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Timothy Harrison

Mme Maurice

EAE 4C

December 7th, 2015

How to Buy a Used Snowmobile

Buying a used snowmobile can be a pleasant experience, but there are a few things to keep in mind when making the decision. Don’t stop at the first snowmobile that you see and purchase it. It pays off to spend half an hour studying the market and getting a feel for the prices and brands. If you are an informed buyer, your chances of getting stiffed by a seller are far lower. Another great idea is to bring a friend along. Two minds are always better than one, and your friend might play the role of the objective voice, if you get overenthusiastic about a certain offer.

When visiting a snowmobile seller, ask him or her to leave the machine cold – not to start it up and allow it to get heated. This will ensure a rigorous testing of the snowmobile’s starting capacity. Warmed up engines will start right away, but cold ones, especially if they have certain malfunctions, will give you a hard time when starting from cold. It also helps if the owner lets you test the snowmobile. In this case you should have your own gear and not borrow it from the owner.

You might think that buying from individual owners is risky – you are right, but dealerships are not far from this truth as well. Some snowmobile dealerships will buy the sleds as trade-ins and polish them up to increase their value. However, a little “make-up” does not justify some of the huge price increases. You should find a competent mechanic,

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if possible, who will have a look at the snowmobile before you purchase it and find any major flaws. Since a work hour on a sled is around 40$ - 50$, you will want to get the snowmobile that has the lowest chances of needing repairs.

Ask the seller if the sled has any accessories, such as a toolkit or instructions manual. Many used snowmobiles do not have them and this should be a good reason for you to negotiate the price even further. Some owners add accessories to their snowmobiles – while those might have been useful for them, they could be of no real value to you. In general, the extra accessories also inflate the snowmobile price. If you just want the basics and are not a huge accessory fan, skip the offers that have a full list of add-ons. Many owners put custom exhausts on their snowmobiles (with a full exhaust system priced at one or two hundred dollars). Suspension upgrades are also quite common, but they can also add a few hundred dollars to the overall sled price.

Just like with cars, some people like to get more performance out of their factory sleds. Try to avoid buying modified sleds, as their risk level is the highest. When modifying certain factory standards to get more performance, owners reduce the life of the snowmobile. Things such as high compression pistons or porting may sound great and offer you a 10% - 15% boost in power, but they are likely to wear out the engine parts a lot sooner. Making the final decision should be as rational as possible – do not let an emotional response dictate your purchase, as this may lead to hours and hours of headaches and a lot of money wasted on repairs.