

CARAVAN SALON with a great success story

60th birthday of the world's leading trade fair for motorhomes, caravans and equipment

Since the first CARAVAN SALON was held in 1962 at Messe Essen, the development of the world's leading trade fair for mobile leisure, now permanently held in Düsseldorf, has been impressive.

In 1962, 34,500 visitors attended the first CARAVAN SALON, where 61 exhibitors from eight countries presented caravans and accessories on 15,000 square metres exhibition space. The CARAVAN SALON DÜSSELDORF in 2019 attracted over 270,000 caravanning enthusiasts. They were shown caravans and motorhomes, accessories, extension components, tents and travel destinations by 645 exhibitors from 31 countries, who occupied space of around 214,000 square metres in 13 halls and open grounds. These record numbers reflected the great enthusiasm for caravanning in society. Under normal conditions, a continuation of the success story could have been expected in 2020, but the Corona pandemic put the brakes on the world's leading trade fair for motorhomes and caravans.

But in 2020, the CARAVAN SALON was also a great success, albeit under completely different basic conditions. Last year, it was the trade fair with the highest number of visitors worldwide within the Corona pandemic. A viable hygiene concept in close cooperation with the authorities with a prescribed minimum distance of 1.5 m, the use of face masks and hand sanitizer dispensers was necessary for the fair to take place. In addition, only a limited daily number of visitors could be admitted after prior online registration. Despite these restrictions, the 107,000 visitors ensure very good sales results and satisfied faces among the participating exhibitors. Especially in these extraordinary times, the CARAVAN SALON has underlined its special importance as an indispensable information and sales platform.

“Right from the start CARAVAN SALON was conceived as a new products and innovations event. It now plays this role not only for the premieres of the new generation of vehicles, but also for all important innovations in the supplier and accessories industry. This is also reflected in the sharp increase in the number of trade visitors from all over the world, making this fair the only international event in the industry. The CARAVAN SALON was and is



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the most important indicator for trends in the caravanning industry," says Stefan Koschke, Project Director of the CARAVAN SALON.

History of CARAVAN SALON:

In **1962** the first CARAVAN SALON, which was initiated by the industry and retail as their own autumn trade fair, lasted five days. The camping exhibition in spring, in which caravans were just one exhibit among many, was no longer sufficient to the growing industry as a platform. In addition, the industry wanted to exhibit and place orders in autumn, so that the vehicles could be delivered right on time for the new season in spring. The initiators of CARAVAN SALON got the inspiration for the new trade fair's name from an event in London's Earls Court as the new premiere trade fair was to be international. The organizers were the German Camping Club (DCC - Deutsche Camping-Club) and the Association of German Caravan Retailers and Importers (Verband Deutscher Wohnwagen-Händler und -Importeure).

The response to the new trade fair was so good, that after the second event was held in **1963**, which also lasted five days, it was already regarded as the largest European event of its kind. Almost all the standard European caravan models were represented, and in total there were around 250 caravans and mobile homes on display. In **1964** the trade fair's duration was for the first time extended to 9 days and two weekends. At this, the third trade fair, a considerable number of foreign visitors were already registered.

In **1965** CARAVAN SALON was once again reduced to five days, until when, in **1966**, it was to permanently remain open for nine days. At the fourth trade fair the then complete Essen exhibition centre was already fully booked. In a word of welcome the message was: "The Caravan Salon in Essen has become a showcase for the pan-European caravan industry." Since 1966 the VDWH, Association of German Caravan Manufacturers (Verband Deutscher Wohnwagen-Hersteller), had been co-organizer of CARAVAN SALON, from **1967** it was then the sole organizer. During these years an increasing number of companies offered good-value, small "caravans for everyone".

In the years that followed the visitor figures at CARAVAN SALON increased further and the exhibition space was also extended to include two halls. In addition, the trade fair became more attractive: the product range (and interest) in accessories grew, an increasing number of exhibitors did not

simply present lines of caravans, but instead showed affectionately-decorated stands, in some cases with the first playing facilities for children. The form and design of the caravans had also changed since the beginnings of the trade fair: they had developed and departed from the typical egg shape to become more elongated. In the interiors electrical and water supply became a standard feature, while the kitchens got bigger and the fittings more comfortable. An increasing number of models attracted greater interest with their winter compatibility thanks to full installation, double glazing windows, cold air excluders and central heating systems.

At the 10th CARAVAN SALON in **1971** the number of visitors reached the 100,000 mark for the first time, in addition personal patronage was assumed by Federal Minister of the Interior Genscher. In the years that followed CARAVAN SALON registered further increases in the number of exhibitors. In **1972** motor caravans, as they were referred to at that time, with a vehicle price range from 10,000 to 100,000 Marks, already occupied more than one third of the total exhibition space. Their share continued to increase constantly and at the 17th CARAVAN SALON in **1978**, for the first time, more motor caravans than caravan exhibitors were registered.

The stands presented by the caravan and mobile home manufacturers became increasingly lavish and elaborate, while the award for the most attractive stand by the trade fair organizers also provided the exhibitors with an additional incentive: there were stands with water features and animals, on one stand an aircraft was shown and in **1974** even a complete fairground roundabout was set up on a stand.

Although the trade fairs held in **1974** and **1975** were characterized by the recession and oil crisis, the industry which had previously enjoyed constant growth saw itself confronted with uncertain customers for the first time, but emerged from the crisis almost unscathed, while interest in caravanning remained stable and the quality and fittings of the vehicles continued to increase. The furnishings style was also predominantly lavish and opulent.

While it was the technical innovations and new developments which were the focal point at the trade fair in **1976**, including in particular new and improved vehicle chassis and the first caravan with solar panels for hot water generation, in **1977** it was special models such as the Argentinian floating caravan, the Swedish winter caravan, which could be placed on runners, or the green hunting caravan with a 5.20 m-high extendible viewing tower,

which attracted the attention of the visitors and the press.

At the 20th CARAVAN SALON in **1981** the sector experienced a difficult phase due, among others, to increasing oil prices. As a consequence of this, in 1981 in Essen, the manufacturers presented an unprecedented range of model diversity in the medium caravan category between 800 and 1,200 kg with the aim of saving petrol. The first attempts to establish a slant-nosed vehicle aimed at optimizing aerodynamics and with it also fuel consumption, were, however, not able to assert themselves. Record camper numbers in the early 1980s, new, larger halls and a direct underground connection to the Essen exhibition centre enabled CARAVAN SALON to expand further up to its 25th anniversary in **1986**, a fact which led VDWH President Erwin Hymer to proudly sum up in connection with the anniversary: “The young sector presented itself modestly at the beginning. Today Salon is the market trend barometer in Europe.”

And that is the way it also stayed in the 25 years that followed up to today. In this connection CARAVAN SALON further transformed itself from a pure sales and order-placing exhibition into a trade fair experience covering all aspects of mobile holidays. At the 30th CARAVAN SALON in **1991**, for the first time a partner country, Denmark, presented itself with its own activities and promotion hall which also hosted panel discussions, a talent show and daily performances by various pop music stars. The service for visitors was also further improved. In this connection for example, the VDWH offered a computer-based caravan model advice service, which provided vehicles tailored to customers' individual wishes.

In **1993** the largest change in the history of the CARAVAN SALON was about to happen: with its growing significance and the increasing desire for more exhibition space, CARAVAN SALON in Essen had finally reached its limits. In a joint press conference, the VDWH, Messe Essen and Messe Düsseldorf announced that CARAVAN SALON would be moving to Düsseldorf as of 1994. They said that in Essen it was no longer possible to take the sector's growth into account, while in Düsseldorf in contrast, there was enough space for accessories, construction components, travel operators, vehicle hire stations and equippers for camping sites. This was a precondition for CARAVAN SALON maintaining its status as the No. 1 industry trade fair in Europe and further extending it, the association said in justifying its decision. With the introduction of additional three-point seat belts and the presentation

of the first mobile home with airbag the focus of attention at the last CARAVAN SALON in Essen was on the theme of safety. Due to serious sales difficulties in the mobile home sector, the trade fair had however to contend with declining visitor numbers.

In **1994**, apart from a completely changed layout structure, the move to Düsseldorf also involved several other changes. The largest change and the one which received the most praise, was the setting-up of the Caravan Center by Messe Düsseldorf. This, the trade fair's own parking area, with more than 1,000 spaces and an optimum infrastructure in the northern section of the exhibition premises, enjoyed increasing popularity down the years and has an out-and-out fan following within the sector today. Overall, the association and exhibitors said they were highly satisfied with the new CARAVAN SALON DÜSSELDORF: this, the first trade fair to be held at the new venue, was already more international than ever before and there was talk about the "socially-acceptable Salon" (VDWH-President German Mensch) and "promotion from the Regional league to the Premier league" (Michael Winkler, President of the retailers' association DCHV).

Thanks to new basic vehicles, for the first time in Düsseldorf a completely new generation of vehicles was on display. The sector did not experience a comparable change of models until the 45th CARAVAN SALON in 2006. Apart from the chassis, a lot of things also happened in the vehicles themselves in the years that followed: their design became fresher and younger, more modern and bright, while the independence and flexibility of the caravans themselves also increased through their own electricity supply and water tanks. The range of accessories grew with greater refinement, while the specific addressing of various target groups such as young families and Best-Ager couples through vehicles planned and tailored to requirements became an increasingly standard feature.

During this period CARAVAN SALON DÜSSELDORF was also continuously further developed, there was, however, no more significant change until the 40th Salon in **2001**, when the date of CARAVAN SALON was set for the end of August/early September and the trade visitor and press day was introduced ahead of the first general public day. It was also thanks to this measure that in recent years the share of trade visitors and visitors from abroad noticeably increased. CARAVAN SALON DÜSSELDORF finally established itself as the first international event for new products and

innovations. In his speech marking the opening of the anniversary trade fair, the Federal Minister of Economics and Technology, Dr. Werner Müller, declared: "CARAVAN SALON is this year celebrating its 40th anniversary. But there can be definitely no talk of a midlife crisis."

The trade fair and range of services provided by Messe Düsseldorf also continued to adapt to the needs and requirements of the caravanning community. In this context, in **2001**, the CARAVAN SALON Club was founded, which also developed into a success story: in **2007** the club already welcomed its 100,000th member (at the beginning of 2021, Messe Düsseldorf already welcomed more than 202,000 Club members).

In **2002** Messe Düsseldorf, supported by red dot projects, launched the "caravanning design award: innovations for new mobility", which since then has been presented every two years and has contributed to design becoming an increasingly important theme in the caravanning industry. A further award was donated by Messe Düsseldorf in **2007** to mark the occasion of the company anniversaries celebrated by the two sector giants Erwin Hymer and Harald Striewski. Within the framework of the trade fair opening, the "A Life of Caravanning" award was presented to them in recognition of their contributions to mobile leisure. In **2008** a further event impressively underlined the significance of CARAVAN SALON DÜSSELDORF for the international caravanning industry: for the first time the CIVD organized a caravanning world conference aimed at improving the exchange of information and contacts between the worldwide caravanning markets.

Be it in the entertainment programme for the trade fair visitors, which in **2009** was complemented by a popular new element in the shape of the Caravanning Show-Center, focusing attention on special caravanning trips and arousing people's desire for faraway places, or in the presentation of current sector themes and trends such as for example the theme of Green Caravanning in **2010**.

In **2011**, the CARAVAN SALON celebrated a round birthday and those responsible could not have wished for a better present: Fittingly for the 50th anniversary of the trade fair, the world's largest trade fair for motorhomes and caravans experienced the best-attended event in its history up to that point, with 179,000 visitors.

Since **2015**, independent experts have been informing first-time visitors and

newcomers in particular about important know-how on caravanning practice in the "StarterWorld". The professionals give tips and recommendations on vehicle types, travel routes, technical equipment and accessories or the right choice of campsite.

In the following years, the CARAVAN SALON grew continuously and thus underlined its high relevance for the industry as a business platform and at the same time as a place of experience for the whole family. In **2015**, a magic mark was broken for the first time with more than 203,000 visitors.

The hall structure in Düsseldorf has also been adapted several times to the increased demand. In **2017**, a second hall for technical accessories was opened, thus significantly expanding the range of interior parts, installations and technology. The increased interest in caravanning as a form of holidaying led to one visitor record after another being set in subsequent years, with over 270,000 fans of mobile leisure making the pilgrimage to Düsseldorf in **2019**.

The year **2020** was dominated by the Corona pandemic. The necessary hygiene and safety requirements and a daily visitor maximum did not make the general conditions for holding a trade fair easy. With 107,000 visitors, the CARAVAN SALON impressively proved in this exceptional year that caravanning as a form of holidaying inspires people and that trade fairs can also be held successfully in times of Corona. Hermann Pfaff, President of the Caravanning Industry Association "These visitor numbers are a very good result under the circumstances. The fact that they include many newcomers and that the average age has come down markedly shows that we are currently experiencing an inflow of completely new customers. The success of the event, however, is not only measured by the attendance figures but above all by the sales deals concluded – and those were even higher than in the record year across the board. Add to this, the customers' very useful direct feedback that manufacturers can only get in this way at a trade fair. Furthermore, the expert exchange on the biggest B-2-B platform of our industry is extremely valuable for exhibitors."

Even after 60 years, the CARAVAN SALON is as vital as ever. It shows what the industry is talking about, what will move it in the future and where the journey is going technically. It informs and entertains, it brings friends and competitors together and thus becomes what it has been for six decades now: a large family and industry meeting and the centre of the worldwide

caravanning world.

The 60th CARAVAN SALON Düsseldorf will be held from 27 August (trade visitor and media day) to 5 September 2021.

www.caravan-salon.com

You will find a selection of historical pictures on

<http://medianet.messe-duesseldorf.de/press/caravan-salon/main>

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