



# A Buyer's Guide to Choosing a Park



# Queensberry Bay Holiday Park

## Holiday Park

*You're welcome...*

Powfoot - Annan

Dumfriesshire

DG12 5PN

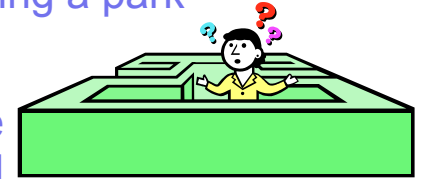


# Introduction

## Choosing a park

This guide is intended as an aid for anyone contemplating choosing a park on which to site a static holiday home.

It is a **general guide** only and the opinions expressed here are based on our own experiences and those we have seen and heard of.



All parks are different and all have different ways of doing business.

As such this is not intended as a definitive guide for any one individual or circumstance - and we accept no responsibility for any damages or loss, financial or otherwise, that may result from following any advice given here.

The recurring theme of this guide is crucial - the only way to be sure that you have the right van on the right park is to **ask questions**.

The next step is to **ask more questions**.

Finally, **ask some more questions**.

Never, ever, be afraid of asking questions - no matter how silly they may seem!



Happy hunting!  
*John, Joanne and the Team*

relax . . .

# Choosing a park



**Choosing a place to live can be scary** there are so many **things to take into account** - schools, shops, roads etc - & it's so easy to get it wrong.

## So how do we choose?

We visit the area, we ask friends, we speak to potential neighbours, we check the local council web site, read the magazines. We get the sort of information that we need to make an informed decision.

## Choosing a place for a holiday

**home can be scary** there are so many **things to take into account** - travelling distance, amenities, local facilities etc - and it's so easy to get it wrong.

## So how do we choose?

We **should** visit the area, ask friends, speak to existing residents, check the local council web site, read the magazines. But we don't. **9 out of 10 of us go on gut instinct!**

**And yet choosing the wrong park can be worse than choosing the wrong house!**

## Let us help you

We're a family run private business with **no axe to grind** - come with us through the maze of choosing your park so that, **whether you choose to buy here or elsewhere**, you'll at least have enough information to hand to make the right choice for you.

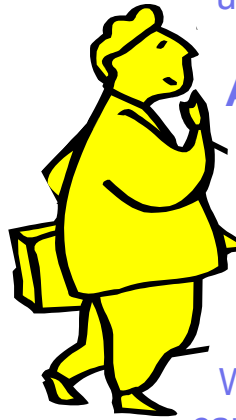


# holiday or residential ...

## Choosing a park

### Where do I start?

Before you do anything else - before you even step inside a demo caravan and fall in love with the walk in wardrobe - you need to decide what you'll use the caravan for.



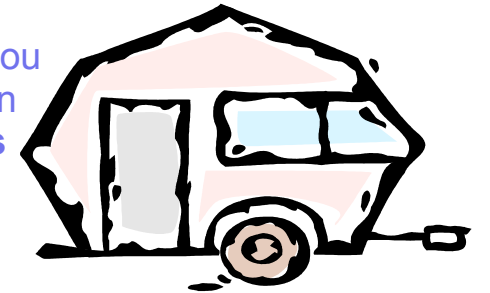
Are you looking for a holiday home or for a permanent (usually retirement) home?

This question is crucial as it determines both the type of van or lodge you need and the type of park you can use.

When you view a park and the manager tells you that you can't live there permanently that's not just so that he can have a break in the quiet season – it's him telling you **how the park is registered with the local planning authority.**

**It is a holiday park and is NOT ALLOWED to have permanent residents.**

*This does make sense if you think about it. To get residential status a park has to convince the planning department that there's capacity in the local community for all these extra residents. Can the doctors' surgery or hospitals cope? What about the roads? So – if you're looking for a permanent place to live – if you're looking in fact to sell your home and relocate – you are restricted to a residential park – a park that's had all that capacity formally approved.*



# where the heart is . . .

## Choosing a park

A holiday park on the other hand also has to have its capacity approved – but on a temporary basis. So you can register with the local doctor – but only as a visitor. You must at all times have a permanent address elsewhere.

### How do I know whether it's residential or holiday?

You can check the park's web site or ask the owner / manager or check the park's site licence – which is always available.

There's also a professional body that governs the proper activity of member parks – the British Holiday and Homes Parks Association (BH&HPA) - and their web site [www.bhhpa.org.uk](http://www.bhhpa.org.uk) has links to various fact finding sites, including [www.ukparks.com](http://www.ukparks.com) – a register of registered parks both residential and holiday.



### Can't I just pretend I live somewhere else?

You can – but you'll most likely be asked to leave the park because you'll be putting the park's licence at risk.



### My friend stays on a holiday park – and simply goes abroad when the park's closed – is that allowed?

It's not about what you do when the park's shut – it's about where you pay your council tax and where you're registered with a doctor.

You can't buy a caravan on a holiday park and make that your home.

# oh give me a home . . .

## Choosing a park

### **But I don't like the residential parks!**

It is true that residential parks have a different feel from holiday parks – but that's why people come on holiday to holiday parks!! A residential park is a mini community – and that suits the market it's aimed at.

Residential park residents also have more rights in terms of land and notice – and again that suits someone who's sold their house – they need that security.



As noted you need to decide at the start what you'll be using the caravan for.

From hereon in this guide deals only with the holiday park - which we are. Residential parks are very different and for further information you might try [www.itlhomesearch.com](http://www.itlhomesearch.com)



# subletting . . .

## Choosing a park

### Can I rent out my van?

So we know we're after a holiday park – but what if we want the ability to make some money from the van we've bought? The obvious way to do this is to let it out.

This is a real hot potato – and tends to divide parks down the middle - but we'll deal with it as fairly as we can.

Now don't get confused – we're not talking here about letting someone use your holiday home. Most parks will allow you to **lend** your van to family or friends for no financial implication. They may, like us, require these guests to check in when they arrive and out when they leave - so that we know they're here. And they may, like us, require your guests to abide by our rules while here.

No, we're talking here about **subletting** the van to strangers.

Very few parks allow this.

Why?



They'll tell you it's because of the grief that letting can bring. In fact it's because there's no real money to be made at it. Letting only makes good financial sense if you're letting in **huge numbers** (hundreds of vans). We have a small hire fleet for example. We do this because it brings **fresh faces onto the park**. We don't do it for the money it makes – after you've paid the liability insurance, annual inspections and repairs as well as the ongoing laundry and cleaning costs, it simply is not a money spinner.



# every little helps . . . ?

## Choosing a park

Guests never treat the letting units with the respect that you'd treat your own van. **Why should they?** They've paid for this facility after all. This means that the vans don't last as long and that things go wrong that a private owner would never come across.



**There are some parks that do allow subletting.**

They tend to be the very large parks where they already let hundreds of vans – and yours is added to the fleet. You would typically pay higher site fees, insurance and repair bills and you would get in return a percentage (after the park's commission) of the rental income. You would normally be able to use the van yourself for so many weeks of the year.

It does work for some parks and it does work for some caravan owners. **BUT** you can only sublet if the park allows you to do so. If you sublet without the authority of the park you'll be in **breach of your licence agreement** – and all that that entails.

### **Why do parks get so hot under the collar about this?**

The answer's simple. Subletting not conducted via the park can significantly affect the status quo of the park as a whole. How would you feel if you bought a van on a park because it suited your lifestyle as a bird watcher say, and then found your time there ruined because your neighbour was subletting to a group of disaffected teenagers?

Where subletting is allowed, it's closely controlled by the park for precisely this reason.

**Subletting is generally only found on the larger, family orientated parks.**



# location, location, location . . .

## Choosing a park

**So we're gradually narrowing down the options!  
The next point is how far would you go?**

Our home is chosen for any number of reasons. It may be close to our work. Or schools. Or family. It may be close to the railway. Or bus route. Wherever it is, its location is normally decided by our **obligations** if you like.

When we choose a park for our static caravan we're actually choosing a **second (or holiday) home**. This is a different kettle of fish. It can be miles from anywhere or just around the corner - it really doesn't matter so long as, when we close the door and switch on the kettle, we feel we're **home**.

There is **one major deciding factor** though that prevents us all from buying up an island in the Caribbean - to get best use of your holiday or second home, it has to be within a **reasonable travelling distance** (or time) of home.

The experts reckon that 1.5 to 2 hours on a straight run is enough to make us feel we're on holiday, but not so much that we dread the journey!

**Before you even step foot onto a park have a look at the map.**

Draw a circle from your home town and see what it covers.  
Then go to [www.ukparks.com](http://www.ukparks.com) to find the parks in that circle.

Make sure there's a **reasonable route** from your home to the places you're interested in. Is there a motorway? Is it single carriageway all the way? Is there a railway station? What are the buses like? **And most importantly, can you do that journey on a regular basis in 1.5 to 2 hours? If not, have another look at that map!**



# beside the sea side . . .

## Choosing a park

### Country, town or sea?

The next decision - **and it's a biggie** - is whether you want to be on the coast or inland. As a general guide we tend to choose our holiday home in an area that's the **complete opposite of where we live**. So if you live in a town, you're more likely to choose out of town for your second home and vice versa.

The **seaside** can be a wonderful place but does it suit your entire family? Do you have young children / grandchildren? Will they be safe by the sea? What sort of beach is it? Is it tidal? Are there lots of speed boats around? Is the surrounding area set up with amusement arcades or is it a nature reserve?



If it's the **country** you're after, what about midges / rivers / hay fever / traffic/ local facilities? And what about accessibility – are the roads leading to the park wide enough for 2 cars, or will you have to spend 30 minutes each day ducking in and out of passing bays every time you want to nip to the shops? Is it too quiet for you? If you live in a town it can be strange (and scary) to hear absolutely nothing at night!



On the other hand, if you're looking at a **town** location you need to consider accessibility again (including traffic jams) safety and security, as well as noise, day and night, both from traffic and local amenities. If you live in the country, getting used to the constant background noise of traffic, no matter how faint, can take some doing.

Finally, what about the effect of the elements on your caravan - should you be looking at a galvanised chassis against the sea air, or will your van be sited under trees in the country and need protection from sap? Will you need to use traffic film to protect the van from pollution?



# big or small . . .

## Choosing a park

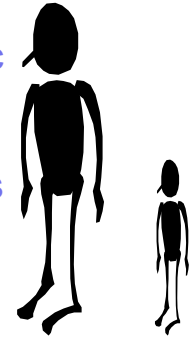


### Does size matter?

Now there's a question! Static holiday parks can vary in size from maybe 10 static holiday homes to 500 or more.

**Every park has its good and bad points** and it's easy to get caught up in the park's own advertising campaigns, so try thinking about the following:

- How big is the park in terms of:
  - Acres
  - Pitch numbers
  - Open space
- How long has the park been established?
- Does it have a clear set of rules and regulations in place?
- What facilities are on offer - and see below - "mine's a half?"
- Who owns the park - is it a small private / family company or a large conglomerate?
- Which would you prefer?
- Does the owner or manager live on site?
- What emergency arrangements are in place?
- What security arrangements are in place?
- Does the park have a hire fleet? How big is it? (a large hire fleet may mean large numbers of strangers on the park in peak season)
- Are there signs of ongoing investment or does the park look and feel run down?
- Does the park owner / manager allow / encourage you to speak to existing residents?
- As you walk around the park, how does it feel?
- What's the average age of the existing residents?



# little or large . . .

## Choosing a park

- What's the park's target market (and it will have one!)?
- Does the park have a visitors' register on display - what does it say?
- If it's a large concern with several parks are there opportunities for using the facilities on other parks under the same ownership or are they run autonomously?
- If it's a small concern, is there a chance that the park might be taken over by a larger concern in the near future - say 5 years?
- Would that bother you?
- If it's a large concern is there a chance that the park might be taken over by an even larger concern in the near future - say 5 years?
- Would that bother you?

As a **general rule** the larger the park the better the facilities.



In addition, the larger the park the more likely you are to get a choice of pitch to site your static holiday home and the more chances there will be of finding a market for your van within the park when you decide to upgrade. There's also more likely to be a sense of community on a larger park.

The smaller parks of course would disagree and they claim you can only ever get peace and quiet on a small park of less than 20 vans.

No one argument is right or wrong - it all comes down to the **park itself and you as an individual**. The only way to be sure is to **ask questions, speak to residents** and book a **short stay in one of the hire fleet** (if there is one) to get a better feel for the park.



# what is there to do . . .

## Choosing a park

### Peace and quiet - or facilities?

And remember - this has nothing to do with the size of park. We're a 219 unit park on 17 acres but we choose to have no pub or club house.

What do we mean by facilities?

"Facilities" covers anything that's available for your use or consumption on the park. This can be as basic as sewage and electricity or as sophisticated as a full leisure complex and club house.

You can't take anything for granted when looking at holiday parks. Checking that they have sewage and electricity may seem too obvious to mention - but it's not! That said most parks do have basic services. Some like ours, offer metered gas instead of those large bottles - or even wireless broadband access.

Most (except the very small parks) will have shop area for newspapers and essentials. Most will have some form of security arrangements in place.

It's at the **entertainment** level that the parks can differ so much. We offer no pub, club or bar for example and have strict rules on noise and behaviour - see below on rules and regulations.

We choose to offer peace and quiet to those that want it. We're strict in enforcing our rules and our guests and residents accept and appreciate this. We also have an adult leisure facility in the form of our spa.

Again - the emphasis here is on peace and quiet and relaxation.



# mine's a half . . .

## Choosing a park

Others parks go the other route and make their name and money from entertainment - and their rules on noise and behaviour will be different - because that's what they offer.



**Neither is right or wrong - we just cater for different parts of the market.**

This does mean though that you need to decide which is right for you.



**It's true to say that the larger parks with multiple facilities generally cater better for the family market.** Bored children can easily become a problem for other guests - and a park with a pool and play area - and maybe even some organised play time or crèche facilities - works wonders for families in general.

Older couples may - but don't always! - prefer something a little more sedate and again it's true to say that our own typical guest is 50 plus. **Perhaps once we hit 50 we begin to understand the appeal of peace and quiet!**

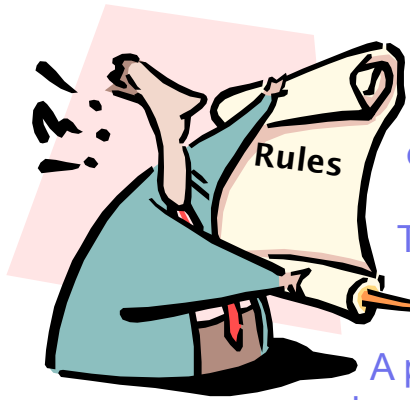
**The point to watch is – do you fit the park's target market? If you don't, you'll never be really settled there.**

**If you don't know what the target market is, take a look at the park's web site or better still ask the owners / manager - or even other residents.**



# by the book . . .

## Choosing a park



### Rules and regulations

When you site a caravan on a park (or at last on a park that's a member of our professional body, the BH&HPA (see above) you get certain **rights** and **obligations**.

These are generally set out in what's called a **license agreement**, which is read and signed in conjunction with the park's rules.

A park's rules can be one page or, more likely in this day and age, tens or even hundreds of pages.

The rules are the cornerstone of life on the park.

### Why so many rules?

Park rules underpin the status quo of any park - and you'll find that every rule on every park, no matter how "silly" it may seem, is there for a reason.

**We have some 200 pitches on our park** - which at peak times can be anything from 200 to 800 people here. We pride ourselves on maintaining an atmosphere of peace and calm and our rules are there to make sure that our park's not adversely affected by such an influx.

Obviously some parks have more rules than others - although recent health and safety legislation in the industry has affected even the most laid back park owner!



# sign here please . . .

## Choosing a park

### What if I disagree with the rules?

As a general principle, if you find you're uncomfortable with the rules of any one park, you'd be best advised to walk away and find an alternative park.

Setting yourself up for an ongoing battle with the park owner or manager for the sake of something you regard as unimportant but they regard as vital is simply **not worth the hassle** - at best you'll find every stay stressful: at worst you'll be asked to leave the park and may find that your van is not accepted by anyone else.

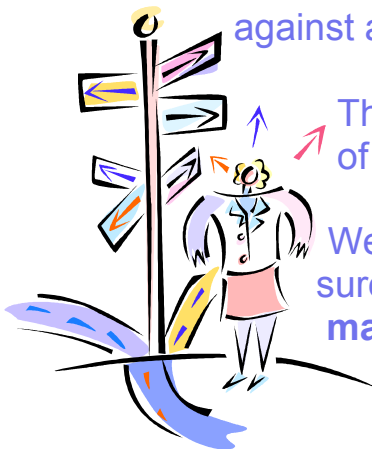
**Do therefore ask to see the rules before you commit to anything.**



### How do I know it's right?

If you've got this far you'll have looked at many parks in many locations.

You'll have done the homework and you'll be in a good position to be able to judge one park against another for your own individual purposes.



The one thing we can't guide you on is **that final choice** – that flag in the ground of where you want to spend your leisure time.

We've suggested a short stay on the park – if that's not possible do at least make sure you've seen your chosen park in good and bad weather – **a sunny day can make a world of difference!**



# last but not least . . .

## Choosing a park

Finally, have a run through the following check list:

- Do I **like** the park?
- Is it close enough to home?
- Are the roads reasonable?
- Is subletting allowed / not allowed?
- Is the park a member of the BH&HPA?
- Do the owners/ managers seem genuine?
- Is the park well cared for?
- Would I feel safe here?
- Would my family feel safe here?
- If there was no pitch available here, how would I feel (*hint – if the answer is “OK” then you’ve not found the right park yet!*)
- **Do I want to move in tomorrow?**



*It's in all our best interests that you find the right park for you. That being so, we'd like to help regardless of whether you buy here - or whether you decide that this isn't the park for you and you buy elsewhere.*

*Do please come back with any queries or concerns you may have on the process as a whole or on any more specific aspects of choosing that park.*

