



Destination Visitor Survey

Strategic Regional Research - Northern Territory

Understanding interstate fly-in visitors to Alice Springs: Summary of results

Introduction

Nearly three quarters of all visitors to the Northern Territory are fly-in visitors. Profile information on this significant group of visitors is limited. It is also important to understand if visitors with different profiles and expectations to the current mix of fly-in visitors will be brought into Alice Springs by the introduction of the low cost carrier, Tiger Airways. Consequently, research was commissioned to examine the impact of Tiger Airways in the Alice Springs market.

This survey was held during June and July 2008, and is based on a sample of 452 passengers who arrived in Alice Springs on the following carriers: 161 'Tiger Airways' passengers; 150 'Qantas Melbourne' passengers who arrived from Melbourne; 141 'Qantas Other' passengers who arrived from destinations other than Melbourne and Darwin.

What is the visitor's profile?

- Just under two thirds (65%) of passengers interviewed were from Victoria. This is due to the quotas set by originating city and airline (i.e. skewed towards Melbourne).
- The remaining visitors to Alice Springs were from New South Wales (13%), Queensland (7%), South Australia (4%), Tasmania (3%), Western Australia and the ACT (each 2%).
- Over half (56%) of total passengers were 45 years or older.
- Females accounted for 56% of total passengers, 55% of leisure visitors and nearly two thirds (63%) of business visitors.
- Visitors to Alice Springs were more likely to be living as part of a couple (59%) than single (33%).
- The majority (92%) of visitors to Alice Springs were travelling for leisure.

What are the differences between airline passengers?

- Over one third (36%) of visitors interviewed in Alice Springs were Tiger Airways passengers, 33% were Qantas Melbourne passengers and 31% were Qantas Other passengers.
- Tiger passengers (19%) were more likely to be aged 25 to 34 compared to Qantas Melbourne passengers (9%).
- Those flying on Tiger Airways were more likely to have lower household incomes compared to those flying Qantas (26% compared to 18%).
- Qantas passengers (11%) were more likely to be travelling for business than Tiger Airways passengers (1%).

- Qantas passengers were more likely to be travelling alone (42%) compared to Tiger Airways passengers (26%).
- Of the Qantas Other passengers, 36% arrived from Sydney, 21% from Adelaide, 19% from Brisbane, 11% from Uluru, 8% from Perth and 5% from Cairns.
- Qantas passengers (14%) were more likely to stop over for at least one night or more on their way to Alice Springs, with only 2% of Tiger Airways passengers doing the same.

What were their reasons for visiting Alice Springs?

- The main reason for visiting Alice Springs was to visit specific attractions (44%), with just under a third (31%) visiting because of the variety of things to do and see, and 27% visiting to undertake specific activities such as bushwalking.
- Tiger Airways passengers (34%) were significantly more likely to visit Alice Springs because of good deals on airfares or because Tiger Airways flies to Alice Springs (33%) compared to only 4% and 1% respectively of Qantas passengers.
- Tiger Airways passengers (22%) were also more likely than Qantas passengers (9%) to visit friends in Alice Springs.

Where else did they go?

- Beyond Alice Springs, Uluru (58%) was the most visited destination, followed by Glen Helen Gorge (27%), Hermannsburg (21%), Erldunda (19%) and Finke (15%).
- Only 9% of visitors to Alice Springs also visited Darwin.

How did the visitors decide to visit?

- Forty five per cent of visitors started planning their trip to Alice Springs two months or less prior to departure. A further 43% planned their trip between two and six months before departure.
- Qantas passengers were significantly more likely than Tiger Airways passengers to have shorter lead times for planning their trip to Alice Springs.
- Over one third (34%) of Tiger Airways passengers started planning their trip six months in advance compared to 13% of Qantas passengers. This may have been influenced by the promotional activity run by Tiger Airways on the commencement of flights to Alice Springs from Melbourne in December 2007.
- Of all visitors, 38% booked their flights to Alice Springs four weeks or less in advance of travelling, with a further 19% booking between one and two months before departure, and 37% booking between two and six months in advance.
- Over half (53%) of visitors booked their accommodation in Alice Springs two months or less prior to departure, with a further 17% booking between two and six months in advance.

How did they book?

- Nearly two thirds of visitors (65%) used the internet to book flights to Alice Springs, while 21% used travel agents.
- Tiger Airways passengers (89%) were significantly more likely than Qantas passengers (52%) to book their flights on the internet.
- The Tiger Airways (49%) and Qantas (47%) web pages were by far the most commonly used websites for booking flights to Alice Springs.
- Booking accommodation was mainly done online (41%), with travel agents (26%), and directly with the hotel (16%).

- Nearly half (49%) of the visitors to Alice Springs used the internet to hire a vehicle in Alice Springs, while 20% used a travel agent and 18% booked directly with the vehicle hire company.
- Travel agents (31%), the internet (23%) and tour operators (19%) were the most commonly used sources for booking tours in Alice Springs.

Where did they stay and how did they travel around Alice Springs?

- Over a quarter (27%) of visitors stayed in a standard hotel/motel/motor inn/resort when visiting Alice Springs. A further 22% stayed in a luxury hotel/resort, 15% stayed with friends or relatives and 13% stayed in a caravan park.
- Qantas passengers (27%) were more likely than Tiger Airways passengers (13%) to stay at a luxury hotel/resort, while Tiger Airways passengers were more likely than Qantas passengers to stay with friends or relatives (21% compared to 11%), at a caravan park (17% compared to 11%) or at a backpacker hostel (9% compared to 3%).
- A hire vehicle (41%) was the preferred mode of transport when visiting Alice Springs, followed by tour coaches (30%) and private vehicles (27%).
- Tiger Airways (47%) and Qantas Melbourne (43%) passengers were both significantly more likely than Qantas Other passengers (31%) to hire a vehicle in Alice Springs.

What did they do in Alice Springs?

- Dining out was the most popular activity for visitors to Alice Springs (81%), followed by visiting national parks or nature reserves (63%), visiting history/heritage sites (53%), visiting an art gallery (43%), and a cultural centre (42%).
- The most popular attraction was Uluru/Kata Tjuta National Park (56%), followed by Kings Canyon/Watarrka National Park (43%), West MacDonnell National Park (36%) and Simpsons Gap (35%).

Were they satisfied with their trip?

- Overall, the majority (81%) of visitors were either satisfied or very satisfied with their trip to Alice Springs, with 60% of Tiger Airways passengers and 44% of Qantas passengers being very satisfied.
- Of all visitors, 44% stated that their expectations of Alice Springs were met, 21% stated they were somewhat exceeded and 17% stated they were completely exceeded. Alice Springs failed to meet only 4% of visitors' expectations.
- Visitors were particularly satisfied with visiting national parks or nature reserves, bushwalking, hiking, trekking, and hot air ballooning - all of which attracted a satisfaction level of 95%.

How did Tiger Airways influence visitor behaviour?

- Eighty six per cent of Tiger Airways passengers say that Tiger Airways has made a trip to Alice Springs cheaper.
- Over half of Tiger Airways passengers (51%) strongly agree and 31% agree that by choosing to fly Tiger Airways, they have more money to spend elsewhere on their trip.

How often do they fly?

Qantas has higher repeat passenger use than Tiger Airways which can be attributed to:

- the length of time Tiger Airways have been in operation in Australia
- Tiger Airways flying to fewer destinations from a single hub
- flights to Alice Springs by Tiger Airways only commencing in December 2007
- Tiger Airways having fewer services to the destination

- The majority (89%) of Tiger passengers have flown Tiger Airways once or twice in the past two years, with 9% having flown with the airline between three and five times, and 1% having flown with them six or more times.
- By comparison, 46% of Qantas passengers have flown Qantas once or twice in the past two years, 29% have flown with them between three and five times, and 24% six or more times.

Why was the airline chosen?

The choice of flying with Tiger Airways is clearly being driven by price. However, the choice of Qantas is based more on timetables and frequent flyer programmes.

- The majority (95%) of Tiger Airways passengers choose to fly with the airline as they have cheaper or good value fares. Direct flights (20%), convenient schedules (15%), having lots of flights to where they want to go (9%) and crew attitude (8%) are also reasons for choosing the airline.
- The main reasons for Qantas passengers choosing to fly with the airline were the convenient schedules (44%), the frequent flyer programme (33%), having lots of flights to where they want to go (31%), direct flights (30%) and reliability (27%).

Are Qantas passengers aware of Tiger Airways?

- Awareness of Tiger Airways by Qantas passengers is limited, with 56% of Qantas Melbourne passengers and 35% of Qantas Other passengers aware that Tiger Airways flew to Alice Springs out of Melbourne.
- Only 5% of Qantas Melbourne passengers and 4% of Qantas Other passengers have flown Tiger Airways in the past, with Qantas business travellers (18%) more likely than leisure travellers (3%) to have flown Tiger Airways.
- Three per cent of Qantas Melbourne and 1% of Qantas Other passengers have flown Tiger Airways to Alice Springs in the past.
- Nearly two thirds (63%) of Qantas passengers say that they would consider flying Tiger Airways in the future.

Will they visit Alice Springs again?

- Intention to revisit Alice Springs is high for all passengers.
- One third of visitors to Alice Springs claim that they will definitely visit again in the future, 41% probably will return, 18% probably will not revisit Alice Springs and 2% definitely will not.
- There is no significant difference between Tiger Airways passengers and Qantas passengers in their likelihood to visit Alice Springs in the future.

For a copy of the full Strategic Regional Research report, please email tra@tourism.australia.com

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