

NERP Tropical Ecosystems Hub – Project 10.2 Factsheet

Cairns Airport Exit Survey 2013/14 – Role of Food Experiences

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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.
- The GBR and the Wet Tropics rainforest are iconic experiences that draw first-time visitors to the Cairns region.
- Repeat visitors are motivated by other reasons, such as rest and relaxation, the climate and the environment.
- Although there are regional food experiences in the Cairns region, along with a food brand *Taste Paradise*, visitors are largely unaware of the brand and the opportunities to experience the region's cuisine.
- Seafood and tropical fruits are food experiences visitors to the region frequently associated with Cairns.
- Although visitation rates in some regional food experiences are low, overall satisfaction rates are (very) good.

Overview

This factsheet reports on visitors' regional food experiences. The aim of this survey was to identify the motivations and preferences for regional food tourism experiences among visitors holidaying in the Cairns region. The findings are based on **438 visitors** departing Cairns between December 2012 and July 2013 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 behaviour 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.

Socio-Demographics

- The sample comprised 60% females and 40% males
- A third were aged 20-29yr, with 18% 30-39yrs and 15% aged 50-59yrs
- 29% were employed as professionals, 18% were students and 12% semi/retired
- 62% had an annual income up to AU\$69K
- 45% were travelling as a couple, 17% with friends and 16% alone
- 49% have a degree qualification
- 41% domestic and 59% international visitors
- Countries of origin were UK & Ireland (30%), North America (9%), Asia (8%) and Europe (7%)

Travel Behaviour

- 65% visiting for the first-time, with 35% repeat visitors
- 70% spent the most nights in Cairns, with another 16% spending most nights in Port Douglas
- 45% stayed in a resort/hotel, with 19% stayed in backpacker hostels and 19% in holiday apartments/units
- 36% hired a car during their visit, while 31% went on a commercial coach tour
- Information on Cairns was sourced from: friends & relatives (47%); the Internet (42%); guidebooks (22%); having been before (17%); travel agents (16%)
- Visitors also went to: Port Douglas (54%); Kuranda (44%); Cape Tribulation and Daintree (each 30%); Palm Cove (31%); Mossman Gorge (26%)

Table 1. Top 10 motives for travelling to the Cairns region by first-time and repeat visitors

Motivation (n = 438)	Mean Rank		
	Overall	First-time	Repeats
Visit Great Barrier Reef	4.25	4.57	3.53
Rest and relax	4.05	4.02	4.11
Experience the natural environment	3.83	3.96	3.55
Visit the Wet Tropics Rainforest	3.81	3.96	3.49
Snorkelling and diving	3.74	3.97	3.21
Climate	3.71	3.74	3.62
See Australian wildlife	3.68	3.89	3.18
Visit the beaches	3.52	3.58	3.38
Visit a World Heritage Area	3.52	3.71	3.11
Price matched my budget	3.52	3.60	3.34

Travel Motivations

The main motivations for visiting the Cairns region are listed in **Table 1** and are presented for first-time and repeat visitors. The scale range is 1 ('not at all important') to 5 ('very important'). For the *overall sample*, visiting the Great Barrier Reef (4.25) was the top motivation, followed by rest and relaxation (4.05) and experiencing the natural environment (3.83).

For *first-time* visitors, visiting the GBR was the strongest motivation (4.57), followed by rest and relaxation (4.02) and snorkelling and diving (3.97). In comparison, rest and relaxation (4.11), climate (3.62) and experiencing the natural environment were stronger motivations for *repeat* visitors than visiting the GBR (3.53), as indicated by their higher mean rank. Regional food tourism experiences are not ranked among the top 10 motivations of visitors.

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Cairns Airport Exit Survey 2013/14 – Role of Food Experiences (Cont.)

Importance of Food when Travelling

Visitors were asked to rank the importance of a number of food related activities when on holidays. **Table 2** shows the mean rank of activities, on a scale from 1 ('not at all important') to 5 ('very important'). Mean ranks between first time and repeat visitors were generally similar. However, significant differences were more likely to be seen between those who considered themselves food tourists, those who did sometimes, and those who did not.

Table 2: Importance of food activities while on holidays

Importance of activities (n = 438)	All Mean	Food tourist		
		Yes	Some times	No
Enjoy dining out while on holidays	3.79	4.35	3.82	3.00
Experience the regional cuisine	3.40	3.98	3.54	2.96
Value for money food and wine experiences	3.29	3.73	3.09	2.55
Purchase locally grown and manufactured foods	3.25	3.98	3.48	2.77
Learn more about a region's cuisine	3.12	3.37	3.06	2.57
Purchase regional food and wine products	3.06	3.86	3.15	2.42
Visit farmers' markets	3.05	3.92	3.26	2.79
Participate in a region' food and wine activities	2.84	3.84	3.48	3.11
Purchase organic produce and food products	2.81	3.73	3.17	2.85
Choose a destination renowned for its food and wine	2.80	4.35	4.08	3.54

Role of Food in Cairns Region

Food related motivations among visitors to the region did not rate highly. Trying local foods and visiting local markets had means of 3.15 and 3.00 respectively. Interestingly, trying local foods and visiting local markets was ranked slightly higher among first-time visitors (3.23 and 3.05 respectively) than repeat visitors (2.99 and 2.88).

This is not surprising, given that only 13% of visitors considered themselves food tourists, or someone who travels to a destination primarily to experience the regional cuisine. A further 26% considered themselves food tourists sometimes, while the majority (61%) didn't consider themselves to be food tourists.

As reported above, the mean ranks for trying local foods and visiting local markets were higher among visitors who identified as food tourists (4.04 and 3.54) than those who did not (2.91 and 2.77 respectively).

Participation and Satisfaction in Food Activities

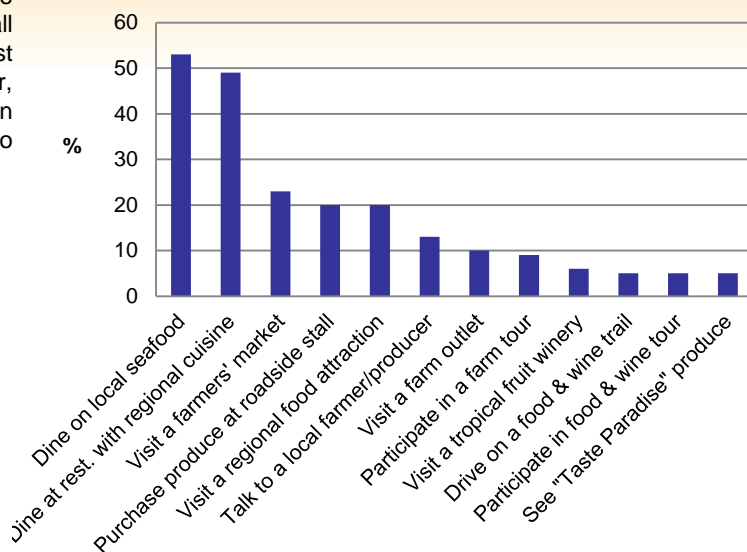


Figure 1: Participation in food activities while in Cairns (n = 438)

Figure 1 shows the participation rates of participants in food related activities while in the Cairns region. The top 5 activities were: dining on locally caught seafood (53%); dining at a restaurant featuring regional cuisine (49%); visiting a farmers' market (23%); and purchasing produce at a roadside stall or visiting a regional food attraction (20%).

In all cases, the majority of visitors who participated in food related activities reported being either satisfied or very satisfied with their experience. Furthermore, up to 50% of those who participated in a food related activity did not consider themselves food and wine tourists. Although not a motivating factor for travel to Cairns, those visitors who participated in food tourism experiences are not limited to food and wine tourists.

Promoting Food in Cairns Region

Less than one third (28%) of visitors noticed promotional material that featured regional cuisine. Although 36% were unsure if Cairns has the potential to develop as a food region in the future, approximately half (49%) believe there is potential. When asked what local food the region should promote, seafood or fish and tropical fruits were the most popular responses. In addition, fish and seafood was also stated as the most enjoyable food consumed in the region.

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, copies of this fact-sheet or a technical report with more details, please contact:
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