

NERP Tropical Ecosystems Hub – Project 10.2 Factsheet

Activities and Preferences of Visitors to Tropical NQ

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Key messages

- The most popular and frequent activity is spending time at the beach – the reef is also very important.
- The average visitor spends \$1,160 in the region.
- The most important regional 'draw-cards' relate to the marine environment – clear oceans, healthy reefs and healthy fish.
- The strongest potential deterrents (things which would make visitors shorten their visits or not come at all) were twice as many oil spills, ship groundings and waste spills, murky ocean water and rubbish.
- On average, visitors were willing to contribute from \$10 to \$15 per person per visit to a fund aiming to reduce various threats to the GBRWHA (improving water quality; protecting top predators; and/or reducing risk of shipping accidents).

Who comes to the region?

A survey of 1,390 visitors to the Cairns and Port Douglas region was conducted between June 2012 and June 2013. Just over half of our respondents (56%) were women, and 57% of those responding were 20-40 years of age. Most of the visitors (34%) were couples, followed by groups of friends (24%) and families with children (15%). Some 30% were employed by government (including health and education) while 14% came from retail (including accommodation and tourism) and 14% from manufacturing (including mining and ports). More than 60% of respondents had been to university or were currently attending. Visitors were of varying annual household incomes with no specific trend.

Half of our respondents came from Australia and Europe (25% from each), followed by those from Japan (17%) and China (16%). Australian visitors came primarily from Victoria (38%) and NSW (31%), followed by Queensland (22%). For 70% of them, this was the first visit to the region; 6% had already visited once, 14% had visited 2-4 times previously,; while 10% had been to the region more than 10 times before.

Where do people go, what do they do and how much do they spend?

Cairns and Port Douglas were reported as the favorite places to visit in the GBRWHA (**Figure 1**), with respondents looking forward to seeing the GBR, Cooktown and Airlie Beach. Most respondents, 79%, spent some time at mainland beaches, on average visiting them 2.7 times (**Figure 2**), while very few spent time fishing (12%) or had been on a private boat (17%). About two-thirds had been to the offshore reefs (68%), snorkelling/diving (68%), on a paid boat (75%) and/or had spent time on an island (61%), visiting them, on average, once (Figure 2).

The average amount of money each person spent in the region was A\$ 1,160. Almost half of it was spent on accommodation, followed by food items and boat trips (**Figure 3**).

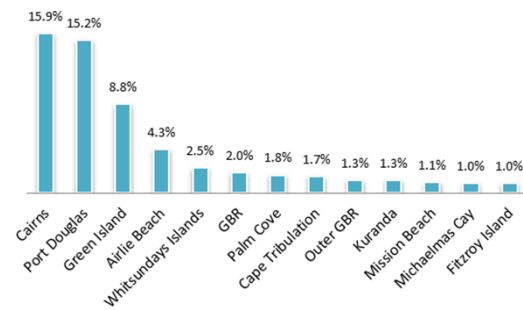


Figure 1. Favorite places in the GBR WHA visited

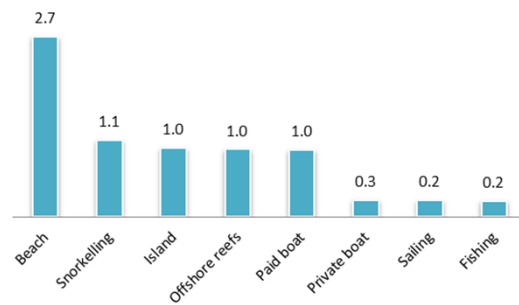


Figure 2. On average, number of times respondents went...

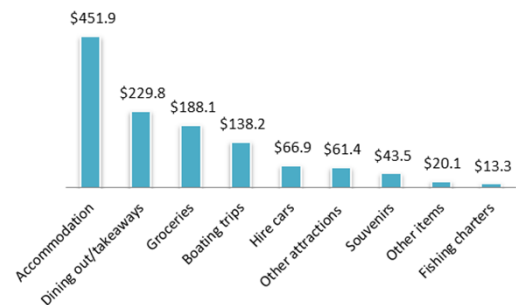


Figure 3. Expenditure per person per visit, on average

What are the most important 'draw-cards' to the region?



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Ocean water clarity, healthy reefs, healthy fish and lack of visible rubbish were the most important factors that encouraged respondents to visit the region (Figure 4). Respondents expressed high satisfaction with these important factors. The least important factors affecting decisions to visit the area were business, proximity from home and fishing/crabbing.

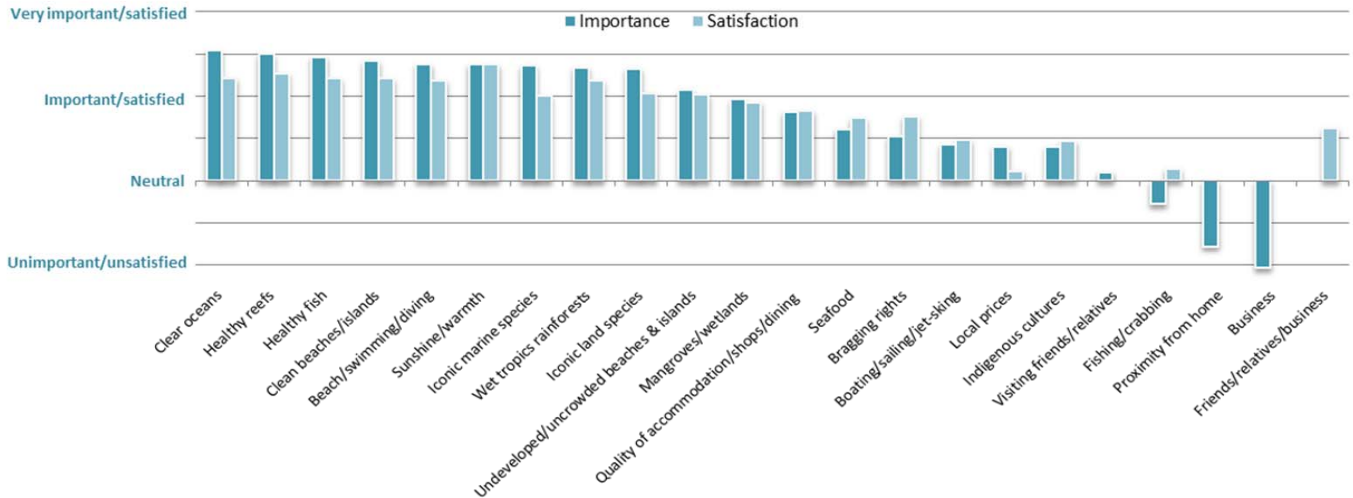


Figure 4. Most and least important ‘draw-cards’ in deciding to visit the region, and satisfaction with those

How would potential changes to the GBRWHA impact their visitation?

Figure 5 below shows the reaction of respondents to hypothetical changes to the GBRWHA. Respondents appeared to be most sensitive to the idea of seeing more oil spills, ship groundings and waste spills, lower ocean water clarity and increases in visible rubbish. More than half of our respondents indicated that they would not visit the region at all if there were twice as many oil spills, ship groundings and waste spills. The majority of people did not seem to be concerned about the idea of having more tourists; nor the prospect of having less chance of catching fish - this could be due to the fact that very few respondents went fishing on their trip to the GBRWHA.

On average, visitors were willing to contribute from \$10 to \$15 per person per visit to fund improvements in water quality; protect top predators; and/or reduce the risk of shipping accidents.

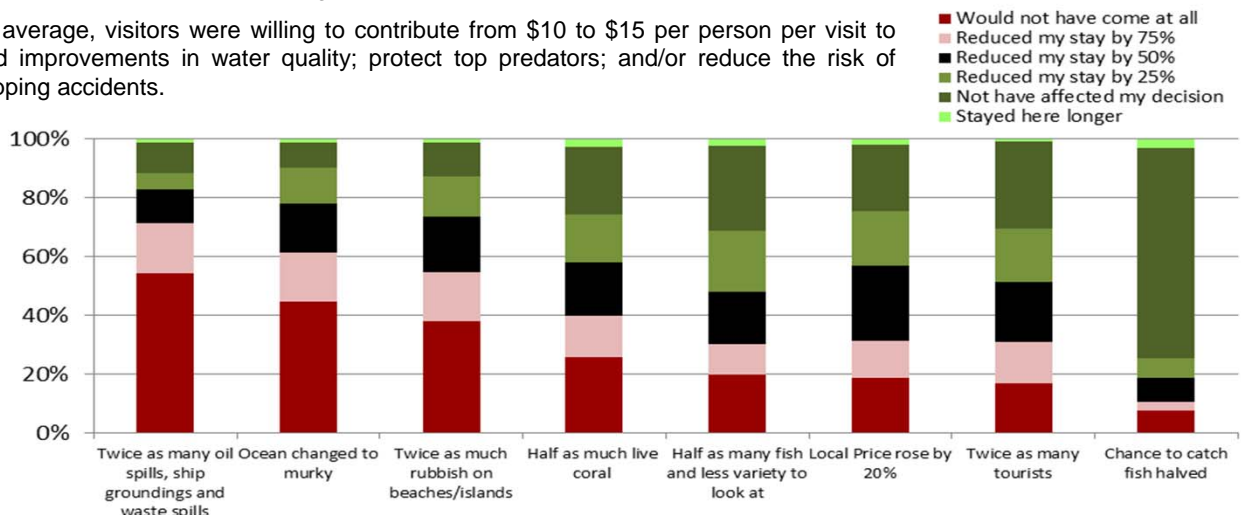


Figure 5. Respondents’ reaction to hypothetical changes in the GBRWHA

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, copies of this fact-sheet or a Technical Report with more details, please contact:
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