

NERP Tropical Ecosystems Hub – Project 10.1 Factsheet

SELTMP 2013: Tourism in the Great Barrier Reef

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Background

The Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is an iconic international tourism attraction. It is now estimated that GBR tourism employs more than 64,000 people and contributes \$5.2 billion annually to the Australian economy¹. An understanding of how tourists perceive the GBR, how they experience it, and how their perceptions are formed is becoming increasingly important for tourism operators and Reef managers aiming to provide outstanding Reef tourism experiences that are managed sustainably.

Report summary

"SELTMP 2013: Tourism in the Great Barrier Reef" is part of a series of technical reports from the *Social and Economic Long Term Monitoring Program* (SELTMP; NERP Project 10.1) for the GBR region. It presents a snapshot of socio-economic data and indicators relevant to the current state of tourism visitation and the tourism industry in GBR. A wide range of secondary data is compiled, showing patterns of regional tourism visitation, industry use and activities.

For the first time, results are presented from SELTMP surveys conducted in mid 2013, representing 2621 tourists who visited the GBR region (from Cooktown to Bundaberg), as well as 119 GBR tourism operations. These survey data provide new insights into tourists' and tourism operators' relationship, values and perceptions of the Reef, and will become an important baseline for monitoring and understanding industry trends, and the impacts of changes in the environment and society.

Key findings

Some of the key findings from this technical report include:

- 80% of visitors to the region rated their satisfaction with their GBR experience as very high (rating= 8/10 or above).
- The most popular activities for tourists visiting the GBR were nature-based: including snorkelling, wildlife watching, scuba diving and fishing.
- The strongest values of the GBR among tourists were (1) biodiversity values, (2) the Reef's aesthetic beauty, (3) the GBR's World Heritage status, (4) scientific and educational values, and (5) lifestyle values.
- More than half of tourists surveyed indicated that they choose a tour operator based on their 'green' credentials at least some of the time.
- The most serious threats to the Reef perceived by GBR tourism operators were (1) climate change, (2) agricultural run-off, (3) shipping, (4) port developments and (5) crown of thorns starfish.
- Contrasting with tourism operators' perceptions and available evidence, the most serious threats perceived by tourists were (1) tourism, (2) climate change, (3) commercial fishing, (4) shipping and (5) marine debris / litter.



Photos: Matt Curnock, CSIRO



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Outcomes

Results from SELTMP 2013 have assisted the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority with their preparation of the 2014 Outlook Report and the Strategic Assessment of the GBRWHA. Consultation with Reef and other natural resource managers, Traditional Owners, industry and community groups is continuing through 2014 to ensure findings from SELTMP are available to address information needs, to improve management of the GBR, and to enhance the wellbeing of Reef users and coastal communities.

¹Dellotie Access Economics (2013). Economic Contribution of the Great Barrier Reef. Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Townsville. Available online: http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/66417/Economic-contribution-of-the-Great-Barrier-Reef-2013.pdf

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: 10.1 Social and economic long-term monitoring program

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