



Katherine Visitor Profile and Satisfaction report: Summary of results

The following Visitor Profile and Satisfaction (VPS) report is based on a sample of 853 visitors to Katherine in the Northern Territory.

This research was conducted in two waves over the following time periods:

- Wave 1 – April/May 2009 (shoulder season)
 - sample 389 visitors
- Wave 2 – August/September (high season)
 - sample 464 visitors

For comparison purposes, some data are compared with benchmark data which includes all destinations completed within the VPS program. Benchmarks are the average of all VPS destination projects with at least 50 respondents. Only the most recent waves for each destination are included.

Additionally, much of the information contained in this report is presented for the following key sub-groups:

- *Self drive* – survey respondents who drove themselves into the NT (a very small number of coach passengers are included in this category)
- *Air travellers* – survey respondents who flew into the NT
- *Domestic* – residents of Australia
- *International* – residents of countries other than Australia

Profile of visitors to Katherine

Katherine attracted a diverse mix of visitors. During both the survey periods there were significant numbers of:

- Australian visitors from every state and territory
- International visitors including young backpackers and older age groups
- Visitors who drove to the NT and were typically on long 'grey nomad' style trips (self-drive)
- Visitors who flew to Darwin and hired a vehicle to get to Katherine (air travellers) and were on much shorter trips than their 'grey nomad' counterparts.

Despite their diversity, all the visitor groups displayed some similar characteristics:

- they were in Katherine on holidays
- they were unlikely to make any bookings prior to arriving in Katherine
- their main reason for visiting Katherine was to see Nitmiluk National Park and this was also the number one activity
- they typically enjoyed nature, cultural and outdoor activities.



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Satisfaction with Katherine

Features of Katherine that visitors were typically happy with included:

- the variety of things to see and do – rated 14 points above the VPS benchmark
- the friendly/hospitable people including locals and industry staff
- the beauty of the natural features, especially the Nitmiluk National Park and the hot springs
- information services in the region were rated very highly – 66% of visitors were very satisfied, which is 19 points above the VPS benchmark. The Visitor Information Centre was highly regarded in relation to both the service provided by staff and the impressive displays in the centre.
- Signage (47% very satisfied) and Roads (55% very satisfied) also scored well above VPS benchmarks (11 and 15 points respectively).

However, when Katherine was compared with all other destinations, the level of overall satisfaction was relatively low across all visitor groups, with 41% of visitors 'very satisfied' with their trip to Katherine. When compared with all other destinations in the VPS benchmark database, the value is 9 points below the average of 50% for all destinations and is ranked 55th of the 66 destinations in the database.

The survey results point to several issues that drive the lower than average satisfaction with Katherine.

Accommodation

As with most destinations the commercial accommodation experience had a significant impact on satisfaction with the destination.

- *Commercial caravan and camping*: 14% stated that they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their accommodation compared with the VPS benchmark of 5%. The major themes of dissatisfaction were prices and the cleanliness of toilet blocks.
- *Other commercial accommodation*: 18% (almost 1 in 5 guests) stated that they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their accommodation compared to the benchmark of 8%. Only 30% reported that they were 'very satisfied' with their accommodation compared to the benchmark of 41%. The major themes of dissatisfaction were price, cleanliness and quality of accommodation, with a common feeling that the star rating of the accommodation did not represent the quality of the property.

Public toilets

- Both the quantity and cleanliness of public toilets were significant issues; particularly with older self-drive visitors.

Cleanliness of the town

- Many respondents were not happy with the amount of rubbish they saw on the roadsides in and around Katherine. The entrance(s) to the local supermarket was frequently raised as an example.

Perceptions of safety

- Many respondents found the presence of people 'hanging out' in the streets of Katherine confronting which led many to express concerns about safety.
- It is possible that safety concerns and town cleanliness contributed to the relatively low score for the local atmosphere in Katherine (14 points below the VPS benchmark).

The overall satisfaction level of the self-drive group was lower than that of the air traveller group despite air travellers recording lower levels of satisfaction with their accommodation. Other factors – such as public toilets and local atmosphere – were obviously also important in relation to satisfaction, particularly for the self-drive visitors to Katherine.

Travel paths and themed drives

Visitors to Katherine arrived in the NT via slightly different travel paths in each season:

- more traffic via the Carpentaria Hwy in the high season
- smaller proportion entering NT from Stuart Hwy in the high season
- smaller proportion leaving via the Victoria Hwy in the high season.

All themed drives (Savannah Way; Explorer's Way; Red Centre Way; Nature's Way; Overlander's Way; Outback Way; Binns Track) were well known by those who travelled on them:

- no seasonal difference in traffic
- the Savannah Way was the only themed drive well known by the broader visitor population.

This summary is extracted from research conducted by Tourism Research Australia in partnership with Tourism NT. For the full Visitor Profile and Satisfaction report please email tourism.research@ret.gov.au.

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Image: Katherine Gorge, Nitmiluk National Park, Northern Territory

Courtesy of Tourism NT

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