

# Outback Queensland Visitors

In late 2010 Tourism Research Australia and Tourism Queensland partnered to conduct an extensive research project exploring the experiences of visitors to Outback Queensland.<sup>i</sup> The objective of the research was to gain a better understanding of visitors to the Outback region and to improve market readiness. Comparisons were made to similar destinations in Australia where appropriate.



## Who are they?

The research shows that the majority of visitors to Queensland's Outback are older Australians from Tourism Queensland's Connector segment on long haul touring holidays, of more than seven nights (median trip length was 35 nights). The Connector segment's ideal holiday is to explore, have new experiences, escape and leave the cares of the world behind.

The visitors surveyed in the region in September and October 2010 were from Queensland (37%), New South Wales (23%) and Victoria (26%). However, the National Visitor Survey<sup>ii</sup> for the years ending September 2005 to 2010 found that Queensland visitors make up nearly half of all visitors to the region.<sup>iii</sup>

These visitors are more likely to be travelling as a couple (69%) rather than as a family or with a group and the majority of these Connectors were retired (66%). Just over half the visitors reported annual household incomes of less than \$52,000, which is unsurprising given the high rates of retirees. These personal characteristics are quite different to those found in visitors to other Outback regions in Australia.

## Where do they stay?

The majority of visitors are driving their own vehicle or motor home (85%), are fairly self sufficient with caravan parks and camping grounds the most common type of accommodation used in the region (71%). Nearly two in five visitors used a combination of both commercial and non-commercial sites while on their trip. These visitors spent more per trip and stayed longer than those who utilised commercial sites only.

A range of reasons were given for and against staying in commercial versus non-commercial camping sites. The facilities, entertainment and social interaction are all seen as positive aspects to staying in commercial camping sites; whilst a lack of privacy, noise and expense are seen as potential drawbacks. Privacy, and the ability to have a 'real' outback experience (complete with camp fires, star gazing and isolation or quietness), are the perceived positives to staying in non-commercial camping sites; whilst a lack of facilities, safety issues and a lack of policing of non-commercial sites emerge as the negatives.

## Getting there

The most common routes taken to get to the Outback were:

- North along the Landsborough/ Matilda Hwy (23%)
- West along the Capricorn Highway (22%)
- South along the Landsborough/ Matilda Hwy (17%)

The most common routes from the region were:

- East along the Capricorn Highway (27%)
- South along the Landsborough/ Matilda Highway (26%)



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## Why do they come here and are they satisfied?

Those coming to the Queensland Outback are looking for a much different experience to that found in the Outback regions of NT, NSW and WA. They are seeking an experience grounded in Australian heritage and history and are looking to learn something new.

Visitors described the functional aspects of the region such as accommodation, facilities and dining options as being of a high quality standard; professionally run, accommodating and affordable.

The wide range of attractions gave visitors an insight into Australia's pioneering country, additionally the 'charming streetscapes', historical buildings and quirky Outback life allow visitors to discover the region's identity.

Whilst the attractions are no doubt key to the experience offered by the region, it is the people- their tales of personal life in the outback and unique outback charm, personal anecdotes and insider knowledge that enable visitors to understand and appreciate the region. This local interaction occurred at attractions, at the Visitor Information Centres (VICs), at caravan parks and various local businesses. For many, it was a combination of many of these sometimes small but pivotal experiences that lead to a highly enjoyable visit.

On the whole, visitors to the Outback experienced a wide range of attractions across a number of different towns, consistently rating such experiences as highlights on their trip. Individually however, visitors only tended to experience a couple of attractions on a single visit and they don't always encounter all the unique attractions and local charm that the Outback has to offer. This was largely because they had not allowed enough time to see the attractions or because they were not made aware of them (either at all or in a timely manner). Engaging visitors when they are actually in the Outback is imperative to assist them in fully experiencing and seeing it all.

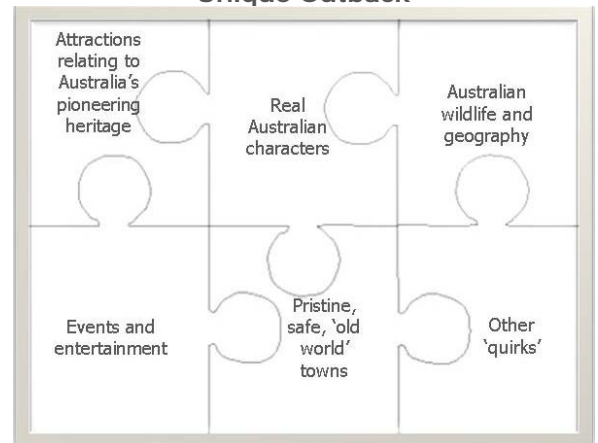
## What can I do to promote my Outback Business / Region?

Those with a lower level of exposure to the Outback have limited expectations and understanding of how the region differs to other Australian outback regions. These visitors largely approach the region as part of a longer journey rather than a destination in itself. However, once they actually visit the region, many discover it is unique and actually has more to offer as a destination than they had thought.

Tourism operators can play a significant role in selling the region and maximising the visitor's ability to plan their trips by providing information to visitors on all facets of the Outback experience within their region- including attractions, tours, road conditions, events, dining and accommodation options in neighbouring areas. The 'bush telegraph' is regarded as the best source of information while en route and VICs are seen to provide the secrets and assist the visitors in getting all they can out of the region.

The Queensland Outback offers a unique Australian heritage experience with attractions and experiences differentiating the region from other Australian Outback regions. Enabling greater interaction with locals, encouraging "off road" experiences and providing advice on areas to visit can shape the region's identity and provide visitors with the knowledge to best maximize their time in the region, encouraging longer and repeat visitation.

## Experiences described as the 'Unique Outback'



## How we did the research

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| Phase 1: | Quantitative Visitor Profile and Satisfaction (VPS) survey. Interviewed 474 visitors to the region in September and October 2010.                 |
| Phase 2: | Qualitative interviews with respondents from the initial VPS survey to expand on and drill deeper into the findings generated in the first phase. |

<sup>i</sup> The majority of this research was conducted within the Outback Central West and Far West, however, the results are applicable to the whole region.

<sup>ii</sup> The National Visitor Survey (NVS) managed by Tourism Research Australia is an annual national survey of travel of approximately 120,000 Australian residents aged 15 years and over. It is a major source of information on the characteristics and travel patterns of domestic tourists.

<sup>iii</sup> The domestic drive market split for visitors to the Outback for the Year Ending September 2005-2007 was 58% interstate and 42% intrastate; and Year Ending September 2008-2010 52% interstate and 48% intrastate. Results were combined for two years due to the small sample size.