

## SNAPSHOTS

2009

## INDIGENOUS TOURISM VISITORS IN AUSTRALIA



Australian Government  
Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism  
Tourism Research Australia

### Definition

An Indigenous tourism visitor is one who participates in at least one Indigenous tourism activity during their trip. Visitors may participate in any of the following:

- Visit an Aboriginal site or community
- Experience Aboriginal art/craft or cultural display

International visitors may also:

- Attend an Aboriginal performance.

Visitors may also participate in other tourism activities.

Other visitors are defined as domestic or international visitors who do not participate in Indigenous activities while in Australia.

### International visitors

#### What are the recent visitor trends?

International participation in Indigenous activities continued to decline in 2009 (-10%) with 709,000 international visitors participating in at least one Indigenous activity. Participation in Indigenous activities declined despite total international visitor numbers remaining steady during this period. This has resulted in international market share in Indigenous activities declining, down from 18% in 2005 to 14% in 2009.

#### How much did they spend?

International Indigenous tourism visitors spent more per trip (\$7,864) than other international visitors (\$4,630). However, this is due to the longer length of stay of Indigenous tourism visitors than other visitors (56 nights compared to 31 nights) as Indigenous tourism visitors actually spent less per night (\$139 compared to \$151).

**Table 1 International Indigenous tourism visitors**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Average annual change
Visitors ('000)	915	842	837	785	709	-6%
Proportion of total international visitors (%)	18%	17%	16%	15%	14%	
Nights ('000)	38,465	41,745	40,636	41,820	40,014	1%

### Who were they?

International visitors from Europe comprised almost half (47%) of the international Indigenous tourism market in Australia. The United Kingdom (19%), USA (13%), Germany (7%) and China (7%) were the largest markets in 2009. A third of international Indigenous tourism visitors (35%) were aged between 20 and 29 years and 17% were 60 years or older. These visitors were most likely to travel alone (48%) or as a couple (30%).

### What did they do?

International Indigenous tourism visitors participated in different Indigenous activities during their stay in Australia. *Experience Aboriginal art/craft or cultural display* was the most popular Indigenous activity, with 75% of Indigenous tourism visitors participating in this activity. This was followed by *visit an Aboriginal site* (39%) and *attend an Aboriginal performance* (27%). A third (33%) of international Indigenous tourism visitors participated in 2 or more indigenous activities.

### Why did they travel?

International Indigenous tourism visitors were more likely to travel for *holiday* (68%) than other visitors (43%). Indigenous tourism visitors were less likely than other visitors to travel for purposes such as *visiting friends or relatives* (15% compared to 27%) and *business* (4% compared to 16%).

### Where did they go?

International Indigenous tourism visitors were more likely to spend nights in regional areas (34% of nights) than other visitors (18% of nights). They were also more likely to travel to the Northern Territory (6%) than other visitors (1%).

### Where did they stay?

International Indigenous tourism visitors stayed in *rented house/apartment/unit/flat* (30% of nights), *the home of a friend or relative* (18% of nights) and *backpacker or hostel* (18% of nights).

### How did they travel?

In 2009, 27% of international Indigenous tourism visitors arrived on a travel package. This was proportionally higher than that of other international visitors (14%). China had the highest number and proportion of Indigenous tourism visitors arriving on a package (67%). International Indigenous tourism visitors (27%) were more likely to travel on a package tour than other visitors (14%).

**Table 2 International Indigenous tourism visitors on a travel package, 2009**

Country	Package tour visitors	Package tour visitors as proportion of total Indigenous visitors %
China	35,559	67
Japan	22,804	62
Italy	7,014	38
Korea	5,571	32
France	8,344	28
USA includes Hawaii	25,140	27
Germany	13,539	26
Other Europe	21,537	22
United Kingdom	24,757	19
Other Asia	12,875	18
New Zealand	7,236	16
Other countries	6,578	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>190,955</b>	<b>27</b>

### Domestic visitors

#### What are the recent visitor trends?

Domestic overnight Indigenous tourism visitors declined during 2009 to 367,000 visitors. Participation in Indigenous activities has declined at an average annual rate of 11% since 2005.

#### How much did they spend?

Domestic overnight Indigenous tourism visitors spent more per trip than other visitors (\$1,743 compared to \$635). While the average length of stay for Indigenous tourism visitors was down from 11 nights in 2008 to 9 nights in 2009, expenditure per night was up from \$149 to \$205.

On average, domestic overnight Indigenous tourism visitors spent almost twice that of other visitors on items such as *transport, excluding airfares* (\$301 compared to \$159) and *package tours* (\$2,585 compared to \$1,326).

**Table 3 Domestic Indigenous tourism visitors and nights**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Average annual change
Visitors ('000)	584	696	677	456	367	-11%
Proportion of total international visitors (%)	0.8%	0.9%	0.9%	0.6%	0.5%	
Nights ('000)	5,054	6,718	5,645	4,816	3,128	-11%

### Who were they?

Domestic overnight Indigenous tourism visitors tended to be *parents* (35%) and *older non-working visitors* (24%), and almost three quarters (74%) were aged 40 years or over. Domestic overnight Indigenous tourism visitors were more likely to travel *as a couple* (34%), with *friends or relatives* (24%) or *as a family group* (20%).

### What did they do?

*Experience Aboriginal art/craft or cultural displays* was the most popular Indigenous activity for domestic overnight Indigenous tourism visitors, with nearly three quarters of these visitors (71%) participating in this activity. This was followed by *visit an Aboriginal site or community* (47%).

### Why did they travel?

Domestic overnight Indigenous tourism visitors were more likely to travel for *holiday* (72%) than other visitors (45%). Indigenous tourism visitors were less likely than other visitors to travel for other purposes such as *visiting friends or relatives* (12% compared to 33%) and *business* (11% compared to 19%).

### Where did they stay?

Domestic overnight Indigenous tourism visitors stayed 33% of their nights in *caravan or camping accommodation* compared to 16% of nights by other visitors. Indigenous tourism visitors also chose to stay in *hotel, resort, motel or motor inn accommodation* (29%).

## Supplementary data

Supplementary questions regarding Indigenous tourism visitors were included in the 2009 International Visitor Survey and National Visitor Survey. This included an expanded list of Indigenous activities (refer to Table 4). The following is an analysis of some of the results from the supplementary.

### What Indigenous learning experiences did visitors have?

Most international Indigenous tourism visitors reported having an Indigenous learning experience, while 16% indicated they did not have an Indigenous learning experience. The most commonly reported learning experiences were *authentic Aboriginal art or craft* (51%), *Aboriginal music, including didgeridoos* (44%) and *Aboriginal boomerangs, spears and other weapons* (39%).

The majority (61%) of domestic overnight Indigenous tourism visitors reported having an Indigenous learning experience on their trip. The most common learning experiences were *authentic Aboriginal art or craft* (62%), *Aboriginal bush tucker food* (36%), *The Dreamtime* (36%) and *traditional hunting and gathering* (33%).

**Table 4 Activities by international and domestic Indigenous tourism visitors, 2009**

	International (%)	Domestic overnight (%)
See Aboriginal art, craft or cultural display	45	54
Visit an Aboriginal gallery	32	24
Visit an Aboriginal cultural centre	28	22
See Aboriginal dance or theatre performance	27	10
Purchase Aboriginal art/craft or souvenirs	26	8
See an Aboriginal site or Aboriginal community	22	27
Some other interaction with Aboriginal people	17	20
Go on a tour with an Aboriginal guide	8	6
Attend an Aboriginal festival	2	np
Stay in Aboriginal accommodation	2	np

### How important were Indigenous experiences in deciding to travel to Australia?

For two thirds (65%) of international Indigenous tourism visitors, having an Indigenous experience had little or no influence on their decision to travel to Australia. Having an Indigenous experience was an influence but not a major factor for 21% of international Indigenous tourism visitors. Comparatively few visitors reported an Indigenous experience as either a major factor or the most important factor in deciding to travel to Australia.

### Who were they?

The largest numbers of international Indigenous tourism visitors were from the UK (18%), USA (13%), Japan (8%) and New Zealand (8%). These were also the top four markets to Australia in 2008.

The largest proportion of domestic overnight Indigenous tourism visitors were from New South Wales (32%), Victoria (24%) and Queensland (19%).

### Where did they go?

Apart from the capital cities, the most popular regions for international Indigenous tourism visitors were Tropical North Queensland (36%), Petermann (17%), Alice Springs (15%), Whitsundays (12%) and Northern Rivers NSW (10%).

Aside from the capital cities, the most popular regions for domestic overnight Indigenous tourism visitors were Tropical North Queensland (10%), Alice Springs (5%), Petermann (5%), Australia's North West (4%) and Flinders Ranges (4%).

#### Data sources

Tourism Research Australia National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Survey (unpublished data). All figures refer to persons over the age of 15 years.

### Key findings

- There was a decline in the number of international and domestic overnight Indigenous tourism visitors in 2009.
- The most popular Indigenous activities for international visitors were *see Aboriginal art, craft or cultural display* (45%), *visit an Aboriginal gallery* (32%), *visit an Aboriginal cultural centre* (28%) and *purchase Aboriginal art/craft or souvenirs* (27%).
- The most popular Indigenous activities for domestic visitors were *see Aboriginal art, craft or cultural display* (54%), *see an Aboriginal site or community* (27%), *visit an Aboriginal gallery* (24%) and *visit an Aboriginal cultural centre* (22%).

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Publication date: August 2010

Image: *Sculptures by the Sea*, Cottesloe Beach, WA  
Courtesy of Tourism Western Australia