

The Self-Contained RV Tourist

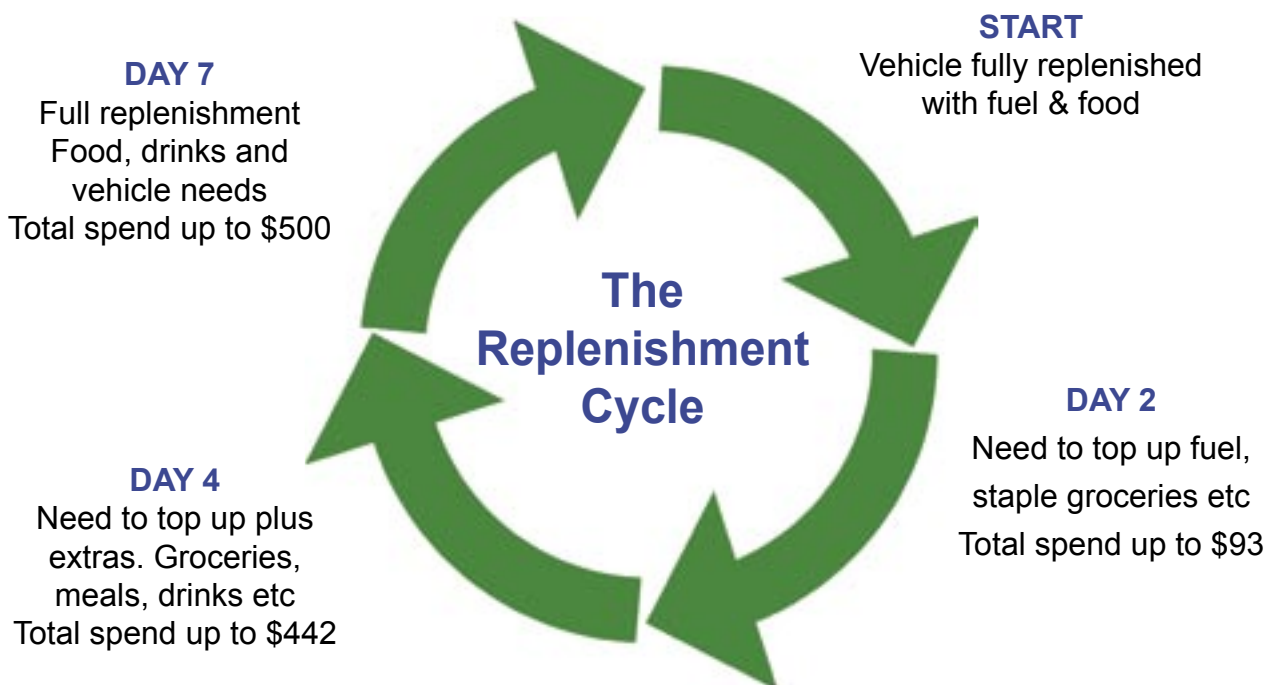
Who are they and how will they benefit your local community?



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Over the past decade the Self-Contained RV Tourist market has continued to expand, and has now emerged as one of the most important and sustainable sectors of the tourism industry. It is increasingly important to effectively understand this market and its needs, and provide facilities and services that will attract this emerging tourism segment to your region.

The growth of the RV industry will increase rapidly over the next few years as the Baby Boomer generation commences retirement travel, with this segment identified as a major growth market with a preference for drive holidays¹. There will soon be in excess of 100,000 recreational vehicles on the road at any given time and RV tourists are set to dominate tourism activity in regional Australia.



In the Past

During the 1970's and 1980's only the most seasoned caravanners took up the challenge and set off to explore the rugged Australian terrain.

Of course in those days a caravan (or campervan) was just a place to eat and sleep and shelter from the elements. Luxuries like electricity, water, showers, toilets and laundry facilities were only available at caravan parks, and every town had at least one.

So these travellers moved from caravan park to caravan park and occasionally, when forced to, stopped where there were no facilities available, roughing it for a night with a gas light and a shovel.

The market has come a long way since then! The new emerging market is the Self-Contained RV Tourist market.



Enter the 21st Century, and the Self-Contained RV Tourist

The self-contained RV, whether towed or self-propelled, has its own toilet, shower, water tanks, fridge, solar panels and/or generator, allowing RV tourists to 'disappear out bush' for up to a week. Mobile phones, GPS's, air-conditioning and computers are the other items frequently found on board these vehicles.

When they visit your region, the only extra services they require are a dump point, a water tap, somewhere to dispose of their rubbish, and of course, somewhere to stop and shop!

In addition, the Self-Contained RV Tourists of the 21st century are conscious of their environmental footprint, leaving only tyre tracks behind.

An increasing number of RV tourists are joining programmes, such as CMCA's Leave No Trace® scheme, to show their commitment to the environment.

The questions you need to ask and the answers you need to know!

1. Who are these Self-Contained RV Tourists?

The majority of Self-Contained RV Tourists are aged between 55 and 75 years, although an increasing number of younger travellers are embracing the lifestyle². These travellers are often retired with a pension, or are either partly or fully self-funded, and usually possess more disposable income than other tourist segments. They come from all walks of life and travel in all types of vehicles, but they have one thing in common – they enjoy the freedom to stop and enjoy the beauty of the surrounding countryside, travelling where the wind takes them!

These Self-Contained RV Tourists are more likely to travel interstate - following the warm weather and revelling in the freedom their vehicles provide. They enjoy the solitude of the bush and spend an average of 163 days a year travelling Australia, covering an average of 14,000 kilometres³.

If your town chooses to accommodate RV tourists, you will find word of mouth can be a priceless communication tool. RVers know where they are made to feel welcome, because travellers talk to fellow travellers. They need to spend their money on the daily essentials and return to spend their money at friendly towns and attractions, in order to support those communities that support them.

There are usually two people in a vehicle (a couple), but single person vehicles are not uncommon², although with the camaraderie amongst this group, you're never really alone! RV tourists are a very social group and congregate at those locations they have identified as being desirable. This is where they make new friends, catch up with old friends, pass on information, assist each other with advice, and enjoy happy hour!

They like nature and animals, with around 30% travelling with pets, and for these travellers a road trip is more than just a holiday, it's a lifestyle².

2. What are their habits?

Dwell Time – RV tourists usually stay in one spot for an average of three nights, depending on the attractiveness of the natural environment and the tourist facilities available³. This is their dwell time, and they will stay longer if the atmosphere is friendly and the infrastructure is supportive. If there are appealing attractions in the surrounding region, they may even make this location their base and revisit it frequently.

In addition, there is an increasing trend towards RVers travelling the same distance but taking longer to reach their destination, meaning more dwell time is spent along the way³.



The Replenishment Cycle – Most are likely to shop for staple items such as milk, bread and newspapers on the second or fourth day, when they are stopped at a location.

On average they undertake a major shopping trip once a week, and this means that when they stop 'out bush' it is usually for between two to seven days. This shop doesn't include other expenditures frequently required by RV tourists, such as pharmaceutical products, vehicle repairs and maintenance and accommodation costs.

While self-contained travellers are equipped with the facilities necessary to stay at bush camps or reasonably priced rest areas or showgrounds, caravan parks that provide basic sites with the needs of the self-contained traveller in mind are frequently utilised.

3. What attracts them?

Self-Contained RV Tourists will always spend time at locations which offer interesting natural and/or man-made attractions. Social and nature-based activities are most popular with this segment⁴, including:

- Markets
- National parks
- Heritage sites
- Museums
- Bushwalking
- Tours
- Fishing
- Wildlife parks
- Wineries
- Bird watching
- Art/cultural festivals
- Art galleries
- Aboriginal art/culture displays

These tourists are interested in Australia and its amazing and diverse environment, along with the natural and social history of the areas they visit. They want to know, understand and experience everything Australia has to offer!

RV tourists don't fully plan their routes, they keep their travels flexible, allowing them to stay longer at a destination that offers lots of attractions. Therefore it is important for towns to regularly promote their local activities to RV tourists.

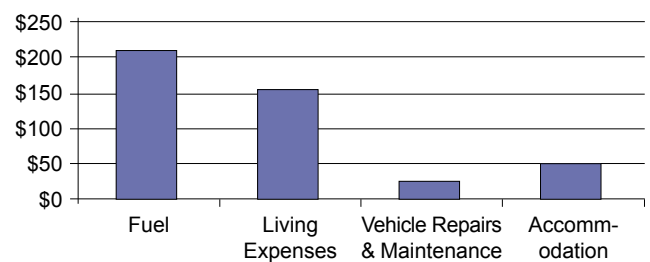
4. What Economic Benefits do they create?

Self-Contained RV Tourists are consistent spenders, who purchase a range of household products and services.

These tourists spend at places with at least one good-sized supermarket, a reasonable range of other shops and services, and facilities for vehicle parts and servicing.

- RV tourists spend an average of \$500 per week when on the road³.
- When visiting towns, on average their major purchases include \$235 on motoring needs including fuel and vehicle maintenance, \$160 on living expenses such as groceries and medical expenses, and \$51 on accommodation costs (calculated per week)³.
- 97% make purchases when stopping in a town⁵.
- If they are staying and touring within a region, they are more likely to make purchases on the second, fourth and seventh nights, with the likelihood of purchases increasing if they stay for more than one week⁵.
- Their estimated spend per vehicle per year, based on an average of 163 days travel, is approximately \$10,700 - \$11,500 or \$66 to \$74 per day³.
- International and domestic RV tourists spend more money and stay more nights in regional Australia compared to visitors from other tourism segments⁴.

Average weekly spend on major items while travelling



5. What are their Wants & Needs?

- A dump point (with toilets if possible) and a tap to refill fresh water tanks.
- RV tourists are more likely to stay longer when they are made to feel welcome and appreciated, so a friendly, hospitable town atmosphere is a must-have.
- Good tourism information that clearly shows all attractions and facilities. Ideally, tourist facilities should be easily accessible and open seven days a week.
- Short-term parking within close proximity of the general shopping area.
- Somewhere to park and stay longer term that is both safe and quiet and slightly away from the main population.

How to capitalise on the RV Tourist market

In 2008, the total spend by RV and camping tourists across Australia was \$8 billion, with domestic tourists spending \$5.27 billion and international tourists spending \$2.75 billion⁴.

To assist towns in capitalising on these tourist dollars, CMCA has introduced the RV Friendly Town™ scheme. Towns that participate in this programme provide a number of basic necessities for Self-Contained RV Tourists, such as short and longer term rest areas (with access to a dump point), 24 hour medical services, a pharmacy and potable water. Towns that do not meet the full criterion may be designated as an RV Friendly Location™.

Participation in this scheme will attract more RV tourists, and CMCA will assist in the promotion of your town to its 55,000 plus Members.

The RV Friendly Town™ scheme has proven to be very successful, especially in regional and rural areas, where the dollars spent by these Self-Contained RV Tourists can make a huge difference to the local economy. Research has shown that international and domestic RV tourists are more likely to visit regional Australia (and spend more nights there) than other visitor segments⁴.

CMCA also administers a subsidy scheme for Dump-Ezy dump point units, whereby we provide, at no charge, a dump point to selected councils. Find out if your town qualifies.



With approximately 330,000 campervans, caravans and motorhomes registered across Australia, and with an estimated 80,000 units on the road at any given time, now is the time for your town to capitalise on this expanding market⁶.

Once these RV tourists arrive in your town, it is imperative that every effort be made to supply them with information regarding the attractions they can visit in your area.

Why not have someone visit your rest areas on a daily basis and supply each visitor with an information pack?

It's also important to ensure that your Visitor Information Centre has up to date brochures.

Promote – promote – promote.

Fast Facts - Think about This!

- The industry has been growing at an annual rate of around 15% over the past seven years⁶.
- The RV and camping industry has remained one of the most stable markets since 2000, with little change in international and domestic visitor numbers and nights⁴.
- The senior travel segment has been domestic travel's best performing age group by far⁸, and this age group is strongly represented in the RV tourist market. By 2021 there are expected to be 9 million Australians over the age of 50⁷, and tourism forecasts predict that senior travellers will increase their contribution to the RV industry in the future as the baby boomer generation begins retiring⁹.

There are many ways that rural and regional Australia can entice this market to their region. It's just a matter of recognising the economic value of RV tourists.

So set the wheels in motion - Welcome this market and the businesses in your area will benefit and grow.

Want to find out more about how your town, shire or region can tap into this exciting Self-Contained RV Tourist market?

Want to find out how your town can become an RV Friendly Town™?

Contact:

National Headquarters

Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia Ltd

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Email: memberbenefits@cmca.net.au

*All data included in this document is drawn from the following sources:

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2. Balfour Consulting, 2008, CMCA Member Survey
3. CMCA Member Survey, 2009, Spend Profiles & Travel Habits, Whyalla Rally
4. Tourism Research Australia, 2008 & 2007, Caravan and Camping Snapshot
9. Tourism Research Australia, 2008, Through the looking glass- the future of domestic tourism in Australia
5. Balfour Consulting, 2003, The Social & Economic Impact of Rest Areas
8. Tourism Forecasting Committee, 2009, Issue 1
6. CCIA, 2008, Caravan & Camping Industry Profile
7. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006, Catalogue no. 3222.0