

SNAPSHOTS  
2009  
CARAVAN OR  
CAMPING  
IN AUSTRALIA  
2009



Australian Government  
Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism  
Tourism Research Australia

Domestic and international visitors stay in a range of accommodation while travelling in Australia. This snapshot presents information on the caravan or camping accommodation sector and a profile of domestic and international visitors who stayed in caravan or camping accommodation in 2009.

### Definition

Visitors who stay in caravan or camping accommodation stay at either commercial sites (*caravan parks, camping grounds or cabins*), or non-commercial sites (*caravan or camping by the side of the road, private property, crown land or a national park*).

Visitors do not necessarily spend all of their nights in caravan or camping accommodation.

'Other visitors' are defined as domestic or international visitors who do not stay in caravan or camping accommodation while in Australia.

### What are the recent visitor trends?

The caravan or camping industry has remained stable since 2000 with little change in visitors or visitor nights for either the domestic or international markets.

Caravan or camping accommodation in Australia is dominated by the domestic market and accounted

Table 1 Visitors and nights spent in caravan or camping accommodation

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Average annual change
<b>Domestic</b>											
Sum of overnight trips (million)	8.5	9.0	9.5	8.9	8.8	8.1	8.2	8.4	8.3	8.2	0%
Nights in caravan/camping (million)	41.4	41.0	42.5	44.2	41.6	38.8	41.5	41.8	39.6	40.9	0%
Average stay in caravan/camping (nights)	4.8	4.6	4.5	4.9	4.7	4.8	5.1	5.0	4.8	5.0	0%
Nights away from home (million)	48.0	49.5	52.6	52.6	50.1	45.4	49.1	48.1	46.1	47.4	0%
Average length of trip (nights)	5.6	5.5	5.6	5.9	5.7	5.6	6.0	5.7	5.6	5.8	0%
<b>International</b>											
Visitors ('000)	298.3	321.3	327.8	320.1	319.8	283.5	277	315.6	336.1	321.4	1%
Nights in caravan/camping (million)	4.8	4.6	6	4.4	4.6	3.9	3.8	4.4	4.6	4.5	-1%
Average stay in caravan/camping (nights)	16	14	18	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	-2%
Nights in Australia (million)	24.5	24.1	22.0	21.1	21.0	17.3	19.1	21.0	22.9	23.4	-1%
Average stay in Australia (nights)	82	75	67	66	66	61	69	66	68	73	-1%

Table 2: Domestic and international expenditure per visitor, 2009

	Domestic		International	
	Caravan or camping	Other	Caravan or camping	Other
Expenditure per visitor (\$)				
Accommodation, food and beverage	365	325	2,687	1,360
Domestic airfares	21	80	199	50
Rental vehicle	12	14	403	48
Fuel	146	56	280	38
Other transport	8	14	2,104	1,344
Shopping	47	74	464	443
Organised tours	18	26	521	90
Entertainment	19	19	158	70
Other	38	29	1,507	1,416
<b>Total average spend per visitor</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>8,322</b>	<b>4,858</b>
<b>Total average spend per night</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>153</b>

for 12% of total domestic visitors and 16% of total domestic visitor nights in 2009. There were 8.2 million domestic visitors and 40.9 million visitor nights spent in caravan or camping accommodation in 2009, an increase of 1.3 million nights from 2008. Domestic caravan or camping visitors have remained steady since 2000 (-0.4%), declining at a lesser rate than the decline in total domestic visitation (-6%).

The number of international visitors using caravan or camping accommodation has been gradually increasing since 2000 at an average annual rate of 1%. This is in line with total international visitation during this period. However, international visitor nights spent in caravan or camping accommodation have decreased at an average annual rate of 1% since 2000.

### How much did they spend?

Domestic caravan or camping visitors spent more on transport items such as *fuel* compared to other domestic visitors, but spent less on *domestic airfares*. Generally, there was little difference between the expenditure for those domestic visitors who stayed in caravan or camping accommodation and those who did not.

International caravan or camping visitors spent significantly more per person than other international visitors. However, this expenditure is related to the average length of stay in Australia by international caravan or camping visitors compared to other visitors (73 nights compared to 32 nights). While spend was higher across all expenditure items, spend on *shopping* was similar.

### Who were they?

Over half (52%) of domestic camping or caravan visitors were aged 35 to 59 years. Older age groups (60 years and over) in the domestic caravan or camping market have shown the largest growth since 2000, increasing at an average annual rate of 6%. Domestic visitors were more likely to travel as a *family group* (31%), an *adult couple* (27%) or with *friends and relatives* (26%).

International visitors who stayed in caravan or camping accommodation mainly travelled *alone* (58%) or as an *adult couple* (26%). International caravan or camping visitors were mainly from the UK (25%), Germany (13%), New Zealand (8%) and France (7%), with Asian visitors less likely to use caravan or camping accommodation. Almost half (49%) of international caravan or camping visitors were aged between 20 and 29.

## What did they do?

Around three quarters (77%) of domestic caravan or camping visitors engaged in *social activities* and were more likely to undertake *outdoor or nature-based activities* (56%) and *sports or active outdoor activities* (50%) than other domestic visitors. Caravan or camping visitors were less likely than other visitors to *visit friends or relatives*, but more likely to participate in outdoor activities such as *bushwalking/rainforest walks*, *going fishing* and *visiting national parks/state parks*.

The majority of international caravan or camping visitors (98%) spent their time participating in *social activities* and *outdoor or nature-based activities*, which reflected the same interests as other international visitors.

## Where did they go?

Domestic caravan or camping visitors spent more of their nights (87% of nights) in regional Australia than other visitors (59% of nights). Areas such as the New South Wales and Queensland coasts were the most popular destinations for caravan or camping visitors.

International caravan or camping visitors spent more of their nights (46% of nights) in regional Australia than other visitors (18% of nights). The most popular locations for international caravan or camping visitor nights were Queensland (35%), New South Wales (16%) and Western Australia (16%). Growth in nights in caravan or camping accommodation was recorded in the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and Tasmania. All other states and territories experienced declines in nights on the previous year.

**Table 3 Most popular tourism regions by nights in caravan or camping accommodation – domestic, 2009**

Tourism region	State	Nights (million)
South Coast	New South Wales	3.1
Mid North Coast	New South Wales	2.7
Northern Rivers	New South Wales	1.5
Sunshine Coast	Queensland	1.4
Tropical North Queensland	Queensland	1.3
Australia's Coral Coast	Western Australia	1.2
Australia's South West	Western Australia	1.1
Fraser Coast	Queensland	1.0
Western	Victoria	1
Central Queensland	Queensland	0.9

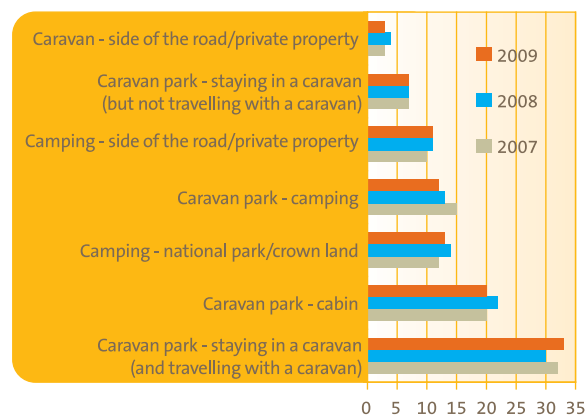
© Commonwealth of Australia 2010. This work is copyright. In addition to any use permitted under the Commonwealth *Copyright Act 1968*, the Commonwealth through Tourism Research Australia permits copies to be made in whole or in part for the purpose of promoting Australian tourism, provided that Tourism Research Australia (representing the Commonwealth) is identified on any copies as the author and the material is reproduced in its current form. In addition, a statement similar to the following must be included on any copy – *Tourism Research Australia 2010*. Copies may not be made for a commercial purpose, that is, for sale, without the permission of Tourism Research Australia (representing the Commonwealth). The information in this data is presented in good faith and on the basis that neither the Commonwealth, nor its agents or employees, are liable (whether by reason of error, omission, negligence, lack of care or otherwise) to any person for any damage or loss whatsoever which has occurred or may occur in relation to that person taking or not taking (as the case may be) action in respect of any statement, information or advice given in this publication. Data derived from Tourism Research Australia surveys are subject to sample error. Users of the data are advised to consult the sample error tables contained in Tourism Research Australia publications or otherwise available from Tourism Research Australia before drawing any conclusions or inferences, or taking any action, based on the data.

## Where did they stay?

Domestic visitors *travelling with a caravan and staying in a caravan park* contributed the greatest number of domestic visitor nights (33%), followed by those that stayed in *cabins* (20%). The number of nights spent *travelling with a caravan and staying in a caravan park* has increased. Nights in all other forms of caravan or camping accommodation remained flat or decreased.

International caravan or camping visitors spent three quarters of their nights (75%) in a *caravan park or commercial camping ground*, and 25% of nights in a *caravan*, or *camping by the side of the road or on private property*.

**Figure 1 Type of caravan or camping accommodation – domestic**



## Where else did they stay?

Domestic caravan or camping visitors spent the majority of their nights in *caravan or camping accommodation* (86%). They also used other types of accommodation during their trip which included *homes of friends or relatives* (7%) and *hotel, resort, motel or motor inn* (4%).

International caravan or camping visitors spent 19% of their nights in Australia in this type of accommodation. These visitors also spent their nights in *backpacker and hostel accommodation* (24%), *rented houses, apartments, units or flats* (23%) and *homes of friends or relatives* (16%).

## Why did they travel?

The majority of international and domestic caravan or camping visitors travelled for the purpose of a *holiday* (73% and 79% respectively). Both international and domestic caravan or camping accommodation visitors were less likely to travel to *visit friends or relatives* or for *business purposes* than other visitors.

## What is happening in the caravan or camping industry?

Over the past few years, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has been recording a decrease in caravan or camping establishments and total capacity. Despite these decreases, site occupancy rates increased to 54% and takings from accommodation increased to \$1.1 billion in 2009.

In 2009, the number of persons employed in caravan parks declined by 3% from the previous year.

**Table 4 Caravan parks, capacity and accommodation**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number of establishments <sup>a,b</sup>	1,734	1,696	1,683	1,668	1,641
Capacity <sup>c</sup>					
- On-site vans ('000)	18	17	17	17	17
- Other powered sites ('000)	147	144	143	141	139
- Unpowered sites ('000)	41	41	41	40	35
- Cabins, flats etc. ('000)	31	32	33	36	35
Total capacity ('000)	237	235	234	233	225
Persons employed <sup>d</sup>	10,016	10,164	10,453	10,734	10,689
Sites occupied by long-term guests ('000)	37	35	35	35	34
Other sites permanently reserved ('000) <sup>d</sup>	43	42	41	41	40
Site nights occupied (million) <sup>d</sup>	45	44	45	45	45
Site occupancy rate (%) <sup>e</sup>	51	51	53	53	54
Takings from accommodation (\$ million)	827	881	966	1,036	1,110

## Key findings

- Despite decreases in the number of caravan or camping visitors, nights have been increasing.
- Domestic camping or caravan visitors aged 60 years and over have shown the largest growth since 2000, increasing at an average annual rate of 6%.
- Caravan or camping visitors spent more nights in regional Australia than other visitors.
- Domestic caravan or camping visitors had similar spend patterns to other domestic travellers.
- There has been a recorded decrease in the number of caravan or camping establishments.

Tourism Research Australia  
Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism  
GPO Box 1564  
Canberra ACT 2601

Email: [tourism.research@ret.gov.au](mailto:tourism.research@ret.gov.au)  
Web: [www.ret.gov.au/tr](http://www.ret.gov.au/tr)

ABN: 46 252 861 927

Publication date: August 2010

Image: Skull Springs Road, WA

Courtesy of Tourism Western Australia

### Data sources

Tourism Research Australia National Visitor Survey (NVS) and International Visitor Survey (IVS) 2000–2009 (unpublished data)  
Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Cat. No 8635.0 Survey of Tourist Accommodation  
All figures refer to persons over the age of 15 years

### Key

- <sup>a</sup> Only includes establishments with 40 or more powered sites and cabins, flats, units or villas
- <sup>b</sup> Measured at the December quarter of each year
- <sup>c</sup> The average over four quarters
- <sup>d</sup> Total number of nights that each site was occupied (includes sites occupied by long-term guests who have stayed permanently for two months or more)