery compartment to verify that it is ventilated and that all slide mechanisms work properly.
- Verify that no battery cables are rubbing on any part of the frame because that will eventually end up with a short circuit and possible fire.
- Understand the battery type provided and how to maintain them.
- Load test the batteries if possible or use them while the coach is unplugged and see if they will hold a charge.
- Start the coach without the boost switch.
- Paint – Carefully check the paint finish on the RV. Look for wavy lines on the side as you look down the coach.
- Push on the undersides and sidewalls of the slides and then push on the side walls of the coach at regular intervals to check for delaminating.
- Look at places where vinyl film is used to make sure it is free of any air bubbles.

- Tires and Wheels – Closely inspect the tires and wheels and understand the proper pressure. Check the date code on all the tires, especially the inside dual.
- You may have to have them pull the tire off to see that and if that is the case I like to verify the torque of the lug nuts
- Awnings – Extend and retract each awning paying particular attention to how the awning is locked in the retracted position. Make sure all springs, lock, supports work well and are properly aligned. Check the Fabric for burn holes. The code on our zipdees is all you need to get a replacement sent.

## CHASSIS INSPECTION

Put on some coveralls and get a creeper, which is a flat device with low wheels that allows you to lie on you back while scooting around under a vehicle. Drive the coach to a level place where it is safe to jack it up, blocking the tires, and then block up the chassis so that it is safe to inspect the underneath. If you don't want to do this then make arrangements to take the coach of a qualified independent truck shop and pay them one-hour labor to do this check.

- Inspect all air and or hydraulic lines, wiring, shock absorber attachments, and in general every place that a wire or pipe could rub against something that will cause a problem later.
- Consider getting a mobile tech to check the engine codes with a code reader for past fault codes and the history of the engine. (electronic engines)
- All wiring and piping should be properly fastened.
- Check the operation of each wheel brake for proper adjustment and operation.
- Check for any fluid leakage.
- Understand how to check the operating levels of all fluids in the RV by actually checking them.
- Hydraulic, transmission, fuel, oil, coolant, etc should be included in this list.
- Understand the engine drive belts and how to inspect them.

## SLIDE-OUT OPERATION

If your RV includes a slide-out or slide-outs then spend the time it takes to understand its operation.

- Start by checking the seals while the slide is retracted. You should not be able to find any places where you can see light or detect airflow.
- Understand the mechanism that extends and retracts the slide. Operate it several times and understand the restrictions like where the drivers' seat has to be for proper clearance. Some models require you to move the seat prior to deploying or retracting slides. Also check the rear slide for cabinet door clearance.
- Understand the interlocks that might be present, like some systems don't work if the compartment below the slide has a door open, etc.
- Understand the manual retraction process and actually walk through the retraction as if the automatic mechanism had failed.

## AWNINGS AND STEP OPERATION

Check to operation of each awning and automatic step device

- If the awnings are manual, then learn how to unlock, extend, retract and lock each one.
- More important is your skill in retracting the awnings when the wind comes up.
- If you have powered awnings then operate them multiple times to make sure their operation is correct.
- If there is a wind sensor that automatically causes the awning to retract, then use compressed air to simulate the wind and verify its operation.

## INSIDE FIT AND FINISH

Now its time to go inside. In general you are looking for things that are not finished correctly since it is too late to inspect the design of anything.

### Cabinets

- Inspect all of the cabinets to insure that all the hinges and latches work well and the gas struts still are good.
- Next pull each drawer out to its stop, return it closed and then try to open it like road vibration might do.
- Make sure that there are no water leaks and that all the wiring and pipes are well fastened.
- Inspect the linings, which are usually carpet, to insure they are fastened securely.

### Lighting

- Operate every light switch and observe its function. There are also battery disconnect switches to understand and verify.

### Closets

- Next open and close all closet doors checking for free operation and proper alignment.
- Hanger rods should be properly fastened and secure.
- Check out the lighting that is provided and any switches that are used.

### Furniture

- Examine every piece of furniture to check for construction, upholstery, pattern and cloth matching.
- Look closely at the quality of the driver and passenger chairs, since most of your time is going to be spent there.

- Inspect and understand the operation of the safety belts.
- Locate any other seat belts in the couch or chairs.

## **Blinds**

- Operate each blind and check for alignment.
- Look at all valances and trim to be sure it is secured.
- Check out the pull drapes that usually cover the windshield by opening and closing them.

## **Counter Tops**

- Inspect all counter tops for alignment and fastening. Make sure that any trim pieces that should be there are in fact tight.
- Check for caulking quality everywhere there may be water.
- Check the installation of sinks and faucets.

## **Windows**

- Open and close every window and operate the locks and if they are double pane, check the window for those bulges of membranes.
- Locks and latches should work freely but securely.

## **Floor Coverings**

- Inspect carpet and other floor coverings in all corners and look at the tile for cracked tiles.

## **Wall Coverings**

- Check to make sure that all the wall coverings actually cover and join properly.

# **OPERATION TEST OF ALL HOUSE SYSTEMS**

You should be about three hours into to the PAI by now and you are ready to test all of the house type systems. Start this test with the RV not connected to any shore facilities.

## **Generator**

- Learn how to start the generator and stop it. Know where the remote stations for this purpose are located and how they work. Start the generator listening for any unusual sound or vibration. Let the generator run a few minutes and understand any Power Relays that might be in your RV and test

incoming ac electricity before cutting it through.

- The electrical status panel should show the status of the generator and the presence of ac voltage.
- Put a load on the generator by starting the microwave and operate it for several minutes. Turn on and off all ac loads like the lighting that is not dc powered.

## **Inverter/Converter/Charger**

- With the generator running, understand the operation of the Inverter/Charger that is provided.
- Have the PDI person explain the function of each control switch, display and status light.
- With ac power present, the inverter becomes a charger and should be charging your house batteries. You can verify this by looking at the display.
- Now shut down the generator with the inverter in the "on" position and the ac loads should immediately be taken over by the inverter.
- Again operate the microwave for a minute to test the inverter. The 1000 watts of the microwave will provide a good test load for the inverter.
- Now you should turn on a TV to create a small load on the inverter and leave the TV on during the rest of your House Systems Test.

## **Water Pump**

- Your PDI person should have filled you fresh water tanks, so now you can test the function of the water pump. After turning it on, you should hear it pump for several seconds, even up to a minute to create enough pressure in the system. If the pump does not shut off, then there is a problem.
- Run water in the kitchen and bathroom sink and notice that the pump will come back on until proper water pressure is restored.

## **Water Heater**

- Try the water heater on propane first. A few seconds after you turn it on, you should hear the click of the igniter and the small pop when the burner lights. The red light should stay on until that process happens. If it does not ignite, then there is a problem.
- Now try it on ac. This is not normally done with no shore or generator power, but it is a good way to see if it works, because you should see an immediate dimming of dc lights because the battery is being drawn down with the inverter providing ac power to the water heater.
- If you don't see the dimming, then further verification of the ac operation is required to prove that it is working. You will have to plug it in at the end and check it then.

## **Furnace**

- Now its time to understand the operation of the thermostat that controls heating and sometimes air conditioning. Turn the furnace on and set a temperature demand that is at least 10 degrees hotter than ambient temperature. In about 30 seconds, you should hear the furnace fans come on. Let the furnace blow and you should get hot air coming out of all vents. Check each one. During this process have your smeller working for any smell of material getting too hot, or exhaust coming

out.

- If you have Aqua-hot then you will test each one and learn how to turn on the basement as well. Some require the bathroom zone to be on. Verify that none of the valves are not opening by getting heat out of each heat exchanger. Verify that the aqua-hot is not blowing out dark smoke and will run on both electric and diesel.

## **Propane and Carbon Monoxide Alarms**

- Now is a good time to check the function of these alarms.

## **Refrigerator**

- Refrigerators work on Propane and AC, or have an automatic mode that gives preference to ac and then will switch to propane if ac is not available.
- Understand the controls and the status lights and set the unit on propane. Go outside and make sure that the propane heating column is lit and heating. The refrigerator needs solid 12 dc to operate. Set the temperature at the highest cooling setting so you can come back in about 10 minutes to feel that the coil is actually starting to cool.
- For the all electric coaches just see if it is cool when you open the door. It should work on either inverter or shore power or genset.

## **TV VCR Antenna and Switching**

- Your front TV should still be on testing the ability of the inverter to provide constant ac power.
- Review and understand the switching system that allows the selection of viewing channel on the front and rear TV. Raise the TV uhf/vhf antenna and learn how to turn on the amplifier.
- Activate the control on the front TV that scans for local stations.
- Now you can learn how to rotate the antenna to maximize the quality of the picture.
- If you purchased the DSS Satellite system, then learn about the complete operation and control of the antenna and receiver along with any switches. Learn how to make your system automatically acquire the proper satellite and how to use the DSS receiver Remote Control.
- It is also necessary to understand the video selection switch that distributes signals to the front and rear RV. Most receivers allow the remote to be used with IR (Infra-red) or RF (Radio Frequency). Learn how to select the transmission method.

## **Air Conditioners**

- Most air conditioners also have a heat strip or heat pump feature so now is the time to verify these functions.
- Start the Generator verifying that your ac control system switches the ac power into the coach. The inverter should switch back to charging mode.
- When the generator is settled out and stable, then turn on the front air conditioner. After a couple of minutes, cool air, 20 degrees cooler than ambient, should be coming out of the registers.
- Leaving the front unit running, go back and turn on the unit in the bedroom. It should also cool in a

couple of minutes to a level of 20 degrees below ambient.

- The generator should hold steady with this higher load of two units.
- Now switch both units to the heat strip or heat pump position and set the thermostats to require heat. Within 5 minutes warm air at least 20 degrees hotter than ambient should be coming out of the registers.
- If you coach has ducting in the ceiling, make sure a good airflow comes out of each register.
- Learn how to clean the filters at this time.

## Air Vents

- Test the operation of kitchen and bathroom air vents making sure they open and turn on properly. Then verify that they retract and close tightly.

## Microwave

- With both air conditioners running, put a cup of cold water in the microwave and set the timer for 3 minutes. With two AC's and the microwave operating, you are near the maximum capability of a 7.5 KW generator.
- The generator should hold strong with this load. In three (3) minutes, the water should be very hot. Be careful when taking the cup out of the microwave to avoid getting burned. Make sure there are no unusual sounds coming from the Microwave.

## Propane Stove

- Turn on one burner of the stovetop while the AC's and Microwave are running and the automatic igniters should cause a strong spark to light the burner.
- Turn on the other burners to verify that there is enough propane flow to operate the refrigerator, water heat and all the burners. If everything is OK, then turn off the burners on the stove.
- Sometimes the igniters interfere with the operation of the thermostats for the roof air. This is caused by improper routing of wiring where the ac too close to the dc, inside the kitchen cabinet. Now is the time to find this problem. If your unit has an oven, then verify its operation now.

## Summary

- You have now done a simple test of the major house systems and can shut everything off including the generator

## VEHICLE OPERATING TEST

Now you are ready to do a basic operations test of the vehicle or motor part of you motorhome. You know that all operating pressures and levels are proper, because you performed this basic status check when you did the walk around.



## Cockpit

- Adjust your seat and mirrors for a safe and comfortable position.
- If the seat has electric controls, learn the function of each button. If it has manual control, then do the same thing with the control levers.
- Adjust the rear view mirrors to reduce blind spots to the absolute minimum. You may need an assistant to be outside moving the mirrors that are not motorized. Learn how the controls work, if you have motorized mirrors. You may need the whole Ramco assembly moved to be able to see properly.
- Adjust the steering wheel for proper orientation to your body.

## Instrumentation

- Identify the function of each gauge and understand what the normal readings should be.
- Turn the ignition on, but don't start the engine yet, so that you can see all of the status and warning lights that might illuminate when you are driving. Have the PDI person explain what each status light means, and what your action should be in response to its illumination.
- Turn on the rear camera and verify its operation and how to adjust it.

## Start the engine

- Most modern diesel engines require waiting until a "Wait to Start" status light goes out. This delay gives the control system a chance to get fuel pressure and other things lined up so that the engine will start easily.
- Turn the ignition to the start position and crank the engine. It should start easily within 2 seconds and you should watch the oil pressure gauge to make sure that oil pressure is present with 1 second (maximum 3 seconds) of starting. If no oil pressure is present, immediately shut the engine down.
- With the engine operating, check to see that the voltage gauge on the dash is registering at least 13.2 volts, which verifies that the engine alternator is operating.
- Now check the air gauges if you have air brakes, and you should see a steady generation of air pressure that peaks at about 120 psi when you hear the air dryer in the engine compartment give out a psssst sound.
- There should be no warning lights illuminated on the dash at this time.
- ### Dash Air Conditioner and Heater Test
- Turn on the Dash Air Conditioner and let it run while you are doing the following tests. With a thermometer verify that the cool air is at least 20 degrees under ambient temperature. After cooling is verified, then activate the Dash Hot air, waiting for the engine to heat the coolant so that you can verify heating.
- You can do this on your short test drive, which will happen in a few minutes.

## Air System Test

- If your coach has air brakes and air suspension, you need to test several things before you drive

the coach. Don't let the PDI person tell you that it's OK to drive! Here are the basics.

- It should take no more than 5 minutes to generate 120 psi, if the unit started from little of no pressure.
- With the emergency brake applied, in the up position, put the vehicle into drive with your foot on the brake pedal. Next remove your foot from the brake and the coach should not move even an inch.
- Shift into neutral and leave the engine operating. Press the brake pedal, repeatedly to deplete the air pressure in the tanks. Watch the air pressure gauge and when it reaches about 90 psi it should immediately start generating pressure again.
- Stop pressing the brake pedal and lightly press the accelerator (while in neutral) enough to get 1000-1200 rpm on the tachometer, and the pressure should be back up to 120 psi within less than one minute. If you don't then there is something wrong with the air compressor.
- Shift into drive with you foot on the service brake, being sure there is 100 yards of driving space in front of you. Stop pressing the brake and apply enough pressure on the accelerator to cause the coach to speed up to 10 miles per hour and then immediately apply the brakes hard. The coach should stop immediately without sliding any wheel. If it does not stop sharply, do not drive this vehicle until the brakes are repaired.
- Now shut the engine off. Again press the brake pedal repeatedly to use air pressure while watching the pressure gauge(s). The pressure should go down to past 90 psi and before 60 psi an audible (low air pressure) audible alarm should sound, and the low air warning light should come on the dash. Keep depleting the air pressure by pressing the brake pedal and when you are down to 40 psi, stop. At this pressure, if you attempt to release the emergency brake by pressing the control knob down, it should pop right back up. This means the emergency brake is working properly.
- If you have air suspension, then have the PDI person explain the operation of this system completely. It uses the same air pressure to maintain the coach ride height. It should be possible to deplete the air pressure in the air bags so that the coach can be stored or parked at the lowest possible level.
- Some systems allow for changing the ride height while in motion, like getting through a steep driveway. Learn how this system works if you have it.
- If there is a tag axle that is controlled with air bags, then learn about the operation.
- If your coach has an air leveling system, then again have the PDI person explain the control panel.
- If your coach has a hydraulic leveling system, have the PDI person demonstrate and explain its operation. At this point you should actually level the coach as if you were parked in a camping spot preparing to spend the night.

## Short test ride

- This drive should be about 20 miles long and the PDI person should be your passenger. The most important thing to do during this test drive is to listen for any unusual sounds and feel for any vibrations. You should be comparing the handling and driving characteristics to the coach that you test-drove during your selection and purchase process. This is a good time to test the proper function of the Retarder.
- Also operate the windshield washer and wiper functions.
- Try the sun shields to make sure they are easy to position and then stay put.
- Instrumentation should show normal reading throughout the test, be sure to check the gauges often.
- Once you are comfortable with low speed maneuvering, head for an Interstate. As you enter, floor

the accelerator and you should get a response of steady acceleration without any unusual sounds. Listen for any sounds that are not normal, like whines or grinds from under the coach, wind noise from the front door or slide out, flapping awnings, engine and transmission. Bring the speed up to merge safely into traffic and go the speed limit.

- Observe gauges for normal range of operation. Observe the steering effort necessary to keep the coach going straight. If it takes too much steering then the wheel alignment is probably not correct.
- Go at least two exits before turning around to return to the parking lot. During this test leave the rear view camera operating as an added rear view. By now, you will have a list of things that you feel need correcting, but it will be then the end of the day, so plan on camping at the factory or dealer lot for the night. This will give you a chance to further test the house functions.

OK now the fun part. You get to spend the first night in the coach.

## THE FIRST NIGHT

You should “dry camp” in the parking lot the first night and not be tempted to hook up to shore utilities just yet. Bring enough kitchen equipment and food so that you can prepare an evening meal. There is no better way to test the living facilities than to actually use them.

### Batteries

- The batteries should be fully charged. Most coaches are designed with enough battery capacity to dry camp at least one night without having to run the generator, even if you watch TV several hours and use the microwave for limited cooking. The stand alone icemakers will usually not let this happen if you have less than 3 8ds. When you get up in the morning see what the charge state of the batteries are. You may have the auto start come on during the night. If that happens try to remember when it came on or write it down.
- In the morning, start the generator or plug into shore power, to verify that the inverter goes directly into the bulk (highest) charge rate. If you have the gauge or a dc current meter, you should verify that 45 to 70 amps are going into the low batteries. It will take two or three hours at that rate to recharge the batteries
- If it is really hot, then by all means connect to shore power so you can run the air conditioners, but when it cools down. Disconnect shore power so that you can test your batteries for the rest of the night.

## THE SECOND NIGHT

At about 4:30 or so, the technicians will bring your coach back to the parking lot and you should then repeat the testing of the things that were on the “fix” list and dry camp for another night. If the house batteries are depleted, then you will have to plug into shore power or run the generator for a few hours. If you find more things to be corrected, more time will be required by the technicians on the third day to do those repairs.

See Discussion at:

- [50 things to check before you buy your used foretravel](#)
- [What assurance does a seller PDI give you?](#)

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