



Destination Visitor Survey

STRATEGIC REGIONAL RESEARCH - NORTHERN TERRITORY INDIGENOUS CULTURAL EXPERIENCES: SUMMARY OF RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

In 2006-07, Tourism NT and Tourism Research Australia commissioned Nielsen Research to undertake a series of Destination Visitor Survey projects across the Northern Territory (NT).

The results from these projects highlighted areas requiring further investigation, particularly in respect to visitor experiences and expectations of Indigenous culture. Between May and October 2007 respondents from the original destination surveys were recontacted and invited to participate in either an in-depth qualitative interview or detailed quantitative online survey.

In total 288 online surveys were completed and 12 in-depth interviews were obtained. Respondents were from the following four visitor groups:

- international backpackers
- international non-backpackers
- interstate fly-in visitors, and
- interstate self-drive visitors.

INFORMATION SOURCES

- The majority of respondents (76%) reported seeking information about Aboriginal people and culture prior to travelling to the NT which was usually available. Information on 'how to visit an Aboriginal Community' was less easy to find compared to most other information sort by respondents.. The internet and travel guide books were the most popular sources of information prior to travel, with word of mouth also rating highly.
- Interestingly, a larger number of respondents (84%) sought information on Aboriginal people and culture during their trip. This indicates that providing information at the destination is critical. The most popular source of information while travelling were Visitor Information Centres followed by Local Visitor Guides.

VISITOR EXPECTATIONS

- The respondents had a high level of interest in Indigenous people. Nine out of ten respondents (91%) expected to meet and interact with Aboriginal people when visiting the NT.
- Most of the respondents (77%) stated it was important for them to meet and interact with Aboriginal people when visiting the NT. International visitors placed greater importance on this activity than domestic visitors.
- Of those respondents who rated the opportunity to meet and interact with Aboriginal people as important, 73% were 'satisfied' with their experience while 27% were 'dissatisfied'.
- The top experiences which respondents were 'satisfied' with were: 'Visiting a museum/cultural centre'; 'Listening to an Aboriginal Guide explain methods of hunting, fishing and survival'; and 'Observing Aboriginal art and paintings and reading the story behind the art'.
- The top experiences which respondents were 'dissatisfied' with include: 'Experiencing Indigenous health and wellbeing'; 'A tour of an Aboriginal community'; and 'Learning and participating in the preparation of Aboriginal foods'.
- Visitors expect to experience an 'All encompassing' Aboriginal cultural experience that is authentic and genuine. That is. 'To visit Aboriginal land and meet local communities' and 'To see Aboriginals in their traditional settings'.
- Visitor information from television, books and past experiences in other cultural tourism destinations strongly influence the expectations of travellers to the NT.
- International visitors are much more likely to have used books to form expectations regarding interacting with Aboriginal people compared to domestic travellers.

ISSUES

- Despite extensive information searches prior to travel, the 'lack of information in knowing where to go to meet and interact with Aboriginal people' was a major issue.
- Other notable issues include: the 'remoteness of Aboriginal communities'; and the lack of 'personal confidence with Aboriginal people'.
- International backpackers expressed a higher level of anxiety over interacting with Aboriginal people than did international non backpackers or domestic visitors.

INTEREST AND EXPERIENCES

- Aspects of Indigenous culture that were of most interest to the respondents included: 'observing Aboriginal art and paintings and reading the story behind the art'; followed by 'visiting a museum/cultural centre'; and 'learning about the Aboriginal belief system and their relationship with the land'.
- The most common cultural activities experienced by the respondents were: visiting a museum/cultural centre (82%), followed by observing Aboriginal art and paintings and reading the story behind the art (74%).
- About half of the visitors interviewed engaged in 'learning about the Aboriginal belief systems and their relationship with the land', and 'hearing stories and legends of Aboriginal culture'.

- Overall International visitors particularly expressed interest in 'a tour to an Aboriginal community'. This provides a potential area of opportunity to develop additional Indigenous experiences.
- Another potential area of opportunity for both domestic and international visitors was identified through high levels of interest in having an Aboriginal guide explain Indigenous methods of hunting, fishing and survival.

SATISFACTION

- Overall, there were relatively high levels of satisfaction with individual Aboriginal cultural experiences and the experiences with the highest satisfaction levels were those that were of most interest to tourists.
- The most satisfying cultural activity was 'listening to an Aboriginal guide explain their methods of hunting, fishing and survival'. In contrast; 'experiencing Indigenous health and wellbeing' had the highest level of dissatisfaction.
- Overall visitors identified the issue of alcohol abuse and social problems in Aboriginal communities as the main negative cultural experience.
- Overall, visitors typically identified interacting with Indigenous people as their best cultural experience. These included taking part in an Aboriginal guided tour, a guided walk around Uluru, followed by, meeting and speaking with local Aboriginal people. Other notable highlights include visiting Kakadu National Park, and learning about and seeing Aboriginal customs, history and traditions.

© Copyright Tourism Australia 2008.

Tourism Australia and Tourism Research Australia permits copies to be made of this publication for the purpose of promoting Australian tourism, provided that Tourism Research Australia is recognised on any copies as the author, the material is reproduced in its current form and a statement similar to the one listed above is included on any copy. However, copies may not be made for a commercial purpose, that is, for sale without the permission of Tourism Research Australia. This work should be referenced as: *Destination Visitor Survey Strategic Regional Research - Northern Territory Indigenous cultural experiences: Summary of results*, Tourism Research Australia, Canberra.

This information is presented in good faith and on the basis that neither Tourism Australia or Tourism Research Australia, nor their agents or employees, are liable (whether by reason of error, omission, negligence, lack of care or otherwise) to any person for any damage or loss whatsoever which has occurred or may occur in relation to that person taking or not taking (as the case may be) action in respect of any statement, information or advice given in this publication. Data derived from Tourism Research Australia surveys are subject to sample error. Users of the data are advised to consult the sample error tables contained in Tourism Research Australia publications or otherwise available from Tourism Research Australia before drawing any conclusions or inferences, or taking any action, based on the data.

Tourism Research Australia
Level 3 11-17 Swanson Plaza
PO Box 1110
Belconnen ACT 2617

Telephone: + 61 2 6228 6100
Facsimile: + 61 2 6228 6180
Email: tra@tourism.australia.com

Publication date: February 2008
ABN 99 657 548 712