

## Buying an Eriba from Holland

In principle, buying an Eriba from Holland is no more difficult than buying from the UK. I say in principle, because there are no paperwork issues (with one exception described below), no customs or VAT issues.

You simply find your Eriba probably via the Internet, arrange to see it, pay, and return to the UK.

However it is a competitive market out there, and when you have spotted the one you want, then the chances are that a potential Dutch buyer has as well and our geography conspires to put us at a disadvantage.

Holland is a relatively small country and anyone can get from anywhere to anywhere in Holland within 5 hours, so you can see that one must adopt a lightening fast attitude to securing your Eriba of choice. It's bound to take you at least several days to set up your travel arrangements and if you are unlucky, then by the time you have got there it has been sold.

### Why buy from Holland?

Firstly, compared to the UK, Holland is 'awash' with Eriba caravans, so you will have plenty of choice.

Secondly, the quality of what is offered is usually excellent. There is probably something in the Dutch culture which makes folks look after their Eriba caravans really well [Robert: Yes there is, cleaning is part of the Dutch culture – heaven help you if you don't regularly clean your house windows].

Many are garaged throughout their lives, often they are equipped with extras, and they seem to have them serviced regularly.

### Is it worth it, financially?

Well, if you live within easy driving distance of the Dover – Calais crossing or Harwich – Hoek van Holland, it will cost a minimum of £250, and probably closer to £500 if you need to use the ferry route from Newcastle or Hull.

Of course, like us, you might take a few days and take a short holiday in Holland, but unless you were going anyway, then you must in order to be realistic accept that the extra £250 - £500 is a cost of buying from Holland.

I reckon I might have found a '94 Eriba (the model I bought), in the UK for around the total cost I paid to buy from Holland, BUT, it wouldn't have been in such *immaculate* condition and might not have had the bike rack, alloy wheels and awning which came with mine. Also, it may well have taken *months* to find and might have involved travelling the country to find it.

*One point of principal here: The more you spend, the less the proportion of travel impacts. For instance, if you buy a nearly new model at 10,000 euros, then your extra costs might work out at around 5%. If you buy an old timer for 2,500 euros then your travel costs work out at around 30%, and this is something to bear in mind. Generally, whatever you purchase, the travel costs are the same!*

My Eriba Pan cost £2800 to which I had to add £500 travel = £3300. I still think I got a bargain, since the quality and condition of the caravan is outstanding! Plus, of course, if I wanted to conveniently forget the extra travel costs as part of the deal, well, we did have a lovely break in what is a charming country!

### **Where to find them?**

The Dutch seem to go for 'classified ad' sites on the web. There are half a dozen where Eriba caravans are regularly offered. Probably the best is [www.marktplats.nl](http://www.marktplats.nl), but there are others and the keen prospective buyer will peruse *all these* daily during the period they are looking. *Remember, and I repeat this from above, you have to be fleet of foot and prepared to act fast if you are to beat the Dutch buyer, especially if you spot something that is really good!*

### **Two Scenario's**

To illustrate what is possible and how where you live can impact upon your success, lets look at two approaches:

The first is the fictitious *Fred Jones* and the second is myself, *Terry Small*.

#### ***Fred Jones***

Fred lives within an hour of Dover. Over a weekend in July, he sees three Eriba caravans of the type and price he is looking for on *marktplats*. On Sunday evening, he phones all the sellers, (Phone numbers are usually included in the advertisement, but if not, an email address is always supplied).

Fred establishes that all are still for sale, arranges a rough time to see them and then books a channel crossing for the next day. Leaving after work on Monday, Fred arrives in Holland around 20.00 and stays in a B and B or family hotel.

The next morning he begins his tour of the offerings, and sees all three by 15.00. The one he finally chooses was in fact the second one he saw, so he immediately phones the seller and they agree the deal (all negotiations regarding price have been done either in advance of viewing or whilst actually seeing the caravan). Fred picks up the van, returns to the UK that night and is at work the next day.

Because of where Fred lives, he has been able to take maximum advantage of the situation. He has been fast and decisive and has been able to get to the offerings before any other Dutch buyers.

[Robert: If you can look at two or three examples, then so much the better]

#### ***Terry Small (this is the actual scenario)***

I live in Fort William in the North West of Scotland. I saw an Eriba in late September advertised on *marktplats*. I mailed the seller right away, got his phone number and immediately started a dialogue. I asked my questions and asked for more photos; these arrived by e-mail the next day.

Because it was late September, there were only another couple of Eriba caravans I saw advertised during this period and they didn't fit the bill.

From the photos, all looked great, the seller seemed an excellent chap and I managed to get the price reduced by 300 euros (always try this, if you don't ask, you won't get!). I used the travel costs as a lever [Robert: The Dutch like to deal].

Now, I had a problem! I had found what seemed to be a good buy, but I couldn't get across for at least a week. My route was to take me down to Newcastle and by ferry to IJmuiden (port of Amsterdam). I looked at all the travel options (including the long drive south to Dover), but decided on the Newcastle - IJmuiden route as the best balance of convenience, costs and time.

In a week, (the earliest I could get there), would it still be for sale!? Dare I book and pay for the ferry on the off chance that it would still be available, clearly not!

*So, I bought it before I went! (Unseen, apart from the photographs and the description).....EEEEK!*

The next day, I booked the ferry. I also did a bank-to-bank transfer of the cash into the sellers account. This, I was told would take a maximum of 5 working days and since I would not be travelling for a week, then this was plenty of time for the funds to transfer before arriving to pick up the caravan. In the event, the transfer was completed in 3 days. My bank charged me £14 for this. In order to do it, one needs the bank details of the seller.

We embarked on the ferry at Newcastle, (actually 10 miles North of Newcastle city centre) at 17.00 and had a pleasant overnight trip, with dinner and a couple of drinks, etc. The ferry docked at 09.00 in IJmuiden the next morning. We had arranged a cheap (but good) hotel in Haarlem, (30 minutes drive from the port). We checked in there and parked our car. We then spent the day as tourists in Amsterdam (a fifteen minute train ride from Haarlem), then back to Haarlem for dinner and sleep. [Robert: Dutch public transport is easy, fast and relatively cheap – parking in Amsterdam is difficult]

I called the seller that night (I had arranged to do this) in order to confirm we were on track to come up to him the next morning.

The next day, we drove the 1.5 hours North to the sellers' home in Sneek, armed with excellent directions he had given. [Robert: Also use the Internet resource [www.viamichelin.com](http://www.viamichelin.com) for local maps which you can print out or route plan]

By 11.30, we had completed all the formalities, fitted my own number plate, which I had brought and also a 'GB sticker' and we were off for a couple of day's tour of Holland.

We visited a caravan superstore near Groningen (on the advice of the seller), where we bought top flight chairs and other bits, then visited Apeldoorn sleeping in the caravan, and visited the 'Airborne museum' near Arnhem, before ambling back to the ferry.

No formalities of any sort. VAT had been paid when the caravan was newly purchased in the EU, so no paperwork of any sort is needed, no one was interested!

*So, from the above, it can be seen that Fred Jones did it the best way. He took a sufficiency of Euro cash, had the chance to see a few before being committed to buying any and chose the best he saw. By contrast, my approach was clearly, higher risk, but given my geography, I was to some extent forced into this.*

*So, if you can operate much more like Fred, then this is clearly the best option.*

## **Preparation**

Whatever method you choose to purchase, you must be well prepared for the collection process. I took a digital photo of the electrical connection of my car and got the seller to check that it was the same as his (it was), but if you are visiting several caravans and you don't yet know which one you will choose, then you might find, they are not all compatible! [Robert: Most Dutch caravans will be fitted with the new standard 13 pin single socket or 12N+S on older caravans]

One idea is to take a lighting board set (of the type used on small boat trailers), then one simply used this for your electrics and you won't need to worry about compatibility issues until after you are home. I also got the seller to measure the existing number plate on the van and had one made (with my car number on it). It was supplied un-drilled and I took a cordless drill to fit it on the spot. You will also need a 'GB sticker' for the rear of the caravan or buy the number plate with the GB logo.

My insurance company allowed the short trip to Holland including towing the van back without any extra premium, because it was only a few days. I was pretty scrupulous about number plates, stickers, etc since in the event of an accident, I didn't want to give my insurers any excuse to back out!

Obviously, you will need a map of Holland, and get the seller or sellers to e-mail you good directions to their house, saving time and frustration!

If you can borrow a 'GPS Navigator' with an electronic map of Holland, then so much the better. Holland is any easy country to get around. Good drivers, excellent road system and almost everyone speaks English!

Take your mobile phone in order to communicate with sellers.

In general, it would be better to go midweek rather than a weekend. Any problems with electrics or other issues are more easily sorted on a Wednesday than a wet Sunday afternoon! Also, I get the impression that many prospective buyers will visit vans for sale over the weekend, so again, if you can get to the seller mid week, then this lessens the chances of being beaten.

### **Buying from a dealer?**

Now this option is not one that I would have naturally taken, but there are advantages!

Your van will probably cost more than a private sale, however the dealer will service the caravan before the sale and in the 'off season' it is possible to get a good deal and dealers sometimes have un-sold (over stocked) previous year models at a big discount.

[Robert: Unlike the UK, Dutch dealers may be able to supply a new Eriba caravan off-the-shelf and sometimes end up with an un-sold van at the end of the season]

The main advantage is that most will tow your van to the port for free! This means that you could arrange transportation with the ferry company and your dealer delivers the van to the docks, it is transported and you pick it up in the UK port! The cost I was quoted was around £90 for the one way trip, which is MUCH cheaper than going there yourself!

Of course, if you don't go, then you don't see it before hand and you have an element of risk but if you are buying an over stocked van then there should be no problems.

Newer Eriba models (say 2000 and younger) are available a good deal cheaper than here, so this is an option I would not discount.

If you browse the Internet sites, you will see dealers offering vans and they usually have a link to their website.

### **The classified sites**

When you first look at the classified sites, you may be forgiven for thinking they are eBay clones where you make binding bids. In fact they are not like that at all. You *can* place a 'bid', but this is just an expression of interest at a particular price. You will often see folks have placed a 'bid' at only half the sellers target price (!), I don't really understand this, since at least by our standards, we would never try to sell an item and seriously expect to be interested in a bid for half this figure (!).

Use the *AltaVista BabelFish* on line translator; it gives the 'gist' of the advert. You simply copy and paste the block of text you need translating. It's a very good tool.

The seller will indicate a price. This is his 'target' price. *In my view, if you saw a stunning bargain, then go right in with his desired price, don't lose the bargain of a lifetime just because you want to be clever in negotiation skills and save a couple of hundred euros.*

You have to *contact* the buyer and do a deal in the normal way. Again, if you see the one you want, *don't hesitate for a second in getting in contact.* Actually, I found that buyers were somewhat 'flattered' that someone from overseas was interested in their Eriba and most will bend over backwards to help. So mail or phone them right away, get '*connected*' early, this is KEY to being successful. 95% of folks can speak English and if they can't, then they soon find someone who can!

Extras don't seem to command a big premium. What I mean by this is that I saw 2 '98 Puck L's offered for the same price. One was in standard spec', the other had an Alko stabiliser, a van der Horne full awning and a bike rack, (probably £1200 worth of extras!).

The sites are

<http://babelfish.altavista.com/>

<http://www.marktplats.nl/>

<http://www.speurders.nl/>

[http://caravan.2dehands.be/markt/caravan\\_tour/eriba.html](http://caravan.2dehands.be/markt/caravan_tour/eriba.html)

<http://www.veilingkijker.nl/>

*This last one is a 'search engine', which appears to show all the Eriba caravans for sale from every web-site in Holland.*

Get the sites into a 'favourites' folder on your PC, so you get into a routine of checking them each day when you seriously begin to look.

On marktplats there is an Eriba section to browse, on the others, just type 'Eriba' into the search bar.

### **Best Time to look?**

I had been looking for some 5 months on the Dutch sites. During the summer months there are several dozen per week being offered (as sellers have their last holiday before upgrading). Just now, (October), there are less on offer, but still enough to make looking worthwhile, you simply NEVER know when a top bargain might appear. I haven't looked in the January to June period, so I'm not sure when the market takes off again.

*So if you are interested, get looking! Another point of principal here is that the more familiar you are with the sites and how you contact folks, etc. then the more confident you will be when it comes to the real thing, so get immersed the process early, even if you don't intend to buy till next year.*

[Robert: Dealers will be selling their new season trade-ins from April onwards]

### **Payment, Money, etc.,**

If you arrange to pay in advance of collection then a Bank to Bank transfer can be arranged, where cash from your account is transferred into the sellers. It's reckoned to take between 3 and 5 working days, so make sure you arrange this service in plenty of time if collection depends upon payment being paid.

If you are going to pay on the spot, then you will need to take cash (Euro). You will need to check with your bank or Post Office for the best rate and lowest commission.

Before you decide on which method, make a couple of calls and ensure that you get the most Euros for your money, whichever route you take.

## European Eriba Caravans

There are some differences between a UK Eriba and a European Eriba:

1. The door is always on the UK drivers' side, so actually there is no difference here
2. The 240 volt electrical sockets inside the Eriba will follow the Dutch / German Schuko layout

Either buy a number of power plugs in a Dutch electrical store (Gamma = Dutch B&Q) and convert your caravan electrical equipment - the Schuko plug and socket offers better protection against water spills than the UK 13 Amp 3 pin plug and socket.

Or convert the sockets back in the UK to UK standard – the Eriba power sockets are a caravan standard design

Do NOT rely on those tourist power converters you can buy at airports – they may not be reliable in the long term and they may not be properly earthed

3. There may be a difference in specification. Eriba caravans in the UK are often supplied to one of two fixed standards – either with a UK options pack or without, the Dutch can choose and customise their Eriba from 4 pages of options.

Assume that the Dutch specification is “without options” until you know different, and price / bargain accordingly.

## Dutch DVLC

Although there are no paperwork issues in general, any caravan that weighs more than 750kg is classed as a CAR in Holland and Germany. [Robert: and is required to pass an annual inspection – a real caravan MOT – which is a great idea]

You need to get the registration documents transferred prior to you driving it away! This has to be done via the Dutch DVLC and they have local offices in most largish towns. It costs 11 euros for the process, but needs both parties or the seller and the identification of the buyer. I don't think it is a big deal, but has to be done and the seller has to agree to it happening.

If you *have* to appear at the DVLC office in person (but I'm not convinced this is the case), then you will *have* to pick up your van mid week!

Of course, if you purchase from a dealer, then he will sort all this out.

If you wanted to phone the DVLC folks, just for a chat and clarification of the process, then they are very helpful, perfect English and they will tell you what you need and how. Most Dutch sellers may not be familiar with the process, so you need to be well informed in order that you can guide them. You might get a seller, who is happy to just let you just take it, but in the event of an accident, then he will still be the owner!

The DVLC folks will also confirm that the seller is the actual owner if you give them the number of the caravan, this then confirms the sale is legal. I didn't bother.

*The Dutch DVLC telephone number is: 0031 598 39 33 30 (from UK)*

**Is it all worth it!**

After reading all the above, you might conclude it's not worth the hassle and expense. If like me, you like to strike a 'bit of a deal' and don't mind a bit of adventure, then it's an excellent way to buy a good Eriba at a good price.

Once you get into it, it all falls into place. I would definitely do it again!

**Any more information?**

*If you want any more information, if I've missed anything or if you have any questions or would like to chat through some aspects of the process, then don't hesitate to mail me. I'd also be more than happy to chat by phone.*

***Cheers, Terry***

Email: [terry\\_small@hotmail.com](mailto:terry_small@hotmail.com)

[Robert: To the reader and Terry - I made a few editorial changes, a few notes from me on my experiences in Holland, and have updated the web-site links and references. And corrected the spelling of a few Dutch words which I know were changed by the UK version of MS Word that Terry was using]