GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

The WA camping experience: satisfaction, spending and future intentions

National and conservation park camping monitoring program

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Lane Poole Reserve. *Photo – Tourism Western Australia.*

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Image on front page of Lane Poole Reserve courtesy of Tourism WA.

Information current February 2025.

Executive summary

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions' (DBCA) Parks and Wildlife Service are major providers of nature-based tourism in Western Australia with 25.03 million visits in 2024–25 (DBCA, 2025), with camping being a popular activity. Since 2018–19 online campsite bookings have increased from 57,000, to 154,000. This growth reflects the expansion of campsites and broader shifts in camping demand, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic. To support this growth in camping across DBCA's estate it is important to monitor the camping market in Western Australia to understand the impact of increased camping participation on campers and guide future campground maintenance and development. This need led to the development of the ongoing camping monitoring program.

This study builds on the first monitoring program report in 2022–23 (National and Conservation Park Camping Survey 2023) and aims to identify changes in camper demographics, behaviour and satisfaction, understand what contributes to satisfaction and estimate the monetary expenditure of campers. Data was collected via an online survey distributed to campers who booked trips at selected indicator sites across Western Australia. These sites were chosen to represent the diversity of camping experiences, including variations in geography, remoteness, and amenities. Timing of the survey aligned with school holiday periods to capture data during peak and transitional visitation phases, with adjustments made for regional seasonality. A total of 1015 valid responses were received from 7673 invitations (13.2% response rate).

Campers in Western Australia's national and conservation parks are primarily **seeking relaxing, nature-based experiences to share with family and friends** and the results of this study suggest these expectations are being met. The results show that campers are **highly satisfied** with their experiences in Western Australia's national and conservation parks, and are **loyal** to them. With an average satisfaction rate of **86.8%,** and **strong advocacy intentions** among satisfied visitors, the findings reinforce the link between visitor satisfaction, loyalty, and park promotion identified in previous research (Moore et al., 2017). However, analysis suggests that higher visitation levels and a concentration of visitor experience features (e.g. trails, viewing platforms – see p30) may cause reduced visitor satisfaction. This underscores the importance of balanced planning for park capacity and infrastructure development to maintain quality experiences. Further, despite **the increase of recreational vehicle (RVs;** e.g., caravans, campervans, motorhomes) **usage**, especially for longer journeys, **their use does not improve camper satisfaction** compared to tent users. Encouragingly, most campers intend to **maintain or increase their camping activity**, reflecting both post-pandemic behavioural shifts and sustained satisfaction. **Barriers to future visitation** included a lack of facilities relative to cost, neighbour behaviour, and issues with the booking system, however these were **mentioned by only a small minority**. Beyond personal wellbeing benefits, camping also delivers **economic benefits to regional communities** through spending on supplies, fuel, and food, contributing directly to regional economies and supporting local employment.

As campground bookings and camping frequency continue to rise, it is critical to **support sustainable growth in visitation** and ensure continued camper satisfaction. To support this, the **ongoing camping monitoring program should continue to track long-term behavioural trends and future research should explore trade-offs between diverse park values and strategies for balancing visitor experience with ecological and community outcomes.**

Lane Poole Reserve. *Photo – Tourism Western Australia.*

Key insights

Who camps in our parks?

- **Demographic patterns have remained stable** since 2022–23 but camping behaviour has shifted notably since the COVID-19 pandemic. Most campers are aged 35–64 (73.5%), reside in Perth, travel with a partner and camp three or more times in a year, for an average of 3.6 nights. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic (2019–20) there has been **a significant increase in camping frequency**, with more people camping at least three times a year.

What does a typical camp trip look like?

- **Campers seek nature, peace and social connection.** The primary motivations for camping were to enjoy nature and the outdoors, rest and relax, and spend quality time with family and friends. Over 60% of respondents reported engaging in bushwalking or cycling during their most recent trip, activities that reflect a broader interest in outdoor recreation.

- **Recreational vehicles (RVs;** e.g., caravans, campervans and motorhomes) **are increasingly popular, but do not improve camper satisfaction.** Since the previous survey (2022–23), recreational vehicle usage has increased by 13.9%, with over half of respondents using them most of the time. This preference increases with distance from Perth. However, despite their growing popularity, recreational vehicles (RVs) do not appear to enhance camper satisfaction compared to those using tents.

- **Camping offers experiences to a broad range of income groups.** Camp trip expenditure varies widely, from $60 to $3150 per trip, with interstate travellers spending more per person per night than Western Australian residents or overseas visitors. As most respondents were Western Australian residents, the wide variation in camping trip expenditure suggests that camping in our national parks also offers experiences accessible to a broad range of income groups.

- **The more remote, the more expensive the camping trip.** Generally, the median cost of a camping trip increased with distance from Perth due to travel expenses such as fuel and vehicle hire. Travel costs were the largest component of trip expenditure with an average trip spend of $304.5. As a result, the most remote indicator sites in the Kimberley and Pilbara were the highest expenditure sites, reflecting the extensive travel required to access them.

- **Campers are important contributors to regional economies.** All indicator sites in the study are in regional Western Australia, and 85.8% of campers reported visiting nearby towns. Importantly, campers spend money in these towns, with an average trip expense of $100.2 on groceries, dining out and takeaways.

Lane Poole Reserve. *Photo – Tourism Western Australia.*

Key insights

How satisfied are campers with their camping experience?

- **Campers are highly satisfied and strong advocates for parks.** Overall camper satisfaction was high, averaging 86.8% across all parks, with individual parks ranging from 82% at Wellington National Park to 91.1% at Cape Le Grand. Importantly, 71.6% of respondents said they were likely to recommend the park they visited, with advocacy strongest among those who reported the highest satisfaction.

- **When it comes to visitation and visitor experience features** (features to improve visitor experience such as trails and viewpoints)**, less is sometimes more.** Campers were less likely to be satisfied in parks with high visitation or excessive visitor experience features, reflecting the negative impact of crowding and excessive infrastructure on the quality of nature-based experiences.

What are campers future camping intentions?

- **Campers are loyal to Western Australia's national parks, with most planning to maintain or increase their camping activity.** However, a small number of participants cited reasons such as inadequate facilities relative to fees, inconsiderate neighbours, or booking difficulties as deterrents to future visits.

Recommendations for future

As camping grows in popularity, **managing park capacity and visitor experience features is essential** to maintain visitor satisfaction. To support this, the **ongoing camping monitoring program should continue to track long-term behavioural trends and future research should explore trade-offs between diverse park values and strategies for balancing visitor experience with ecological and community outcomes.**

Lane Poole Reserve. *Photo – Tourism Western Australia.*

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Warren National Park. *Photo – Frances Adrijch*

Background

DBCA's Parks and Wildlife Service is a major provider of nature-based tourism in Western Australia, with camping being a popular activity. Since 2018–19 online campsite bookings have increased from 57,000, to 154,000 (Figure 1). This growth reflects the expansion of campsites (Figure 2) and broader shifts in camping demand. Notably, camping demand surged in 2020–21 during COVID-19 pandemic, a trend also seen in other countries (Kang *et al.*, 2022; Zorlu, Tuncer and Taşkın, 2022). This is likely due to an increase in intrastate travel due to state border lockdowns, and the perceived safety of camping as a leisure activity during the pandemic (Kang et al., 2022; Zorlu, Tuncer and Taşkın, 2022). This upward trend in campground bookings has continued in subsequent years (Figure 1). To support this growth in camping across DBCA estate, it is important to monitor the camping market in Western Australia to understand the impact of increased camping participation on campers and guide future capital works. This need led to the development of the ongoing camping monitoring program.

The first ongoing camping monitoring program study was conducted in 2022–23 and drew from baseline research at indicator campgrounds across Western Australia (Shields and Smith, 2016; Smith and Rodger, 2018; Smith and Shields, 2018). The first study revealed that visitors are highly satisfied with their camping experience, intend to camp more in the future and that camping is more than an accommodation choice with visitors valuing the camping experience itself.

Building on this previous work, this study aims to:

- identify changes in camper demographics, behaviour and satisfaction;
- gain a greater understanding of what makes campers satisfied or dissatisfied; and
- estimate the monetary expenditure of campers.

The results of this work will provide guidance on what capital works are needed to support the increased demand for camping to ensure the camping experience is preserved. In addition, understanding campers' expenditure will provide insights into how campers are distributing wealth across the State and supporting regional communities.

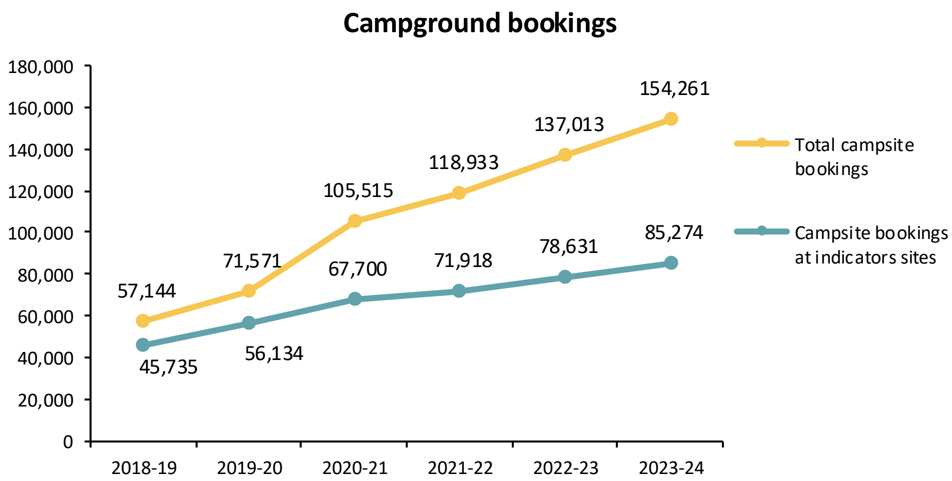


Figure 1 *shows campground booking data sourced from Park Stay live database for the past six financial years. Figures represent the best available data at the time of reporting but may be updated in future reports as errors are identified and corrected.*

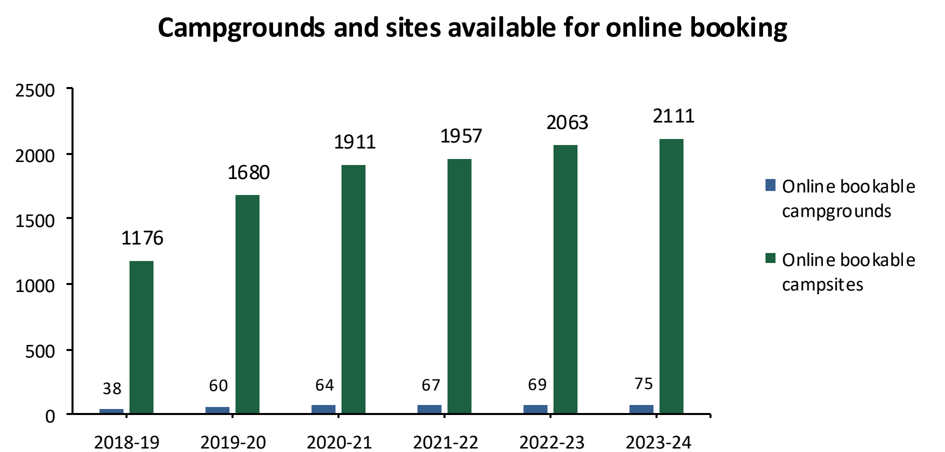


Figure 2 *shows the number of campgrounds (areas designated for camping that contains multiple campsites and shared facilities such as toilets) and sites (a specific area in a campground where an individual camp groups stay) available for online booking from 2018–19 to 2023–24 based on data from the PVS Park Stay Campgrounds Progress Reports. Fluctuations reflect the addition of new sites, as well as temporary closures due to natural disasters, operational needs and other events.*

Methodology

Survey tool

Data for this study was collected through an online survey developed on SurveyMonkey, which built on the ongoing camping monitoring study conducted in 2022–23. The survey asked participants about their demographics (such as age and residence), details of their most recent camping trip (activities, satisfaction, expenditure), and future camping intentions.

Indicator sites

The survey was distributed to campers who booked a camping trip at selected indicators sites across Western Australia. These indicator sites were selected from DBCA's 'Park Stay WA' campsite booking system and were chosen to represent the diversity of camping experiences across the State and build on previous monitoring (Smith and Shields, 2018; Smith and Rodger 2018). The indicator sites encompass a range of geographical settings, environmental conditions, levels of remoteness, visitation intensity, and camping amenities (Figure 3). Most indicator sites are defined at the park level with data being collected from all campsites within the park. An exception is Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park, where only Conto Campground was included as the indicator site to build on previous monitoring at the site (Shields and Smith 2016; Smith and Shields, 2018).

Honeymoon Pools, Wellington National Park. *Photo – A. Smith*

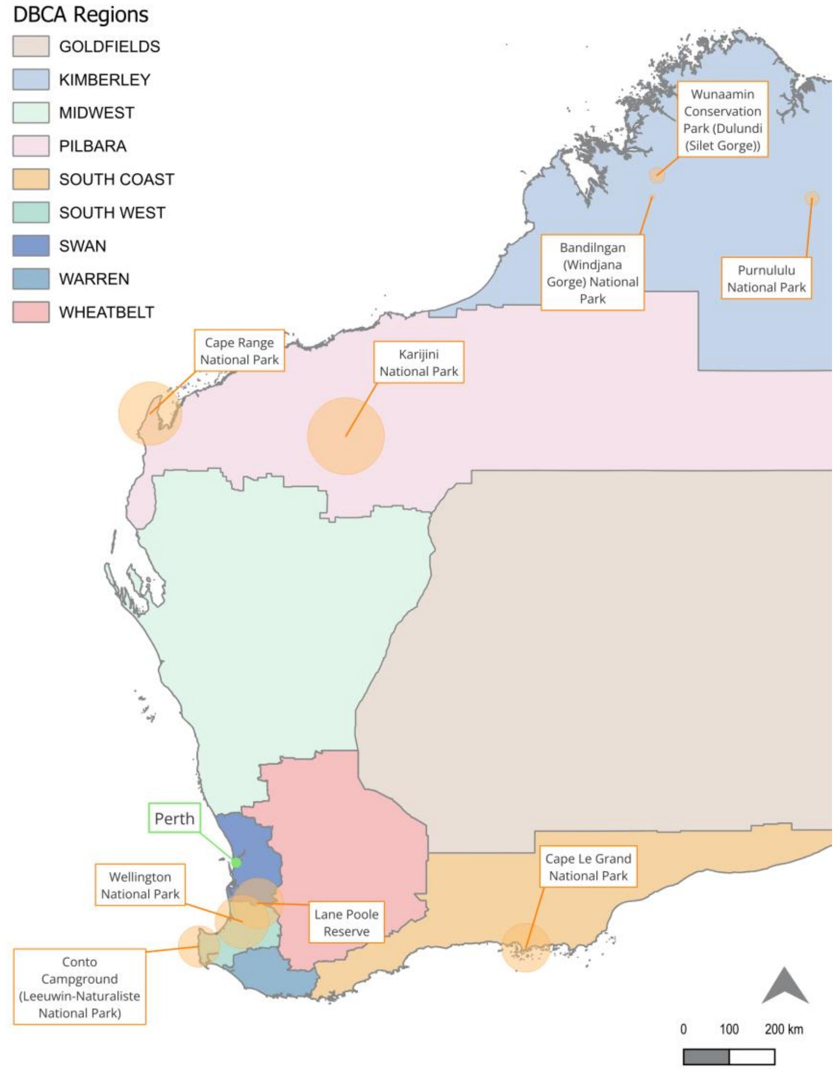


Figure 3 *presents a map of Western Australia segmented by DBCA regions. Indicator sites are marked with orange bubbles. The size of the bubble represents the site's 2023–24 visitation where larger bubbles indicate higher visitation (range 9073 – 593,026). The Perth Metropolitan Area is marked with a green dot and is included to illustrate spatial relationships and distances between indicator sites and the metropolitan area.*

Methodology

Indicator site visitation

Visitation across the indicator sites varies greatly ranging from 9073 in Bandilngan (Windjana Gorge) National Park, to 593,026 in Karijini National Park (Figure 4). While all sites saw a decline in visitation during the COVID-19 pandemic (2019–20), visitation to most sites has remained stable, except from those in the Pilbara region. The indicator sites in the Pilbara, Cape Range and Karijini National Park, saw a dramatic increase in visitation during the COVID-19 pandemic, however in recent years this visitation has started to decline. Whether this is short term fluctuation or whether visitation will return to pre-COVID levels is unknown.

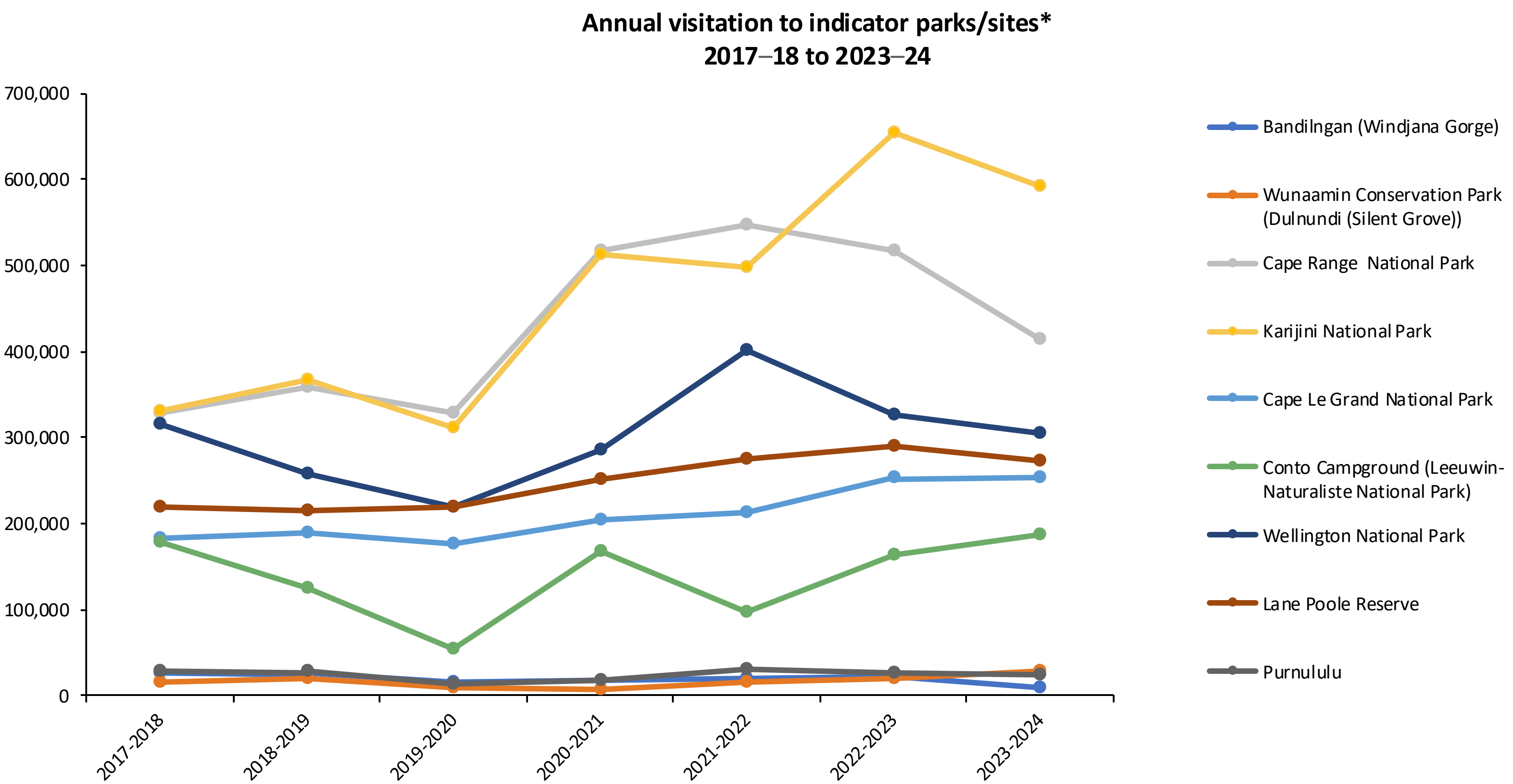


***Figure 4** shows total visitation for the indicator sites. Note that where accurate visitation data was unavailable, estimates based on the previous year's visitation were used.*

Methodology

Sampling

The survey was distributed via email to campers who booked a camping trip at any of the selected indicator sites. To maximise response rates, the survey was distributed during school holidays and the adjacent weeks. School holidays represent peak visitation periods for campgrounds across Western Australia, making them a strategic time to reach the largest number of campers. Including the surrounding weeks also ensured representation of those who travel outside of peak periods. However, due to Western Australia's broad latitudinal range, peak visitation periods vary across the State. Northern sites, such as those in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions, typically experience peak visitation during their dry season (May to August), while southern sites attract more visitors during warmer periods (Spring and Summer). Additionally, sites in the Kimberley are subject to seasonal closures during the wet season (warmer months) due to flooding impacts (see Appendix 1 for more details on indicator site seasonality).

To account for these regional differences, the survey was distributed during the April 2024 school holidays and surrounding weeks for all regions except the Kimberley. For Kimberley indicator sites, the survey was distributed during the June 2024 school holidays and surrounding weeks, aligning with their peak visitation period and seasonal accessibility. In addition, all indicator sites were sampled in the October 2024 school holidays and surrounding weeks.

In total, 7673 campers were invited to participate, resulting in a 13.2% response rate and 1015 valid responses. Sample sizes for Kimberley sites were smaller, reflecting lower annual visitation and seasonal closures (Table 1).

Table 1 *shows the number of valid survey response from each indicators site.*

Region	Indicators site	Number of responses
Swan	Lane Poole Reserve	216
Pilbara	Cape Range National Park	183
Pilbara	Karijini National Park	175
South Coast	Cape Le Grand National Park	151
South West	Wellington National Park	136
South West	Conto Campground (Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park)	86
Kimberley	Purnululu National Park	41
Kimberley	Bandilngan (Windjana Gorge) National Park / Wunaamin Conservation Park (Dulundi (Silent Grove))	21
NA	No park reported	6

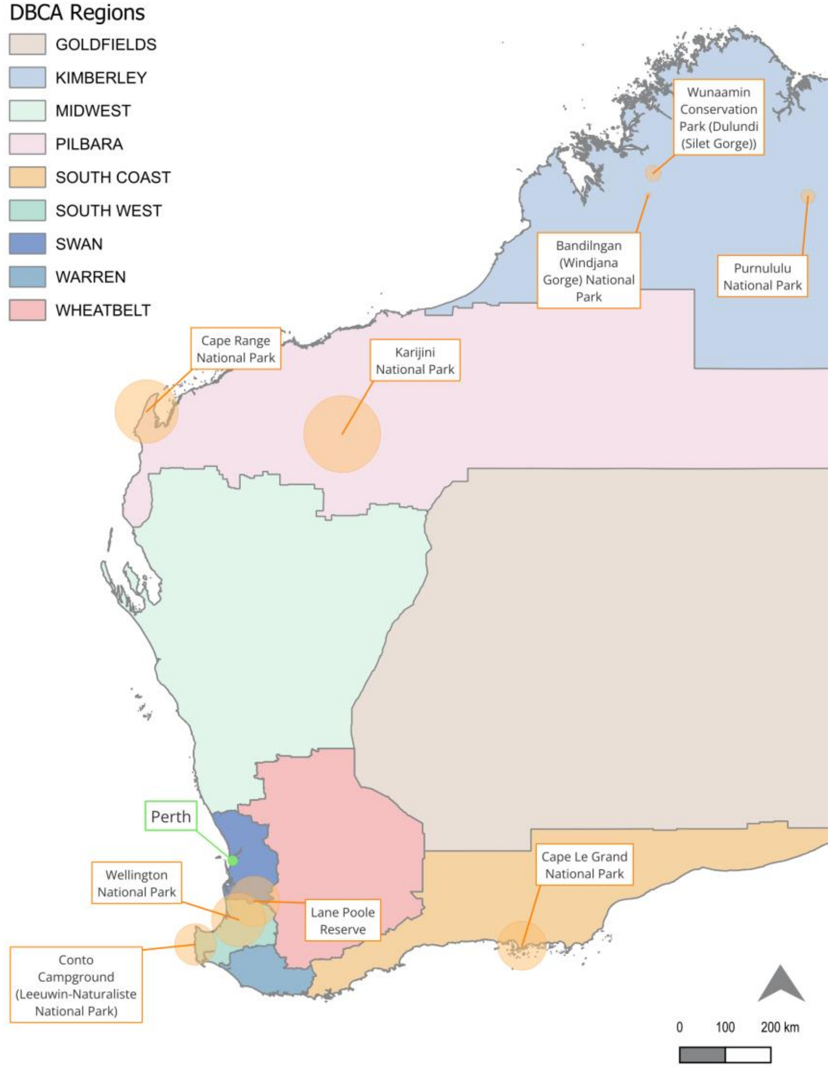


Figure 3 *presents a map of Western Australia segmented by DBCA regions. Indicator sites are marked with orange bubbles. The size of the bubble represents the sites 2023–24 visitation where larger bubbles indicate higher visitation (range 9,073 – 593,026). The Perth Metropolitan Area is marked with a green dot and is included to illustrate spatial relationships and distances between indicator sites and the metropolitan area.*

Exploring the results

Results in this report are presented through four guiding questions that reflect a camper's journey.

You can jump to sections of interest by clicking on the images below.

Results not explored in this report can be found in Appendix 2, this includes thematic analysis of the survey comments.

Who camps in our parks?

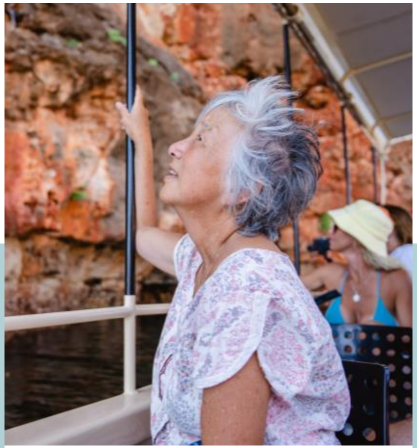
This section explores camper demographics, travel groups and camp frequency.

What does a typical camp trip look like?

This section explores the activities campers participate in and their expenditure on camping trips.

How satisfied are campers with their experience?

This section explores satisfaction rates and what factors contribute to satisfaction or dissatisfaction.



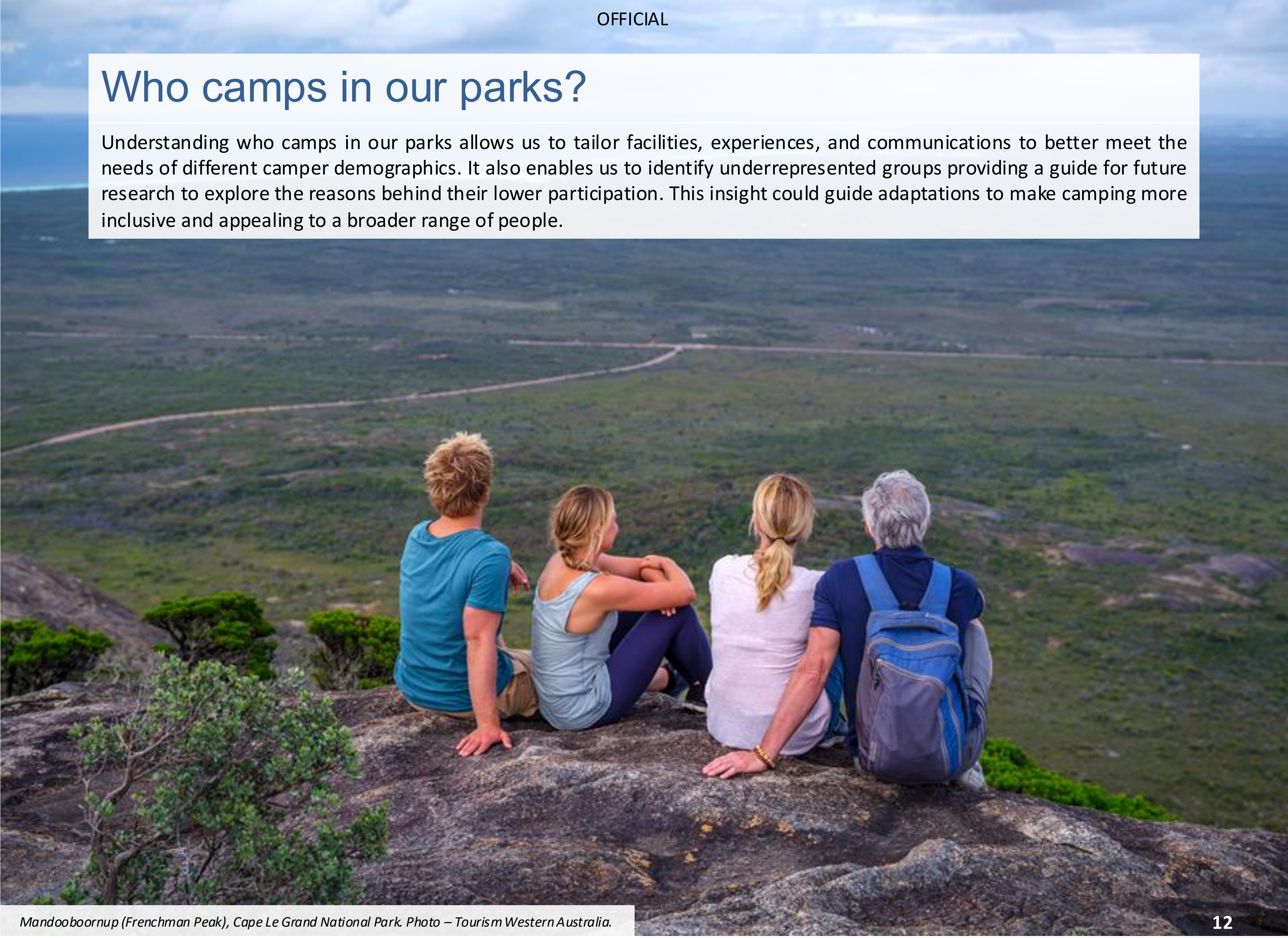
What are campers future camping intentions?

This section explores how campers may participate in camping in the future.

From left to right: Mandooboornup (Frenchman Peak), Cape Le Grand National Park. *Photo – Tourism Western Australia; Cape Range National Park. Photo – A. Smith;* Wellington National Park. *Photo – A. Smith;* Yardie Creek, Cape Range National Park. *Photo – Tourism Western Australia.*

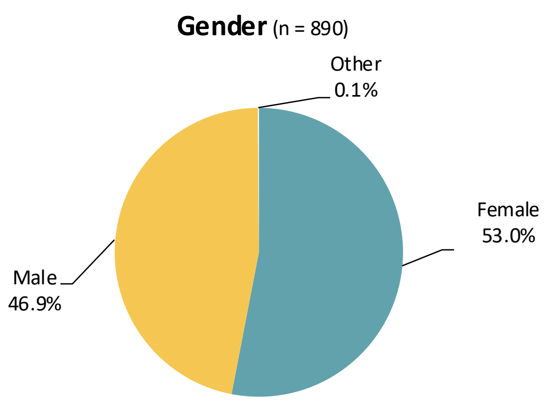
Who camps in our parks?

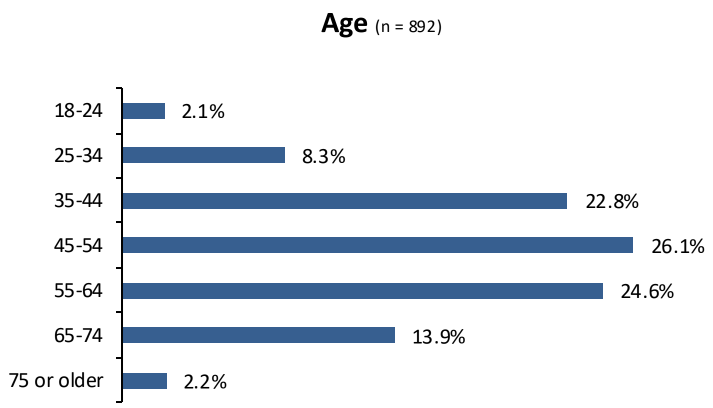
Understanding who camps in our parks allows us to tailor facilities, experiences, and communications to better meet the needs of different camper demographics. It also enables us to identify underrepresented groups providing a guide for future research to explore the reasons behind their lower participation. This insight could guide adaptations to make camping more inclusive and appealing to a broader range of people.



Mandooboornup (Frenchman Peak), Cape Le Grand National Park. Photo – Tourism Western Australia.

Respondent profile





53%
of respondents identified as **female**

There has been a shift towards older campers with a **6.3% increase in those aged 55–64** compared to the 2022–23 study.

Yardie Creek, Cape Range National Park. *Photo – Tourism Western Australia.*

Respondent profile

Where is your usual place of permanent residence? (n = 886)

Origin	Percentage of total	Difference from 2022-23
Western Australia	**71.9%**	**-3.1%**
Perth Metro	59.0%	
South West	6.8%	
South Coast	1.5%	
Midwest	1.4%	
Goldfields	1.2%	
Kimberley	0.8%	
Pilbara	0.7%	
Wheatbelt	0.6%	
Warren	0.0%	
Interstate	**23.8%**	**+3.0%**
New South Wales	4.3%	
Queensland	3.8%	
South Australia	2.7%	
Tasmania	0.9%	
Northern Territory	0.9%	
Australian Capital Territory	0.2%	
Victoria	7.2%	
Overseas	**4.3%**	**+0.1%**

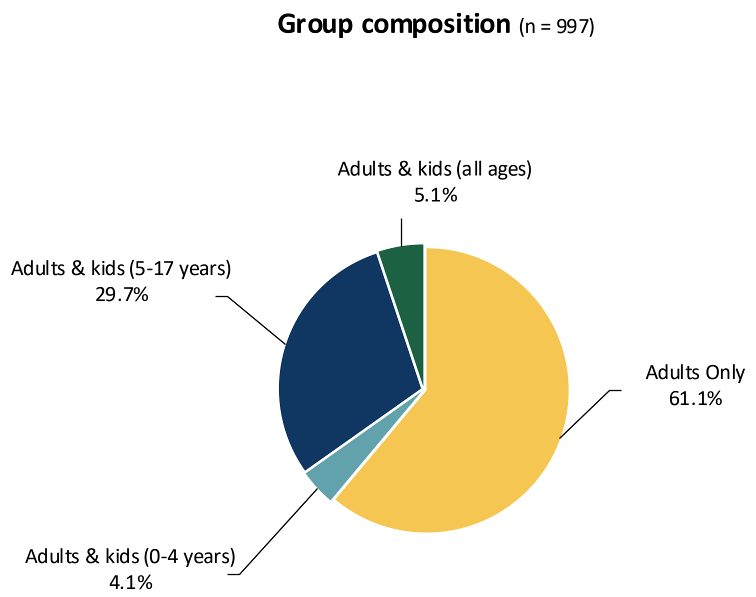
*This figure is based on a two-year comparison only and may reflect a short-term fluctuation rather than a sustained trend. As such, caution should be used when interpreting this change, particularly for informing decision making.

71.9% of campers are from **Western Australia,**
59.0% of which from **Perth Metro**.

There has been a **3.1%** increase in **interstate** and **overseas** campers.*

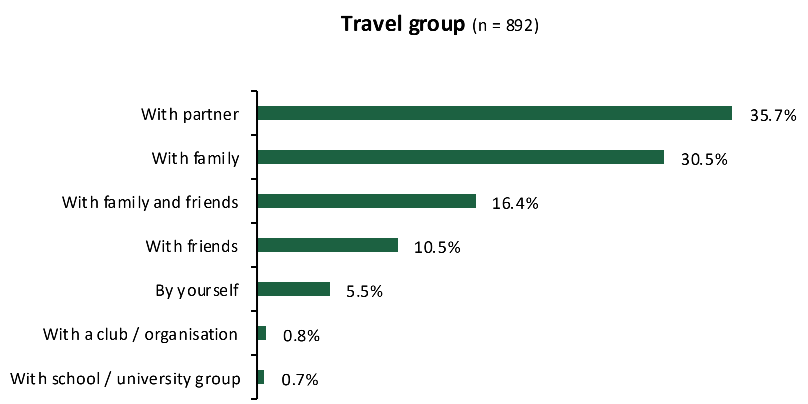
Mandooboornup (Frenchman Peak), Cape Le Grand National Park. *Photo – Tourism Western Australia.*

Travel group



61.1% of respondents were travelling in **adult only** groups. For those travelling with children, most were school aged (5–17 years).

On average there were **3 people per group** (range 1–32 people)



Most people **travel with** their **partner or family.**

Camping frequency

50.2% reported it was their **first visit** to the park where they camped

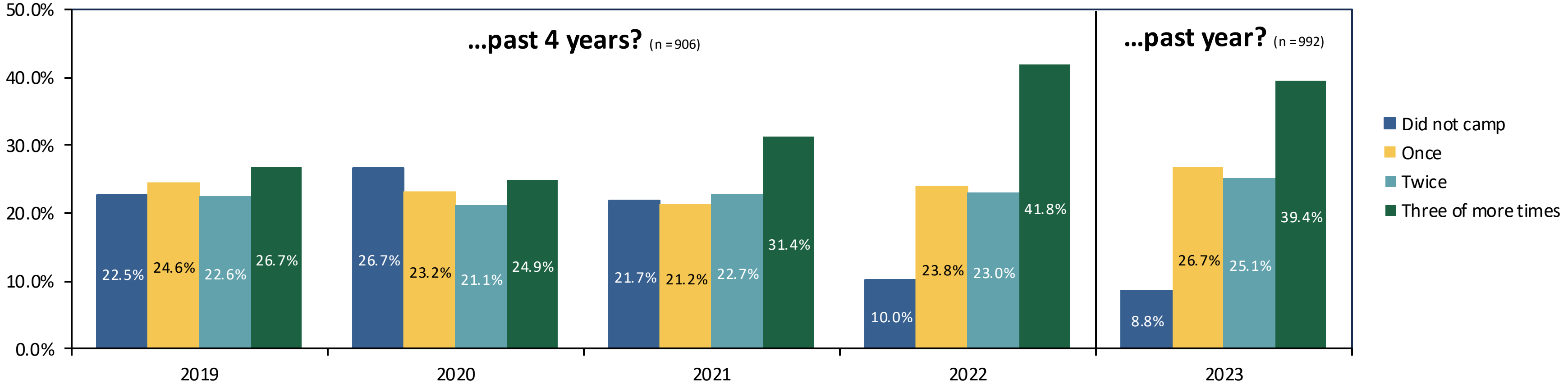
78.9% visit national parks **at least once a year or more**

39.4% undertook **three or more camping trips per year**

There is a **significant increase in camping frequency since the COVID-19 pandemic** in 2019–20 to 2022.*

Lucky Bay, Cape Le Grand National Park. *Photo – Tourism Western Australia.*

How often did you go camping in a national or conservation park in the...**



*In 2023, we asked people to reflect on how often they camped over the previous four years. In contrast, the 2024 data comes from a new sample of respondents that reported their camping frequency from the past year alone (2023). Therefore, we could only use statistical modelling (ordinal regression) to explore changes in camping frequency between 2019–22. It should be noted that while the 2019–22 data provides an indication of broad changes in camping frequency, it is based on memory and may be affected by recall bias.

**Data from 2023 is isolated in a box as it is an independent sample and does not contribute to the statistical analysis. Response rate does not total 100% because not all respondents reported a camping frequency for each year.

Summary: who camps in our parks?

Most campers…

- Are female (53%)
- Aged 35–64 (73.5%)
- Reside in Perth
- Travel with a partner
- Camp three or more times in a year, for an average of 3.6 nights

There is little change in camper demographics

The demographics of campers is broadly consistent with the 2022–23 study, with a few differences. For example, there has been an increase (+6.3%) in campers aged 55–64 and an increase (+3.1%) in interstate and overseas campers. However, these differences are based on a two-year comparison and therefore could reflect a short-term fluctuation rather than an emerging trend. Thus, it is critical that caution is taken when interpreting these changes, particularly for informing decision making. This is particularly important as some changes detected conflict with other research. For example, a recent report found a decline in the number of camping trips interstate travellers were having in Western Australia in favour of local destinations or international trips (Caravan Industry Association Australia, 2025). To detect genuine changes in camper demographics the ongoing camping monitoring program should continue to build a long-term data set. However, overall, this survey suggests that camper demographics is stable.

Campers are going camping more often

Camping frequency increased significantly between 2019 (pre-COVID) and 2022, reflecting broader shifts in campsite bookings (Figure 1). A sharp rise in camping demand was observed during 2020–21, likely driven by COVID-19 lockdowns, and this trend has continued to grow (Figure 1). One possible explanation is that individuals who began camping during this period have maintained their participation, contributing to sustained increases in camping frequency. This behavioural shift aligns with research suggesting that frequent visitation to campsites and national parks, combined with high satisfaction levels, is associated with visitor loyalty and park advocacy (Moore et al., 2017).

Mandooboornup (Frenchman Peak), Cape Le Grand National Park. *Photo – Tourism Western Australia.*

What does a typical camp trip look like?

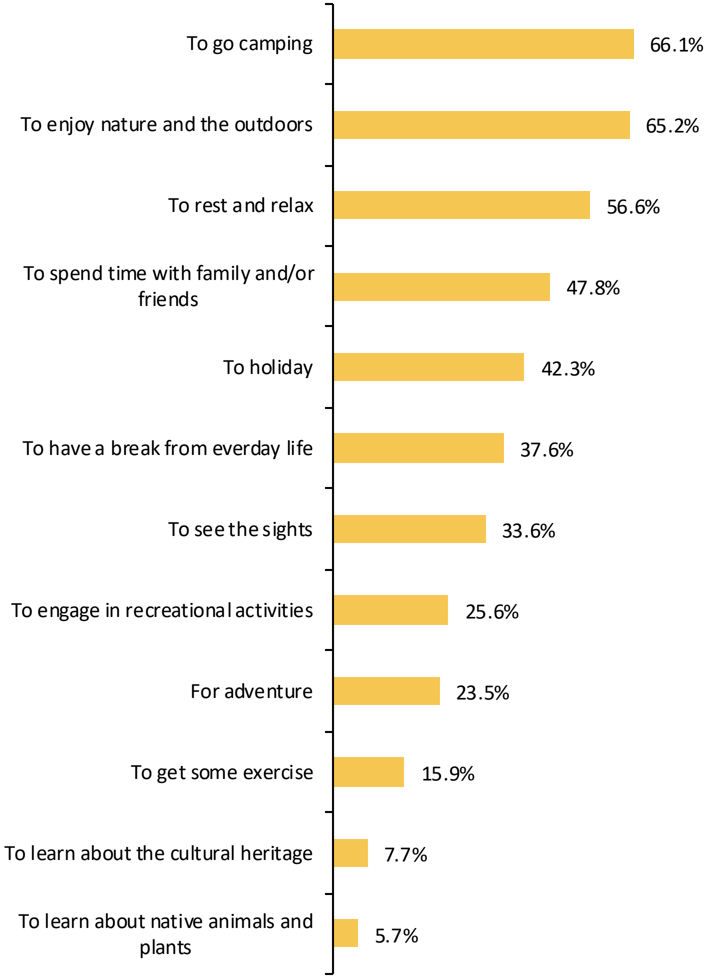
Understanding what a typical camping trip involves helps us to ensure that park experiences align with camper values and facilitates better planning of infrastructure and services. In addition, understanding campers' spending habits allows us to understand how campers contribute to local economies and which groups benefit most, helping guide investment and partnership opportunities.

Cape Range National Park. Photo – A. Smith

Trip profile

What were the MAIN purpose/s of your trip?*

(n = 1000)



*Respondents could select multiple responses

On average respondents camped for **3.6 nights** (range 1–27 nights).

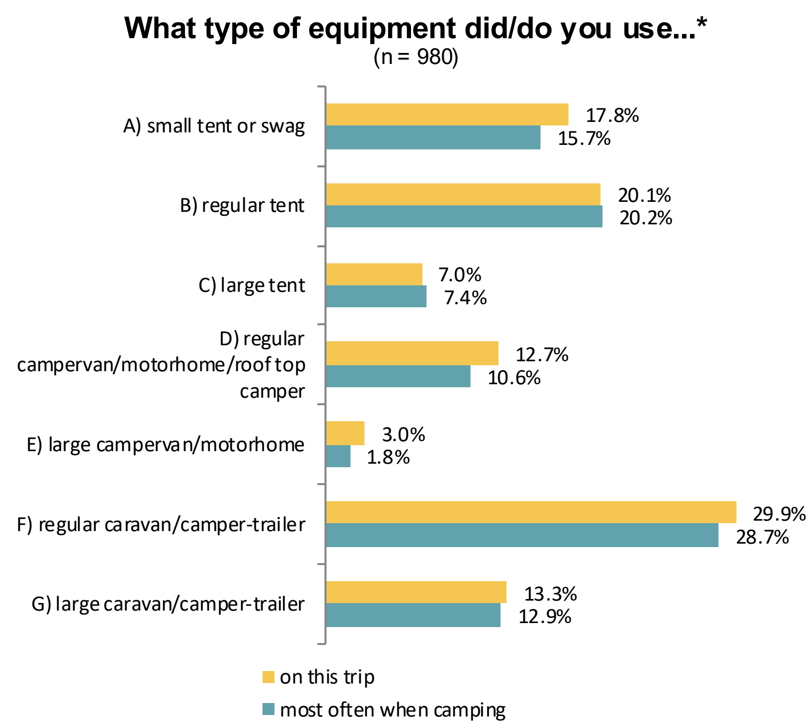
Top three main purpose/s of trip

(consistent with 2023–23 data):

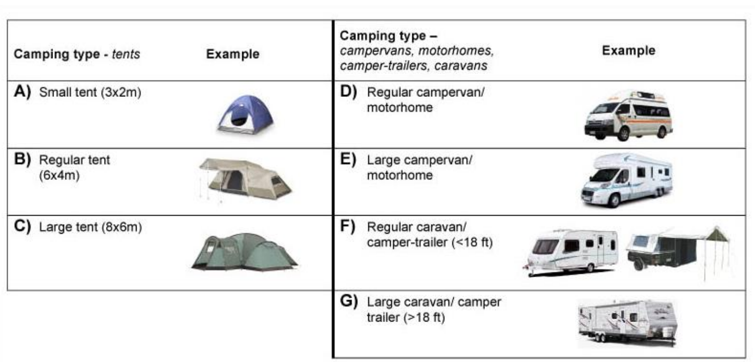
- Camping
- To enjoy nature and the outdoors
- To rest and relax

Black Flanked Rock Wallaby, Yardie Creek, Cape Range National Park. *Photo – Tourism Western Australia*.

Camping equipment



*Respondents could select multiple responses



Camping type - *tents*	Example	Camping type – *campervans, motorhomes, camper-trailers, caravans*	Example
A) Small tent (3x2m)		**D)** Regular campervan/ motorhome	
B) Regular tent (6x4m)		**E)** Large campervan/ motorhome	
C) Large tent (8x6m)		**F)** Regular caravan/ camper-trailer (<18 ft)	
		G) Large caravan/ camper trailer (>18 ft)	

Figure 5 *above illustrates the image shown to participants in the survey to define their camping equipment. Equipment labelled D–G are defined as recreational vehicles (RVs) in this report.*

- In this report a recreational vehicle (RV) is defined as a campervan, motorhome, camper-trailer, caravan or rooftop tent.
- **Over half** (54%) of respondents use **recreational vehicles (RVs) most often** when camping. This is a 13.9% increase compared to respondents in the 2022–23 survey.
- The equipment used by campers was tested in the satisfaction modelling and showed that there was **no effect of equipment used on a camper's satisfaction with their experience**.
- Regions further away from Perth have a higher proportion of campervan users.

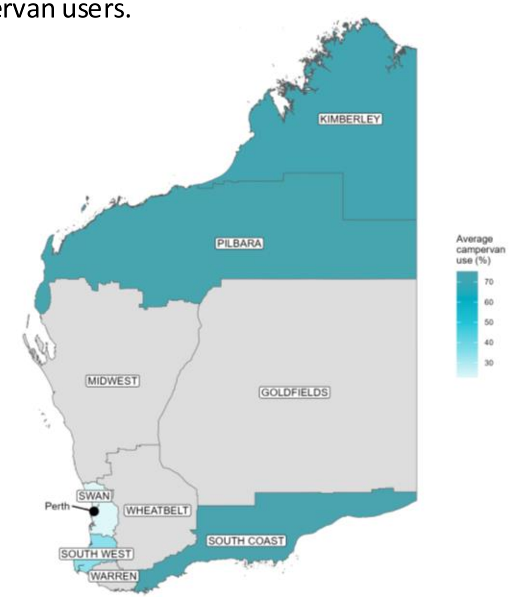
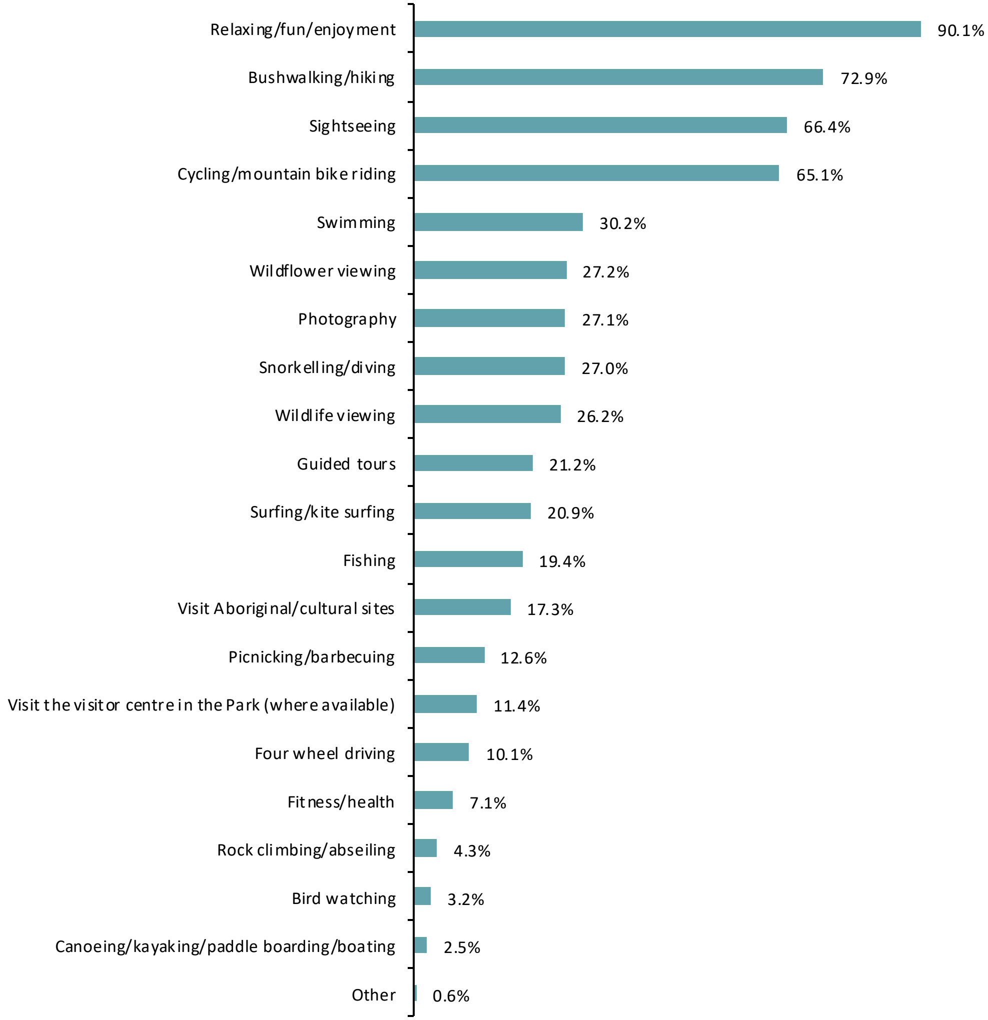


Figure 6 *above shows the proportion of recreational vehicle (RV) use for each region across the 2022-23 to 2023-24 financial years (n = 1986). The darker the colour the higher the proportion of campervan users in that region. Regions in grey had no data associated with them as they contain no indicators sites.*

Camp trip activities

What activities (besides camping) did you participate in during your most recent visit to the national or conservation park you visited?* (n = 994)



*Respondents could select multiple responses

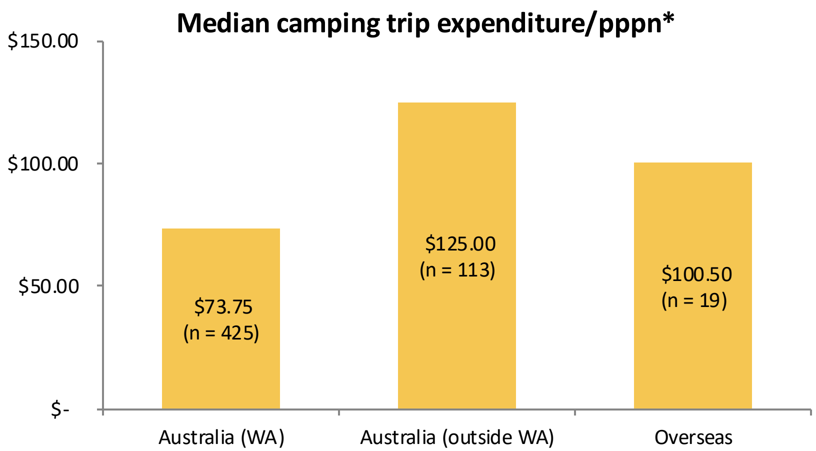
Top 5 most popular activities were:

- Relaxing, fun and enjoyment
- Bushwalking
- Sightseeing
- Cycling or mountain bike riding
- Swimming

Cape Range National Park. *Photo - Tourism Western Australia*

How much are campers spending?

Trip expenses included those incurred travelling from a campers' home/previous destination (if on a multi-day trip) to their campsite, and expenditure while they stayed at the campsite.



*per person per night (pppn) expenditure, outliers have been removed. Outliers represented values which we suspect to be the result of misinterpreting the question and reporting unfeasible expenditure.

Trip expenditure ranged from **$60–$3150** across all respondents.

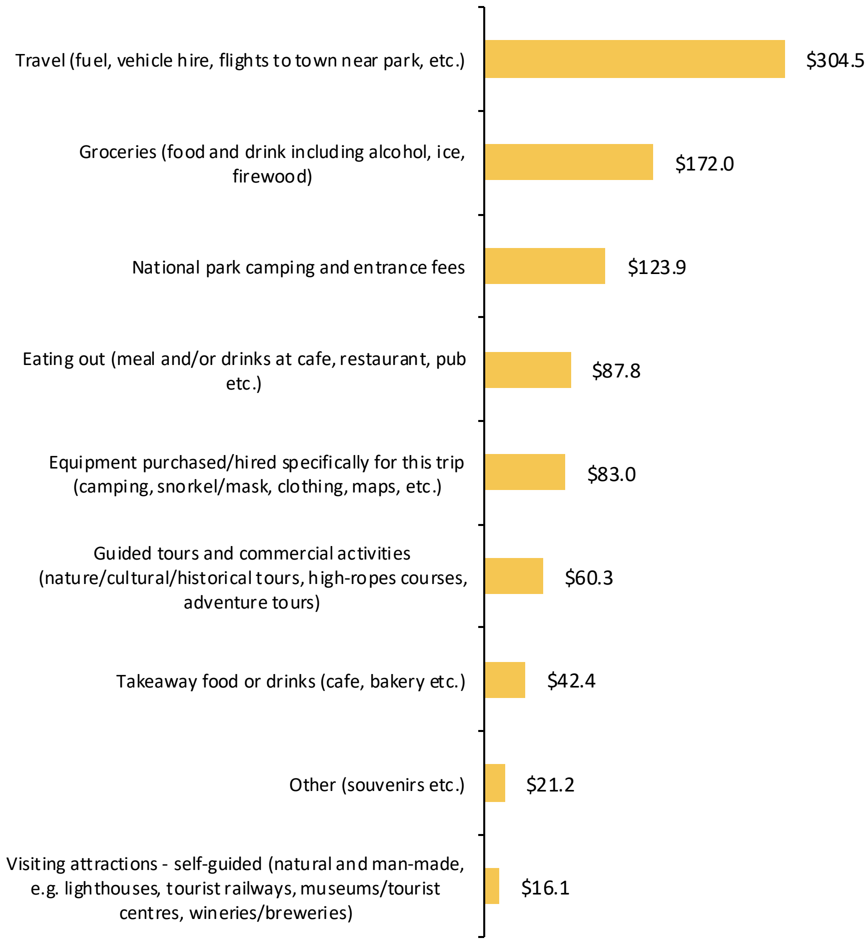
Australian residents from outside Western Australia have **highest** median per person per night **expenditure** ($125.00).

WA residents have the **lowest** median per person per night **expenditure** ($73.75).

Hellfire Bay, Cape Le Grand National Park. *Photo – Tourism Western Australia*.

What are campers spending their money on?

Average trip expenditure on...* (n = 587)



42.1% spent most on travel (such as fuel, vehicle hire, flights to town near park)

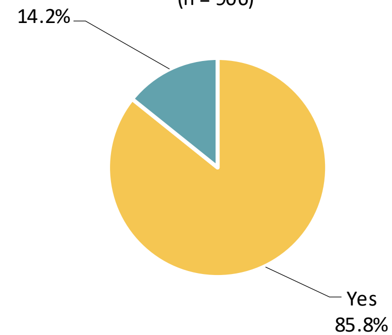
$100.72 was the average expenditure on food (including groceries, eating out and takeaways).

15.2% spent most on national park camping and entrance fees.

85.8% visited the town/city near the national park where they camped.

Did you visit any of the towns/cities near the national park where you camped during your most recent camping trip?

(n = 906)



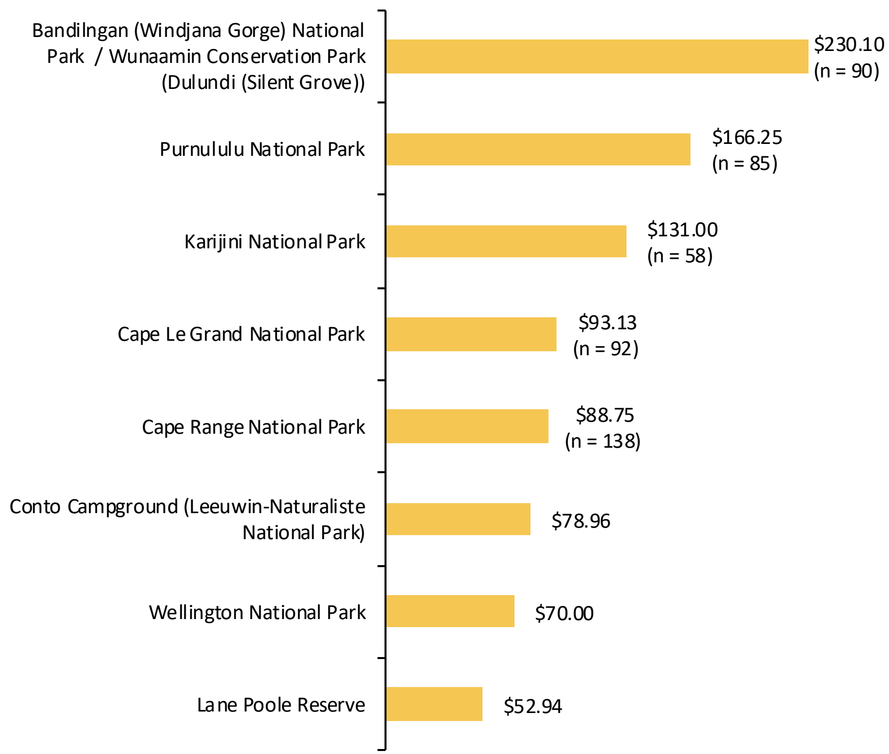
*Outliers have been removed. Outliers represented values which we suspect to be the result of misinterpreting the question and reporting unfeasible expenditure.

Where are campers spending their money?

The top three **highest expenditure parks are remote** parks in the Pilbara and Kimberly region due to the high travel cost to reach these parks.

Lane Poole Reserve, closest to Perth Metropolitan Area, had the **lowest expenditure.**

Median expenditure for indicator sites/pppn*



*per person per night expenditure, outliers have been removed. Outliers represented values which we suspect to be the result of misinterpreting the question and reporting unfeasible expenditure.

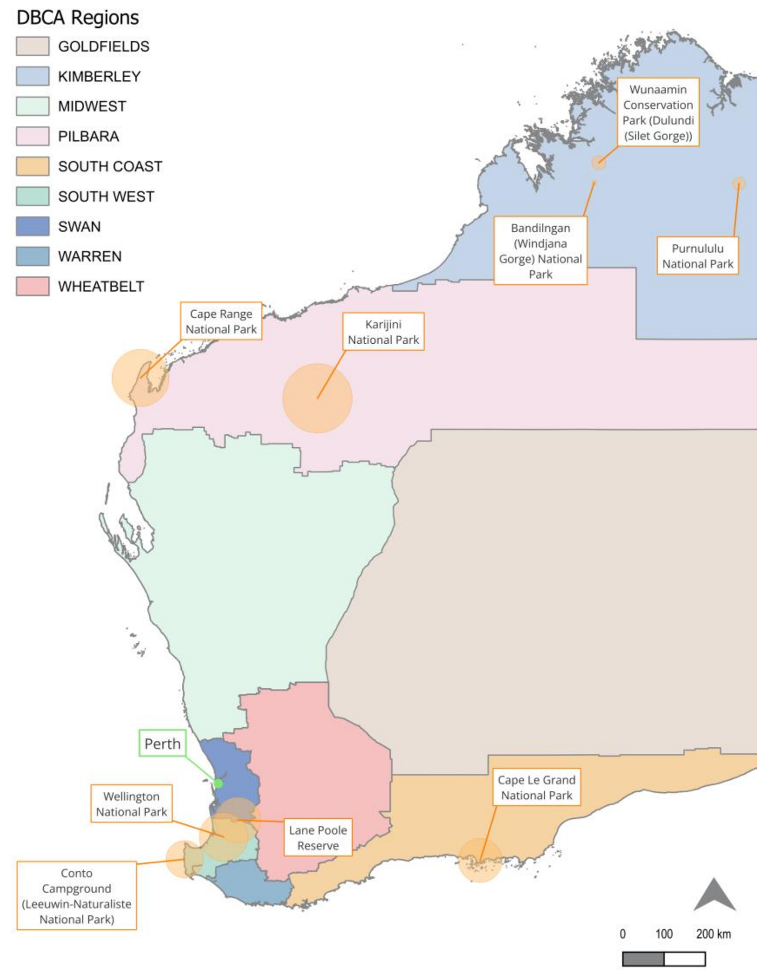


Figure 3 *presents a map of Western Australia segmented by DBCA regions. Indicator sites are marked with orange bubbles. The size of the bubble represents the sites 2023–24 visitation where larger bubbles indicate higher visitation (range 9,073 – 593,026). The Perth Metropolitan Area is marked with a green dot and is included to illustrate spatial relationships and distances between indicator sites and the metropolitan area.*

Summary: what does a typical camp trip look like?

Campers seek nature, peace and social connection

The results of this study suggest that camping is driven by the desire for nature-based experiences, rather than an alternative to accommodation choice. The survey found that the primary motivations for camping were to enjoy nature and the outdoors, rest and relax, and spend quality time with family and friends. Further, over 60% of respondents reported engaging in bushwalking or cycling during their most recent trip, activities that reflect a broader interest in outdoor recreation. Similarly, a recent report identified bushwalking, beachgoing and visiting national parks within the top four activities campers in Australia participate in (Caravan Industry Association Australia, 2025). Overall, these results may suggest that campers are seeking restorative and enjoyable nature-based experiences. This aligns with previous research, which highlights that reconnecting with nature, escaping everyday routines, engaging in recreational hobbies and social connection are central to the camping experience (Hassell, Moore and Macbeth, 2015; Lo, Lau & Xu, 2024). While affordability may play a role for some (Lo, Lau & Xu, 2024), the results suggest that campers are seeking more than a cheap accommodation choice and are looking for restorative nature-based experiences.

Recreational vehicles are increasingly popular, but do not improve camper satisfaction

Camping in a recreational vehicle (RV), such as a campervan, motorhome, camper-trailer, caravan or rooftop tent, is a popular choice for Western Australian campers. Over half of respondents use a recreational vehicle (RV) most often when they go camping, and this preference increases with distance from Perth. This could suggest that comfort and mobility may become more important on longer journeys. Since the previous survey in 2022–23, recreational vehicle (RV) usage has increased by 13.9%. As this increase is based on a two-year comparison this may reflect short-term fluctuation rather than a sustained shift. However, this result aligns with a steady increase in caravan registrations in Western Australia which peaked in 2024 (Caravan Industry Association Australia, 2025; Tourism Research Australia, 2025). Interestingly, while recreational vehicle (RV) usage is high, their use does not improve the satisfaction of those campers compared to tent users. This could be due to differences in facilities provided to tent and caravan users or reflect the importance of experiential motivators over accommodation facilities.

Cape Range National Park. *Photo – A. Smith*

Summary: what does a typical camp trip look like?

Camping offers experiences to a broad range of income groups

Camp trip expenditure varies widely, from $60 to $3150 per trip, highlighting that camping in our national parks offers experiences accessible to a broad range of income groups. Notably, both the minimum and maximum values were reported by Western Australian residents, highlighting the broad spectrum of spending within this group. Interstate travellers spent more per person per night than Western Australian residents or overseas visitors. This may reflect lower average travel costs for Western Australian residents due to proximity, while international visitors likely incur higher overall expenses but spread these across longer, multi-destination trips resulting in lower per night expenditure.

The more remote, the more expensive the camping trip

Generally, the median cost of a camping trip increased with distance from Perth Metropolitan Area due to travel expenses such as fuel and vehicle hire. These costs were the largest component of trip expenditure with an average spend of $304.5. As a result, the most remote indicator sites in the Kimberley and Pilbara were the highest expenditure sites, reflecting the extensive travel required to access them. While a formal travel cost model could not be applied to the available survey data, the high visitation rates at remote high expenditure parks, such as Karijini and Cape Range National Parks, suggest that campers place substantial value on the experiences offered by these sites, consistent with the assumptions of travel cost theory and previous research (Deloitte, 2020; McFadden, 1974).

Campers are important contributors to regional economies

Overall, the expenditure data collected in this survey aligns with previous research that highlights that campers are important contributors to regional economies (Caravan Industry Association Australia, 2025). All indicator sites in the study are in regional Western Australia, and 85.8% of campers reported visiting nearby towns. Importantly, evidence in this study suggests that campers spend money in these towns, with an average expense of $100.2 on groceries, dining out and takeaways. This echoes the findings of a recent national report which identified dining out as the most common activity campers participated in across Australia (Caravan Industry Association Australia, 2025). These patterns suggest that camping not only supports individual wellbeing but also plays a role in sustaining local businesses and services in regional communities.

Cape Range National Park. *Photo – A. Smith*

How satisfied are campers with their experience?

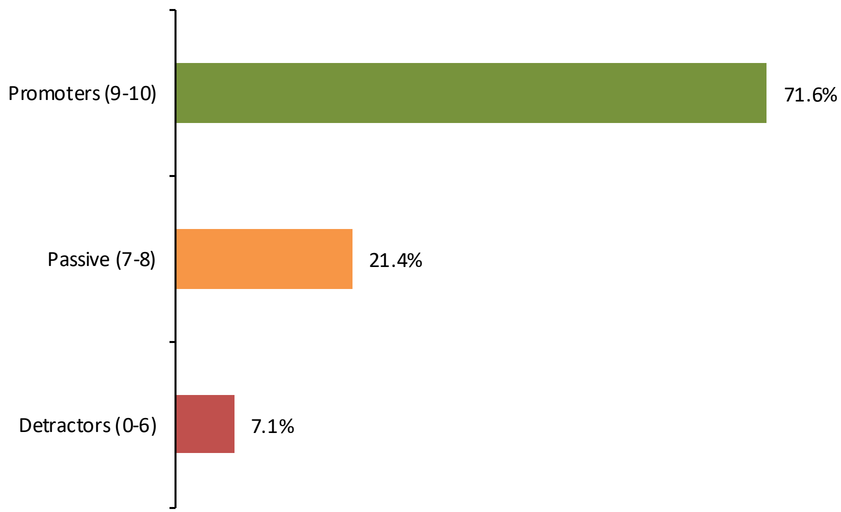
Understanding camper satisfaction in the national or conservation park they visited and how it is influenced by park features is important to develop management strategies that promote positive visitor experiences and generate park loyalty and advocacy (Okello and Yerian, 2009; Carvache-Franco et al., 2020).

Wellington National Park. *Photo – A. Smith*

Camper satisfaction

	2022-23	2023-24	Overall
Average satisfaction with recent camping experience	87.3% (n = 971)	86.2% (n = 1009)	**86.8%** (n = 1980)
Average satisfaction with recent visit to the national or conservation park	89.4% (n = 946)	87.4% (n = 1006)	**88.3%** (n = 1952)

How likely is it that you would recommend visiting the national or conservation park you visited to a friend or colleague? (n = 988)

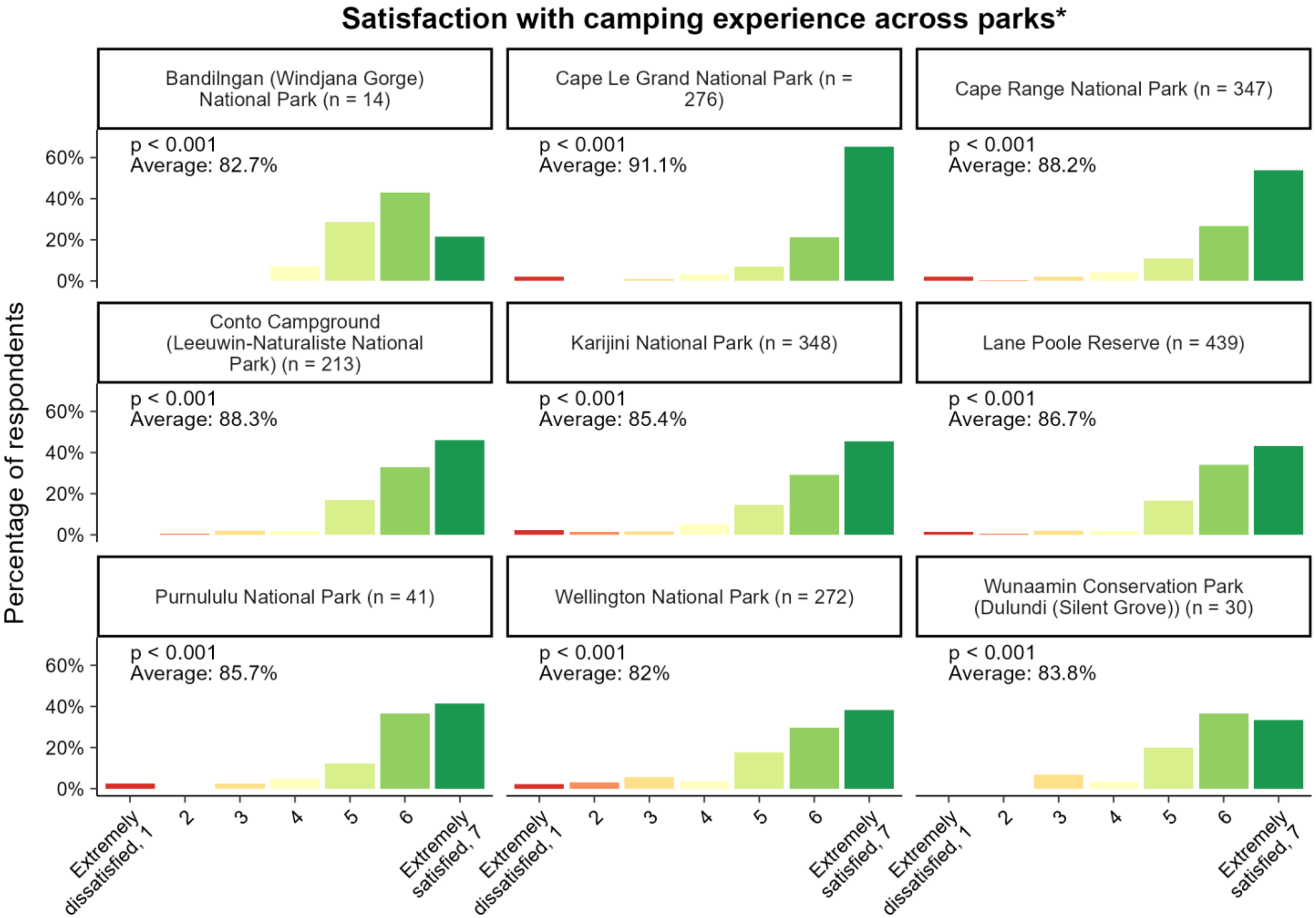


Campers are on average **86.8% satisfied** with their experience.

Those who are **highly satisfied** with both their park visit and camping experience are **significantly more likely to recommend** or promote the national park to others ($p < 0.001$), highlighting the strong link between satisfaction and advocacy.

* Tested using a generalised linear model in R statistical software.

Camper satisfaction



How does satisfaction vary across parks?

Across all parks, satisfaction with camping experience was high and significantly greater than neutral.*

The lowest average satisfaction with camping experience was for Wellington National Park (82%), and highest for Cape Le Grand National Park (91.1%).

* P-values indicate results from Sign Test which was used to assess whether satisfaction ratings differed significantly from a neutral point. The neutral point was defined as 4 on a scale from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 7 (extremely satisfied).

Camper satisfaction

What it is about parks that makes visitors satisfied or dissatisfied?

While satisfaction is high, it is important to understand what it is about parks that makes visitors satisfied or dissatisfied. This allows the development of management strategies that benefits visitors and campers. To do this, we looked at how different factors relate to campers' satisfaction using a statistical model.

We explored both park and visitor factors:

- **Park visitation**
- **Number of visitor experience features in the park** (for example, infrastructure designed to enhance recreational and interpretive opportunities. These may include elements that expand activity options and interpretation opportunities or improve access to new areas, such as interpretive signage, viewing platforms, trails, and boat ramps. Standard amenities like toilets and BBQ facilities are excluded.)
- **Number of nights camped in park** (this result will not be discussed as it was included to improve model fit, see below)

We aimed to make the model both statistically reliable and practically useful. Some variables were included because they help explain visitor satisfaction, while others were retained for their relevance to park management, even if they were not statistically strong. For example, park visitation and the number of visitor experience features were included because they can be actively managed. In contrast, number of nights camped was included to improve the model's accuracy, even though it is less directly controllable. We also included park as a variable to account for differences between parks that are not explained by the other factors.

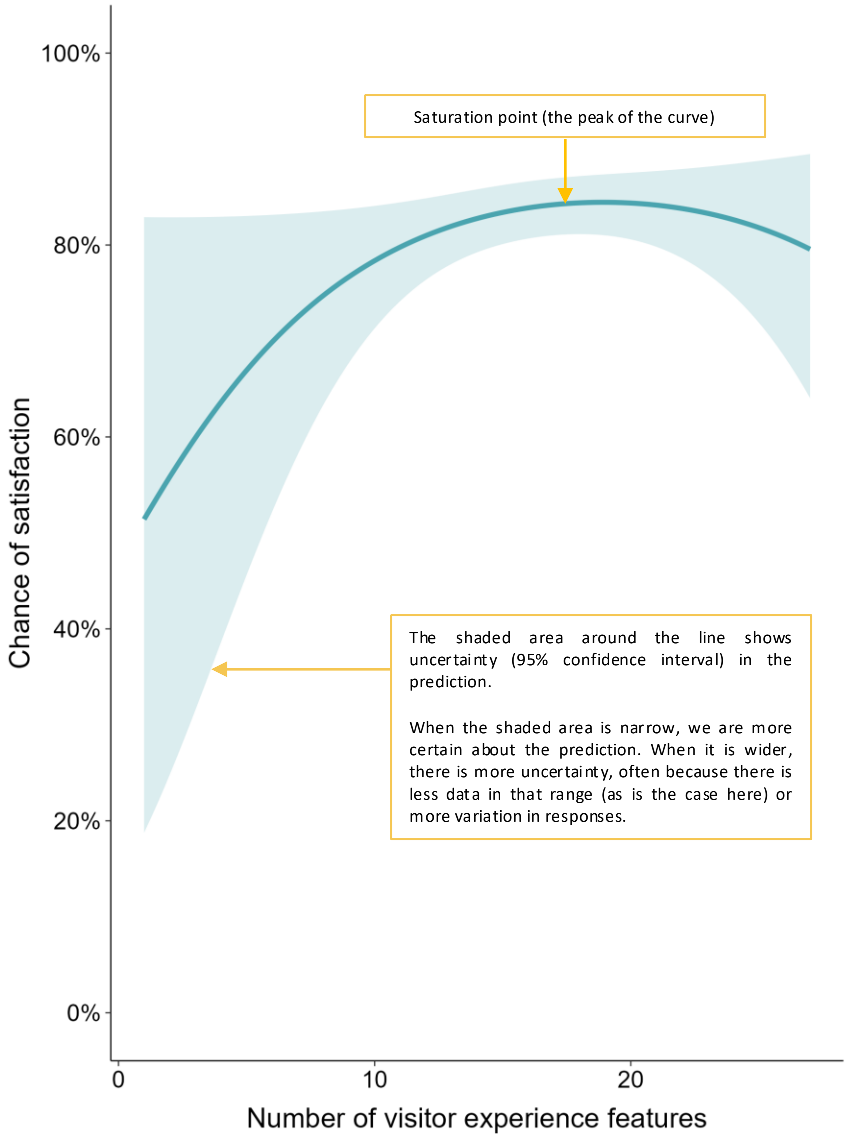
Model limitations

- The model excludes measures of visitor experience feature quality, which may overlook how the conditions and maintenance of these features effect satisfaction.
- The dataset only includes nine indicator parks, which limits variation in park characteristics and reduces the generalisability of the findings.

See Appendix 3 for full details of model selection, variables modelled, and model outputs.

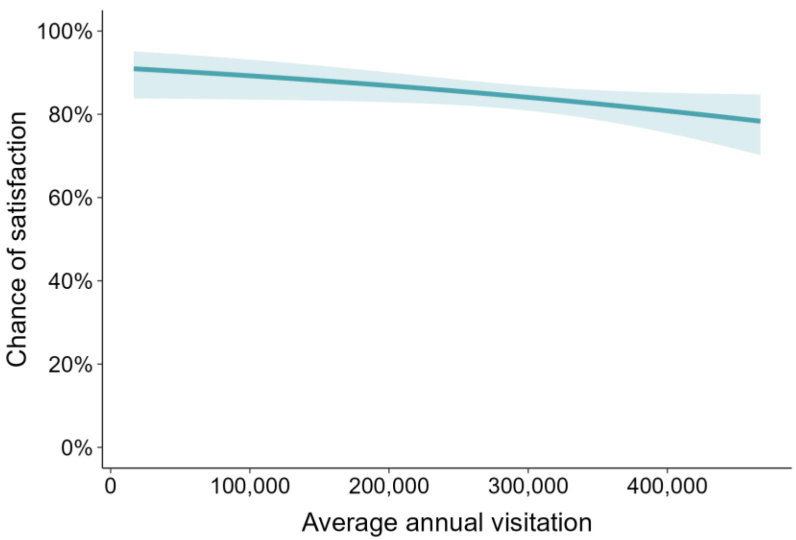
Dales Gorge, Karijini National Park. *Photo – A. Smith.*

Camper satisfaction



Campers are significantly less likely to be satisfied in parks with high visitation and are more likely to be satisfied when parks offer visitor experience features, but only up to a point.

While the likelihood of campers being satisfied remains above 50% (they will be satisfied) across a wide range of visitation rates (9073 – 593,026), our analysis shows that campers are significantly less likely to be satisfied in parks with high visitation. In contrast, the chance a camper will be satisfied increases with the number of visitor experience features. However, if the number of visitor experience features is excessive and exceeds a saturation point, adding more features does not improve the chance of satisfaction and may even reduce it. While this relationship is not statistically significant, the shape of the curve was consistent across different modelling methods giving us confidence that the pattern is meaningful. It is important to note that the saturation point will vary across parks, depending on factors such as remoteness, visitation rates, infrastructure and visitor expectations (Heagney et al., 2019; Neuvonen et al., 2010).



Summary: how satisfied are campers with their experience?

Campers are highly satisfied and strong advocates

Survey results indicate that respondents were highly satisfied with their camping experiences, with an average satisfaction rate of 86.8%. Satisfaction levels were significantly greater than neutral across all parks and ranged from 82% (Wellington National Park) to 91.1% (Cape Le Grand National Park). Importantly, 71.6% of respondents reported being likely to recommend the national or conservation park they visited to friends, family, or colleagues. This tendency was especially pronounced among those who were highly satisfied and were significantly more likely to advocate for the park. This aligns with existing research suggesting that high satisfaction fosters visitor loyalty and park advocacy (Moore et al., 2017).

When it comes to visitation and visitor experience features, less is sometimes more

Campers were less likely to be satisfied in parks with high visitation, or when visitor experience features surpass a parks saturation point. This is consistent with previous research showing that congestion and crowding can diminish the quality of the visitor experience in national parks (Ferreira & Harmse, 2014; Schamel & Job, 2013). Similarly, previous research suggests that an overabundance of visitor experience features, particularly when paired with reduced biodiversity, can also have a negative impact on visitor experience (Juutinen et al., 2011). While this analysis is not exhaustive, it highlights a potential risk, that increasing visitation and visitor features may eventually reduce the quality of the visitors' experience. Overall, these results suggests the need for careful consideration when planning marketing campaigns to attract more visitors or adding more features that aim to improve visitors' experience. Further, these results suggest the need for future research to explore how this pattern varies across parks with different levels of remoteness, infrastructure and visitation, visitor expectations and ecological integrity. However, as parks are more than just a social asset, it is important to integrate social values into a trade-off framework incorporating cultural and ecological values to transparently identify an appropriate balance between diverse values.

Wellington National Park. Photo – *A. Smith*

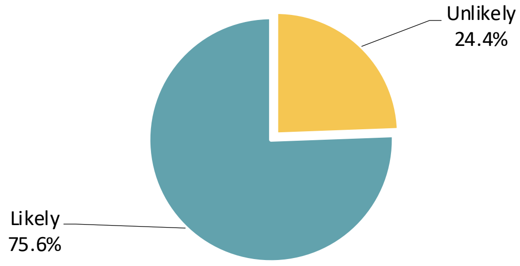
What are campers future camping intentions?

Understanding campers' future intentions provides valuable insight into emerging trends in park use, visitor preferences and park loyalty. This information helps anticipate demand for facilities, services, and conservation efforts, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently.

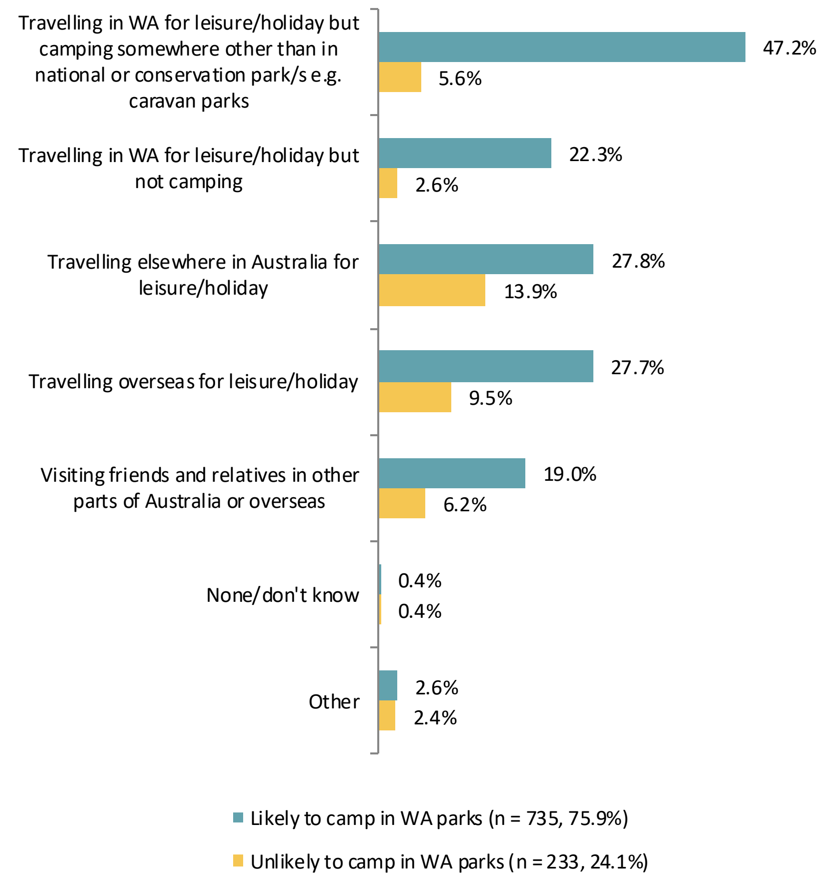
Yardie Creek, Cape Range National Park. *Photo – Tourism Western Australia*

Future camping behaviours

During the next 12 months, how likely is it you will go camping again in ANY Western Australian national or conservation park? (n = 991)



What sort of leisure trips are you likely to take in the next 12 months?* (n = 968)



Most respondents are **likely to go camping again** in Western Australian national or conservation parks in the next 12 months (7-point scale, 1–4 unlikely, 5–7 likely).

47.2% of those likely to camp in Western Australian parks again **would also camp in Western Australia somewhere other than parks** (a 4.2% increase from 2023-24)

The largest proportion of those **unlikely to camp in Western Australian parks** in the next 12 months reported they **would be travelling elsewhere in Australia for leisure/holidays** (13.9%)

Future camping behaviours

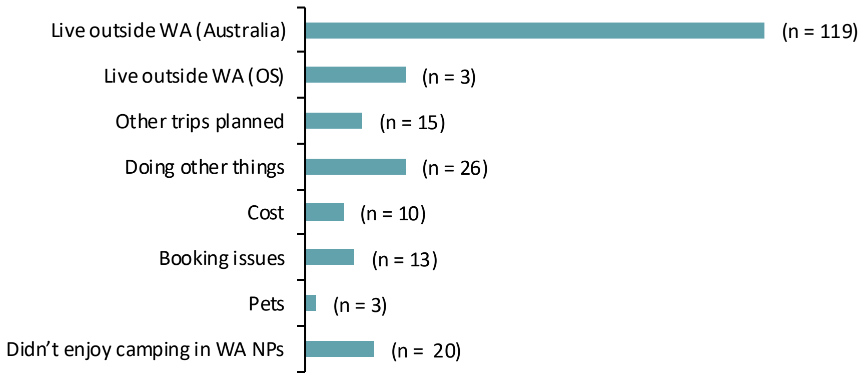
Camping intentions over the next 12 months:

- **41.3%** of campers plan to **increase** the number of camping trips, nights, or both.
- **38.3%** expect their camping activity in Western Australian national or conservation parks to **remain about the same.**

Likely to go camping in WA, how trips might change (n = 734)

Trips \ Nights	Decrease	About the same	Increase	Unsure	
Decrease	0.7%	0.8%	0.0%	0.1%	1.6%
About the same	1.2%	38.3%	9.1%	1.1%	49.7%
Increase	0.7%	9.7%	22.5%	1.0%	33.8%
Unsure	0.1%	1.2%	1.0%	6.9%	9.3%
	2.7%	50.0%	32.6%	9.1%	

Reason unlikely to go camping in Western Australian parks in the next 12 months (n = 215)



- Of the small proportion of respondents **unlikely to go camping in Western Australian parks in the next 12 months** and chose to provide a reason (n = 215), 67.4% said it was because they **live outside of Western Australia**.
- Of the small proportion of respondents **unlikely to go camping in Western Australian parks in the next 12 months** because they **did not enjoy camping** reported lack of facilities (particularly relative to the cost of camping) or found them too busy/had inconsiderate neighbours.

Summary: what are campers' future camping intentions?

Campers are loyal to Western Australia's national parks, with most planning to maintain or increase their camping activity

Most campers surveyed indicated they are likely to camp again in Western Australia's national parks, with the majority reporting they would either maintain or increase their current number of trips and nights. This echoes the increased frequency of camping trips reported since the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, this finding aligns with the high levels of satisfaction reported in the survey and supports existing research linking visitor satisfaction with loyalty and repeat visitation (Moore et al., 2017). While continued camping in national parks is likely, nearly 50% of respondents also expressed plans to camp in alternative settings such as caravan parks. This suggests that national park camping complements, rather than competes with, other forms of camping accommodation. Encouragingly, most of those unlikely to return to Western Australian national parks in the next 12 months were non-residents, indicating that their decision is likely due to geographic constraints rather than dissatisfaction. However, a small number of participants cited reasons such as inadequate facilities relative to fees, inconsiderate neighbours, or booking difficulties as deterrents to future visits. Overall, the results in this survey suggest that campers will continue to camp in Western Australian national parks, perhaps more frequently and for longer trips.

However, while previous research suggests that stronger intentions are generally associated with a higher likelihood of performing a behaviour and thus offer useful insight into potential demand, it is important to recognise that self-reported intentions do not reliably predict future behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Sheeran, 2001). Human decision-making is influenced by a range of contextual factors, such as time, money, and access to resources, which can limit a person's ability to follow through even when motivation is high (Ajzen, 1991; Sheeran, 2001). Individuals also tend to overestimate their future actions, particularly in survey contexts (Sheeran, 2001). Therefore, robust forecasting of participation would require predictive modelling that accounts for behavioural patterns, constraints, and external influences.

Yardie Creek, Capre Range National Park. Photo – Tourism Western Australia

Conclusion

Campers in Western Australia's national and conservation parks are primarily **seeking relaxing, nature-based experiences to share with family and friends** and the results of this study suggest these expectations are being met. The results show that campers are **highly satisfied** with their experiences in Western Australia's national and conservation parks and are **loyal** to them. With an average satisfaction rate of **86.8%,** and **strong advocacy intentions** among satisfied visitors, the findings reinforce the link between visitor satisfaction, loyalty, and park promotion identified in previous research (Moore et al., 2017). However, the data also highlights that **high visitation and excessive visitor experience features can negatively impact the visitor experience**, suggesting a need for **careful management of park capacity and development.** Further, despite **the increase of recreational vehicle (RVs)** (caravans, campervans, motorhomes) **usage**, especially for longer journeys, **their use does not improve camper satisfaction** compared to tent users. Encouragingly, most campers intend to **maintain or increase their camping activity**, reflecting both post-pandemic behavioural shifts and sustained satisfaction. For a small proportion of campers, **barriers to future visitation** included a lack of facilities relative to cost, neighbour behaviour, and issues with the booking system. Beyond personal wellbeing benefits, camping also delivers **economic benefits to regional communities** through spending on supplies, fuel, and food, contributing directly to regional economies and supporting local employment.

As campground bookings and camp frequency continue to rise, it is critical to support sustainable growth in visitation and ensure continued camper satisfaction. To support this, the **ongoing camping monitoring program should continue to track long-term behavioural trends, and future research should explore trade-offs between diverse park values and strategies for balancing visitor experience with ecological and community outcomes.**

Lane Poole Reserve. *Photo – Tourism Western Australia.*

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Appendix 1: Visitation seasonality

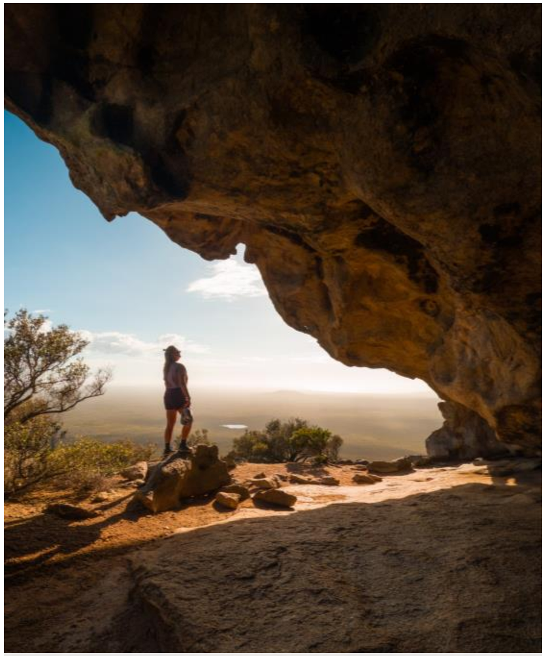
The indicator sites are distributed across Western Australia's latitudinal range resulting in highly seasonal patterns of visitation. Typically, indicators sites in the north (e.g., those in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions) receive more visitation in the cooler months and the southern sites receive more visitation in the warmer months. These seasonal trends are amplified during school holiday periods which drive peak visitation across the state. In addition, indicators sites in the Kimberley region, Bandilngan (Windjana Gorge) National Park, Wunaamin Conservation Park (Dulundi, Silent Grove) and Purnululu, are subject to seasonal closures in their wet seasonal (summer) due to flooding impacts.

The table below shows indicator site seasonality. The percentages represent the average share of annual visitation received in each month calculated over an eleven-year period (2013-14 – 2024-25). Typical school holidays months are shown in italics and suffixed with an asterix (*). A colour gradient is used to aid interpretation, with darker cells indicating higher visitation proportions. Months are presented in financial year format, consistent with DBCA data reporting.

Seasonality at indicator parks/sites	Region	*Jul**	Aug	*Sep**	*Oct**	Nov	*Dec**	*Jan**	Feb	Mar	*Apr**	May	Jun
Bandilngan (Windjana Gorge)	**Kimberley**	34.4%	19.1%	10.6%	4.3%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	1.5%	8.9%	20.4%
Wunaamin Conservation Park (Dulnundi (Silent Grove))	**Kimberley**	32.9%	19.3%	10.9%	4.4%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	10.7%	21.4%
Cape Range National Park	**Pilbara**	13.8%	12.0%	10.7%	9.2%	4.9%	5.0%	4.5%	2.4%	4.8%	10.3%	10.6%	11.8%
Karijini National Park	**Pilbara**	17.6%	15.3%	11.3%	8.3%	4.2%	2.7%	2.1%	1.7%	3.7%	8.8%	10.8%	13.5%
Cape Le Grand National Park	**South Coast**	3.2%	3.4%	6.6%	8.0%	8.3%	14.6%	16.1%	9.8%	10.2%	10.6%	5.6%	3.8%
Conto Campground (Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park)	**South West**	3.5%	3.9%	6.6%	9.2%	8.8%	9.8%	13.5%	8.2%	9.6%	11.9%	10.5%	4.6%
Wellington National Park	**South West**	5.8%	5.8%	9.2%	8.4%	8.3%	9.5%	13.4%	8.5%	9.1%	10.3%	6.0%	5.5%
Lane Poole Reserve	**Swan**	5.3%	5.8%	8.8%	10.8%	8.5%	10.6%	11.8%	6.2%	8.0%	9.8%	7.1%	7.4%
Purnululu	**Kimberley**	29.1%	19.1%	9.8%	1.8%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%	14.8%	22.5%

Appendix 2: Comments

- **536 respondents** (52%) provided a range of general comments.
- Each topic within a comment was counted. A single comment could mention multiple topics.
- Topics mentioned were divided into the two categories of experience related or management related
- Topics were categorized as either positive (coded in **green**), neutral (coded in **grey**), or negative (coded in **red**).



Mandooboornup (Frenchman Peak), Cape Le Grand National Park.
Photo – Tourism Western Australia.

	Count of mentions	% of total comments (n = 536)
Experience related		
Positive experience (Loved it, great, will return, unique experience, beautiful, nature, animals)	94	17.5%
Others' behaviour (noisy, rude, busy, speeding, driving on beach, foraging firewood, light pollution)	35	6.5%
Other campers (good/friendly)	7	1.3%
Management related		
Booking system (difficult to use, sites booked but empty, problems with cancellations/refunds, hard to get booking)	165	30.8%
Facilities/amenities (good, well maintained, clean; incl. toilets, BBQs/camp kitchen, tables, showers, solar hot water, waste, trails, roads, location, visitor centre)	113	21.1%
Maintenance needed (incl. toilets, firepits, BBQs, sinks, showers, lights, waste, trails, roads graded)	116	21.6%
Staff friendly/helpful (incl. rangers, camp hosts, visitor centre)	59	11.0%
Want more/different facilities (e.g. lights, sinks, showers, tables, hot water, dump point, rubbish bins/recycling, hooks in toilets, hand sanitiser, tent sites, camper-trailer sites, firepits, firewood, ban generators, visitor centre)	49	9.1%
Want more information (pre-visit, on site signs, cultural, prescribed burns)	32	6.0%
Staff unfriendly/unhelpful/missing (incl. rangers, camp hots, visitor centre)	18	3.4%
Booking system (easy to use, good, like cancellations/modifications)	6	1.1%
Want to be allowed to bring dogs	5	0.9%
Information good (pre-visit, on site)	4	0.7%
Dingo-human interactions problematic	1	0.2%
Don't want dogs allowed/need better dog control	1	0.2%

Appendix 3: Satisfaction modelling

To explore how both camper and park attributes influence satisfaction, we used a Generalised Linear Mixed Model (GAM). This approach allows us to understand the relationships between predictors and the binary outcome of camper satisfaction (where respondents who selected 6 or 7 on a scale of 1 (extremely dissatisfied), to 7 (extremely satisfied), were classed as satisfied. Data used to estimate the model included all valid data across both the 2022–23 and 2023–24 dataset (n = 1716).

We aimed to make the model both statistically reliable and practically useful. A model was chosen using backwards selection applied to relevant variables. Variables explored included, camp equipment (e.g., campervan or tent), number of adults and children in camp party, age and avidity of camper etc. Some variables were included because they help explain visitor satisfaction, while others were retained for their relevance to park management, even if they were not statistically strong. For example, park visitation and the number of visitor experience features were included because they can be actively managed. In contrast, number of nights camped was included to improve the model's accuracy, even though it is less directly controllable. We also included park as a random effect to account for differences between parks that aren't explained by the other factors (see final model variables in Table 1 on the next page)

There are two important limitations of the model to note. First, due to lack of data the model excludes measures of feature quality such as cleanliness or maintenance which could influence satisfaction. Second, the analysis is only based on nine parks, limiting the variation in park characteristics and reducing the ability to generalize findings across the broader park system. Despite these limitations, the approach offers a useful starting point. It can serve as a pilot for future work and has potential to be scaled up and applied to statewide satisfaction surveys, where a more diverse dataset could support more robust and representative insights.

Appendix 3: Satisfaction modelling

***Table 1** shows the variables used in the generalised linear mixed model to determine their effects on campers' satisfaction with national or conservation park they visited.*

Variable	Type	Values	Description
Response variable:			
Satisfaction	Binary	Satisfied (1), Dissatisfied (0)	Stated level of satisfaction with recent visit to national or conservation park on a scale from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 7 (extremely satisfied). Those who select 1-5 were classed as dissatisfied, and those that selected 6 or 7 were classed as satisfied.
Explanatory variables:			
Number of visitor experience features	Numeric	0-27; mean 16.7	Number of features or infrastructure in a park that go beyond basic facilities to improve visitor experience by increasing access to new areas, activities or interpretation materials. This included the number of viewing platforms/lookout, information signs, trail types, bridges, boardwalks, boat ramps and jetties.
Number of visitor experience features^2	Numeric	1-729; mean 306.8	The quadratic term for number of experience features was included to explore diminishing returns.
Average visitation	Numeric	16588 - 466851; mean 297906	Average annual visitation to park, included as a proxy for business.
Number of nights camped in park	Numeric	0-14; mean 3.48	The stated number of nights camper stayed within the park. This was capped at 14 as many campsite do not allow booking of over 14 nights, particularly during peak season.
Random effect:			
Indicators site	Categorical	9 levels, 1 for each indicators site (e.g., Cape Range National Park, Lane Poole Reserve)	Indicator site was included as a random effect to account for unobserved variation between sites.

Appendix 3: Satisfaction modelling

***Table 2** shows the estimated generalised linear mixed model of campers' satisfaction with national or conservation park they visited.*

Variable	Estimate (Standard Error)
Number of visitor experience features	0.12 (0.1)
Number of visitor experience features^2	-0.19 (0.12).
Average visitation	-0.28 (0.14)*
Number of nights camped in park	0.09 (0.04)**
Random effect	**Estimate (Standard Deviation)**
Indicator site (intercept)	0.05 (0.23)

Significance at * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Cape Le Grand National Park. *Photo – Tourism Western Australia.*