



CCSA / KSA

SUMMER 2019



CAMP BOFFIN

Are you one of us?

The Davids can't wait for a camping weekend with their caravan club, and the Smiths have long since booked the only stand at Solitary Bay. Where will you be going?

Words: Leon Botha Photos: SACA and CCSA



Variety is the spice of life, and in the world of camping it is no different. One family may prefer a bustling resort that you could almost call a mobile city; while another looks for a solitary stand deep in the Kalahari under a camelthorn tree. Some families load their children's push bikes, while some couples head for resorts where no kids are allowed. Music is another bone of contention...

The same goes for caravan clubs, of course. But how familiar are most campers with what caravan clubs are really all about? We turned to the South African Caravan Association (SACA) and the Caravan Club of Southern Africa (CCSA) for answers.

Say what?

SACA celebrates its 50th anniversary this year and has a membership of 1 125 families in 35 regions. The membership

fee amounts to R365 per household per year (R355 for people over 60). The CCSA, in turn, is the oldest caravan club and was founded in 1947. This organisation has a membership of 1 414 families divided into 36 regions, and the membership fee amounts to R440.

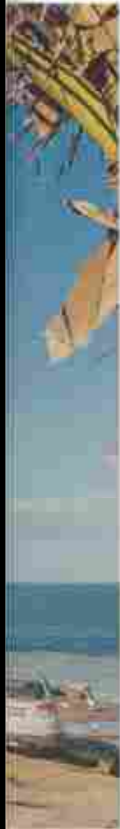
SACA's national chairman, Jurie Dreyer, and CCSA president, Russel Gibbens, answered a few questions.

Who is the club's typical member?

SACA: Our members consist mostly of families, but of course the numbers of those above 60 increases as time goes on. We also have singles, including quite a few women who even tow their caravan on their own.

CCSA: Most of our members are older couples, and many of the friendships formed in the club extend beyond the club.





Is a caravan required?

SACA: No, people with camping gear such as tents, off-road trailers, motorhomes and rooftop tents are also welcome.

CCSA: Not at all.

How often do you all camp together?

SACA: The regions arrange their own gatherings, if possible they happen once a month, while the larger areas meet once or twice a year. The national gatherings – such as the annual presidential conference – are attended by as many regions as possible.

CCSA: The regions hold 10-12 events a year with an average turnout of around 50%.

Are you obliged to attend a certain number of gatherings?

Neither club requires that.

Do you camp less during school holidays?

SACA: We stay active, for example, in the holiday season

earlier this year we arranged no less than 30 rallies. During the winter holidays, 27 regions went camping. Long weekends are used to travel further afield.

CCSA: It is true that caravan clubs camp less in these times because rates are higher.

What happens at a gathering?

SACA: Members relax, enjoy nature and make use of the facilities at the resort. Depending on the theme for the weekend, communal braais and other entertainment are organised.

CCSA: At many instances members get a light dinner on Friday night – a hamburger, boerewors roll or curry and rice – at a nominal fee. The Saturday consists of activities that the weekend's rally marshals arrange and often includes a programme for kids. No activity – for children or adults – is mandatory. On Saturday night, we braai, and some of our regions will have a church service (and Sunday



What do our Facebook friends say?



Johan Duvenhage

I was previously a member of SACA, but it wasn't for me. Everyone says you are not obliged to participate at such gatherings, but if you don't, you get looks. There were also a few cliques.



Mathys Pretorius

I have nothing against clubs, but we do our own thing with friends and family.



Zaandré Campher

I was a member of a club for a few years and had great times. A club does need to grow and change as members change. Right now, I'm not part of a club and camp with a group of family and friends. We let each other know when we go camping, and those who want to join, do so. It's not a problem if you can't or don't want to. Sometimes you feel like having a nice visit with lots of people and a lot of noise, but other times you want to experience the silence with only a few people around a campfire. A club therefore has its place, but there is also an argument for not being a member.



Isabel de Klerk

On 20 December 1979, we established our own private club with our children, in-laws and grandchildren.



Marinda Mulder

We have been part of the CCSA Vaal Triangle since December 1987 and it's a wonderful group of people. We're heading to Malonjeni just outside Heidelberg this weekend.



Nico Prinsloo

I camp with a caravan club, with friends and on my own. I enjoy camping and it doesn't matter who is there with me or how I camp.



Henry Austin

I like to camp alone. In a group there are sometimes people who know best about everything and women who want to establish menus. Camping on my own is better and I make new acquaintances every time.



Hennie Jansen van Rensburg

We once tried camping with a group, but we'd rather do our own thing with our own circle of friends.



THE ORIGINALS The Caravan Club of Southern Africa (CCSA) has the distinction of being the oldest caravan club in SA and was founded in 1947. Its membership consists of 1 474 families across 36 regions.



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school) on Sunday morning. We conclude the weekend with awards for people who attended a certain number of rallies, followed by fun "penalty fines". This is for "perceived misdemeanours" and is actually a form of fundraising: the proceeds are usually donated to a charity.

Which years did you have the most members?

SACA: Membership has declined over the years, but the eighties and nineties were the most prosperous.

CCSA: The late 1970s to the early eighties.

To what do you ascribe this decline?

SACA: The arrival of the EB license, toll fees, the cost of acquiring a proper tow combination, the condition of certain roads, the camp rates and the decline of certain resorts, especially those under municipal control.

CCSA: The towing license is one of the reasons, but the world

has changed dramatically over the years. The economy pinches and there's the possibility of burglaries while leaving your home empty. People also arrange their lives around school going children.

Do you actively recruit new members?

SACA: We are currently busy with extensive planning that also looks at increasing membership.

CCSA: We focus on retaining our existing members, and our membership is an issue that is discussed annually. This is a continuous process.

How has the caravanning landscape changed over the years?

SACA: More campers have switched from traditional road caravans to off-road trailers and caravans – the condition of some roads is no longer suitable for a regular road caravan. Motorhome owners have also increased.

Furthermore, caravan parks are struggling to remain profitable





HALF CENTURY The South African Caravan Association (Saca) celebrates its 50th anniversary this year and has a membership of 1 125 families who come from 35 regions.

because of higher electricity and water charges – and wages.

CCSA: Before our existence there were no caravan parks in the country. Thanks to the dedication of our club's founding members who exerted pressure on municipalities to make land available, we have such campsites today. Camping with a caravan has been regarded as a cheap holiday for many years. That is no longer the case – you'd struggle to find a towing combination under R250 000; in fact, combinations of R1 million or more are a common sight. Caravan parks also feel the economic pressure, and without the seasonal holidaymakers they struggle to keep their heads above water. That's why the CCSA also camps out of season – it's an extra income for the parks.

What are the benefits of a caravan club?

SACA: Campsite rates are negotiated on your behalf; we have a website for everyone plus a nationwide network of resorts and dealerships; safety risks at gatherings are mitigated; there's an annual programme that makes planning easier; plus the companionship of fellow campers who become good friends and stand together as a family.

CCSA: You experience good camaraderie when you get away with your friends for a weekend up to 12 times a year. Your campsite is also booked for you – often at a discounted price. Your savings can be even more than your club rate, and of course it's safer when a group of people go camping together.

f What do our Facebook friends say?



Hendrik Bezuidenhout

Sometimes we camp on our own and at other times with a club. We are members of a motorhome club and enjoy it a lot.



Piet Botha

A club has its benefits, including making good friends, but then you're also bound to specific events on such a gathering. I prefer to decide for myself when I go and what I do.



Andreana Swanepoel

I think some people have a misconception about caravan clubs. We have been camping with the members of the CCSA Tygerberg since

2013. Each event is one big party. There are no stories of one being better than others, and no gossip. The only obligation is to sign in on Friday night – and that only takes five minutes of your time. The rest of the weekend you do what you want. No one gets upset with you if you only attend a camp once a year or every month. Come and try it out.



Bonita Fourie Schultz

We belong to the CCSA Eastern Province. Although we sometimes camp alone, I can honestly say that camping with the club is the best as you know everyone around you. When you camp alone, you are only familiar with the people who go with you. Our club has a lot of members.



Andre Geldenhuys

A caravan club is great when it is a small group, such as a group of friends who regularly camp together. As soon as stuff such as raising the flag ceremonies and many rules appear, I keep clear.



Ben Visagie

The clubs serve a good cause and bring people together. However, I prefer to camp on my own or with friends. Otherwise I make friends in the campsite.



Johan Visser

From a safety point of view, it is better to belong to a caravan club.

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THERE'S A PLACE FOR EVERYONE: You get three types of campers; those who belong to a club, those who do not belong to a club, and then those who support both.

What do the resorts say?

The Dolphin Holiday Resort in KwaZulu-Natal gives discounts to groups such as caravan clubs, but these special rates apply only out of season. This excludes school holidays and long weekends. In the past, they had a prerequisite of at least 10 caravans to make a block booking, but because the club visits declined, they reduced it to five. According to the resort, this arrangement still works well, as a number of clubs make use of this. For a booking, a club should send a list of prospective campers so that the price can be fixed. Pensioners automatically qualify for their discount, but the remainder get a 10% discount.


The Kam'Bati River Resort in the Western Cape say they have seen a noticeable decline in club bookings over the past two years. It seems the economy is pinching and the clubs go to resorts closer to big cities where they are based. Kam'Bati gives a 10% discount for a group of 20

families or more – that's for two adults plus kids per site.

Forever Resort Plettenberg is also in the Western Cape and does not have a fixed discounted rate, says resort manager André Steyn, but they will negotiate discounts for groups (such as caravan clubs). There has to be a minimum of 15 caravans and it would exclude long weekends, Easter holidays and December holidays. Although there is also a school holiday during October, it is quieter in the resort and groups are welcome. Depending on the numbers, groups can get up to 20% off (sometimes even more), but André warns that people should keep to agreed numbers. It happens, for example, that someone negotiates discounts for 100 caravans, but then arrives with far less and still expect to pay the lesser tariff.

ATKV Eiland Spa is in Limpopo and the resort manager, Bennie

Steenkamp, says as an ATKV group, for example, they have an agreement with SACA for better rates – and that applies to all seven of their resorts. Bennie also says better rates apply to times when they are quieter. They are prepared to negotiate

a good rate for a group, but then it must consist of at least 15-20 caravans. They do their best to handle such a group as a block booking and try not to disperse the group all over the campsite, especially because groups like to stick together. 



What do our Facebook friends say?



Anton Pretorius

It seems to me that people have a misconception about caravan clubs. I am a member of the CCSA South Rand region and would like to invite those who live in our area for a weekend with us. Join in the joy of children who move around without worry, and the adults also appreciate the camp life. And if you want, you can be on your own, too.



Jan Ebersohn

I've been with SACA for 45 years. We are not a group of friends, but one big family and know each other's loves and sufferings. The management organises the camps that we decided on at the annual meeting. If you can't or don't go, just excuse yourself. Nothing keeps you from camping on your own.



Erika Sandbaal

We're one of two families who try to camp once a month. It's fabulous and great fun. I'm not interested in a club.



Gielie Lambrechtts

A friend long ago belonged to such a club and they enjoyed it very much. But when I heard about a "chairman's tea", I lost all interest.



Johann L. Lemmer

We have been members of SACA for 40 years and it is fantastic. It is truly a family where everyone can do their own thing.



Sonya de Beer

We don't belong to a club, but are considering it. I think when camping, you make friends as you wish. We have always camped on our own, but have had wonderful neighbours. I think both have its pros and cons.



Dion Marinus

I am a member of the CCSA Eastern Free State. Do yourself a favour and camp with a club for a couple of times before deciding whether to join. The club eventually becomes like family. You can still camp on your own, but doing it together is great.