



Let's face it; you can't get much for free these days!

I have always been happy to go into a national park, play by the rules and pay my tiny fee for the privilege of staying overnight. There are tracks to be laid, maintenance to be done, wildlife to be protected and of course – cleaning up after some not so environmentally friendly campers.

National Parks

Out of national parks, a lot of councils allow free camping and consider it a good tourism initiative, and I think that's fantastic. Campers need supplies, a good feed away from the old barbeque and some trinkets, t-shirts or extra camping gear, so local communities will profit from nearby camp spots.

Private Property Camping

As extra income, property owners are starting to open up to campers and charge nominal rates for services offered, the better the facilities the higher the rate, and I reckon that's fair.

Caravan Parks

In regards to caravan parks, I've heard the number of parks are declining and some owners are upgrading facilities to keep up with the Joneses and attract new clients.

Nowadays it's not uncommon to come across jumping castles, super duper camp kitchens and piping hot showers. But, prices are rising to cover these new family-friendly additions – so is this fair and reasonable?



What is a reasonable price for camping? Photo: Harry Fisher

Well, here's where the discussion starts, so please join in.

I look at a more expensive holiday overseas or interstate trip with the family and compare costs to camping and caravanning. We consider the cost of food in a resort and compare it to what we can cook ourselves. I also compare the family time I can enjoy as kids ride bikes, go fishing, or read a book.

A caravan park might raise its prices (let's hope not a lot), but you're going to get better facilities and spend quality time with your family. If you don't like the rise you can always go camping, find a free camp spot, national park or private property, there are always options and it's usually only for a few relatively cheap weeks a year.

But here's the big issue, the retirees or folks that have taken time out for the "big lap".

- Let's say \$40 average a night in a caravan park
- Multiply by 7 = \$280 a week
- Multiply x 52 weeks = **\$14,560 a year.**



Sure you're not paying directly for water, electricity, council rates etc. But a lot of grey and not so grey travellers can't afford this, so cheaper alternatives must be found.

I just hope councils and caravan parks look at the big picture and support all travellers together. A caravan park or free campsite? I think there's room and a need for both.

What is your preference when it comes to finding the perfect location for a family getaway?