

A road trip exposes an RV to everything the highway throws at it: abrasive road film, acidic bug splatter, salt spray near coasts, tree sap at campsites, and sun that bakes paint and rubber. A methodical detailing session reduces the stress your rig endures and makes the trip easier on you. Surfaces stay cleaner longer, glass sheds rain instead of smearing, and rubber seals stay supple. It is not a matter of vanity. It is comfort, visibility, and longevity.

I keep a short log for every coach I prep. It records what I used on the exterior and interior, when the roof was decontaminated, and whether we topped with a sealant, ceramic coating, or left it bare for repaint work later. That log proves its worth on the next visit, especially when a customer returns after crossing three states and says the front cap still beads like a freshly waxed hood.

Start at the top: roof, gutters, and the first rinse

Every RV detailing session begins on the roof. Neglecting it is the fastest way to chase streaks down the sidewalls and fight reoccurring black runs. I start by blowing loose debris from AC shrouds and solar panel frames, then soak the roof with a low alkaline cleaner that will not strip sealants from painted panels. EPDM and TPO roofs demand gentler chemistry and a soft bristle brush. Fiberglass caps can take a bit more agitation, but only after testing a small area and confirming no chalky oxidation transfers excessively to the towel.

Gutters channel whatever is up top. Flushing them before washing the walls prevents tiger striping that reappears after you think you are done. I have seen brand new coaches with early staining simply because pollen and asphalt dust pooled in gutter runs. If you have solar, wipe panel glass with deionized water and a glass-specific cleaner that leaves no hydrophobic residue. The wrong product can slick the panels and reduce output.

A proper wash that respects materials

Think in stages: pre-rinse, foam, contact wash, decon, rinse. The pre-rinse removes the grit that scratches gelcoat and paint during contact. A thick foam dwell loosens bugs and tar, important if you have just run through a summer hatch. On the face of the front cap, a citrus bug remover pays off, but avoid saturating vinyl decals. I prefer a pH neutral soap for most of the body, and I switch to a dedicated degreaser only for wheel wells and the toad's rear bumper where exhaust film accumulates.

Use separate wash media for the upper and lower halves. If you only change one habit, make it this one. The lower five feet accumulate metal particles and road film that turn a mitt into sandpaper. A two-bucket method with a grit guard still matters on a coach the size of a studio apartment.

Decals, gelcoat, and painted sections

Not every RV is fully painted. Many feature long vinyl graphics or striping on gelcoat. Machine polishing on those areas requires a lighter touch and different pads. Gelcoat can handle a heavier cut to remove oxidation, but a vinyl decal will heat, smear, or even shrink if you ride it too hard. Tape edges before compounding near decals. For painted Class A or Super C coaches, a paint thickness gauge helps avoid thinning edges. If the factory clear is thin, you are better off with a light polish and a sacrificial layer like a sealant or ceramic coating, then reassess after a season.

Oxidation on gelcoat often looks worse than it is. A two-step approach, first with a microfiber cutting pad and a mid-cut compound, then with a foam pad and a finishing polish, brings the gloss back without chasing perfection

that the material will not hold. If you are new to machine work, stay away from seams and rivet lines until you have control over heat and residue management.

What a professional sees: lessons from Aaron's Automotive Ceramic Coating, Paint Protection Film and Tint - Largo, FL

On a 38-foot Class A that passed through Aaron's Automotive Ceramic Coating, Paint Protection Film and Tint - Largo, FL last spring, the owner complained about constant bug etching on the front and dull sides after each wash. The paint was sound, but the front cap had a peppering of shallow pits from lovebugs and sand. We corrected the worst areas with a careful single-step using a DA polisher and a microfiber pad, restrained the speed to control heat, and avoided overworking edges. Then we applied a ceramic coating up front for chemical resistance and easy cleanup, and a durable sealant on the sides to keep maintenance simple.

Months later, the owner reported rinsing bug guts off with a gentle sprayer instead of scrubbing. That is the experience you want. Coatings do not make a surface invincible, but they change the clean-up routine so lenses, mirrors, and front caps do not punish you for enjoying your trip.

Glass, cameras, and visibility essentials

Visibility is a safety item, not just a detailer's pride. After washing, I clay the glass if it feels sandpapery. You can feel bonded contaminants immediately if you slide a damp hand across the windshield. A light glass polish removes wiper trails. Top with a hydrophobic glass treatment on exterior windshields and side windows. On the last storm I drove through on I-75, treated glass shed water well enough that wipers ran a lower speed with no chatter, which reduced driver fatigue over hours.

Do not forget backup cameras and side view camera domes. If those lenses fog or smear, a careful plastic polish meant for polycarbonate clears them without scuffing. A tiny amount goes a long way. Rinse thoroughly so the next rainstorm does not carry residue into the housing.

Tires, wheels, and the underside that carries your trip

Wheels on coaches see more brake dust and heat cycles than most people realize. Use an iron remover only on painted and clear-coated wheels that tolerate it, and rinse generously. Raw aluminum needs a different approach and a neutral cleaner. I avoid greasy tire dressings on rigs that visit gravel or dirt, because those products pull dust in and create a gritty paste that ages the sidewalls. A water-based dressing with UV inhibitors keeps a uniform satin look and helps read sidewall condition later.

Wheel wells and suspension arms deserve a degreaser and a pressure rinse. This not only looks clean, it reveals leaks and loose hardware. I have caught a weeping shock on a towable this way. Detailing exposes maintenance points because it forces your eyes across surfaces you might ignore.

Awning fabric and slide gaskets

Awnings collect dust, tree pollen, and insect residue on the underside. Unfurl them fully, rinse, and treat with a fabric-safe cleaner. Allow them to dry before retraction to prevent mildew. Slide-out gaskets are another failure point when ignored. Clean with a mild soap and water, then apply a rubber protectant that remains dry to the touch. Sticky products attract grit that abrades the seals. Cycling slides fully in and out after treatment redistributes lubricant along the contact area.

Protection that matches your route and storage

There is no single right answer to protection, only what fits your travel and storage. Wax remains viable if you enjoy frequent hand care and your coach sleeps under cover. Synthetic sealants last longer, typically 3 to 6 months in harsh sun, and can be layered over polished paint or gelcoat. A ceramic coating raises the bar with stronger chemical and UV resistance and self-cleaning behavior that keeps maintenance light. The front cap, mirror backs, and the lower third of the sides benefit most, because they face the brunt of bugs and tar. It is not unusual for us to coat only the impact zones on first-time customers and expand later.

Paint protection film changes the story in high-abuse areas. On coaches that run coastal roads or through insect swarms, we have applied PPF on the front cap and forward-facing edges like compartment door lips and step plates. Film absorbs strikes that would chip paint and it resists the acidic bug remains that etch. It is a different investment than a coating, and it can pair with ceramic topping for easier cleaning. If you store outside in Florida sun, prioritize UV blocking measures on gelcoat and any black plastic trim that grays out quickly.

Interior detailing with the realities of living space

The cabin is a home. [ppf](#) Food odors, sunscreen, and pet hair create a film that slowly dulls surfaces. Start with a thorough vacuum using crevice tools for track rails, under dinettes, and around the doghouse in Class A cockpits. An enzyme cleaner on traffic paths removes organic spills before they set. If you have carpeted sections, a low-moisture extractor is safer than flooding fibers, especially near wood panels where wicking can cause staining.

Upholstery ranges from vinyl to leatherette to true leather on some captain's chairs. Read the tags or confirm with the manufacturer. Leatherette handles gentle all-purpose cleaner and a water-based conditioner designed for synthetic surfaces. True leather takes a pH balanced leather cleaner and a conditioner that leaves a dry finish so your clothing does not transfer oils during long drives.

Kitchen and bath are function-first. Use food-safe degreasers on galley counters, degrease the vent hood filters, and check for hidden grease beads under cabinet lips. Hard water stains around the sink lift with a mild acid cleaner and a nylon pad, but keep acids away from stone or marble inlays unless they are sealed and approved. In the bath, a non-acidic soap scum remover paired with a soft brush preserves caulk lines. Vent fans deserve a wipe to keep lint from building up.

HVAC vents and return filters accumulate fine dust that the cabin keeps circulating. Vacuum grilles with a soft brush and inspect filters for replacement. On two coaches with persistent musty smells, we ran a dry fog treatment after cleaning the evaporator coils and drains. Ozone is an option, but only with strict safety and ventilation and never while anyone, including pets, is inside. A controlled enzyme or fog application is often sufficient.

Electrical bays, generator, and delicate spaces

Not every component should be polished to a shine. Electrical bays need dusting and an inspection for corrosion, not a soaking. Use a damp towel with an electronics-safe cleaner on surfaces and avoid pressure wash near seals and grommets. Generators respond well to a degreaser on the outer casing and a careful rinse, keeping water away from intakes and electronics. Label anything you disconnect for drying so you are not debugging a no-start in the morning.



The same caution applies to satellite domes and antennas. A wipe with a plastic-safe cleaner removes film that causes drag and noise. Hinges and struts benefit from a dry PTFE spray rather than heavy grease that collects dirt.

Water spots and minerals, the quiet enemy

Hard water makes spots that bond, especially on dark paint. If you wash with tap water in a hot driveway, drying quickly reduces the chance of spotting. A deionized rinse is a luxury but pays for itself on dark coaches. If you already have spots, a dedicated water spot remover that uses mild acids can break the bond, followed by a polish if necessary. On coated surfaces, work gently and re-top the affected panel after.



Mirrors and stainless trim collect minerals aggressively. Polish stainless with a fine metal polish and seal it. On chrome, avoid aggressive compounds that cut the plating. If you are unsure what you are looking at, test in a

hidden area. I have seen stainless that looked like chrome and vice versa, and the wrong polish leaves permanent haze.

Checklist walkaround with Aaron's Automotive Ceramic Coating, Paint Protection Film and Tint - Largo, FL

Before signing off any rig, the team at Aaron's Automotive Ceramic Coating, Paint Protection Film and Tint - Largo, FL does a second walkaround under bright LED panels and natural light. That second pass catches towel streaks on lower panels and light residue on trim. We also run a hose over the windshield to verify water behavior. Coated glass should form tight beads and sheet at speed. If it drags, we re-clean and reapply.

That same walkaround doubles as a systems glance. I have noticed a cracked wiper blade, a loose ladder cap, and a missing valve stem cap in a single sweep. Detailing and basic pre-trip inspection overlap more than most owners expect. You polish not just for shine, but to see clearly what needs attention.

A short exterior pre-trip detailing checklist

- Front cap de-bugged, polished if needed, and protected with sealant, ceramic coating, or paint protection film
- Roof rinsed and gutters flushed so streaks do not redeposit on walls
- Glass clayed, polished lightly, and treated for water repellency including side windows and mirrors
- Tires cleaned, dressed with a non-greasy UV product, and wheel wells degreased to expose leaks
- Awnings and slide gaskets cleaned and treated, then fully dried before retraction

A short interior readiness checklist

- Floors vacuumed, traffic paths spot-treated, and carpet or rugs low-moisture extracted
- Cockpit glass and screens cleaned with lint-free towels to prevent glare at night
- Galley surfaces degreased with food-safe cleaner, vent hood filters rinsed and dried
- Bath surfaces de-soaped, vents wiped, and any mildew-prone corners inspected
- HVAC filters checked and returns vacuumed to cut down cabin dust

When car detailing methods meet RV scale

Most of what works in auto detailing scales up, but the stakes and ergonomics change. Car polishing on a small fender becomes panel management on a wall the size of a billboard. A dual-action polisher still rules for safety, yet pad selection and liquid choice matter more as you manage heat on bigger panels. You will swap pads often and blow them out with compressed air between sections to keep cut consistent.

Paint correction is a sliding scale on RVs. Chasing perfection on a 40-foot wall is not the same as finishing a show car. Set expectations. If decals interrupt the panel, your correction plan may become sectional: heavier cut on safe gelcoat, finesse near vinyl, then protection that evens out gloss across different materials. Aim for uniformity and protection rather than 100 percent defect removal.

Florida specifics: salt, sun, and bugs

Coaches that run Florida coasts and store outdoors need more frequent protection. UV works fast here. Plastic trim grays in months, not years, and lovebugs in spring and late summer can etch within 24 to 48 hours if left unattended. At Aaron's Automotive Ceramic Coating, Paint Protection Film and Tint - Largo, FL, we see the worst etching at the shoulders of the front cap and along mirror arms where splatter sits in the wind shadow. A sacrificial layer helps, and quick rinses during trips go a long way. A portable deionized rinse kit in your bay pays for itself after one season of dry-down without spotting at campgrounds.

If you tow a car, its trailing surface collects exhaust soot and micro-abrasive dust. Treat it like part of the RV session. A quick clay and sealant on the toad's trunk and bumper make it easier to rinse off after a long day.

Time, materials, and when to split the job

On a 30 to 40 foot coach, an exterior wash, decon, and single-step polish with a protective sealant can take 10 to 16 hours depending on oxidation and ladders. Add a ceramic coating and you may spend a full day prepping surfaces and another for application and cure, especially if humidity runs high. Interior deep cleans vary by layout, but a cockpit and living area refresh that includes extraction typically runs 3 to 6 hours. Splitting the job into logical zones keeps energy focused: day one for top-down exterior including roof and gutters, day two for sides and protection, day three for interior. Working in shade or under a canopy reduces water spotting and keeps chemicals predictable.

As for materials, stick to known brands and avoid mixing systems on the same day unless you understand interactions. Solvent-heavy trim restorers can undermine nearby ceramic coatings by leaving oily residue. Test products on the backside of an access door before committing to the whole side.

When protection pays back on the road

The reward for dialing in exterior detailing and interior detailing is not just a glossy footprint at the campsite. It is time saved mid-trip. On a rain day you wipe the windshield and keep moving instead of guessing where the smear came from. On a bug bloom you rinse the front and see water peel away rather than bead over a film that fights you. On a long return, you pull into the driveway and your cleanup is measured in hours rather than days.

RV detailing is a craft that borrows from auto detailing, yet it respects a different set of tolerances and tasks. When car detailing techniques and materials are adapted to the size and mixed materials of a coach, the results are durable and practical. Whether you opt for a durable sealant, a ceramic coating on impact zones, or paint protection film on the front cap, the checkpoint mindset gets you out of the driveway with fewer surprises and a rig that stays easy to live with mile after mile.

Aaron's Automotive Ceramic Coating, Paint Protection Film and Tint - Largo, FL
6270 118th Ave N, Largo, FL 33773

FAQs About Window Tinting & Ceramic Coating

What are the legal requirements for window tinting in Largo, FL?

In Florida, the front side windows must allow more than 28% of light in, while the back side and rear windows must allow more than 15%. Windshield tinting is only allowed above the AS-1 line. It's important to follow these regulations to avoid fines and ensure safe visibility.

Can window tinting reduce the heat inside my car?

Yes, professional window tinting can significantly reduce heat inside your vehicle by blocking a large percentage of infrared rays and UV radiation. This helps keep your car cooler, improves comfort, and protects your interior from fading.

What is the difference between a car wash and a ceramic coating?

A car wash removes dirt and contaminants from the surface, while ceramic coating provides long-term protection. Ceramic coatings bond to your vehicle's paint, creating a hydrophobic layer that repels water, dirt, and contaminants while enhancing gloss and durability.

How often should I have my car ceramic coated?

Ceramic coating is typically applied once every 2 to 5 years, depending on the product used and how well the vehicle is maintained. Regular maintenance washes and proper care can extend the lifespan of the coating.

How long does ceramic coating take to apply?

Ceramic coating usually takes 1 to 3 days, depending on the condition of the vehicle and whether paint correction is needed beforehand. Proper curing time is essential for maximum protection and performance.

Do I need paint correction before ceramic coating?

Yes, paint correction is highly recommended if your vehicle has swirl marks, scratches, or oxidation. This step ensures the surface is properly prepared, allowing the ceramic coating to bond effectively and deliver the best results.