



Destination Visitor Survey

Strategic Regional Research - Northern Territory

Understanding interstate fly-in visitors to Darwin: Summary of results

Introduction

Fly-in visitors represent almost three quarters of international and domestic interstate visitors to the Northern Territory. Although this is a substantial market, there is limited profile information available specifically for these visitors. The following research was conducted to examine the opportunities and impact of transforming Darwin into a 'stop over' destination, by examining interstate fly-in visitors to Darwin.

This survey was held during May 2008, and is based on a sample of 381 interstate fly-in passengers to Darwin airport, comprised of the following groups: transit passengers (waiting for another flight); stop over passengers (in Darwin for less than 24 hours); short break passengers (in Darwin from 24 hours to 3 days); and long break passengers (in Darwin for 3 days or more).

What is the visitor's profile?

- Of the passengers interviewed, 20% were transit visitors, 6% stop over visitors, 14% short break visitors and 60% long break visitors.
- Thirty per cent of visitors were from Victoria, 22% from Queensland and 18% from New South Wales.
- Victorians were more likely to be transit passengers and were more likely than visitors from other States/Territories to arrive in Darwin on a Low Cost Carrier (LCC), e.g. Jetstar or Tiger Airways.
- Of the passengers into Darwin, 25% were aged between 15-34 years, 37% were 35-54, and 38% were 55 or over. Visitors over the age of 45 were more likely to visit Darwin for a long break compared to younger age groups.
- Over two thirds (67%) of passengers do not have children living at home, with only 5% travelling with children under 15 years, and 3% with children over 15 years.
- About 45% of visitors travelled as a couple and 40% travelled alone.
- Almost three quarters (72%) of all travellers were visiting Darwin for leisure purposes, with 28% travelling on business. Leisure travellers were more likely to be in Darwin on a long break (81%), or stop over/transit (73%), compared to a short break (35%), while business travellers were more likely to be on a short break (65%) compared to a stop over/transit (27%) or long break (19%).
- Long break visitors were significantly more likely to be retired/pensioner than other visitor types.
- The majority of passengers started their journeys from Melbourne (23%), Brisbane (19%), or Sydney (13%).

- Over one quarter (26%) of short break visitors had changed planes or airlines prior to arriving in Darwin compared to 18% of all passengers. The most common connecting airports were Brisbane (33%), Alice Springs (14%), Sydney (13%) or Melbourne (13%).
- Only 7% of visitors stopped over for at least one night on their way to Darwin, with Alice Springs being the main stop over destination (42%).
- The main end destination cities for visitors were Melbourne (32%), Brisbane (22%), Sydney (11%), and Adelaide and Perth (each 8%). Six percent of visitors were planning on stopping over elsewhere for at least one night before ending their journey, with Brisbane (18%), Perth (14%) and Alice Springs (14%) the most likely stop over destinations.

How did the visitors decide to visit?

- One third of travellers began planning their trip to the Northern Territory four weeks or less prior to leaving, while just over half (52%) began planning between two and six months in advance.
- Approximately 40% of visitors booked their flights to the Northern Territory four weeks or less before departing.
- Short break visitors were more likely than other visitors to plan their trip four weeks or less before departure, and long break passengers more likely to book their flights between two and six months in advance.
- Only 6% of travellers booked their flights over nine months or more in advance.
- One third of all travellers also booked their accommodation four weeks or less prior to travel, with just over one third booking between two and six months in advance.
- Queenslanders were more likely than visitors from other States/Territories to book their accommodation one week or less before their trip.

What booking methods did they use?

- The most popular method for booking flights was the internet, with 64% of passengers booking their flights online and 14% using a travel agent.
- Over two thirds (67%) of leisure travellers used the internet to book their flights, which was significantly more than business travellers (45%).
- The internet was the most common method for booking accommodation (47%), while 17% used a travel agent, 16% had someone else make the booking for them, and 12% booked directly with a hotel.
- Business travellers and short break visitors, (who have a large proportion of business travellers), were more likely to book accommodation through a company travel agent than other visitor types.
- Of all non-transit passengers, 33% hired a vehicle during their trip, with 43% booking via the internet, and 23% booking directly with the vehicle hire company.
- Leisure travellers and long break visitors were the most likely visitors to hire a vehicle on their trip.
- Over one third (34%) of all visitors booked a tour on their trip, with 24% booking through a tour operator, 18% using the internet, 18% having someone else book for them, and 15% using a travel agent.
- Airline websites were the most popular when booking trips online, with the Qantas website (49%) being the main one used, followed by Jetstar (17%), Virgin Blue (15%) and Tiger Airways (11%).
- Non-airline websites such as Webjet (14%), Budget (9%) and Flight Centre (6%) were also used by travellers to book their trip.

Where else did they go?

- Darwin is the most commonly visited destination in the region amongst non-transit passengers, with stop over passengers tending mainly to visit Darwin and perhaps Adelaide River or Katherine.
- Short break and long break visitors to the region tend to have a wider dispersal with Adelaide River, Litchfield National Park, Batchelor and Katherine being the most visited after Darwin.
- Over one third (37%) of visitors to the Northern Territory hired a vehicle to travel within the region, while 31% used public transport or taxis, 28% used a private vehicle, and 22% travelled with a tour coach.

Were they satisfied with their trip?

- Forty one per cent of visitors were very satisfied and 27% satisfied with their trip to Darwin. Only 2% were dissatisfied with their Darwin experience.
- Long break visitors were the most satisfied with Darwin, with over half (53%) very satisfied. About 44% of short break visitors and 14% of stop over visitors were very satisfied with their visit.
- Those visitors who were very satisfied with Darwin tended to undertake more activities and visit more attractions than less satisfied visitors. These visitors tend to be long break visitors.
- Travellers from New South Wales and South Australia showed higher levels of satisfaction than those from other States/Territories.
- Over one third (35%) of all travellers stated Darwin either somewhat or completely exceeded their expectations, while 39% stated Darwin met their expectations, and 9% stated it either somewhat or completely failed to meet their expectations.
- Visitors to Darwin either agreed or strongly agreed:
 - Darwin is a welcoming destination (72%);
 - You can experience nature in Darwin (63%); and
 - Darwin provides an experience you can't get in any other State/Territory in Australia (58%) or any other destination overseas (46%).

What did they experience in Darwin?

- Popular activities undertaken by visitors to Darwin were dining out (69%), visiting markets (51%), shopping (50%), visiting national parks or nature reserves (44%), going on boat trips or cruises (40%), visiting waterfalls/waterholes (36%) and museums (33%).
- Activities which had relatively low participation but high satisfaction included:
 - Driving tours - 20% participated, 84% were very or fairly satisfied;
 - Aboriginal rock art sites - 17% participated, 94% were very or fairly satisfied;
 - Fishing - 16% participated, 89% were very or fairly satisfied;
 - Aboriginal guided tours - 6% participated, 100% were very or fairly satisfied;
 - Four-wheel driving - 6% participated, 94% were very or fairly satisfied.
- Nearly half (47%) of the travellers to Darwin visited the Mindil Beach and village markets, with 58% very satisfied, and a further 23% fairly satisfied. Just under one third (31%) visited the Cullen Bay Marina, with 43% very satisfied, and 38% fairly satisfied.
- The above two attractions along with Stokes Hall Wharf (27% visited, 84% were very or fairly satisfied) and the Museum and Art Gallery (29% visited, 93% very or fairly satisfied) attracted relatively high levels of visitation as well as satisfaction.

Did they book a travel package?

- Only 16% of non-transit passenger's trips included a travel package.
- Business travellers were less likely than leisure travellers to have booked a packaged deal, while long break visitors and those over 65 years were most likely to do so.
- Domestic airfares and accommodation (each 69%) were the most likely items to be included in a travel package, followed by bus/coach/train fares (37%), meals (35%) and entrance fees/organised tours (27%).

What would encourage transit passengers to become stop over passengers?

Converting transit passengers to stop over passengers is affected by the following:

- they did not have enough time (46%);
- the flight schedules (32%); and
- wanting to get to their end destination quickly (17%).

The flight schedules of the low cost carriers into Darwin, in most cases, do not allow passengers to take a stop over or short break in the destination, therefore compounding the issue of limited time.

- Eight per cent of transit passengers never considered stopping over in Darwin.
- Sixty one per cent of transit passengers said they would definitely consider stopping over in Darwin to visit a national park or reserve.
- Half of all transit passengers stated boat trips or cruises would make them consider stopping over in Darwin, with business travellers more attracted by boat trips and cruises than leisure travellers.
- Visiting a waterfall/waterhole (44%), bushwalking, hiking, trekking (42%), driving tours (40%) and four-wheel driving (40%) were also activities that would encourage transit passengers to consider stopping over in Darwin on their trip.
- The attractions most likely to persuade transit passengers to stop over in Darwin were the Jumping Crocodile Cruise (36%), Mindil Beach and Village Markets (36%) and the Territory Wildlife Park (34%).

Will they visit Darwin again?

- Over one third (36%) of all travellers stated they will definitely visit or revisit Darwin in the future, and a further 40% stated they probably will return. Business travellers are more likely to revisit Darwin than leisure travellers.
- Of the visitors who stated they will definitely revisit, 52% were stop over passengers, 39% were short break passengers, 38% were long break passengers and 26% were transit passengers.
- Visitors who stated they may return were likely to do so because they like the lifestyle (21%), they live locally or have family or friends who do (20%), or because there is a lot more to see or do in Darwin (19%).

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

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