



Caravan, camping sector on rapid rise

The caravan and camping sector is one of the state's fastest tourism growth sectors, a National Visitors Survey has shown.

It has achieved outstanding results over the past 12 months, contributing about 30 per cent of overall tourism growth in NSW.

"Caravan and camping is now experiencing significant growth – punching well above its weight and making it a major contributor to the NSW economy," Caravan and Camping Industry Association NSW CEO Lyndel Gray said.

"In the year to December 2013, close to 2.4 million people stayed in commercial caravan or camping accommodation in this state, delivering more than 11 million visitor nights.

"This is an additional 303,000 visitors to commercial caravan parks on the previous year and an additional 727,000 visitor nights."

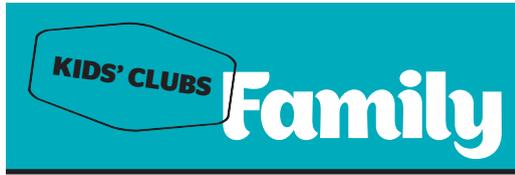
Ms Gray said these figures represent an impressive overall visitor growth of 15% while visitor nights are up 7%.

"Of the overall number of caravan and camping visitors to NSW, 80% are engaged in holiday and leisure activities that bring significant benefits for the broader tourism economy of regions," Ms Gray said.

"These results prove that caravan and camping is fast becoming a preferred holiday option in NSW, particularly for families who make up the largest group (34.4%) of caravan and camping visitors to NSW.

"Caravan and camping visitors are contributing \$1.9 billion to the NSW economy and spending an average of 4.7 nights, which is 1.4 nights longer than the average for visitors to the state.

"In the past year the sector has lifted its economic contribution by more than 17 %."



with **TRACEY SPICER**

Mama Holiday

It's the question I'm most often asked, as a family travel writer. "Can I fit in your suitcase? Please ...? Pretty please ...?"

After that, comes the question, "How can we save money?"

Well, fear not, brave favellers*, for I have brought together some of the biggest brains in the industry, popped on the thumb screws, and tortured them until they gave up their secrets. (I'm definitely watching too much *Game of Thrones*).

Flying: Getting discounted flights is all about timing. Work around the peak season by choosing the cheaper 'shoulder' period either side. And try to book mid-week, rather than weekend. Also, tick the box for e-newsletters from airlines. Yes, they do send through a lot of fuff, but they also offer their best discounts here first.

"Internationally, it's standard practice in the travel industry for airlines to release 'earlybird' fares in September for travel to Europe, so sign up to travel agent newsletters to get the jump on the best deals," Escape Travel general manager Mark Hodgson advises.

You can save money by choosing a holiday package that combines flights and accommodation, because they're based on wholesale rates. Be careful about which airport you fly into: many have exorbitant taxes, which really add up when you're travelling with a family. For example, it's cheaper to fly into Paris than London. For

internal flights, don't pooh-pooh the local airlines. (Vietnam Airlines is cheaper than Jetstar!)

Cruising: This is all about planning. "Take advantage of earlybird cruise offers for the season ahead, as you can pick up discounted rates for travel in the following year, free airfares, or other bonus inclusions like onboard credit," according to

Cruiseabout national marketing manager Monique Van Gelder. If you're travelling with extended family, RCI and Celebrity Cruises offer a significant discount for seniors.

And as Angie Kelly wrote last year after two weeks on board Voyager of the Seas, your family spends so much time on the ship the destinations are secondary. So opt for a repositioning cruise.

Driving: You can't beat an RV – Recreational Vehicle. The "trailer parks" in the US are better equipped than those in Australia. "Home, transport, entertainment all in one bucket. Cost it out. You'll save tons!" says the author of *America Over Easy*, Mark Sheehan.

In Australia, travel blogger Fiona Harper prefers campervans: "One-way campervan hires are supercheap in Australia, New Zealand, the US and Canada (\$1 a day thereabouts from imoova.com), but you need to be flexible."

Staying: In the low season, family resorts in the Asia/Pacific have plenty of stay-eight-nights-pay-for-four deals. But always aim for self-contained accommodation. Eating at the resort, however, can be

expensive. As Heather Tyler from tastefortravel.com.au writes: "In France it's too easy to pick up a baguette, pate and cheese for next to nix". This is important if your child has food issues.

Travel photographer Paul Dymond says, "Our youngest has dairy and peanut allergies, so we always get an apartment with a kitchen".

"Booking a holiday rental is much cheaper than staying in a hotel and often cheaper than camping," reckons travel writer @carlagrossetti. Journalist Joanna Hall recommends renting a house or apartment outside of town, "as you can save a lot on the per night rate ..."

*Family travellers. I just made that up. Like it? **T**



TRAVELLER
KEEP UP WITH MAMA HOLIDAY

tracey.spicer@fairfaxmedia.com.au; Twitter: @spicertracey

'Booking a holiday rental is much cheaper than staying in a hotel.'



Photo: Getty Images

