



# Camping with kids

Camping with the kids can create the basis of life-long, treasured family memories ... if you plan ahead and know where to go. Here are 10 of WA's top camping spots for families WORDS Samille Mitchell



Camping with kids. Sound like a horror rather than a holiday? Well prepare to rethink your perceptions. Sure, you may need to be more prepared to go camping with little ones in tow but the effort is worth it. There is something so magical about slowing down and seeing the world through children's eyes. However, such trips don't necessarily come easy. You've got to plan and prepare and plan some more.

and south coast, while winter's mild daytime temperatures and a drop in coastal winds make anywhere north appealing. Very generally speaking, the south has more in the way of camping infrastructure in its national parks and towns – and with more infrastructure often comes more people. Generalising again, heading north often appeals more to those looking to escape the crowds and 'rough' it (unless, of course, you're glamping).

## Where to go and when

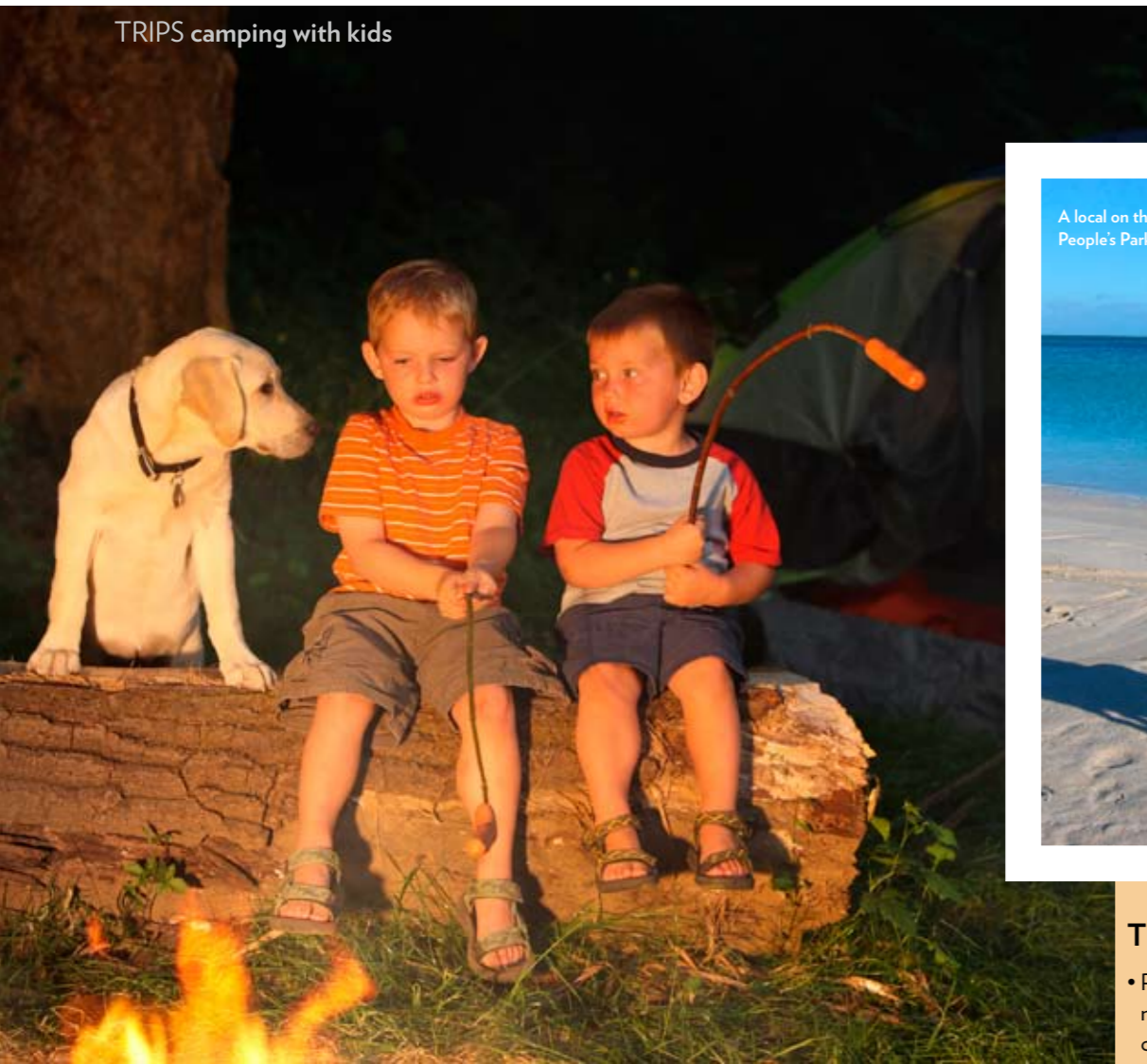
Where you go will largely be dictated by how long you've got and the season you're travelling. You've also got to consider how much roughing it you can take. Do you prefer an established campground with toilets and hot showers, or are you happy to pitch a tent near the beach? For those who are prepared to fork out some cash, there is a growing number of luxury 'glamping' options to consider, including Savannah Campground in Karijini National Park, El Questro in the Kimberley and Sal Salis near Exmouth.

To make your planning simple, think south in summer and north in winter, although if you get lucky with the weather, off-season camping means less crowds and more serenity. Summer temperatures are ideal for exploring the forests and beaches of the south-west

## What to take

What you bring with you can make or break your trip with kids, so plan carefully. First, think about the basics. Kids adore staying in a tent and there is a huge range on the market these days to suit families of all sizes. Some tips? Make ease of putting it up a priority, and consider how many 'rooms' you need and where the doors are positioned, so you can access the tent without disturbing the little ones and they can't escape without you knowing.

You'll need something to sleep on – options include self-inflatable mattresses (great space savers), swags (easy to roll out and you don't need a tent, but they can be bulky), or stretcher beds (which keep you off the ground so can be warmer). Then there are sleeping bags. If you're going down south in winter you'll need a minus-two-Celsius-graded bag, but if you want something more general, warmer is better



“A campfire is a wonderfully atmospheric cooking option for camping, especially if you remember to bring the marshmallows...”

Next, think about food. You'll need a car fridge or esky to store perishables, and plates, bowls, cups, grill, frying pan and utensils to cook and eat. How will you cook? Is there power? Are barbecues provided? Are campfires allowed at the time you're travelling? Do you need to bring your own wood? A campfire is a wonderfully atmospheric cooking option for camping, especially if you remember to bring the marshmallows, but you're best to have a gas cooker on hand in case campfires are not allowed. These are also far easier if you just want to whack on a cuppa. It's also worth taking a thermos - fill it up in the morning and you won't need to boil the billy again all day.

What to eat? Think simply - barbecue meat, pre-cooked stew or pasta that you can simply reheat or, for a special treat, a roast or stew slow-cooked on the fire in the camp-oven. There are also surprisingly tasty dried-food meal options these days - just add boiled water and

your meal is ready. Don't forget the snacks. Kids can work up a serious appetite so keep fruit, nuts, biscuits and muesli bars in easy-to-access places for car journeys and while out exploring.

If there are no showers on hand you can bathe the little ones in a deep plastic bowl (which you can also use to do your washing up). You can also get shower 'tents' - black bags of water with a shower head attached that warm in the sun during the day ready for an evening scrub.

Lighting is also important. Kids love head torches - being hands free, they are practical too. Try a lantern for general lighting. You can even get remote-control lights that hang from the roof of your tent - lie in your sleeping bag and flick a switch, to save stumbling in the dark.

Also bring your camera. Be sure it's charged before you go or buy an inverter that plugs into the cigarette lighter of your car, allowing you to charge electrical items while driving (great for the mobile phone, too).



A local on the beach at Coral Bay (Photography People's Park Caravan Village).

### TIPS FOR CAMPING WITH KIDS

- Plan, plan, plan and keep it simple (do you really need a coffee machine that plugs into the car cigarette lighter? Yes, they do exist).
- Know where you're going before you set out and if you need to book. For camping in national parks, check out [dec.wa.gov.au/campgrounds](http://dec.wa.gov.au/campgrounds) for information and to make bookings.
- Avoid too much driving. If your destination is a long way away, break up the journey and make the trip there part of the adventure. Once there, set up camp and stay a while in the one place.
- Keep drinks and snacks on hand - for the car or in a backpack while exploring.
- Bring games (think a deck of cards rather than a Nintendo DS).



## Western Australia's TOP 10 CAMPGROUNDS

WA is blessed with excellent family camping options. Here's ten of the best

### 1 Jurien Tourist Park, Jurien Bay

**Where is it?** Jurien Bay is about two to three hours' drive north of Perth, along the new Indian Ocean Drive.

**Why it's great for families** It's sprawled upon a beachfront with sheltered waters and great beach fishing. There's a pontoon in the water, a jetty for fishing nearby and a giant jumping pillow in the park. The town also offers bike hire, kayak hire and sea lion tours, and the Pinnacles Desert and caves of Stockyard Gully are not far away.

**What is there?** The park features powered and unpowered campsites and a range of other accommodation types. There's also the giant jumping pillow - a favourite with the kids.

**Tips** Bring your swimmers.

**Don't miss** A swim at the beach and dropping a line for fish.

**Bookings/more information** For bookings, call (08) 9652 1595 or 1800 119 239, or visit [jurienbaytouristpark.com.au](http://jurienbaytouristpark.com.au).

### Congelin campground, Dryandra Woodland, Peel

**Where is it?** 164km south-east of Perth and a little more than 20km north-west of Narrogin, amid the trees of Dryandra Woodland. It's two-wheel drive accessible.

**Why it's great for families** This is possibly the best place in the State to see elusive and rare native mammals. You can visit nearby Barna Mia Animal Sanctuary to see these cuddly looking creatures and partake in a guided nocturnal tour. It's also home to nearly half the State's population of the numbat - WA's fauna emblem.

**What is there?** Communal gas barbecues, communal fire ring sites, long-drop bush toilets, seven to eight single caravan sites, three group camping tent areas (catering to about 40 people), three individual, one car-bay, camp sites. The park also features Barna Mia Animal Sanctuary and interpretive centre, a drive trail, walk trails and picnic tables. You can also stay at nearby Dryandra Woodland Village.

**Tips** There's little drinking water: take your own.

**Don't miss** A guided nocturnal tour at Barna Mia Animal Sanctuary and a walk on the Woylie Walk trail - recognised by Top Trails WA as one of the State's 50 best trails. The Ochre Trail is also excellent, with interpretive signage describing Aboriginal culture of the area.

**Bookings/more information** There is no booking system for the campground. Simply obtain camping fee envelopes from the information shelter (brochures are also available here) and send your payment to the DEC office in Narrogin. For more details visit [dec.wa.gov.au](http://dec.wa.gov.au) (click on Parks and recreation, then Park finder), go to [dec.wa.gov.au/campgrounds](http://dec.wa.gov.au/campgrounds), or call DEC's Narrogin office on (08) 9881 9200.



Soaking up the natural beauty at Dryandra Woodland (Photography Department of Environment and Conservation).



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### Beelu campground, Perth Hills Centre, Mundaring

**Where is it?** Beelu National Park, Mundaring.

**Why it's great for families** This is camping with kids at its easiest. The campground is easy to access at just 40 minutes' drive from the Perth CBD, and has excellent facilities. Despite the infrastructure, this is still a true camping experience, staying in a tent amid the trees, where you're likely to spot native animals like kangaroos, possums and birds.

**What is there?** 12 unpowered camp sites, powered and sheltered camp kitchen with free gas barbecue and fridge, hot showers, flushing toilets, nearby visitor centre with refreshments, walk trails, access to the Bibbulmun Track, an onsite camp host for security and information, a nearby visitor centre for information and refreshments, nearby access to the Munda Biddi off-road cycling trail and firewood available for purchase (be sure to check fire restrictions).

**Tips** Book early – it can be very popular.

**Don't miss** The short walk to the Mundaring Weir lookout and setting out on a walk trail through the trees.

**Bookings/more information** Visit [dec.wa.gov.au/campgrounds](http://dec.wa.gov.au/campgrounds) or phone the Perth Hills Centre on (08) 9295 2244.



Cape Peron (Photography Tourism WA)

### Bottle Bay campground, Francois Peron National Park, Shark Bay

**Where is it?** Francois Peron National Park, Shark Bay. It's four kilometres from Denham, 340km from Carnarvon and 430km from Geraldton. Access to the campground requires a high-clearance 4WD vehicle and competent four-wheel driver. The campground is nestled behind the dunes, close to the beach but is largely protected from southerly winds.

**Why it's great for families** If there's one place to come to see marine life, Francois Peron National Park should well be it. Stand atop a cliff here to see charismatic marine animals such as dolphins, manta rays, turtles, schools of fish and dugongs. Bottle Bay campground has a sheltered swimming beach, great beach fishing and is the closest campground in the park to Skipjack Point, where you'll see the best of the marine life. It is also strikingly beautiful, with vivid rust-red sand dunes contrasting against the white beach and blue ocean.

**What is there?** Around 15 to 20 camp sites, generator and generator-free zones, toilets, gas barbecues and a boat-launching area on the beach.

**Tips** You'll need to bring all your own water and bathing facilities (there are no showers).

**Don't miss** The short drive to the Skipjack Point Lookout – the best place to see an astounding array of marine life in the waters below.

**Bookings/more information** No bookings are required. If the campground is busy, there are several other campgrounds within the park. Herald Bight is well protected on the other side of Peron Peninsula, and Big Lagoon, South Gregories and Gregories also offer campgrounds.

Visit [dec.wa.gov.au](http://dec.wa.gov.au) (click on Parks and recreation, then Park finder), go to [dec.wa.gov.au/campgrounds](http://dec.wa.gov.au/campgrounds), or contact the DEC Shark Bay office on (08) 9948 1208.

### 5 Lake Leschenaultia, Perth Hills

**Where is it?** About 50km from Perth in Chidlow, in the Perth Hills.

**Why it's great for families** White sandy beaches and clear waters make Lake Leschenaultia appealing for the whole family. You can hire a canoe, swim, jump off the pontoon, set out on a walk and bike trails, birdwatch and generally soak up the bush setting.

**What is there?** There are around 20 campsites and all but one group site are powered. There's a camp kitchen with fridge, microwave, electric barbecues and sink, and large ablution blocks with hot showers, flushing toilets, washing machines and clothes dryers.

**Tips** Bring basic sleeping gear and eating/cooking utensils. For a full list of what to bring, see the website below.

**Don't miss** A swim in the clear lake waters or a stroll around the lake's shores.

**Bookings/more information** You must book in advance and arrive onsite before gate closing times, which vary depending on the season. Call (08) 9572 4248 to book, or visit [mundaring.wa.gov.au](http://mundaring.wa.gov.au), and click on Your Community, then Recreation and Leisure, then Lake Leschenaultia.

Lake Leschenaultia (Photography Shire of Mundaring)



Honeymoon Pool campground is popular for swimming and canoeing (Photography Collie Visitor Centre).

### Honeymoon Pool, Wellington National Park, Collie, Geopraphe region

**Where is it?** 28km from Collie.

**Why it's great for families** This riverside campground is set on the banks of a beautiful pool in the Collie River and is surrounded by forest. It features a network of bike and walk trails and the river's clear waters are popular for swimming and canoeing.

**What is there?** Bush camping, flushing toilets, picnic facilities, fire rings (bring your own firewood and avoid use in the fire-ban season) and barbecues. The adjoining Stones Brook campground has a covered camp kitchen with barbecues, gas burner, sink and water, which Honeymoon Pool campers can also use.

**Tips** There's no power or showers so come prepared. Bring the kids' bikes because there are heaps of cycling trails.

**Don't miss** A swim in the river or a hike through the trees.

**Bookings/more information** There are no bookings for this campground. For information, visit [dec.wa.gov.au](http://dec.wa.gov.au) (click on Parks and recreation, then Park finder), go to [dec.wa.gov.au/campgrounds](http://dec.wa.gov.au/campgrounds), or contact DEC's Wellington District on (08) 9734 1988.

### 7 Dampier Peninsula, West Kimberley

**Where is it?** It's a little over 200km from Broome to Cape Leveque, at the tip of the peninsula. You'll need a 4WD vehicle to access it (although half the drive is now sealed).

**Why it's great for families** There's a riot of family-friendly activities on offer at varied places along the peninsula – mud crabbing, Aboriginal cultural tours, fishing, whale watching, swimming, snorkelling, kayaking, birdwatching, boat charters, the list goes on. And the beaches are simply stunning (but be wary of extreme tides).

**What is there?** You've got a big choice of campgrounds and facilities on the peninsula, from pitching a tent near the beach to staying at an eco-retreat at Goombaragin or luxurious safari tents at Kooljaman at Cape Leveque. There is no free camping around here – you must stay at one of the

authorised campgrounds. Several of the campgrounds have small shops serving the Aboriginal communities.

**Tips** What you bring with you largely depends on which campground you choose – some require you to be totally self-sufficient, others offer the luxury of a 'bush butler' service. No dogs are allowed and there's no alcohol for sale – check at your campground if you're allowed to bring alcohol with you.

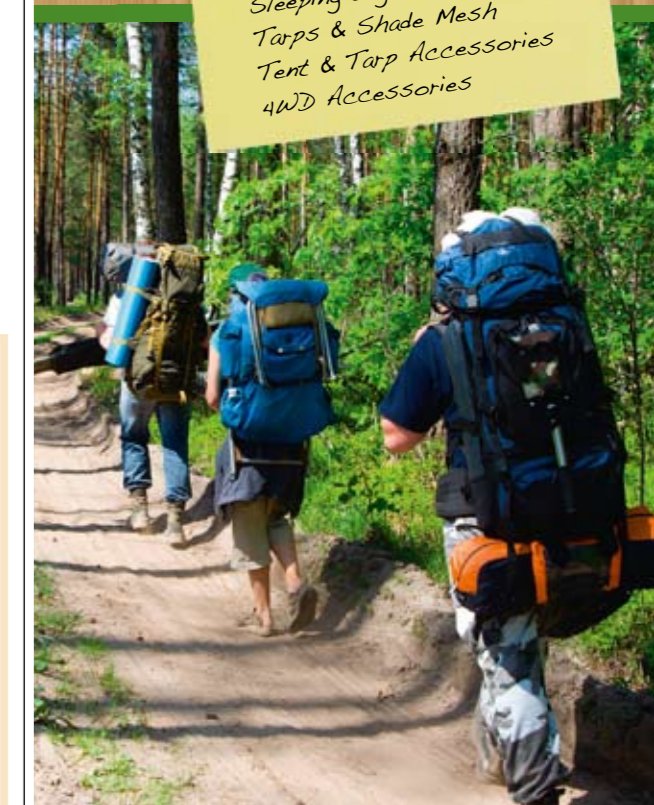
**Don't miss** An Aboriginal cultural tour offering activities like mud crabbing, a visit to see the ancient footprints of humans and a dog fossilised in the rock, reef tours, bush tucker and more.

**Bookings/more information** The peninsula can be busy during school holidays and at the peak of The Dry. You'll need to book directly with whichever accommodation provider you wish to. Go to [ardi.com.au](http://ardi.com.au) or visit the Broome Visitor Centre and ask for the Dampier Peninsula Traveller's Guide.

## CAMPING CHECKLIST

### Your Online Store

- Beach & Shade
- Camper Trailer Accessories
- Camper Trailers
- Canvas Products
- Cast Iron & Cookware
- Coolers
- Dome Tents
- Ensuites
- Furniture
- Gazebos
- Gas
- Lighting
- Mats
- Packs
- Sleeping Bags
- Tarps & Shade Mesh
- Tent & Tarp Accessories
- 4WD Accessories



## EXPLORE THE WORLD

[www.campingchecklist.com.au](http://www.campingchecklist.com.au)

[info@campingchecklist.com.au](mailto:info@campingchecklist.com.au)

Phone: 1300 765 569

### Bayview Coral Bay or People's Park Caravan Village, Coral Bay

**Where is it?** About 1200km north of Perth.

**Why it's great for families** Coral Bay is heaven for families. There's no need to drive after you arrive, the beach is stunning and protected and you need only step metres from the shore to enter the enchanting coral gardens of the Ningaloo Reef. Then there's glass-bottom boat tours, snorkel tours, swimming with manta rays, swimming with whale sharks, quad bikes, kayaks – the list goes on.

**What is there?** Both caravan parks offered a range of accommodation, from unpowered or powered camp sites to cabins and villas. People's Park is virtually on the beach and has beach volleyball nets while Bayview is close to the beach and has a swimming pool, two playgrounds, beach volleyball net and basketball hoop.

**Tips** Book early, especially for holiday periods which may be booked out more than a year in advance.

**Don't miss** Checking out Ningaloo Reef – whether it's on a glass-bottom boat tour, snorkelling or on another of the many available tours. In-season swimming with whale shark tours are a once-in-a-lifetime experience for older kids and adults.

**Bookings/more information** Call People's Park on (08) 9942 5933 or Bayview on (08) 9385 6655, or visit the websites [peoplesparkcoralbay.com](http://peoplesparkcoralbay.com) or [coralbaywa.com](http://coralbaywa.com).

People's Park Caravan Village, Coral Bay.



Rottnest Island (Photography Tourism WA)

# 9

### Allison Camping Ground/Caroline Thomson Cabins, Rottnest Island

**Where is it?** The campground and cabins are located near Bathurst Lighthouse; a short stroll from The Basin, one of Rottnest Island's most popular family beaches.

**Why it's great for families** The campground is set among bushland and shady trees and the island itself is laid back, there are no cars, great beaches, heaps of free guided walks, adorable quokkas, bike hire, extensive walk and cycle paths, historical artefacts, and a riot of paid tours too.

**What is there?** The campground offers basic camping facilities with barbecues, lighting and water tap as well as a nearby ablution block. The cedar-clad cabins consist of one large space which contains a kitchenette, two sets of bunks and a double bed with a separate bathroom.

**Tips** Bookings are essential for campsites during peak periods, however, they are not balloted. Caroline Thomson Cabins are only balloted twice a year during January and the Easter school holidays.

**Don't miss** Hiring a bike and exploring the island.

**Bookings/more information** Call the Rottnest Island B Shed Visitor Centre on (08) 9432 9111 or visit [rotnnestisland.com](http://rotnnestisland.com). Bookings can be made through [bookings.rotnnestislandonline.com](http://bookings.rotnnestislandonline.com). Remember that you'll need to book early for holiday periods.

# 10

### Guilderton Caravan Park, Moore River

**Where is it?** Under 100km north of Perth.

**Why it's great for families** The park is nestled between the mouth of Moore River and the open ocean. The town is very quiet – there are few cars. There's a country club offering kids lawn bowls, tennis, free mini putt and a skate ramp. There's a canoe and paddleboat hire, river cruises, beach and river fishing and 4WD tracks.

**What is there?** The park features 114 sites, 103 of which are powered, and 10 chalets. There are also ablution blocks, a camp kitchen with free barbecues, kettles and microwave, laundry facilities, chemical dump point, library and information centre and a shop next door.

**Tips** There's not much in the way of eating out in Guilderton so come fully stocked with most of your food and equipment to cook it.

**Don't miss** Fishing from the beach or banks of the river.

**Bookings/more information** (08) 9577 1021 or [guildertoncaravanpark.com.au](http://guildertoncaravanpark.com.au).



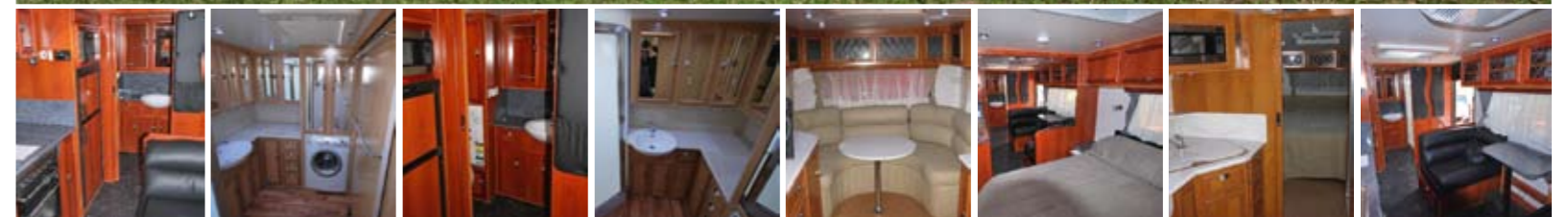
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