PREVOST SELECTION

Making the choice of models and options

Anyone that has taken the time to read any of the Prevost forums realizes there are no absolutes. Nobody can point to any model, model year, body style or options and say with conviction “this is what every buyer should have.”

So I am going to stick my neck out and try to put all the choices in perspective. As long as the reader understands this is an opinion piece, and it is up to a coach buyer to make the final decision this article may be of assistance. The basis for the article is that over the years potential buyers almost always ask the same questions, and the responses to those questions are also the same, although those answers are like this article, nothing more than opinions.

A person can ask about the model year, body styles, A/C systems, engines, service intervals, upgrades, or converters and it is a given the thread will take on a life of its own because all owners have an opinion.

I intend to offer my opinions, but also to provide the opinions of others to try to give a balanced answer to the common questions. My biases will show through.

The starting point for any potential buyer is the budget. A buyer might have a list of questions but in reality the buyer’s budget addresses a lot of the questions that might otherwise come up. For example, if the buyer wants the best coach for under $80,000 (to pick a number out of thin air) it is doubtful he is going to be asking about slides or no slides, XLII skin issues, or maybe even a Series 60 engine. It is also doubtful he will get a coach with everything zeroed out, fresh tires and batteries, or no problems at all.

On the other hand, a buyer looking for a coach in the mid to high 6 figures is unlikely to be looking at an 8V92 powered XL 40 footer. His questions are likely to relate to slides, maybe skin issues, and maybe the choice between an XLII and an H3.

So let’s begin with the model choices.

Available Models

There are three broad model selections. An XL, and XLII, and an H3. New, but rare are X3 models. Every model has a range of model years and those model years include running changes Prevost implemented. For example the XL was available as a 40 foot coach, then later became available as a 45 foot coach also. Originally it
had an 8V92 2 stroke Detroit Diesel and eventually all models were powered by the 60 Series Detroit diesel. The XL never had Prevost installed slides.

The H3 followed the same type of changes going from a shorter coach (41 feet?) and ultimately being available as a 45 foot coach. The H3 originally was available as a non-slide coach and later years saw it offering up to four slides. The XLII originally was available as a 40 or 45 foot coach, and at some point the 40 foot coach was phased out. Early in the production of the XLII it was available as a non-slide coach, but eventually was available with one or two slides.

So given the three models, a buyer has options to consider just in selecting which model. The budget obviously comes into play, but there are reasons beyond the budget considerations for selecting one of the three.

The H3 non-slide coach feels big inside, even without slides. None of the X models offers anywhere near the amount of bay storage space as an H3, with or without slides. If a buyer does not want the coach equipped with slides, and wants to have a lot of bay storage space the H3 is the clear choice just because everything about says “roomy”.

On the other hand, if bay storage is not a critical issue, and the buyer just likes the looks of stainless, and a robust, highly perfected coach, not prone to any serious issues, easy to maintain, economical to operate and wants a lower height the clear choice is the XL. Unlike the H3 the XL has a fully riveted exterior and there just are not any problems with the skin.

If the buyer likes the stainless look, but wants a quieter coach, with a range of improvements over an XL such as a quieter ride, or small but good improvements then an XLII seems like it would be the best choice. It might just be the more modern looks and smooth sides that make an XLII the best choice.

There are a lot of other factors that go into the selection of a specific model, but apart from how a coach looks to the buyer those factors may lead to a selection for reasons other than the general reasons stated above.

Buyers may have looked at a lot of coaches, but usually the final choice of a model is based on many factors and not just the strong points of each model. The budget is going to be a strong influence, and when a budget is considered it should be recognized that it includes the purchase price as well as the initial money spent to bring the coach up to the buyer’s standards. The cost to repair or bring the coach into a like new condition can be very expensive and well into 5 figures. Buyers should be aware that buying a coach because it is cheap may not be the best method for
selecting a coach. Do not underestimate the cost of bringing a coach that has been neglected back to its original condition.

Sometimes it is far better to wait for the “perfect” coach, than to buy one that is not exactly what the buyer wants, but is “cheap”.

**Influencing features**

One important influencing factor that cannot be ignored is how the buyer treats a purchase such as that of a coach. “Cheap” may be the greatest consideration in a coach purchase because the owner tends to trade vehicles frequently. It is not unusual for some buyers to look for a coach priced well below its market value because the seller is looking to move it quickly. In that case the greatest influence is going to be the price. The opposite position is going to be a buyer who is looking for the long term, has no intention of “flipping” the coach so other factors will influence the purchase. Flipping coaches often makes specific features less important because swapping it for another erases that issue.

The availability of certain features plays a big role in coach selection. It is possible a buyer does want an H3, but ends up with an X model. That might seem irrational, but if the buyer wants a specific floor plan, or a private toilet, or a booth instead of table and chairs, a stacked washer dryer as opposed to a combo the choice may be for the coach that more closely meets the needs rather than the particular model whose appearance or storage space is less important than having a private toilet or over the road full coach heat and air. The buyer’s list of wants and needs is going to control the selection.

Since every coach is a compromise this is a good time to discuss prioritizing the needs. My list of wanted (needed?) items includes full coach heat and air, a private toilet, a dinette booth, long range fuel and the low height of an XL. More recently we added slides to our list of wants and needs. But the only deal breakers on our list are private toilet, OTR and a coach no taller than an XLII. Everything else are things we want, but we can easily choose a coach without them, and we have.

But if an H3 came along with all of our wish list satisfied would we buy it? Absolutely not because of the height restrictions presented to us by our driveway slope and garage door opening. So buyers need their wish list, with the items prioritized into the items absolutely needed, and then the items that would be really neat to have, but not mandatory. The “deal breakers” have to be recognized and placed at the top of the list. Some “deal breakers” are hard to define, but should be noted if possible. Really ugly colors or paint design could be a reason to reject a coach, even though the colors or decors are extremely poor reasons to buy one. Yet there are countless
Buyers who bought their coach because they were blown away by the appearance. The colors were right, the interior décor was right, and the look of the coach was the deciding factor.

Some buyers consider the smell of cigars or pets to be a reason to walk away from a purchase. Everyone has those hard to define reasons to not buy a coach and it might not be possible to think of all those things and add them to a list. But the buyer will know when they look at the coach.

Budget considerations come into play because if your first priority is a 2 slide XLII you cannot pull that off with a non-slide XL budget. If you do not know what is realistic, narrow your list of wants and needs and then go all over the internet looking at asking prices for all coaches with those features. It will not take long to develop a range of prices for you to evaluate relative to your budget. As stated previously make certain your budget includes not only the purchase price, but the dollars required to bring the coach up to a safe and reliable condition. Along with the analysis of asking prices should be an understanding the listed prices are almost always negotiable. Almost is the key word however because some coaches are so exceptional, and the seller knows the market that the asking price may not be negotiable. Conversely some owners plow a lot of money into upgrades that do not add a lot, if any value, but don’t realize the buyers are not willing to pay more than fair market value just because the coach has a new $50,000 paint job in colors the owner likes.

This may sound petty, but the devil is in the details. It is our practice to load and unload with each trip. That usually involves bringing clothes, bedding, food and miscellaneous items into the coach prior to the trip. At the end of the trip we pull everything out until the next trip so it can be laundered, or put back in the house refrigerator. That loading and unloading is a pain. It is not a lot of fun carrying laundry baskets into the coach given the relatively small door opening and relatively steep steps, so even if we could fit an H3 into our garage we would have to have a very strong reason for preferring an H3 because the added steps and the 90 degree turn in the steps would make us consider if the H3 is worth the added effort. Then after considering the added effort to load and unload we would consider what it is like traveling with family or another couple. In an H3 the driver is sitting in a little cubby hole on an entirely different level than the passengers and is excluded from the socializing while driving. The driver is on the same level and part of the socializing on X models so in total we would opt for an XL. I mention this because there are going to be a lot of things to consider before focusing on a specific model.

Unless I wanted slides I do not think an XLII would be a better choice than the XL. While most if not all XLII coaches have gotten past the issue of skin delamination, either by having repairs or being found to not need them the XLII is a more expensive
coach to own and maintain. Skin or glass repairs are expensive and not something the average owner is going to tackle. If you ding a door skin you are not just going to drill out a few pop rivets and put on a new skin with the XLII. The same can be said for glass replacement which involves larger and heavier window glass and in the case of side windows specialized skills. Then there is the concern relating to air leaks and push in fittings.

But if you want slides, the entire selection process changes.

**Slides**

Once the decision to buy a coach with Prevost slides has been made, the XL (rivet) coaches are no longer going to be considered. The search will shift towards later model H3 coaches or XLII coaches. In considering slides a lot of thought needs to go into how the coach will be used. If the coach is going to be driven a lot, and time spent in one spot is going to be limited to one or two nights, or in rest areas or Walmart parking lots slides might not be the best choice. If on the other hand the coach is going to spend longer periods in RV resorts or parks it then becomes more like a second home rather than transportation slides make a lot of sense. For a long time a major use of our coach was in doing trade shows or visiting sales offices around the country. In that case we were either in one spot for short time periods, such as overnight, or the only time we were in the coach was to sleep. Slides made no sense until we began using our coach as we do today.

No discussion of slides would be complete without talking about the benefits and drawbacks of slides. There is no discussion or debate needed regarding the ability of slides to alter the complete character of a coach. Without slides a coach has a more confined feel to it. A non slide coach is definitely livable but it does not have the spacious feel of a coach with slides. Opening up slides changes a coach from a narrow “tunnel” to a wide open living area.

But there are negative aspects to a slide that are facts, not opinion. First, a slide coach is going to require slide maintenance. Most of the time the slides work well. But like all mechanical things, they break, go out of adjustment, or replacement of wear items is needed. The most obvious Prevost slide maintenance cost is slide seal replacement. That alone is going to require a $4000 plus expense per slide room. I don’t think it would be unreasonable to assume a slide seal has a “life” and that life could be 5 or 10 years.

But the cost of having slides is reflected in the purchase price, new or used, and the fact you are going to burn more fuel dragging around the extra weight having slides imposes. A lot of additional structural reinforcing is required and the weight of that
means more fuel required to go down the road. That extra weight may also limit how much of your “stuff” you can carry and remain under the Prevost axle weight limitations.

To add to the negative aspects of slides, they make the living space feel more spacious but the penalty is the loss of headroom in the bays due to the slide room opening reinforcing as well as the loss of interior storage or closet space as a result of the room required to accommodate the slide mechanism. Each slide costs about 8 or 9 inches of space on each side of the slide room. The combined loss in a 2 slide coach might be 30 inches or more of space on the side with slides. That 30 inches represents the space required for a pantry, or long closet or maybe even room for a washer and dryer. You will not be able to put all you carry in your non-slide coach into your new slide coach.

So when your choice regarding slides is considered the bottom line is if the increased open living area is worth not only the expense and loss of storage space, the cost of maintenance and purchase price, but the loss of utility of the entire coach when the slides are in such as when traveling. In some, if not all slide coaches space to move front to rear is restricted, certainly less than a non-slide coach. Additionally if the coach has a bedroom slide, with the slide in access past the bed to a closet or drawers may be restricted or blocked completely.

On this choice there is no correct opinion because when all aspects of slides are considered it is always going to boil down to personal preference. The market clearly favors slides as can be seen by the complete lack of non-slide coaches in later model years.

One occasional question is asked regarding non-Prevost slides. There are several coaches that have been converted with slides, but the slides were not designed and installed by Prevost. Usually the question is asked in the context of the purchase of a coach with those aftermarket slides versus a coach with only Prevost slides.

If any of the non-Prevost slides were a serious concern there likely would have been posts on the Prevost forums. I cannot recall any owner’s cries for help or making serious negative comments. In fact some slides, such as HWH mostly used on Vantare coaches have gotten a lot of praise. Before I considered a coach with non-Prevost slides however I would research to find out if they have a history of reliability, if they are supported, and if there is any maintenance such as seals, and what a typical seal replacement cost. It cannot be overstated that sealing a slide against leaks is critical because if there is leakage and mold and mildew grows as a result the health risk is great and the cost of remediation may cause the coach to be totaled.
Over the road heat and air conditioning (OTR), Prevost installed.

Few topics inspire as much debate as whether a coach should or should not have Prevost installed OTR. Just so my remarks are taken as presented let it be known I do not want a coach that does not have OTR. That is a deal breaker for me.

But having said that it is easy to present some facts. The lowest output on a Prevost OTR system for A/C is about 80,000 BTU, with current models putting out about 109,000 BTU. The system was designed to keep 45 or 50 passengers in a sealed coach comfortable when driving across southern AZ in the summer with the sun beating down on the coach. Each passenger is the equivalent of a 500 watt heater in each seat. The system is robust and capable of not only cooling under adverse conditions, it is also capable of keeping the coach warm in temps below 25 degrees F below zero. (We have driven in those conditions and know personally the heat provided is ample also.) A coach with OTR is not only convenient to operate with respect to keeping the entire coach comfortable, it proves to be a real asset if rapid temperature changes are needed. When a coach has been heat soaked or is very cold it is really nice to have OTR, even if it is only going to be used as a supplement to the house systems. We have left a comfortable coach in the morning, only to return to a very hot coach because we forgot to turn on the A/C units. It was nice being able to start the coach, run the OTR along with the Cruiseairs to have a previously hot coach at comfortable temps within a short period of time.

OTR is not without its negatives. First and most obvious is it takes horsepower to drive the large six cylinder compressor. Having said that it should be noted that the energy actually required to maintain a coach temperature is going to be the same whether the cooling is done by the house A/C units via an inverter or the generator or a converter installed full coach system. OTR will impact mileage, but that cost is likely to be in the .1 to .2 MPG range. Those are tenths of a mile per gallon so the penalty is not substantial.

The condenser requires about 20 inches of depth in a bay and so does the evaporator so it costs about ½ the space of a bay total. If bay space is important that additional ½ bay may prove more important than having OTR. Do not be led to believe OTR uses an entire bay as some salesmen continue to state. The space between the condenser and evaporator compartments on an OTR equipped coach is used by the fuel tank(s).

A converter is not only going to charge more for OTR because of the cost of the option on a chassis, the converter has to do a lot of extra engineering and interior work to balance the flow and distribution of supply air and to provide ample return air flow.
The offset is it retains it value in resale.

All coaches have driver’s air. OTR equipped or not it is likely the front passenger and driver can remain comfortable without running other house systems. Almost every non OTR coach also has the ability to run at least one A/C unit from the inverter(s) so in addition to driver’s air there is going to be approximately 13,500 to 15,000 BTU of cooling from the inverter powered A/C unit, Maybe more if two can be in operation at the same time. Also if the driver chooses to run the generator every A/C unit on the coach can be run for a total of as much as 54,000 to 60,000 BTU of cooling available in addition to driver’s air.

Some converters install their own “whole coach” A/C system and either they or loyal owners have taken to calling these supplemental systems “over the road air” or “OTR” A new buyer has to learn the difference because coaches equipped with Prevost OTR typically command higher resale prices and have greater capability. The cooling ability of a converter installed system cannot be compared in any way to Prevost OTR.

Typically converter installed full coach systems used when driving have an automotive style or size A/C compressor and multiple evaporator coils located inside the coach. Owners of these systems usually report good results, typically saying they are able to keep the entire coach comfortable. All full coach A/C systems are going to be in need of maintenance, but anecdotal evidence suggests such converter installed systems have had some reliability issues. Compressors have been mentioned as more frequent failures than would be expected.

The bottom line on the OTR discussion has to begin with a recognition of the buyer as the sole decider as to what constitutes comfortable. It is widely accepted that with the greater than 80,000 BTU capability of Prevost installed OTR that system is capable of keeping the coach at any temperature desired by the passengers. Temperature extremes apparently have no affect on the system.

If you as a buyer take advice as to whether OTR is a deal breaker or not keep one very critical fact in mind. Nobody can define what is comfortable for you, except you. If you are happy in colder temps and warmer temps get you uncomfortable make sure you test a non-OTR equipped coach very well to determine if it will maintain temps in your comfort range. I know I like cool temps, to the point that when my windshield and side windows are condensing moisture on the outside of the coach it is typically just right inside the coach for me. In terms of numbers I want the inside of the coach in the 70 degree range and I want cold air blowing on me. So I have a clear bias towards OTR. My aunt and uncle on the other hand would never consider turning on a fan or their A/C unless and until the temps inside their house were 85 degrees
or above. What constitutes comfortable varies with the individuals. I suspect most owners would find a converter installed whole coach system adequate.

As a buyer, however make certain you fully understand the plusses and minuses of each system including the costs of maintenance, storage space, etc. before deciding which to add to your wish list.

**Roof Air conditioning units or Cruiseairs?**

By definition roof air conditioners are fully self contained air conditioners that enclose both the condensing and evaporator systems that mount on the roof of the coach. The roof air units can distribute cool air exclusively from their installed location or ducted to distribute air through the length of the coach.

A Cruiseair is what is known as a split unit with the evaporator system installed in the house portion of the coach and comprised of an evaporator coil and a blower to distribute cool air through the coach. The condenser part of the system includes the condensing coil, a condenser fan and a compressor and is typically located in the belly of the coach, such as behind the front bumper, or in the space between bays on each side of the coach. Cruiseair units are not ducted, but are located so each unit cools (or heats) a specific general area.

Each type of house AC system has strengths and weaknesses.

Roof A/C systems are relatively inexpensive because they are produced in large volumes and are supplied to the entire RV industry. Their output is typically 13,500 to 15,000. They can be supplied with heat strips or used as heat pumps depending on the design.

They have a distinct advantage over Cruiseair units in that the condenser is always drawing in air that is at ambient temperature. By mounting them on the roof they are not trying to cool the condenser coil with heated air radiating from a very hot highway. Some coaches with roof airs have experienced damage to roof airs because they usually add some height. Usually they are not higher than a satellite dish, so if the dish is not getting damaged, the roof airs will not get damaged. I has not been unusual for roof air owners to find the plastic enclosure on their roof air separated from the coach and is likely laying in the median or on the shoulder somewhere. Usually damage, such as a low tree limb might do cracks the shell and at some point the shell fails and flies off.

Their drawback is roof air units are noisy compared to Cruiseairs. Roof air units are not known for their long service life, although some have lasted for a couple of
decades.

Cruise airs are offered with outputs of around 13,000 BTU, and because noise sources are in part isolated from the coach living area the operation of the units is relatively quiet. The condensers being located in the belly of the bus keep the noise of the condenser fan and the compressor away from the living area.

Unlike roof air units which often are cheaper to replace than repair, Cruiseair units are robust and can be serviced. They are expensive so a repair is often the choice rather than replacement. The components used are available from sources like Dometic, or from WW Grainger and those components are typically of industrial or marine quality.

Cruiseairs have drawbacks. They take up bay space. Generally the converters place them in areas rarely offered for storage, such as in the area near fuel tanks or behind the front bumper so the real loss of space is not a big issue. The serious drawback is when driving on a highway that has gotten excessively hot from the sun, the heat radiating from the highway cuts back sharply on performance and in extreme cases may cause the unit to shut down. Later model conversions were not as affected as early conversions but the potential should be considered, especially if the owner does extensive travel in the desert southwest in August.

When making a decision about A/C systems buyers should recognize a rule I state often. If the coach is equipped with OTR it really does not matter if the coach has Cruiseairs or roof air A/C units in terms of comfort when driving. Cruise airs are very nice to have in the sense that when parked they are drawing ambient air through them and they are pleasant to experience in the house due to low noise levels. But if the coach does not have Prevost OTR do not depend on Cruiseairs to keep you cool under all conditions, but be safe and insist on roof airs.

The discussion is not complete without discussing actual operation of A/C systems. First, recognize we all have different definitions of comfortable temps. But it is my opinion a coach without OTR, and with only 3 A/C units has the potential to be uncomfortable. It is my opinion a 45 foot coach should have 4 A/C units. This is especially true of coaches with slides.

In all but the rarest of conditions a coach that has not been allowed to get heat soaked can stay comfortable with just two A/C units operating. That involves shading the interior with the blinds or awnings to prevent the sun from adding heat the A/C units cannot over come. But once a coach gets into an uncomfortable temperature range, even four A/C units working hard are gong to take a while to get the coach comfortable. One key to remaining comfortable is to never allow the coach to get
uncomfortably warm. When considering a coach keep in mind 3 A/C units will be ample under all but extreme circumstances, but if the coach gets especially hot inside it is going to be a struggle to bring temps into a comfortable range.

If one A/C unit on a 4 unit coach fails you will still have 3 units to keep you comfortable when sitting or driving. If a 3 A/C equipped coach has a failure the two remaining, depending on their location can prove inadequate. Running all 4 house air conditioners of either type is going to demand you practice energy management. With four units running it will not take much more load such as a water pump, air compressor, a hair dryer, etc. from tripping shore power. Having four A/C units does not mean you are going to run all four at one time, or ever.

Bottom line........The choice of roof air units or Cruiseairs is going to be greatly influenced by whether the coach has OTR or not. Neither of the two choices is perfect so as a buyer you have to pick the type of A/C units that suit your requirements. And as a buyer remember if the seller tells you he was always comfortable that means comfortable to his standards for comfort, not yours.

Absent from the discussion has been a mention of the “package” units some converters used. They typically are combination evaporator and condenser units combined into a single box. The hot air from the condenser is exhausted from the unit usually out the belly of the coach, and the supply air is distributed through the living quarters via ductwork not unlike a house. These larger units are located in a bay.

The problem is few of these units were used compared to the number of coaches with Cruiseairs or roof air units, and now the original units installed in coaches are not supported by the factory. A replacement unit can be installed but the cost of the unit plus installation can run above $5000. They are repairable to an extent.

Floor plans

There is no single best floor plan. Some are ideal for the needs of multiple occupants, some work better for a single or pair of occupants. Some floor plans lend themselves to providing privacy, others make privacy difficult. Some have enclosed or private toilet rooms, others have an open toilet plan.

Some have bunks for kids, some have provision for two people only. There are floor plans for a main bathroom with a ½ bath, others only one bathroom.

Some living rooms (salons) have two sofas, some have a sofa and two chairs, and others have a sofa and a single chair. I have seen a salon area with 4 captains
The topic of floor plans doesn’t get a lot of interest because a buyer either likes one or not. What a buyer can and should do is list the features of a floor plan that are important such as a private toilet or a queen bed or two sofas. While they may or may not be deal breakers it is important to add the preferred configuration to the list of wants and needs. A buyer has to think through how the coach will be used to determine what works best.

A good example is the salon configuration. A very common plan now is to have a sofa and a single chair, often a recliner with a footrest or ottoman, and an adjoining cabinet with a shallow drawer for a laptop computer. The drawback to that configuration is if another couple joins the couple that owns the coach it will be clear than almost all the time someone is going to be sitting in the dining area. The sofa may be large enough for three people, but most often only two will sit there, a third will be in the recliner, and the fourth person will end up at the dinette unless the passenger seat up front can be spun around to become part of the salon seating. The devil really is in the details.

**Batteries**

It used to be that the only variation in batteries was the number of flooded cell lead acid batteries. But as battery technology has changed, so has the recognition that there are varying types and numbers of batteries available, and how the coach is to be used makes batteries a serious consideration or not.

If the coach is equipped with Lithium Ion batteries, it has the latest technology and it is not a system that is going to lend itself to modification. But most coaches still have more conventional batteries, so an owner can choose to modify either the number or type of batteries.
Generally speaking the market has chosen to equip the coaches with AGM batteries, and Lifeline has become the standard. AGM batteries are durable, do not require the addition of water, and have a good service life based on how well they were maintained.

An alternate type of battery is the gel cell battery. Gel cell batteries can perform as well as an AGM but are more sensitive to charging current level and high temperatures. A coach could have a bank of lead acid batteries, but as a practical matter they are all but gone for our application.

All batteries store a certain amount of energy, and the amount you need depends on the planned use of the coach. If the intent is to spend a lot of time dry camping, without hookups to electric power it is better to have an ample number of large capacity batteries. The downside is the batteries are heavy and expensive. That suggests if the coach is used to go from one RV resort to another the fewer batteries the better. Why carry 8 large batteries in the bay, adding weight and considerable expense if the coach is used to travel to the evening’s power plug?

When considering a coach the number and size of batteries should not be a deal breaker, but it is a factor when considering a coach. With batteries as expensive as they have become it is not unusual for a new set in a small four battery bank to cost $3000.

As a buyer battery condition is going to be an important consideration, especially as the number and size of batteries increases. The way a coach uses batteries along with the date codes offers an indication of battery condition, although there is no substitute for separating the batteries and testing them individually.

Batteries that are in a power pole to power pole coach and that are relatively new are likely good for years. Older batteries, especially those that were used in a coach in which the owner relied on autostart and did a lot of dry camping may have limited remaining life. As a buyer it is reasonable to determine if a large expenditure for batteries can be expected sooner, rather than later.

**Tires**

Regardless of the vintage of coach it is likely the size of the tires is going to present an issue when having to replace them. We do not have the size tires typically found in stock at the local dealer. We may not even have a size stocked at the closest warehouse. When the need for tires arises the best advice is to plan ahead.
When selecting a coach the size and condition of tires is going to become a factor in the decision. We as owners have all been confronted with availability issues as well as cost issues. The debate will never end regarding the option of always getting Michelin tires as opposed to using other brands. There should be no debate about when to replace tires and it has become a very good practice to consider replacement at about 6 years of age or when cracks begin to appear in the treads or sidewalls. Tire dressing hides a lot of sins, but the date codes reveal when tires need replacement. Do not be mislead by the amount of remaining tread.

Our coaches were using 12.00 X 22.5 tires in olden times. Then Prevost began using 315 X 22.5 tires on all coaches. Neither of the two sizes listed are common sizes, but they are no longer so rare they could not be bought and delivered in a relatively short time.

But as axle weight ratings increased the decision was to use 315 tires on the drive axle and 365 tires on the tag and steer. As a buyer you not only have to consider the age of the tires on the coach being purchased, but how you are going to find replacements if there is an issue while on the road. So far coaches with 365 tires have been delayed for as much as a week because of the lack of availability of 365 tires. If a coach has all 315 tires the problem of getting back on the road is not as complex.

Owners converted a lot of coaches from all 315 size tires to 365 tires either on the steer axle only or on the tag and steer axles. That combination makes getting back on the road a bit of a challenge if the 365 tire is what has let go. 365 tires look cool however. It has been reported by owners who made the change from 315 to 365 tires the handling and ride improved. There may be better availability in the future because high end conventional motor homes are now being provided with 365 steer and tags, and 315 drive tires. That will only help increase the demand. Given an option (I don’t have that option) I would want a coach equipped with 315 tires all around.

**Delamination**

For reasons never reported some XLII coaches have had issues with the bond between the skin and the frame failing. The problem is not exclusive to the XLII, has happened on some H3 buses also, but not to the extent seen on the XLII.

Minor issues relating to loose skin panels can be easily repaired, such as a loose bay door skin, but when contemplating the purchase of a specific XLII as a buyer you need to verify the coach has been checked by Prevost and found to be in perfect condition, or has been checked and repaired using the rivet method which includes
resealing of all panels plus adding rivets around the entire perimeter of the panels as well as zee strips for moisture protection and decorative trim bands on the vertical joints.

Buyers and sellers have to understand only Prevost can do a skin evaluation. Prevost has devised methods to verify the skin is OK, or to find it needs some remediation. Prevost will then advise if repairs are required and not only provide an estimated cost, but an indication of how much if any participation they will have in the cost.

There is no debate about this issue. This is mentioned here because if an XLII coach is being considered a buyer has to understand skin issues have been a problem and without proof the issue has been addressed by the seller it has to become a mandatory test by Prevost.

One of the worst decisions a buyer of an XLII can make is to ignore this issue and not ask for proof the problem has been solved, or does not exist. Repairs to the skins on an XLII can reach or exceed $50,000 and take months to repair. In the interest of attempting to save money, some owners have had “repairs” made by service providers other than Prevost. I compare this to having heart issues treated by a dermatologist.

Service records

New buyers do not know what they do not know. That is not an opinion, but fact. No coach is going to be easily understood by the first time buyer. There are many systems and sub systems. The coach needs service on a regular basis to a schedule created by Prevost or a component manufacturer. There are many scheduled service events ranging from cleaning the A/C filters, to replacing tires or changing oil. A potential buyer must understand that nobody selling a coach will look you in the eye and state “I have had this coach for 10 years and haven’t done a damn thing as far as maintenance”. But almost every single seller will say “this coach has been serviced regularly by Prevost or the converter” or “this coach has been well maintained by my own mechanic“. The seller of every coach will tell you the coach has been well maintained. Some sellers lie. As a buyer you have to determine if the coach has had the good maintenance the seller wants you to believe.

When they say that ask for the documentation. As a buyer maintenance history is the first clue towards evaluating the coach’s condition. Maintenance is not just changing oil once a year. Maintenance is not having the coach detailed. If an owner claims the coach has been properly maintained yet cannot produce any records or documentation ask for the master maintenance schedule that lists when stuff has been done or has to be done. If it cannot be produced as a buyer you must consider
the coach is in serious need of maintenance. Nobody on the planet can mentally track the needed maintenance events. Nobody. Claims to the contrary are male bovine exhaust.

Maintenance is adhering to or exceeding the various required schedules along with items not specifically listed anywhere, such as vacuuming the refrigerator condenser coils, or changing the A/C filters, or replacing the air bags, air dryer, or power steering filter. You need to start by comparing maintenance logs or records with the Prevost service interval list. Prevost has a comprehensive service schedule that is available online and is coach specific. That is the starting point you will use to check off the reported service events. Keep in mind a coach that gets an oil change and lubed once a year or every 10,000 or 12,000 miles already fails to meet the maintenance requirements that call for 6200 mile chassis lubes. What else was ignored?

Nobody, including Prevost or the converter can possibly track and insure all maintenance has been done. The owner has to be specific and tell the service provider what has to be done. Yes Prevost may have done a great job of changing oil and lubing the chassis, but it is not their role to remind you that you are one year overdue for a transmission fluid change. So as a buyer you have hit the jackpot if the seller has a master schedule for maintenance and logs each event as it is completed. The seller gets all A’s if he has a schedule that is of a preventive nature, rather than waiting until something fails.

Buyers who want a coach that has a proven history of a strong and complete preventive maintenance program are a seller’s worst enemy. Typically those buyers are seeking a coach with not only excellent maintenance records, they also expect the maintenance program to emphasize prevention rather than reacting to problems. A buyer should understand a coach with detailed service records and that has been on a good preventive maintenance program is going to have a higher value. Be prepared to pay more for a coach with a proven and documented history.

If good service documentation is not available the best advice that can be offered is to do a 100% service that includes all fluids, filters, etc. and use that as a starting point for adhering to the scheduled maintenance. Don’t forget to include everything that requires service from the generator to the house appliances. Make sure your budget reflects the cost to zero out all maintenance because it will not be a small amount of money.

**Mileage and generator hours.**

A Prevost coach was designed for steady use as a commercial vehicle. It was intended to be used often and for extended periods. Some components on the coach
actually are designed to perform better when used. Tires for example benefit from frequent use by having compounds that prevent aging released as the tire rolls. A coach that has few hours and spends its life in storage can begin to exhibit problems due to lack of exercise such as suspension valves that do not move freely.

Yet despite knowledge to the contrary sellers often place a much higher value on a coach that has very low miles. And buyers also think there is something magical about buying a 10 year old coach with 30,000 miles. There is no doubt low miles may be beneficial in some respects, but a buyer should be wary. If the coach has not been used much is the owner willing to change engine coolant when the coach only has added 6,000 miles in the two year life of the coolant? Or was the transmission fluid changed at 4 years even though it has low mileage?

Was the low mileage coach used as a second home for long periods, but rarely driven? If that is the case what condition will the interior and its appliances be in? That means the coach has spent a lot of its life, outdoors exposed to the sun. Is the clear coating on the roof flaking off or is the sealing material used on roof penetrations cracked and beginning to leak? Are the tires prematurely cracking? There actually may be less wear and tear on a coach that has piled up some miles over a few years compared to a coach that served as a stationary home for many months over the same number of years.

A coach that has low miles may be excellent, but if the coach is a low mileage coach it might be worth doing an extensive inspection to verify everything works to the extent necessary. Lack of use can be damaging. The drive trains were designed for many miles of use, and sometimes a 15 year old coach with 30,000 miles may prove to have more problems than the same age coach with 150,000 miles and a record of steady maintenance. It is not hype when the manufacturer expects a coach to run a million miles or more.

The same can be said of generators. The generators typically found in our coaches are built for long life. They are designed to be run for long hours under heavy load. It is not uncommon for entertainer coaches to have the same generators that have accumulated 30,000 to 40,000 hours.

The best thing for our generators is to run them often, for long periods and under load. In fact, for those who want to give their generators good exercise, instead of using OTR, or relying on the inverters to run the A/C units, crank up the generator and turn on all A/C units set to your favorite coach temp. The fuel cost is going to be minimal and the hours of use and the loads will give your coach alternator a rest and you will seem to have more power.
Buy cheap and do your own work

On occasion there will be a once in a lifetime deal on a coach. All the planets will line up and the coach that checks all the boxes on your wish list will come on the market for a price that defies logic. If you have done your homework, know the market, have the money or financing in place, and can react quickly you may actually luck out and get the coach of your dreams for significantly less than market value. And that coach will have a pristine service history, boxes of records relating to maintenance, and it will need nothing except a license plate. And if you do find and buy that coach you should go out and play the Powerball Lottery. The odds are similar.

It is true that the good coaches, even when priced fairly are not going to sit in the market for long, and as a buyer you must be prepared to take action when that good coach becomes available.

But coach conditions all fall under the proverbial bell curve. Some are exceptionally good and their price is likely to reflect that good condition. Most by far are average. They haven’t been trashed, they have had decent maintenance, but might benefit from a little TLC. At the other end of the bell curve might be your coach. It may have all that you seek, and even better, it is available for below the market prices, but that is because it needs tires, it has the leans, the furniture needs some re-upholstery, and there are some unknowns such as the condition of the pneumatic system. There are two schools of thought. One is to walk away until your coach in much better condition comes along.

Or you can bite the bullet, and buy the coach, hoping the cost of repairs will not push your investment above market value. Buying any coach is somewhat of a crap shoot. Buying through the converter who stands behind the coach is a pretty safe purchase. Buying from a dealer who might be persuaded to fix some items and stand behind the coach on a limited basis is better than nothing, but a private sale, especially of a coach with known issues takes guts, mechanical skills, or luck. Usually you need a combination of all three.

Being a bottom feeder can be advantageous. Under loved and under priced coaches can be restored to mechanically great condition and even to a superb appearance. The ideal purchaser however is going to do his own work because hiring people to repair and restore gets very expensive, very fast. If you as a buyer have no experience with big heavy vehicles, or even a Prevost just be aware parts are expensive and some basic understanding of the coach and systems is going to be required.

It is a great hobby, and a capable buyer can get a great coach cheaply in exchange
for a lot of sweat equity.

**Bottom line**

As a buyer you have a lot of decisions to make. You have to set a budget, you have to decide what kind of coach fits not only your budget, but your wants and needs. You need to take the time even before you begin kicking tires to learn what is out in the market and what the price ranges are going to be.

Then you need to actually see coaches. You need to get a sense of scale. Photos are deceiving and what looks like a good sized salon or shower stall may be completely inadequate. As you learn by seeing coaches in person, you will find evaluating coaches from photos becomes easier.

As you narrow the search plan recognize you are going to compromise. Unless you are buying a new coach you spec out, your new to you coach will be as close as you can get to your wish list, but is almost never perfect. Recognize that you need to see the coach you intend to buy in person. You cannot detect the smell of cigars or mildew in photos. You cannot physically operate all the buttons, knobs and dials remotely. You have to be there to insure the coach does not have wear and tear and signs of abuse not visible in photos.

The good news about the purchase process based on conversations with just about everybody describing the event has been how exciting it is to seek out and buy a Prevost conversion. It is work, it requires attention to detail, it requires knowledge gained through research, talking to others, and participating on forums or email, and it requires some risk, but all seem to agree when the dust settles the purchase of a coach has been a great experience.

God luck and happy hunting........

Jon W. Wehrenberg
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