How To Buy a New Van

By Dave Hoffman

If it's part of your daily routine to haul around a large amount of cargo, people or both, you may be considering purchasing a van. Vans range in size, from a mini-van for families who need to transport people and their stuff to full size vans, designed to carry heavy and cumbersome cargo. Whereas SUVs are the more trendy and stylish choice for family transportation, minivans are safer and more economical. They are less expensive in cost, maintenance, insurance and get better gas mileage.

Vans come with the option of four and all wheel drive. These are safe options to consider in areas with heavy winters. If weather is not an issue models come with two wheel drive as well. Two wheel drive vehicles typically cost less and are less expensive in terms of gas mileage.

Full size vans are truck based vehicles. They range from about $25,000 to $35,000. Since they are designed for heavy loads they use a large six-cylinder engine or eight to 10 cylinder engines. Full size vans have basic safety features and few conveniences but some luxuries. The main draw of a full size van is the enormous inside. Most seat from eight to 15 comfortably. But if your purposes are carrying heavy loads or lots of people around the full size van is your vehicle. What full size vans lack in amenities or modern convenience they make up for in components that have stood the test of time. Some things to consider when purchasing a full size van are the size of the interior; how easy is access to third or fourth row seats; the towing capacity and what the seating configurations are. Some seat people in rows, some along the side of the cabin.

Minivans range in price from less than $20,000 up to $40,000 depending on how many luxury amenities you want. They have four or six cylinder engines, six being standard. Minivans can achieve brisk acceleration and more than 20 miles per gallon during highway driving. Minivans, being family oriented are among the safest vehicles you can drive. They rank high in crash test scores and many offer other safety features such as stability control and side airbags. Minivan owners can really enjoy family friendly features such as power sliding doors, easily adjustable seats, air conditioning in the back of the vehicle, storage containers and even an entertainment system including video.

Minivans are the draw of the carpooling set because they can sit seven to eight people in comfort. Most vans come with removable rear seating, but some come with second and back row seats that reconfigure by folding into the floor which is more convenient than having to remove the

seats. Some minivans have "captain's chair" style seats in the back, but others have full bench seats offering space for more people. The back seats of a mini-van are often considerate for parents who may have to attend to younger children while the car is in motion. There is a joke that the back seats of a minivan aren't meant for many children, but rather meant so that children can be seated out of reach of each other so they can't fight. Seriously, minivans can be very child oriented with options for television and DVD players in the back seats. Some offer built in car seats that take place of the ones you buy in the store. There are options for front and side airbags to protect against a collision that comes from the side. Anti-lock brakes, traction control, and sensors that alert drivers when there is a vehicle in the blind spot are other optional safety features on many models.

The large and heavy build of minivans makes them sage. Weight can be an advantage during a collision. They are more stable than SUVs. SUVs are heavy but their center of gravity is higher making them prone to rollover. Since vans ride lower to the ground they hit other cars bumper to bumper making them actually safer than SUVs.

The disadvantage is that minivans are not as easy to maneuver as SUVs or regular size cars so while they are safer in an accident it's not as easy to avoid one. But defensive driving can more than make up for that.