

CORONAVIRUS

'Off the rails': RV sales booming as Bay Area residents hit the road to escape COVID-19 woes

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If you've thought about buying an RV during the coronavirus pandemic, you're apparently not alone.

SANTA ROSA, Calif. (KGO) -- Every day it seems, we report another way in which COVID-19 is changing our lives.

This week, we add vacations to the list.

"Got a bathroo

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There is nothing better for a boy with a new toy, than knowing he had a good excuse for buying it.

Neema plans to use the unit for work and also for and vacation.

He's had enough uncertainties of COVID-19. "So you can book hotel in advance, and at the last minute there is a surge, and boom, they cancel."

That logic seems to be peaking in the RV sales business right now.

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"It's off the rails. The train is off the rails," said Craig Smith at Santa Rosa RV, where customers keep coming. "When the virus hit, I thought I would be sitting at home playing tiddlywinks. Just the opposite is happening."

In a typical week, this dealership might sell six RVs.

Last week?

"We sold 22 of them," Smith said. "That is a record week for us. More than what we sell in a month."

In general, dealers tell us that sales have doubled.

It's a seller's market driven by a shortage of units after COVID-19 closed the RV factories.

"We're going to be running shy by the middle of summer," Smith said. "It will be fall before we get restocked. Wish we had more."

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"There was not a lot of negotiating," Neema told ABC7 about his purchase in Sacramento. "You could see the sales person was not interested. If you didn't want it, then it was okay with him."

Frederic bought on the spot.

The lure? RV's offer isolation and social distancing during this pandemic.

"You can drive hundreds of miles and interact only with a person in a gas station," said Georgianne Austin of the Escapees RV Club. "People are going to feel safer and more in control and more able to enjoy their trip."

And, they will do so in a mobile home on the road. It's one more wrinkle from a pandemic that changes us a little more with every passing day.

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