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Painting an old tourer

Admit it, there's nothing more satisfying than to own and be seen in a shiny well cared for outfit when touring. 'As smart as paint' goes the old saying but like cars, caravan bodies deteriorate with age and you need to take extra special care with if you want to keep that body beautiful.

Naturally, a van's body can suffer from stone chip damage on the move and while touch-up paints are obtainable from van dealers and specialists, they are not as freely available as car types and the shades can be discontinued quickly.

That said, a good paint specialist should be able to blend and match up a paint shade to your needs easily enough if the caravan maker can't supply it anymore.

Actual body repairs can be difficult however, unless it's left to the professionals. Older vans may have been built using a thin aluminium skin rather than GRP that's now employed. Usually, it's easier to replace aluminium panels than to have them beaten out and filled because that's a specialist job.

There again, working with fibreglass isn't so straightforward either, particularly on larger patches of damage where professional matting or gelling work may be required.

Think very carefully indeed before having your caravan resprayed. Unless an professional job is performed, repainting a tourer that's less than ten years of age will significantly devalue it! It's a very expensive job too, taking a full week's work, which means that there's little change out of £2000. Considering their resale values, it could be money down the drain. However, if you are skilled at this yourself then you could save a small fortune while also having the extra satisfaction of knowing you have done the work yourself.

A much cheaper alternative to the above is brush or roller painting. On older vans it is certainly the most cost-effective method of smartening up a tatty tourer. The secret of a first-class job without the usual brush marks showing is in the preparation and using good quality brushes or, better still, rollers, followed by a light rubbing down with fine wet/dry paper with soap and then a polish.

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Moving down to the chassis, most have been galvanised from new so rusting isn't a real problem these days. However, if the chassis rails are looking aged, then a run down followed by a coat of tough and durable Hammerite is the best cure - fairly cheap and straightforward (if uncomfortable lying on your back) to apply. If your caravan is in good nick, then the best thing to do is to keep it that way with regular washing using Fenwick's Caravan Cleaner and rinsing it off with Fenwick's Bobby Dazzler.

Take care where you store it and if it's undercover during the winter time, remove the cover and check it often. Fenwick's Overwintering is a great product for protecting your van during a long storage over winter.



Hand painted Sprite 400, 1960's model

Motor Vehicle / Caravan Paint Mix

This Paint is for any motor vehicle or caravan. It is Exterior Gloss Paint (the runny stuff not the Gel type). This is mixed;- 75% paint to 25% Clear Varnish. Then when you put it into a spray gun, you thin it 50/50 with Petrol. (Don't smoke!!!!).

I would suggest that you use a HVLP spray gun. (High Volume Low Pressure).

This mixture is used by the Travellers. I call it "Tinkers Paint".

Either way, it works and I have seen vehicles that were painted by this method 10 years ago and they are still looking good.

Thanks to Lobey Dosser for the paint mix formula

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