

Big Rivers region Destination Management Plan

ANNUAL REPORT CARD 2023

The Big Rivers region Destination Management Plan (DMP) focuses on development priorities for the sustainable growth of tourism in the region over 10 years.

There are six DMPs that identify key strengths and assets across Northern Territory regions, and provide a comprehensive overview of comparative advantages, current product offerings and visitor profiles.

The six destinations are:

- Alice Springs and MacDonnell Ranges region
- Lasseter region
- Barkly region
- **Big Rivers region**
- East Arnhem Land region
- Greater Darwin region



The Annual Report Card measures the progress of outcomes and includes key performance metrics for the region such as visitor numbers, expenditure, satisfaction rating, online feedback/ reviews and digital data.

The DMPs are reviewed every two years to ensure action plans and the prioritisation of product development opportunities align within the context of the current environment, including demand.

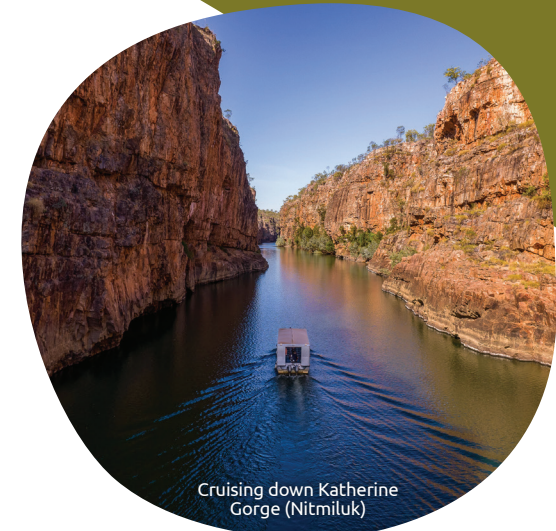
DMPs for the Big Rivers and three Central Australia regions (Alice Springs and MacDonnell Ranges, Barkly and Lasseter) were completed in late 2020, with the East Arnhem Land DMP completed in November 2021. The final DMP, for the Greater Darwin region, was completed in May 2022.

Big Rivers region

The Big Rivers region offers many tourism opportunities, including activities and attractions available through iconic national parks as well as experiences built around unique natural environments, sporting and recreational activities, Aboriginal culture and pioneering history. The tourism industry in the region is focusing its efforts on leveraging its natural, cultural and historical assets to maximise the benefits from current travel trends. Investment in festivals and relevant events also presents an opportunity to build value in the tourism market.



Victoria River Escarpment,
Judbarra / Gregory
National Park



Cruising down Katherine
Gorge (Nitmiluk)

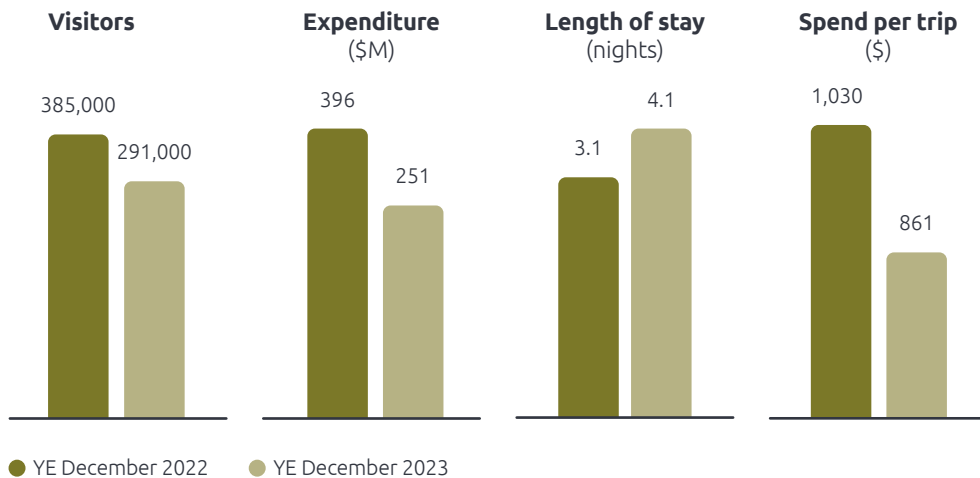
1. Visitation and expenditure

1.1 Big Rivers region key data | Year ending December 2023

With percentage changes compared to YE December 2022 data.



Source: Tourism Research Australia (TRA), International and National Visitor Survey



Source: TRA, International and National Visitor Survey.

2. Visitor satisfaction

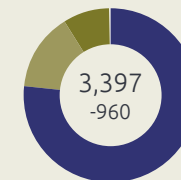
2.1 YE December 2023 with percentage changes compared to previous 12 months

Based on establishments – attractions, hotels, caravan parks and wayside inns (not food and hospitality providers) – ReviewPro data.

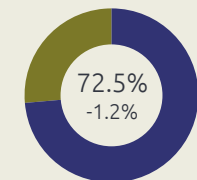
Global review index*

87.5%
+0.9%

Reviews



Semantic analysis



Management response

17.1%
-2.2%

● positive 3,907
● negative 436
● neutral 731
● not rated 6

● positive 10,622
● negative 3,775

Positive reviews:

Food and drinks 1.7%
Location 1.6%
Experience 0.8%
Ambience 1.1%
Bathroom 2.9%

Negative reviews:

Room 7.7%
Cleanliness 3.5%
Facilities 1.1%
Staff 0.5%
Value 1.6%

Global Review Index (GRI) saw a small increase of 0.9%, with both number of reviews and management response experiencing decreases. Overall, semantic analysis showed a small decrease of 1.2%, with mixed results for the top ten categories of mentions identified in visitor reviews. Positive mentions increased for food and drinks, location, experience, ambience and bathroom. On the other hand, negative mentions increased for room, cleanliness, facilities, staff and value.

* The Global Review Index (GRI) is an online reputation index which is calculated by an algorithm that generates a numerical score from 0 to 100 and can be used for tracking historical performance and comparison purposes. The GRI is based on reviews from 140+ online travel agencies in more than 45 different languages. However, the GRI is not an average of all review scores and the algorithm considers several aspects to provide the most accurate picture of online reputation (e.g. it gives a higher weightage to the most recent reviews and a lower weightage to older reviews).

3. Drive Tourism

3.1 Most popular drive routes



3.2 Entry and exit points for drive visitors using their own car



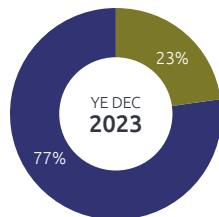
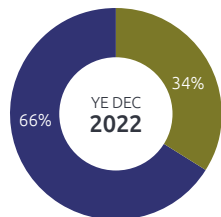
Source:
Tourism NT Drive
Tourism Study 2023

3.3 Visitation performance

Big Rivers	YE Dec 2022	YE Dec 2023	Change
Drive visitors	237,000	240,000	1.3%
Percent of total NT drive market visiting the region	34%	30%	-4pp
Average length of stay (nights)	3.5	3.2	-0.3
Average spend per trip	\$886	\$754	-15%

pp = percentage points

Source:
TRA, International and
National Visitor Survey.



- Drive visitors
- Fly drive visitors

Note: Fly drive and drive visitors may have used other types of transport in addition to aircraft and/or self-drive vehicle (e.g. coach, bus, taxi etc.).

Source:
TRA, International and
National Visitor Survey.



Driving at Seven Emu Station,
Katherine and Surrounds

4. Collective stakeholder progress on regional priorities

Locality and opportunity	Progress and regional achievements
<p>Big Rivers region: enhance visitor experience through alignment of grant funding to regional priorities</p>	<p>Over \$800,000 awarded to 11 tourism related businesses through round 7 of the Visitor Experience Enhancement Program (VEEP).</p> <p>\$159,000 awarded to local government town councils through round 2 of the Tourism Town Asset program to prioritise upgrades to thoroughfares and central public facilities towards creating 'welcoming public spaces' for visitors.</p> <p>Over \$500,000 collectively awarded to regional and remote wayside inns, caravan and roadhouse operators across the region to support infrastructure improvements. Continued support for the drive tourism market through infrastructure projects including the installation of a potable water fill point and long vehicle visitor parking in Katherine.</p> <p>\$14,000 awarded to fund new family friendly evening experiences through round 2 of the Tourism Evening Experiences Development Support program.</p>
<p>Big Rivers region: increase destination awareness and promote regional identity</p>	<p>Promotion of regional identity through Big Rivers' content marketing to increase interest in product and experiences in the region.</p>
<p>Big Rivers region: increase quantity and improved quality of Aboriginal tourism products</p>	<p>Business development support for Aboriginal-owned tourism businesses and organisations to undertake feasibility studies and business planning with over \$150,000 awarded as part of the Aboriginal Tourism Grant and Aboriginal Tourism Development Support Grant Programs.</p>
<p>Katherine: establish quality accommodation offerings</p>	<p>A targeted feasibility study was undertaken for a short stay accommodation development in Katherine. Note: this has been completed and is under consideration.</p>

4. Collective stakeholder progress on regional priorities > cont.

Katherine: enhanced accessibility of tourism experiences

Projects undertaken to improve accessibility and inclusive travel including improvements to the Katherine Visitor Centre and increased capacity of the outback shows at Katherine Outback Experience.

Katherine: enhance visitor experience

Promotion of three successful events through Activate Katherine including Live in the Dry, the Food Van Collective and Sunday Sessions at the Jatti Pool in Nitmiluk National Park in collaboration with Nitmiluk Tours.

Delivered the first street art event in Katherine through Activate Katherine in collaboration with Katherine Regional Arts to provide tourists and visitors with a creative and innovative experience.

Mataranka: implement Elsey National Park master plan developments

Support for visitor planning and infrastructure improvements at Elsey National Park including the installation of small cell technology for local telecommunications coverage and upgrades to the Mataranka thermal pool weir.

Pine Creek: enhance visitor experience

Support for nature based tourism initiatives including the installation of birdwatching interpretative signage structures at Pine Creek and the Pine Creek Geotrail.

5. Future focus

- Deliver a refreshed Destination Management Plan.
- Support the development of swimming opportunities at existing and new locations across the region's thermal springs and National Parks.
- Identify the potential for the development of wellness tourism in the region and leverage the growing interest in adventure experiences such as hiking and mountain biking.
- Encourage greater overnight stays through further development of night time experiences and community events such as the K-town Street Art event.
- Encourage a diverse range of quality accommodation offerings including new rooms and room upgrades in line with market expectations.
- Advocate for telecommunications improvements to support business growth and enhanced visitor experience.
- Support Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security to deliver projects that enhance visitor experience and create strong foundations for business growth.
- Continue to address perception barriers of low season travel through adaptive marketing strategies.
- Joint promotional efforts to incentivise eco-conscious travellers, share destination messaging and highlight the difference of a holiday in the region.

For further information please contact Tourism NT's Industry Development team on tourism.development@nt.gov.au or **08 8999 3859**

Read more about Destination Management Plans here:

[tourismnt.com.au/
research-strategies/
destination-management-plans](https://tourismnt.com.au/research-strategies/destination-management-plans)



Djilpin Arts Cultural Tour,
Katherine and Surrounds