

Our Homes

TODAY

Photography by Chris Skelton

Towing their home behind them...

By HELEN PERRY

After years of battling in Auckland's business rat race Max and Julie Nummy decided to toss it in and take to the road - in a caravan.

Since then they've spent two winters and three summers in the South Island and will soon start touring the far north. Generally away three months then back for three to catch up with family they are addicted to caravan life and say the only downside is coming back to Auckland's, traffic, noise and graffiti.

This successful couple's lifestyle change was prompted by a health scare three years ago. Not yet 60 at the time and married for the best part of 40 years they decided their business no longer needed Max's daily presence and their three children had busy lives of their own.

"We'd travelled abroad often and felt it was time to see our own country. Three years on we never tire of the scenery and are constantly astounded by its beauty."

When first toying with the idea of touring the Nummys were set on buying a motor home but a caravan holiday with friends in Australia changed their minds.



Max and Julie Nummy

"We decided a caravan was the most practical," Max says. "By separating it from our vehicle we are free to drive around unhindered, into townships or to explore wonderful byways such as the Molesworth Station, Dansies Pass on the way to Naseby and Old Man Rock in the Nevis Valley, all unsuitable for caravans and motor homes but real treasures."

The couple also joined the New Zealand Motor Caravan Club which gives them access to park over properties known as POPS. Usually the farms or residential properties of other caravanners, the tariff is considerably cheaper than at camping grounds however caravans must have a self-containment certificate verifying that waste tanks have been fitted and other regulations followed.

"We've met wonderful people wherever we've gone but we've made some great friends at POPS, especially at those we have used more than once. There's no compulsion for hosts to offer anything but a site to park but most end up providing warm hospitality while you are there."

Hopping from park to camping ground to DOC site may sound like fun but is it

comfortable? Max and Julie say anyone who thinks caravanning and roughing it are synonymous, should think again.

Their 7.3 metre (24ft) Jayco Sterling caravan is comfort plus featuring a separate bedroom with queen size island bed and en suite. The kitchen is equipped with a multitude of timber cupboards, fridge-freezer, which can operate off gas, electricity or battery power, rangehood, microwave and a ceramic cook top.

"We have TV, air conditioning and four different types of heating as well as underfloor insulation," Max says. "A solar panel keeps the battery charged but if it rains for days we head for a camping ground where there is power to recharge."

But rain is something that has hardly bothered them. "Last summer we went six weeks in the South Island and saw only half a day of rain. At the time, friends who joined us for a week ended up staying six. They loved the whole experience."

The layout of Max and Julie's caravan is particularly comfortable but like most things it took a bit of trial and error getting there. Twelve months after buying their first caravan with no underfloor insulation they decided stepping from a toasty warm bedroom in winter to a frozen kitchen floor was not part of the plan. They traded it in on one better suited to their needs and have never had heating problems since, even in the heart of a Southland winter.

"Of course, dealing with a reputable caravan company has been invaluable," Max says. "We have bought twice through Coastal Caravans at Whakatane where servicing and back-up has been fantastic. When a moulding broke around the roof line resulting in a massive leak the team



removed the whole roof to ensure a first class repair. Nothing is ever too much trouble and they are now good friends."

After purchasing their new van (about \$65,000 after all extras had been fitted) the Nummys' say cost of living has been relatively cheap. Their biggest item is fuel and they don't scrimp on that.

"We set out to see the country and that's what we do," Julie says. "Food is no different than at home and is sometimes cheaper because we often buy fruit and vegetables from roadside stalls and we don't eat out like we did in Auckland. "I generally pack a sandwich lunch because we never know where we will end up. We return to the caravan for dinner, however, our daily treat is morning coffee in one fabulous location or another. Among our favourites are The Bay House overlooking beautiful Tauranga Bay on the West Coast, Fleur's Place at Moeraki and Sandfly Café at Farewell Spit.

"In winter we pack our skis and make for Cardrona. In summer we load the inflatable dinghy on top of our 4WD and spend many a day or evening fishing at the likes of Kaikoura or out from Portage in the lovely Kenepuru Sounds. You couldn't ask for a more idyllic lifestyle. And what's more the housework is done in a jiffy."

