

CENTRAL AUSTRALIA INDIGENOUS TOURISM VISITORS

CENTRAL AUSTRALIA VISITOR PROFILE AND SATISFACTION SURVEY

Report Period: 2011

The Central Australia Visitor Profile and Satisfaction (VPS) project was completed as part of the Destination Visitor Survey Program (DVS) managed by Tourism Research Australia (TRA). This project was undertaken by TRA—in partnership with Tourism NT—to gain a better understanding of visitors to the region, including their motivations and satisfaction with their visit to the Central Australia region and attractions within the region.

The survey was also able to capture information relating to Tourism NT’s marketing pillars of nature, culture, history and adventure to understand their importance to Red Centre visitors. While this document focuses on Indigenous culture experiences, a [summary report](#) on the full scope of the project is available on the Tourism NT corporate site.

Visitors to Central Australia were recruited to take part in this research from a range of locations within the region (such as the Alice Springs Airport, Ayers Rock Resort and Alice Springs commercial attractions). A total of 533 responses were received.

Results from TRA’s National and International Visitors Surveys (the NVS and IVS) provide background and benchmark information used in conjunction with results from this project. A fact sheet on [Indigenous Culture in the NT and Australia](#) using data from the NVS and IVS is also available on the Tourism NT corporate site.

INDIGENOUS TOURISM VISITOR DEFINITIONS

Indigenous tourism visitor: national level definition based on activities. **CA**

Indigenous tourism visitor: local level definition based on trip motivation.

An **Indigenous tourism visitor** is defined using NVS and IVS data by the activities visitors have undertaken. The activities used to define an Indigenous tourism visitor are ‘experiencing Aboriginal art, craft and cultural displays’ and ‘visiting an Aboriginal site or community’. The definition of an international Indigenous tourism visitor also includes ‘attending an Aboriginal performance’.

Through the Central Australia VPS results, it is possible to assess, along with specific activities, visitor motivations and expectations in regards to Indigenous culture in the region. Based on visitor motivations, we have defined **Central Australia (CA) Indigenous tourism visitors** where one of the reasons for coming to the region is to learn about Aboriginal culture in the region.

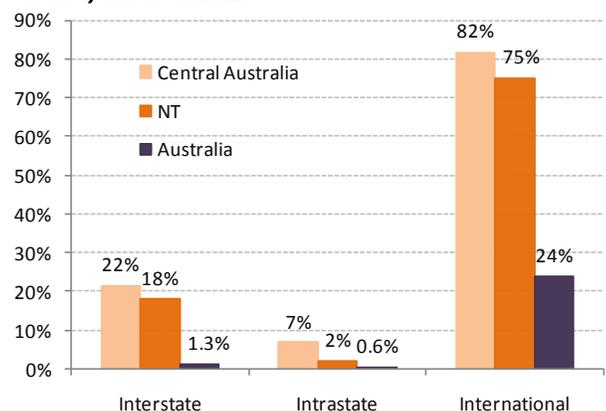
NORTHERN TERRITORY AND NATIONAL VISITATION

Holiday visitors to the NT and particularly Central Australia are more likely to be Indigenous tourism visitors than nationally.

The number of Indigenous tourism visitors has been in decline both nationally and to the NT.

- In 2011, Indigenous tourism visitors represented 18% of the NT’s interstate holiday market and the proportion was larger (22%) for Central Australia region. Nationally, however, Indigenous tourism visitors represent just 1.3% of the interstate holiday market.
- In 2011, the majority of international holiday visitors to the NT and Central Australia were Indigenous tourism visitors (75% and 82% respectively) which was significantly higher than nationally (24%).
- Nationally, domestic Indigenous tourist visitors on holidays have almost halved in the last four years, with 2010 the lowest result over the past decade. The number of domestic Indigenous tourism visitors holidaying in the NT has also declined over this period, although not to the same extent as nationally.
- There has also been a negative trend for international Indigenous tourism visitors, with numbers declining both Australia and the NT since 2006. This has been strongly influenced by falling numbers of European visitors, who contribute almost half of all international Indigenous tourism visitors to Australia.

Indigenous tourism visitors as a proportion of all holiday visitors in 2011



CENTRAL AUSTRALIA INDIGENOUS TOURISM VISITORS

From the Central Australia VPS, visitors who included “to learn about Aboriginal culture” as a reason for their trip to Central Australia have been designated **CA Indigenous tourism visitors**. Of all visitors to Central Australia, 19% were CA Indigenous Tourism visitors. Although “to learn about Aboriginal culture” was a common reason to visit the region, it typically was not the most important motivation for visiting (with just 2% of visitors identifying it as the most important reason for visit).

- Although two thirds of CA Indigenous tourism visitors were from interstate, a higher proportion of international visitors (25%) than domestic visitors (17%) to the region were CA Indigenous tourism visitors.
- Travel parties most likely to be CA Indigenous tourism visitors were young singles (25%), family groups (22%) and interstate older non-working visitors (19%).
- Interstate visitors from Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT (22%) were more likely than visitors from other states (14%) to be CA Indigenous tourism visitors and were also more likely to be female.
- As expected, the majority (76%) of CA Indigenous tourism visitors went to a cultural centre in the region and one in four (25%) went on an Aboriginal guided tour. There were however also significant proportions of non CA Indigenous tourism visitors (i.e. those who did not indicate to learn about Aboriginal culture as a motivation for visiting) who visited a cultural centre (56%) or went on an Aboriginal guided tour (12%). Interestingly for international visitors, there was no significant difference in proportions visiting a cultural centre or going on an Aboriginal guided tour whether or not they indicated an interest to learn about Aboriginal culture.
- The majority of visitors, whether they indicated an interest to learn about Aboriginal culture (94%) or not (78%) expected an opportunity to experience Aboriginal arts or culture in the region. Both groups (CA Indigenous tourism visitors 41% and others 36%) also commonly expected the region to offer a bush tucker experience. Interestingly for international visitors there was no significant difference in how well these expectations were met between CA Indigenous tourism visitors and others. However for the domestic market, CA Indigenous tourism visitors were significantly more likely to have these expectations exceeded than other visitors.
- There were similar overall satisfaction levels with the Central Australia trip between CA Indigenous tourism visitors and other visitors (with average satisfaction ratings 4.4 verses 4.3 out of 5 respectively). However, CA Indigenous tourism visitors were significantly more likely to agree that Alice Springs was a great place to immerse myself in local culture and Alice Springs was a great experience that you could not get in any other state in Australia.

One in five visitors to Central Australia had “to learn about Aboriginal culture” as a reason for visiting the region.

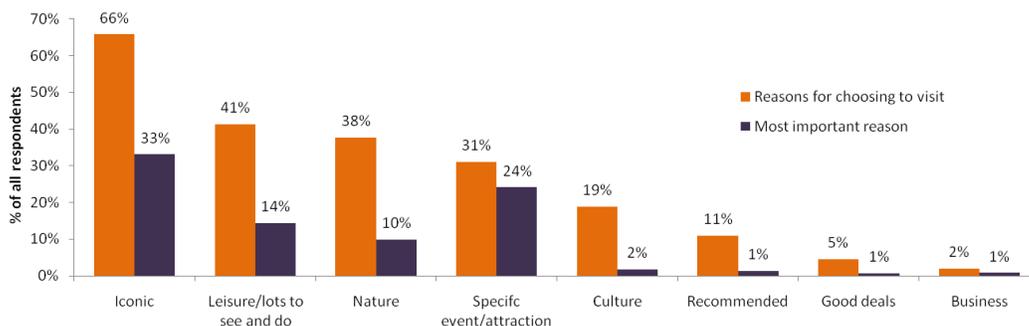
Young singles, family groups and interstate older non-working visitors have a greater propensity to be CA Indigenous tourism visitors.

CA Indigenous tourism visitors are more likely to agree Alice Springs is a great place to immerse yourself in local culture than other visitors.

Visitors most commonly visit Central Australia because of its iconic status and for a third of visitors this is the most important reason for visiting.

MOTIVATIONS FOR TRAVELLING TO CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

Generally, visitors wanted to travel to Central Australia for a variety of reasons. The most common reason identified by visitors was ‘to visit an iconic Australian destination’. From the range of reasons, respondents were also asked to select the most important reason in choosing to visit Central Australia and again ‘to visit an iconic Australian destination’ was most commonly identified.

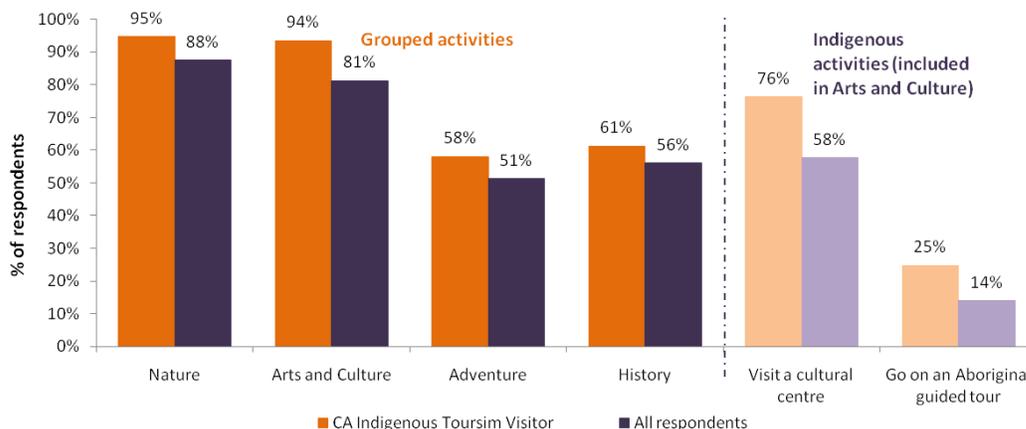




CUSTOM REPORT

- While two thirds of visitors (66%) were motivated to visit because it was an iconic Australian destination, one in five visitors indicated they wanted to learn about Aboriginal culture (19%) (note in the graph above this reason is labeled 'Culture').
- Visitors that went on an Aboriginal guided tour or went to a cultural centre (75%) were significantly more likely than 'other' visitors (45%) to come to the region because of its iconic status. This was also the case for wanting to learn about the natural environment, to experience nature, to learn about Aboriginal culture and because the place is untouched or undeveloped.

ACTIVITIES



International visitors were more likely to go to a cultural centre compared to domestic visitors.

Visitors who went to a cultural centre were significantly more likely to be satisfied with their trip to the region than other visitors.

Visitors commonly participated in a range of activities centred around nature, history, arts and culture whilst in Central Australia. There were two specific activities included relating to Indigenous culture: "did you go on an Aboriginal guided tour" and "did you visit a cultural centre". In the graph above, these are grouped with 'Arts and Culture' and are also identified separately. The majority (81%) of visitors participated in activities focused around arts and culture with more than half (58%) of all respondents visiting a cultural centre while only 14% went on an Aboriginal guided tour. Overall trip satisfaction was higher amongst visitors who went to a cultural centre compared to those who didn't.

- In general, international visitors (71%) were significantly more likely to go to a cultural centre compared to all domestic visitors (54%).
- There were a relatively similar proportion of international and interstate visitors going on an Aboriginal guided tour (16% and 14% respectively).
- A greater proportion of CA Indigenous tourism visitors participated in each activity type than other visitors.

EXPECTATIONS

The majority of visitors expect Central Australia to offer Aboriginal arts and culture experiences.

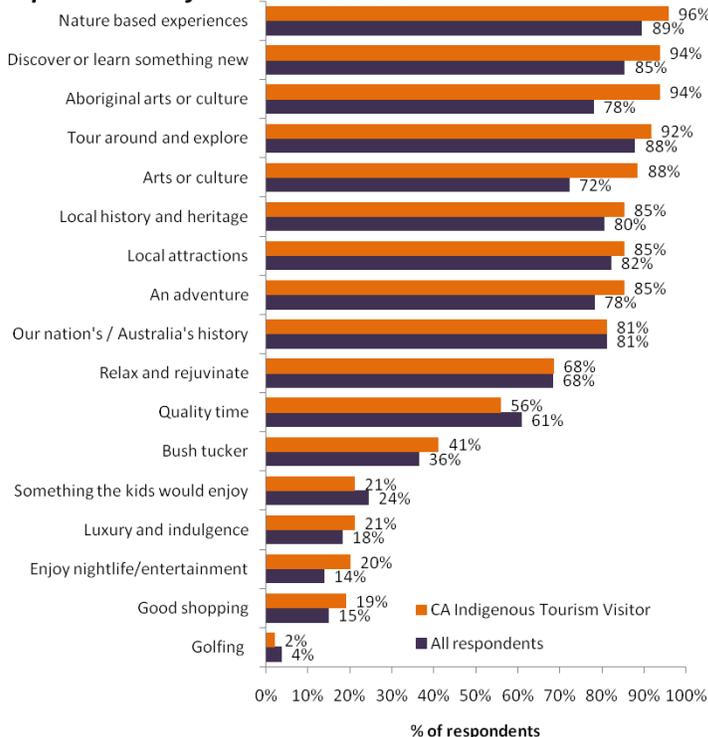
Visitors were asked to indicate (from a range of listed experiences) what they expected Central Australia to offer. Two experiences particularly relating to Indigenous culture were included: 'did you expect an opportunity to experience Aboriginal art / culture' and 'did you expect the region to offer bush tucker experiences'. If an experience was expected, the respondent was also asked to indicate how well the experience met their expectations.

- The majority of visitors to the region expected Aboriginal art and culture experiences (78%) to be offered. This is dramatically higher than other Australian regional destinations where similar research has been conducted in 76 other Australian destinations providing a benchmark expectation for this type of experience at 45%. This expectation, for CA Indigenous tourism visitors, was even higher at 94% and was their third highest expectation closely behind nature (96%) and discovery (94%).

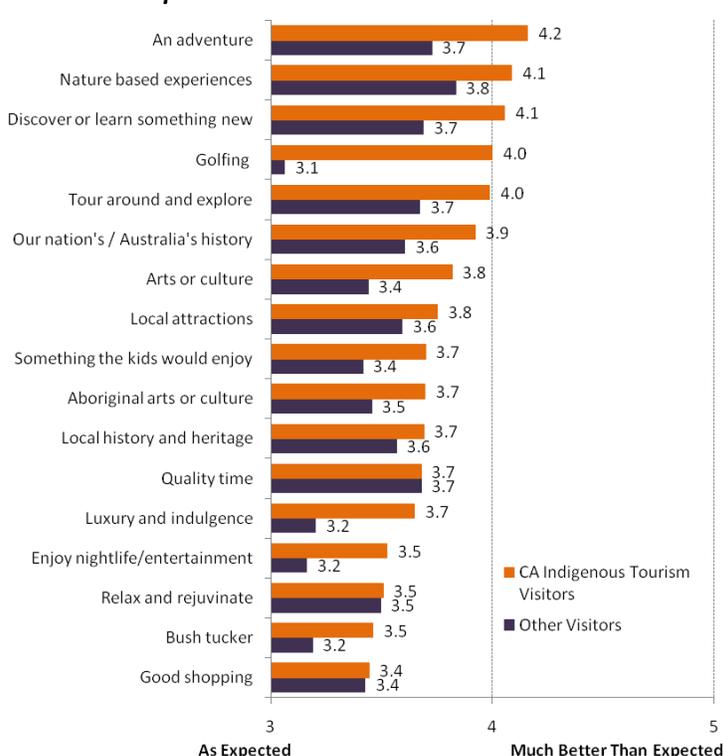


CUSTOM REPORT

Expectations of Central Australia



How Well Expectations Were Met



- Visitors aged over 65 years were least likely to expect the opportunity to experience Aboriginal arts or culture or a bush tucker experience, however these experiences were commonly expected even with this age group (with 64% and 25% of this age group expecting these two indigenous experiences).
- Of visitors who expected to experience Aboriginal arts or culture, nearly two thirds (63%) went to a cultural centre. Subsequently they were more satisfied with their trip than those who didn't visit a cultural centre (with 57% compared to 50% 'very satisfied').
- The expectations of CA Indigenous tourism visitors tended to be better met across the full range of expected experiences in comparison to other visitors.
- Of visitors who had a bush tucker experience, the expectations of CA Indigenous tourism visitors were better met than for other visitors. However, in comparison to other experiences, expectations for bush tucker experiences were not as strongly met.
- The comparatively lower levels of both expectations for bush tucker experiences and how well they are being met is an area for further consideration. Based on the enthusiasm for other interactive indigenous experiences in the visitor comments (see next section) this type of experience should boost visitor satisfaction.

As well as Aboriginal arts and culture experiences, the large majority of CA Indigenous tourism visitors expect nature based experiences, to discover or learn something new and to tour around and explore.

The expectations of CA Indigenous tourism visitors tend to be better met across the broad range of experiences than for other visitors.

The lower level of expectation and how well expectations are met with regards to bush tucker experiences is an area for review.



VISITOR COMMENTS

Comments were made by respondents specific to the Indigenous culture experiences. These comments included:

Visitors commented that they would like more Aboriginal involvement in the hospitality and tourism industries.

Visitors loved the Cultural Centre at Uluru and the Aboriginal survival talk at Alice Springs Desert Park

- *No easily accessible bush tucker and lack of coroboree tours.*
- *All good, would appreciate more aboriginal involvement.*
- *Surprised that aborigines were not running the tours or cultural centre at Uluru.*
- *Disappointed that most people working in hospitality are from overseas countries and not our own Indigenous people.*
- *Nothing made me particularly unhappy. I would like to learn more about Aboriginal culture from aboriginal people but that may have been available. I will look into it next time.*
- *Lack of aboriginal presence in cultural precincts.*
- *The highlight of my holiday was visiting the cultural centre at Uluru. I have been there three times (including this time), and I simply love it. The set up/design of it, the information about Indigenous people, their traditions, life style, their art.*
- *We liked the remoteness and nature. Also enjoyed talking to local aboriginal people and learning about their culture.*
- *Kings Canyon and Kings Creek cattle station. Awesome. Loved visiting Wallace Rockhole and Indigenous experiences there. Dot painting and tour in local Indigenous guide.*
- *I absolutely loved all the information about aboriginal culture and information especially information about sacred sites and dreamings.*
- *I was happy to meet local Indigenous people in Central Australia.*
- *[Happy with] Indigenous tour guides.*
- *[Happy with] The aboriginal paintings [at Uluru].*
- *[Happy with] Seeing and learning more about the aboriginal's way of life, their disadvantages in everyday life and ways of bettering their conditions.*
- *[Happy with] Aboriginal inclusion.*
- *[Happy with] To see Uluru, and cultural centre aborigines.*
- *The Aboriginal tours were very informative and gave a good sense of the history. The walking tour guides were fantastic, as was the signage and information around the various walks.*
- *[Happy with] Aboriginal/Indigenous art (some galleries in Alice).*
- *[Happy with] Having an aboriginal tour guide around Uluru!*
- *[Happy with] Desert Park aboriginal survival talk.*
- *Amazing sights. The Desert Park in Alice was great, and the talk on aboriginal weapons & herbs/cooking was simply outstanding - I learnt more in that hour than I did probably in the rest of the trip.*
- *The Cultural Centre at Uluru is first class.*
- *Awesome! The informative talks were fantastic especially the one on Indigenous survival in the desert. A highlight of our trip for sure.*
- *The "Aboriginals Surviving in The Desert" demonstration was the best presentation by an Aboriginal person about Aboriginal people I have heard.*
- *The guide we had was extremely informative and taught us a lot about Aboriginal culture and the importance of native flora and fauna.*
- *The cultural lecture given by an Aboriginal guide was exceptional. It was supposed to take 40 minutes and went on for an hour as it was so interesting. The Park was much more interesting than I had expected.*