



Barkly Visitor Profile and Satisfaction Report: Summary of results

The following Visitor Profile and Satisfaction (VPS) report is based on a sample of 482 visitors to the Barkly region in the Northern Territory.

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

- Wave 1 – April/May 2009 (shoulder season)
 - sample 162 visitors
- Wave 2 – September/October (high season)
 - sample 320 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.

Profile of visitors to the Barkly region

Unlike many tourism destinations in Australia, the Barkly region attracted a remarkably similar group of visitors; a significant benefit in terms of managing the destination. During the two survey periods, the Barkly visitor profile was dominated by older Australians who had driven to the Northern Territory and were typically on long trips away from home. Eighty percent were towing a caravan or driving a campervan and most of those stayed in a caravan park.

The majority of visitors who stayed overnight in the Barkly region reported the main reason for being there was that it was a convenient stopover point. Despite this, they spent an average of four nights in the region and almost 70% visited Karlu Karlu (Devils Marbles). Just under half also visited other attractions such as Battery Hill Mining Centre, Wycliffe Well and the Overland Telegraph Station.

Satisfaction with the Barkly region

Features of Barkly that visitors were typically happy with included:

- The friendly/hospitable people in general
- The beauty of the natural features
- Signage and roads - these scored well above VPS benchmarks.

There were, however, some significant issues concerning visitor satisfaction with the Barkly region. The overall satisfaction score for the region was relatively low – in fact, the region received the lowest proportion of ‘very satisfied’ visitors of all the destinations in the VPS benchmark database.

Approximately 60% of the survey respondents volunteered that they were unhappy about some detail of their



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stay in the Barkly region, with results pointing towards the following contributing factors:

Accommodation

As with most destinations, the commercial accommodation experience has a significant impact on satisfaction with the destination. In this instance the accommodation experience relates to caravan parks and commercial camping grounds. About 1 in 6 guests (16%) stated that they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their accommodation experience, compared to the benchmark of 5%. Only 20% reported that they were 'very satisfied' with their accommodation compared to the benchmark of 43%.

The major themes of dissatisfaction were prices, quality and cleanliness of toilet/shower blocks and customer service. There was concern that the caravan parks did not have appropriate star ratings.

Roadside rest stops

The amount of commentary on this issue from respondents suggested that rest stops were very important to these types of travellers. The main concerns were that the rest stops were too far apart, did not have enough toilets, and generally lacked shade. A number of people commented that they were situated too close to the road.

Cleanliness of the region

Many respondents expressed shock at the amount of rubbish they saw on the roadsides in the region.

A few other issues were frequently raised although not as often as those listed above:

- Concerns about safety in Tennant Creek – this was a perception, no actual events were reported
- Lack of mobile phone reception
- Lack of public toilets
- Cleanliness of existing public toilets
- Petrol prices

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: Devils Marbles, Northern Territory
Courtesy of Tourism Australia

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