

Have five-star caravan, will travel the country.

By SARAH PRICE

GREY nomads are heading for five-star luxury as they are predicted to hit the road in droves in the coming decade.

Social demographer Bernard Salt said a wave of Winnebagos was set to wash across Australia as baby boomers pushed into their late 50s and early 60s.

And they can do it in the lap of luxury with a top-of-the-line Winnebago, known as the Classic, on the market which comes complete with satellite television, a solid timber cocktail bar with glass doors, a household-sized shower, a combination washer-dryer, a queen-sized bed and solid American oak timber furniture.

And it can be all yours for less than \$500,000.

Mr. Salt said those **most inclined to caravanning were 55 to 69 year-olds.**

"The baby boomers are now aged 43 to 58, so over the next 10 years will be where caravanning becomes more popular because simply more people are pushing into that time of life," he said.

Australians would soon come to see traveling around the country in a recreational vehicle as a must-do upon retiring and it would become a "rite of passage" of sorts for retirees, he said.

Danny Williams, the sales man-

THE GREY PARADE

Let's drive: Motorhome touring is tipped to become a must-do.



Picture: HEATH MISSEN

ager for Western Sydney Winnebago, said the Winnebago Classic was five-star luxury.

The beauty of it, he said, was you could pull up wherever you could find a good spot, be it by the sea or in the bush, and be ensconced in luxury.

"This is like going around Australia and staying in five-star hotels all the way," Mr Williams said. "But this is a cheaper way of doing it."

Priced at \$496,600, the Classic also comes with a DVD and VCR combination unit, 10-way electronic bucket seats, satellite navigation, a lounge area that can slide out over the side of the vehicle to give it an extra metre of space, a two-door fridge and freezer, a four-burner LPG stove with a separate grill and oven, a convection microwave, a separate toilet, cedar-lined wardrobe cupboards, polished solid timber

- 80 per cent of the caravan and tourist park market is over 55.
- About 15,000 Australians are touring Australia in recreational vehicles at any onetime.
- **70 percent of new caravans and motor homes are bought by those 50 and over.**
- **Sales of vans and mobile homes have increased by 70 per cent each year for the past four years.**
- **There are about 15,000 new caravan registrations a year.**
- Hiring a Winnebago can cost up to \$275 a day.

floors and dual air-conditioning. Mr. Williams said Winnebagos were popular among baby boomers who had retired and wanted to see Australia. But he said the Classic was generally for "people that have a bit of money, for sure".

"They're saying they want to go and see Australia - this is the way to do it," he said.

Ros Bromwich, the editor of *Caravan World*, said that **over the past five**

years there had been a boom in recreational vehicles of all kinds, including motor homes, caravans and camper trailers.

And there were no indications it was going to slow down.

That could be attributed to a number of reasons, she said, including the realisation that getting out and seeing Australia was a worthwhile venture and that people were living longer and generally in better health for longer, so it was a more viable option come retirement.

"Put it together with the fact that people are a bit wary about going overseas because of world events, and, also, the manufacturers of vehicles have really got their act together in terms of equipping vehicles ... where people can actually live in them," she said.

Figures from Caravan Industry Australia show that the production of recreational vehicles has tripled since the early 1990s and 70 per cent of new caravans and motor homes are being purchased by those aged 50 and over.

Ms Bromwich said some people sold everything, bought a recreation vehicle and went travelling indefinitely, while others rented their houses out to travel.

"Most people want a home to go to," she said.



LAP OF LUXURY: Danny Williams shows off his Winnebago Classic for the well-heeled travelers.

Picture: ANTHONY JOHNSON

