



Homeland security: where our holiday hearts lie

EXCLUSIVE

LISA ALLEN

Forget Bali, Phuket or Fiji. As the dollar softens, Australians are returning to the joys of domestic travel, whether it be free camping sites, a high-end resort or visiting friends and relatives.

Federal government figures released today reveal 10 per cent growth in interstate travel for the year to December — the largest increase in since 1998.

Overnight spending also jumped 6 per cent to a record \$28.2 billion and holiday nights increased 3 per cent to 133.3 million nights, according to Tourism Research Australia's National Visitor Survey.

More Australians are staying at free camping, caravan parks and rest stops.

The number of domestic visitors attending health spas jumped 30 per cent while those choosing to exercise, visit a gym or swim on holiday rose 29 per cent, as did the number of holidaymakers visiting botanical

or other public gardens.

Stays in camping and caravan spots dipped slightly between 2014 and last year in NSW, Queensland and South Australia, but other states showed growth.

Virgin pilot Elise Cannell said “the cost of living is going up so camping is a great getaway without the price tag”.

The chairman of caravan and recreational vehicle manufacturer Jayco, Gerry Ryan, said: “This is the best I have seen the market in 40 years.” This year, privately owned Jayco expects to manufacture 11,600 caravans, camper trailers, pop tops and motorhomes worth about \$600 million and ranging from the \$10,000 compact JPOD caravan up to the \$190,000 Optimum motorhome.

In Queensland, Noosa River Holiday Park office supervisor Liz Lamond said Germans, French and Dutch accounted for a huge amount of the popular camp site's bookings, “but in winter time 90 per cent of our customers are Victorians, grey

nomads. “On sunny days, it is usually locals.”

On the back of strong growth for domestic overnight holiday and business travel, the number of nights spent in hotels, motels and resorts — which account for 25 per cent of all domestic visitor nights — increased 8 per cent to 80.9 million.



LYNDON MECHEISEN

Virgin pilot Elise Cannell and partner Adam Poole at the Noosa River Holiday Park on the Sunshine Coast. 'A great getaway without the price tag'



Rochy tourism drive

Rochester traders are on the front foot trying to entice visitors to the town for an economy boost.

They are pushing for the town to gain RV friendly accreditation.

The RV Friendly Town scheme is an initiative of the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia and towns must meet a criteria, including access to drinking water and a free dump point.