



Daylesford and the Macedon Ranges Visitor Profile and Satisfaction Report: Summary of results

Daylesford and the Macedon Ranges region (DMR) Visitor Profile and Satisfaction (VPS) project was completed as part of the Destination Visitor Survey Program (DVS) run by Tourism Research Australia (part of the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism).

The objective of the project was to supply DMR with information about their visitors to assist in destination management planning, marketing and product development. Respondents to the survey were recruited during their visit to the region in April and early May 2010. A total of 359 visitors were surveyed.

Since 2006, 68 VPS projects have been completed in Australian regional tourist destinations. Data from these projects have been collated to establish the VPS Benchmark Database.

Benchmarks are the average of all (unweighted) VPS destination projects with at least 50 respondents. Some destinations are surveyed during different times of year in order to encompass the broadest range of visitors. In this event, only the most recent research for the destination is included. Comparisons against VPS benchmarks are made throughout this report.

Visitor and trip characteristics

A significant feature of the DMR visitor profile is the proportion of day visitors to the region. Nearly two in five respondents (38%) were day visitors, seemingly taking advantage of DMR's proximity to Melbourne.

DMR attracted a broad range of visitors:

- The majority of respondents (77%) were in the region for holiday/leisure. The proportion visiting for this purpose was higher for overnight visitors (83%) than day visitors (66%).
- About 44% were aged less than 45 years old, although day visitors had a slightly older profile than overnight visitors.
- Almost half (48%) travelled as a couple. Twenty per cent of visitors were young/midlife couples – seven percentage points above the VPS benchmark.
- Four in five visitors (80%) were from Victoria, of which two thirds were from Melbourne. Most interstate visitors were from SA (8%) and NSW (7%).
- The largest proportion of day visitors from Melbourne lived in the western suburbs (28%). The largest proportion of overnight visitors from Melbourne lived in the south-eastern suburbs (31%).
- Visitors to DMR were typically repeat visitors (75%), which is seven percentage points above the VPS benchmark. Day visitors (85%) were more likely to have visited previously than overnight visitors (69%).
- The *internet* was the most common source used for information about DMR by overnight visitors (60%). Having *been there before* was the most common information source for day visitors (40%).



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- About 39% of visitors reported using mobile technology during their visit to DMR – of these 63% used a GPS navigation device. Visitors aged less than 45 years were more likely to use mobile technology during their visit (49%).
- Just over half (54%) of Melbourne residents used the Calder Highway to get to DMR. Of these visitors, 21% returned to Melbourne via the Western Highway.
- About 42% of Melbourne residents used the Western Highway to get to DMR and 26% of these visitors returned via the Calder Highway.
- Three in five overnight visitors stayed in DMR for 1 or 2 nights.

DMR had a relatively unique accommodation profile:

- Two in five overnight visitors (40%) stayed in a rented house/apartment – 30 percentage points above the benchmark.
- Nearly a fifth (18%) stayed in luxury accommodation – six points above the benchmark.
- Most regional tourism destinations have a significant proportion of visitors staying in commercial caravan and camping accommodation but DMR had only 6% – 16 points less than the VPS benchmark.

Why did they visit Daylesford and the Macedon Ranges?

There was no obvious single reason for choosing to visit DMR for either day or overnight visitors.

For day visitors, the single 'most important' reason for choosing to visit DMR was *to visit a specific attraction* (13%), closely followed by *the variety of things to see and do* (12%) and *convenient stopover* (10%).

While day visitors seemed more likely to have a specific reason to visit e.g. *to visit a specific attraction*, *to go to markets* and *to explore mineral springs*, overnight visitors were more focused on emotive reasons such as *to spend time with partner* (16%) and *to escape and indulge* (11%). However, *the variety of things to see and do* (13%) was also a 'most important' reason for visiting for overnight visitors.

The study results indicate that there are clearly a range of desirable experiences giving people a reason to visit DMR, and that the variety of experiences on offer is in itself a key reason people choose to visit DMR.

The list of experiences that visitors expected DMR to offer was quite long. There were several experiences that scored above VPS benchmarks (proportion of visitors who expected the experience):

- *Relaxation and rejuvenation* (88%)
- *Spend quality time with partner/family/friends* (81%)
- *Food and wine experiences* (68%)
- *Luxury and indulgence* (61%)
- *Arts and culture* (55%)
- *Good shopping* (50%).

The proportion of visitors expecting *luxury and indulgence* was 34 percentage points above the VPS benchmark; expectations for *food and wine* experiences were 21 percentage points above the VPS benchmark. These two experiences clearly play an important role in defining the region as a tourist destination.

There were three other high scoring experiences that were not benchmarked but which play an important role in defining DMR:

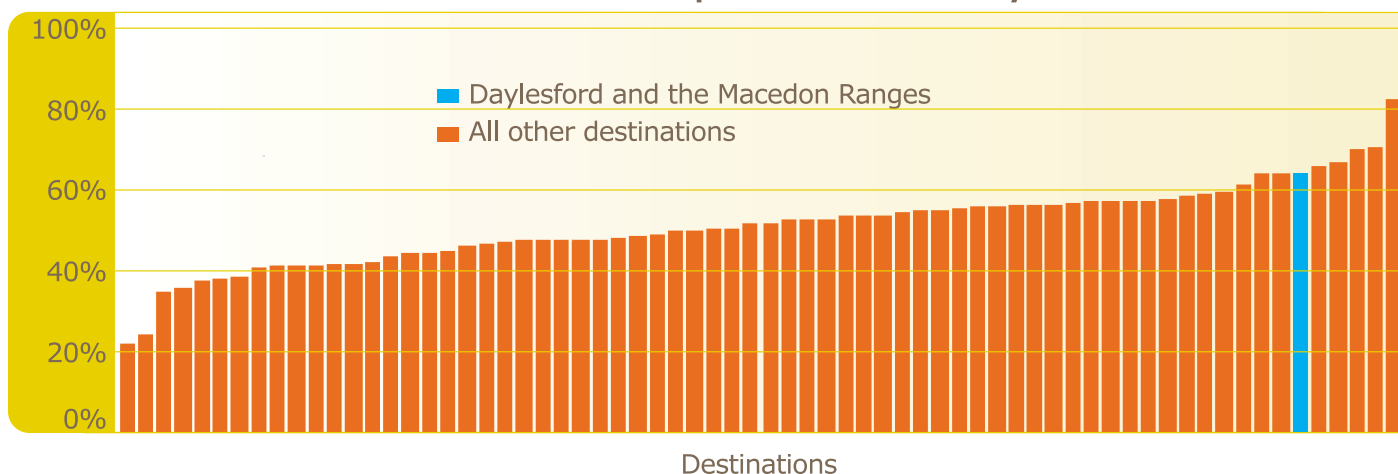
- *To explore the mineral springs* (61%)
- *To have a spa experience* (56%)
- *To go to the markets* (53%).

Overnight visitors had much higher expectations for a number of experiences than day visitors. The difference in expectations was most pronounced for *relaxation and rejuvenation*, *food & wine experiences*, *luxury and indulgence*, *arts and culture*, *spa experiences* and *going to markets*. Overnight visitors were also more likely *to visit health resorts/spas* and *go to fine dining restaurants* than day visitors.

Were visitors happy with their trip to Daylesford and the Macedon Ranges?

DMR recorded one of the highest proportions of visitors who were very satisfied with their visit (64%), which is the sixth highest of all the VPS benchmark destinations. The high level of satisfaction was generally true across the various visitor types, including both day and overnight visitors.

Overall satisfaction: Proportion of visitors very satisfied



The high satisfaction with DMR was supported by higher recommendation, with 66% of visitors very likely to recommend DMR as a place to visit, 14 points above the benchmark. Visitors were also highly likely to return within 12 months (74%), 19 points above the benchmark. This was driven by Melbourne residents with 83% likely to return within 12 months.

A factor in the high satisfaction score for DMR is that the expectations of most visitors were either met or exceeded across the range of expected experiences. One experience that clearly exceeded expectations was *food and wine*. Expectations were exceeded for 56% of the visitors that had expected the experience. This result is 10 percentage points above the VPS benchmark.

Interestingly, respondents often took the time to list the restaurants they had visited when making positive open ended comments in the survey, indicating that the restaurant experiences were memorable ones:

Found a quiet little café (Cozy Corner Café) that served great food. Highly recommended and is up there with 'The Lake House' and others. The food options were amazing. (25–34 years, first-time visitor)

There were several destination attributes for which satisfaction scored above VPS benchmarks (proportion very satisfied):

- *Personal safety and security* (63%)
- *Food and beverage* (60%)
- *Local atmosphere* (58%)
- *Variety of things to see and do* (58%)
- *Information services in the region* (57%)
- *Commercial accommodation* (43%)
- *Shopping* (39%)
- *Local transport* (21%).

There were several themes running through the open ended comments of visitors that provide further insight into the strong score for *local atmosphere*: the beauty of autumn; the historical architecture; peacefulness; the friendliness of people; and the scenery. The following quote typifies many comments:

The beautiful weather, trees changing colour, peaceful atmosphere, great markets and wonderful selection of restaurants and eateries. I love shopping in Daylesford. (65+ years, repeat visitor)

To escape and indulge (which is not benchmarked) also scored highly in satisfaction (61%). This is a strength of DMR given it is an important reason why DMR was chosen and therefore an experience which visitors expected to have, particularly overnight visitors.

On the less positive side, there were two results of note for DMR. Although the satisfaction scores for *roads and signage* were average in relation to the VPS benchmarks, there were many open ended comments critical of these areas. In relation to signage, comments were generally about there not being enough signage and distance information:

More road signs needed and clearer signs needed. (25–35 years, repeat visitor)

Signage – we always get lost travelling via Daylesford to Kyneton. (55–64 years, repeat visitor)

Road signage could be improved including distances to travel to next towns. (65+ years, repeat visitor)

In relation to roads there were a number of comments regarding road surfaces:

Some of the roads are in need of repair – very rough. (55–64 years, repeat visitor)

Shocking roads. (45–54 years, first-time visitor)

Wouldn't say I was particularly unhappy with anything, maybe just badly surfaced roads. (15–24 years, repeat visitor)

Despite a satisfaction score comparable with the VPS benchmark, *value for money* was another area where some concerns were raised in the open ended comments:

We found many restaurants throughout the region expensive – most tourists cannot eat lunch and dinner at \$35 to \$40 a head every day, it cuts down the amount of days you stay in a town. We found most tourists we met had the same opinion. We had a great spa treatment package but again, we would have had more if the prices were not so high. (25–34 years, first-time visitor)

Eating out is particularly expensive, more so than in Melbourne. Spa treatments are also very expensive - can get the same treatments (massage/facials) for a much more reduced cost in Melbourne. (25–34 years, repeat visitor)

Generally, however, the VPS results for DMR paint a very positive picture. There were a number of compelling reasons for visitors to choose the region and these align well with what the DMR promotes as its offering. The themes of *relaxation and rejuvenation* and *luxury and indulgence* were evident in most visitors' expectations of the region.

The natural and architectural beauty help create an atmosphere that is greatly appreciated by visitors and the proximity to Melbourne makes the region easily accessible. Perhaps most importantly, the region as a whole delivered strongly on its key visitor expectations, with *food and wine* experiences a real stand out.

This summary is extracted from research conducted by Tourism Research Australia in partnership with Daylesford and the Macedon Ranges Tourism Inc. and Tourism Victoria. For the full Visitor Profile and Satisfaction Report, please email tourism.research@ret.gov.au.

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Courtesy of Daylesford and the Macedon Ranges

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