

NERP Tropical Ecosystems Hub – Project 10.2 Factsheet

Cairns Airport Exit Survey 2013/14 -

Comparison of First-time and Repeat Visitors' Views on Nature

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Key messages

- Data reported in this factsheet form part of a long term monitoring study of visitors departing Cairns Airport since 2007.
- First-time visitors were more inclined to visit the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics Rainforest than repeat visitors.
- First-time visitors were highly motivated by visiting the GBR and related activities, while repeat visitors were motivated by the relaxing lifestyle and climate in the tropics.
- Selecting Cairns as holiday destination that actively protects its environment was important for first-time visitors.

Overview

This factsheet compares first-time and repeat visitors' nature visitation experiences in the Cairns region. The findings are based on 876 visitors departing Cairns between September 2013 and February 2014 via the domestic terminal of Cairns International Airport.

Data were collected as part of a study investigating long term trends and changes in the travel motivations and behavior of tourists to the Cairns region. Disclaimer: The study was not designed to report on overall visitor numbers to the study region and was distributed only in English. Care should be taken if results are generalised beyond the sample reported in this factsheet.

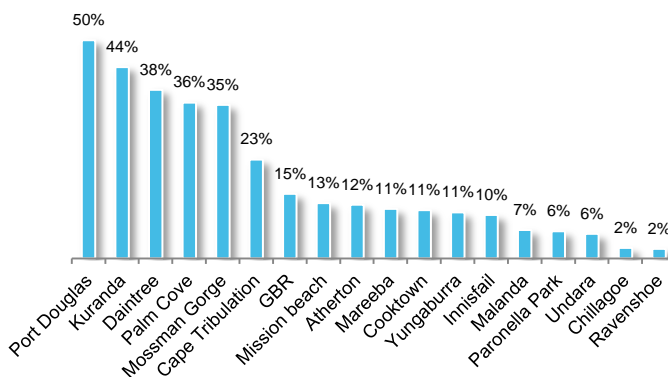


Figure 1. Favourite places visited in the Cairns region (n=876)

Socio-Demographics Profiles

- Equal distribution of female and male visitors.
- A third were aged 20-29yrs, with 19% 30-39yrs and 17% were at least 60yrs.
- Some 27% were employed as professionals, 16% were students and 13% were retired.
- Half had a degree qualification.
- 30% had an annual household income of AU\$32K-69K.
- 46% travelled as couples, 16% with friends and 15% were families with children.
- 57% international and 43% domestic visitors.
- Countries of origin were UK and Ireland (35%), Europe (28%), North America (22%), and Asia (9%).
- Domestic visitors were primarily from Victoria (36%), New South Wales (36%) and Queensland (18%).

Travel Behaviour

- 70% were first-time visitors, 30% were repeat visitors.
- 62% spent most nights in Cairns, with another 19% staying at Port Douglas.
- 48% stayed in resorts/hotels, 19% in holiday apartments/units and 17% in backpacker hostels.
- 17% of the overall sample, or 42% of respondents aged 20-29, were backpackers.
- 42% hired a car while 36% joined commercial tours.
- Information sources for Cairns: friends and relatives (41%), the Internet (39%), and guidebook (25%).
- Popular locations: Port Douglas (50%), Kuranda (44%), Daintree (38%), Palm Cove (36%), Mossman Gorge (35%). (See Figure 1).
- The average overall budget was AU\$5,728 for 2 adults and 2 children.

Travel Motivations

Visitors ranked their travel motivations to visit the Cairns region on a scale of 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important). The top 10 motivations are listed in Table 1. Overall, the top five motives were: Visiting the GBR; rest and relax; snorkelling and diving; experiencing the natural environment; and visiting the Wet Tropics rainforest.

First-time visitors were strongly motivated by: visiting the GBR; rest and relax; and snorkelling and diving. In contrast, repeat visitors were motivated by: rest and relax; enjoying the tropical lifestyle; and the climate. Spending time with family and the price matching their budgets were within the top 10 motives of repeat visitors.

Table 1. Top 10 motives visiting the Cairns region (n=876)

	Overall	First-time	Repeats
Visit the GBR	4.24	4.47	3.65
Rest and relax	3.93	3.78	4.27
Snorkelling and diving	3.78	3.99	3.26
Experience the natural environment	3.74	3.75	3.70
Visit the Wet Tropics rainforest	3.61	3.70	3.40
Enjoy the tropical lifestyle	3.61	3.50	3.87
Climate	3.60	3.52	3.80
See Australian wildlife	3.55	3.67	3.24
Visit the beaches	3.48	3.44	3.55
Visit the region's National Parks	3.43	3.53	3.20

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Comparison of First-time and Repeat Visitors' Views on Nature (Cont.)

Wet Tropics Rainforest Experiences

66% of first-time visitors visited the Wet Tropics Rainforest (WTR). It was the first trip to the WTR for 87% of them. 48% of repeat visitors visited the WTR and over four-fifths of them had been before. Over 80% of both first-time and repeat visitors reported having a good experience. First-time visitors were more likely to visit the WTR than repeat visitors (Figure 2).

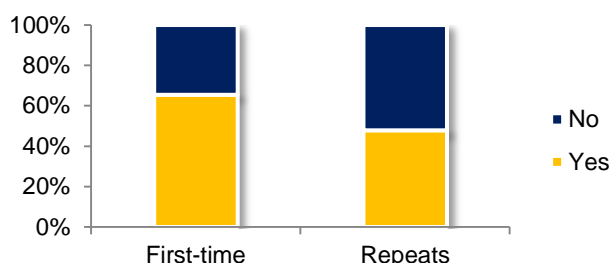


Figure 2. Wet Tropics Rainforest Visitation (n=876)

Great Barrier Reef Experiences

- Over four-fifths of first-time visitors went to the GBR. It was the first trip to the reef for 92%.
- 49% of repeat visitors went the GBR during their visit to the Cairns region, while 12% claimed it was their first trip to the reef.
- The majority of first-time (82%) and repeat (89%) visitors reported having a good experience of the GBR.
- First-time visitors were more inclined to visit the GBR compared to repeat visitors (Figure 3).

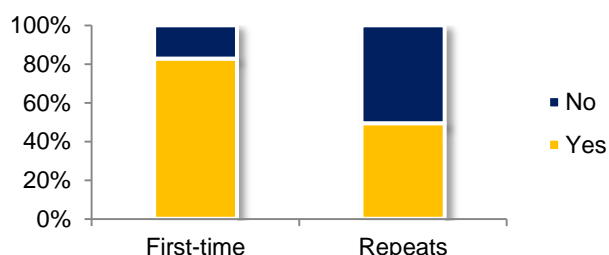


Figure 3. Great Barrier Reef Visitation (n=876)

Destination selection

71% of first-time visitors expressed a preference for selecting a destination that actively protects its environment and believed that the Cairns region is actively protecting its environment. This was not the case for repeat visitors.

If GBR was damaged...

Visitors were asked whether they would still have made this trip to Cairns if any of the following hypothetical situations had occurred on the GBR: damaged by a major oil spill; affected by major coral bleaching; or lost its World Heritage status. Only a quarter of first-time visitors would still have made their trip if either of first two situations applied, while around 40% of repeat visitors would do so (Figures 4 and 5). This implies that visitors are environmentally conscious when selecting holiday destinations.

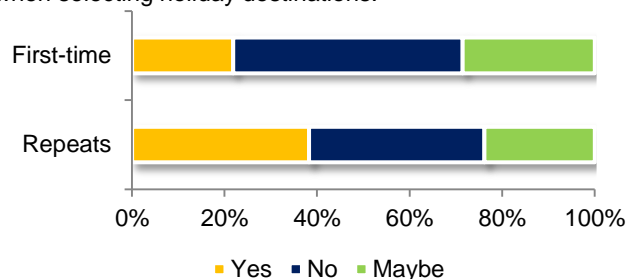


Figure 4. Travel decision if GBR was damaged by major oil spill (n=876)

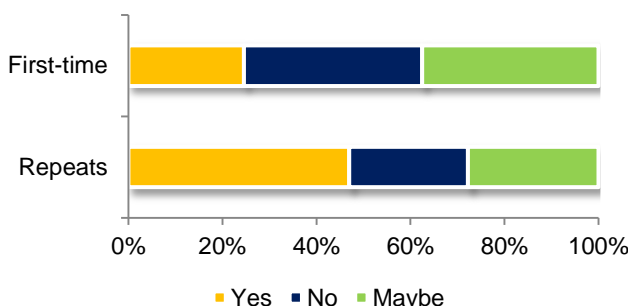


Figure 5. Travel decision if GBR was affected by major coral bleaching (n=876)

Loss of World Heritage status would significantly affect visitors intentions to visit Cairns. As shown in Figure 6, 52% of first-time and 64% of repeat visitors would still have made this trip if the reef lost its World Heritage status.

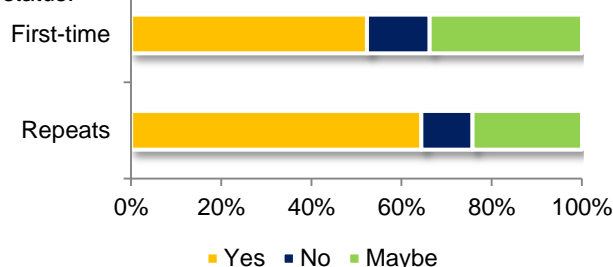


Figure 6. Travel decision if GBR lost its World Heritage status (n=876)

Find this project at www.nerptropical.edu.au
 Theme 3: Managing for resilient tropical ecosystems
 Program 10: Socio-economic value of GBR goods and services
 Project: 10.2 Socio-economic systems and reef resilience

For more information about this project, please contact:
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