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CRUISE SHIP VISITORS TO DARWIN

Summary

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CRUISE SHIP VISITORS TO DARWIN

INTRODUCTION

Australia's cruise industry has experienced strong rates of growth over the past decade. In 2013–14, the number of cruise ship visits increased 13.4%.

The Northern Territory (NT) benefits significantly from the cruise sector. In 2013–14, the sector contributed approximately $54 million directly to the NT economy.

Tourism Research Australia (TRA)—in partnership with Tourism NT—contracted Colmar Brunton to survey visiting cruise ship passengers and crew to better understand their on-shore experiences and satisfaction with Darwin.

This summary reports on key findings from the research, including:

- visitor spend in Darwin
- satisfaction with Darwin (both overall and specific aspects)
- participation in self-guided activities and organised tours
- sources used for planning a day in Darwin
- likelihood of returning to Darwin and/or recommending Darwin as a destination to family and friends.

KEY MESSAGES

- Nearly all passengers surveyed spent money while in Darwin. Average expenditure per passenger was $94.
- Shopping and food and drink were the items most often purchased by passengers while in Darwin.
- Average spend per passenger was much higher for pre-paid organised tours than for other purchases.
- There was a high rate of satisfaction with nearly all aspects of Darwin and the overall visitor experience.
- On average, passengers participated in around five self-guided activities in Darwin. Walking around/general sightseeing and shopping were the most common activities.
- Nearly one-third of passengers went on an organised tour. The majority were first-time visitors to Darwin.
- For many passengers, travel agents played an important part in the cruise booking process.
- The rates of likely return to and recommendation of Darwin as a travel destination were high and an indicator of Darwin's appeal to cruise passengers.

RESEARCH APPROACH

The research was conducted through face-to-face interviews with 974 cruise ship passengers and 43 crew from eight ships[1]. The ships had docked at Darwin between 2 March and 26 April 2015 across different times of the week (including weekdays and weekends). The cruise ships selected covered a good mix of visitor types, cruise companies, and ship sizes.

Table 1 profiles the demographic characteristics of respondents interviewed. Most respondents travelled in a party of two (80%), and the majority were aged 65 years or more (58%). Respondents were more likely to be domestic (58%) than international visitors (42%) and there was an even spread between first-time and previous visitors to Darwin.

This summary focuses on results for cruise passengers only. For self-guided activities, results have been compared with those from a previous study conducted in 2009*.

The full report from which this summary has been prepared is available on request from tourism.research@tra.gov.au

TABLE 1: PROFILE OF CRUISE VISITORS TO DARWIN

HOME RESIDENCE (%)			
United Kingdom	22	NSW/ACT	25
New Zealand	6	Queensland	13
United States	6	Vic/Tas	10
Canada	3	Western Australia	6
Other international	5	SA/NT	4
Total international	**42**	**Total Australia**	**58**
GENDER (%)		**DARWIN VISITATION (%)**	
Male	50	First-time visitor	52
Female	50	Previously visited	48
AGE (%)		**PARTY SIZE (%)**	
15 to 34 years	3	1 person	5
35 to 54 years	10	2 people	80
55 to 64 years	29	3 people or more	11
65 years or more	58	**Total passengers**	**96**
		Crew	**4**

1 Arcadia (2 March), Queen Mary 2 (3 March), L'Austral (4 March), Celebrity Solstice (5 March), Seabourn Odyssey (6 March), Radiance of the Seas (6 March), Diamond Princess (5 April) and Rhapsody of the Seas (26 April).

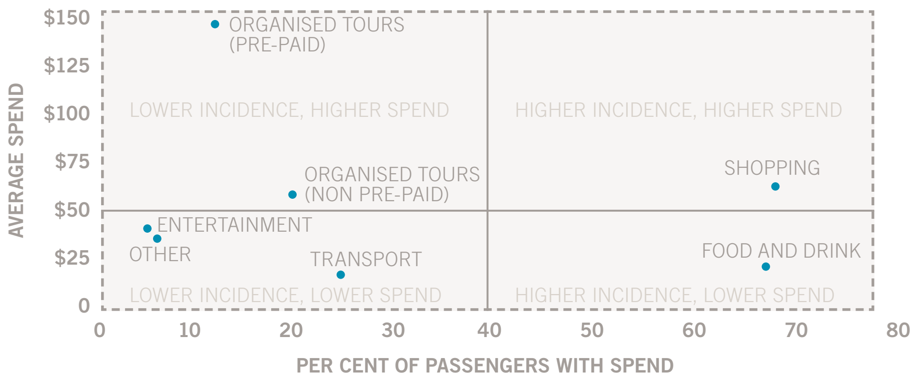
*Broader comparisons with the 2009 study are not possible due to differences in the questions asked and shifts in the profile of cruise ship visits/passengers to Darwin.

VISITOR SPEND IN DARWIN

Nearly all passengers (98%) spent some money while in Darwin—average expenditure per passenger was $94.

Shopping (70%) and food and drink (69%) were the items most commonly purchased by passengers. The average spend for these purchases was $62 and $22 respectively. The highest average spend was for pre-paid organised tour purchases ($143). However, only 12% of surveyed passengers pre-paid for a tour, while 20% purchased tours on that day. On average, these passengers spent $58 on their tour purchases (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: VISITOR EXPENDITURE



Overall, passengers who went on an organised tour had higher total average spend than those who did not take a tour ($117 compared with $83). First-time visitors to Darwin ($106) also spent more on average than repeat visitors ($81). The average spend of domestic and international visitors was similar ($96 and $90 respectively).

Average spend was also similar for those visiting Darwin on a weekend ($100) or a weekday ($94). However, pre-paid organised tours were a much larger contributor to weekend spend, while shopping had higher spend on weekdays.

SATISFACTION WITH DARWIN

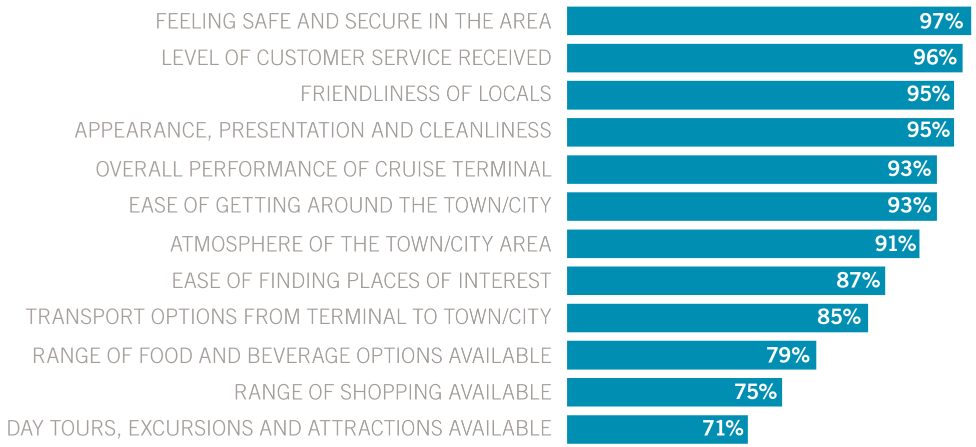
There was a high rate of satisfaction with nearly all aspects of Darwin and the overall visitor experience.

Overall satisfaction with Darwin was high, with more than 9 in 10 passengers (94%) reporting they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'.

Led by 'safety and security' (97%), 'the level of customer service received' (96%) and 'friendliness of locals' (95%), passengers rated their satisfaction with nearly all aspects of Darwin highly. The 'availability of day tours and attractions' (71%), 'range of shopping' (75%) and 'range of food and beverage options' (79%) were the only aspects of Darwin where less than eight in ten passengers were satisfied (Figure 2).

Consistent with the high level of satisfaction, two-thirds (66%) of all passengers could not suggest any improvements to the Darwin experience.

FIGURE 2: SATISFACTION WITH DARWIN



GETTING AROUND DARWIN AND THE CRUISE TERMINAL FACILITIES

Passengers were impressed by the cruise terminal facility and satisfied with the options to get into and around town.

Nearly half the passengers (48%) used the (paid) shuttle bus to get from the cruise terminal to town and 25% walked. Overall, 93% of passengers were satisfied with the ease of getting around Darwin, while 85% were happy with the transport options available to get into town (Figure 2).

The cruise terminal facilities also created a positive first impression of Darwin. Nearly all passengers (93%) were satisfied with the overall performance of the terminal (Figure 2). In particular, passengers were satisfied with the terminal's staff and volunteers (98%) and cleanliness (98%).

While 71% of passengers were satisfied with the range of shopping and food available at the terminal, 12% of passengers cited more café/dining options as a potential improvement to the cruise facility, and 11% would like to see free Wi-Fi available. It should be noted, however, that the Darwin terminal was designed as a transit facility with the strategic intent of driving cruise visitors into the city and waterfront areas.

SELF-GUIDED ACTIVITIES AND ORGANISED TOUR PARTICIPATION

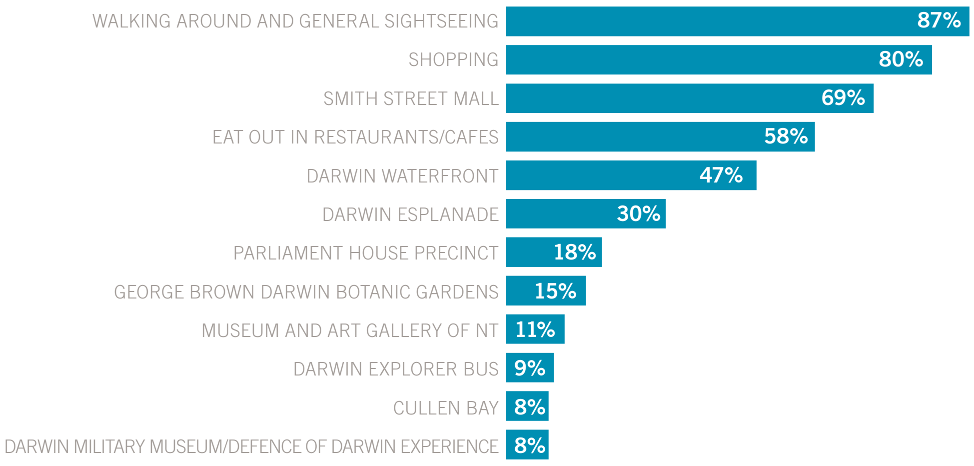
On average, passengers participated in around five self-guided activities in Darwin and nearly one-third went on an organised tour.

The most popular self-guided activities undertaken by passengers were:

- 'Walking around and general sightseeing' (87%, up from 77% in 2009).
- 'Shopping' (80%, up from 77% in 2009).
- Visiting the 'Smith Street Mall' (69%, up from 60% in 2009) (Figure 3).

Around three in five (58%) passengers reported eating out in restaurants/cafes, which was up from 41% in 2009. The average number of self-guided activities undertaken was also higher in 2015 than 2009 (5.1 compared with 3.1). This suggests that efforts to encourage greater dispersal of cruise passengers into town have been successful.

FIGURE 3: PARTICIPATION IN SELF-GUIDED ACTIVITIES

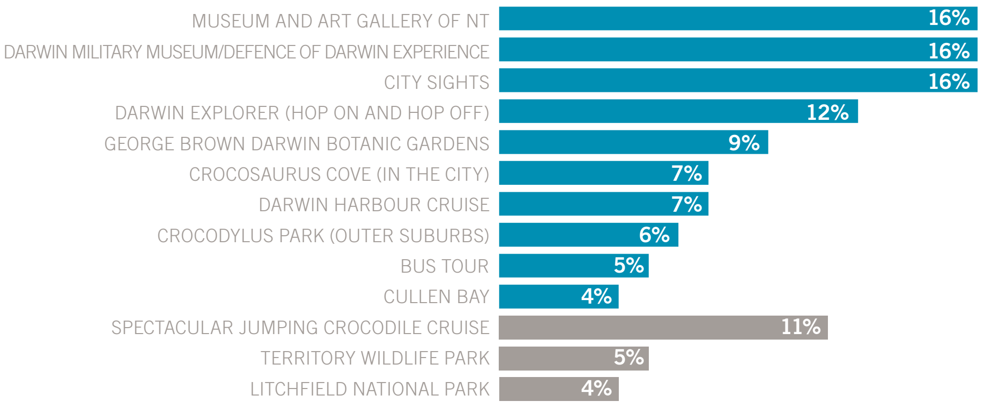


Nearly one third (32%) of all passengers indicated that they had participated in an organised tour while in Darwin. Within Darwin, the 'Museum and Art Gallery of the NT' (16%), the 'Darwin Military Museum/Defence of Darwin Experience' (16%) and 'City Sights' (16%) were the top tour choices. Outside of Darwin 'Jumping Crocodile Cruise' was the most popular tour (11%) (Figure 4).

More than two-thirds of the passengers who went on an organised tour were first time visitors to Darwin (69%). Where first-time visitors did not go on a tour, the most common reasons they gave were 'not enough free time on shore' (20%) and 'prefer to do own thing/sightseeing' (18%). Repeat visitors (more typically domestic passengers) were more likely to cite their previous experience as a reason for not participating in an organised tour (43%).

More than two-thirds (70%) of passengers did some planning to inform their choice of day tours and/or sightseeing activities. On-ship travel agents/tour operators (19%) and concierge (15%) were the most common sources of information used, while 14% of passengers visited the Darwin Visitor Information Centre. On average, passengers who did some planning spent more during their shore visit to Darwin than those who had not planned.

FIGURE 4: PARTICIPATION IN ORGANISED TOURS



CRUISE PASSENGERS PLANNING

For many passengers, travel agents played an important part in the cruise booking process.

Nearly four in ten passengers (39%) booked their cruise in person with a travel agent. A further 20% booked through a travel agent online, while 15% booked by phone with a travel agent. Just over 20% of passengers made their booking directly with the cruise company (14% online and 7% by phone).

Around half of all passengers (49%) viewed the inclusion of Darwin on the cruise itinerary as an important factor in selecting their cruise. First-time visitors to Darwin (56%) and domestic passengers (51%) were more likely than repeat visitors (42%) and international passengers (46%) to regard the inclusion of Darwin on the itinerary as important.

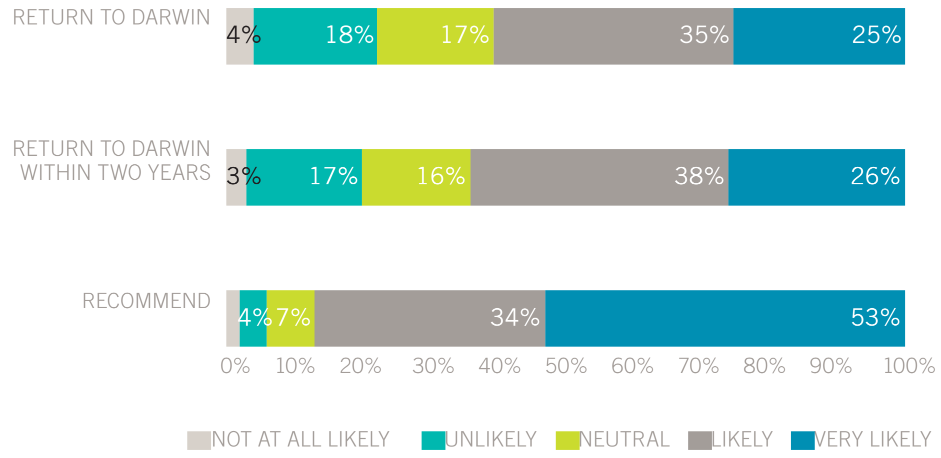
LIKELIHOOD OF RETURNING TO AND/OR RECOMMENDING DARWIN

The rates of likely return to and recommendation for Darwin were high and an indicator of Darwin's appeal to travellers.

More than half of all passengers (60%) said they were very likely or likely to return to Darwin. Encouragingly, of these, nearly two-thirds (64%) stated they were very likely or likely to return to Darwin within two years (Figure 5).

Consistent with the high rates of satisfaction observed, just over half (53%) of all passengers indicated they would be 'very likely' to recommend Darwin as a destination to family and friends. A further 34% said they would be 'likely' to recommend Darwin (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5: LIKELIHOOD OF RETURNING TO AND/OR RECOMMENDING DARWIN



CONCLUSION

Results indicate that cruise ship visitors view Darwin as an enjoyable and attractive destination.

The high rates of satisfaction (94%) and willingness to recommend Darwin to friends and relatives (87%) point to Darwin being a highly attractive port option for cruises operating in the region. This may provide leverage to further increase the inclusion of Darwin on cruise itineraries.

Self-guided activities are popular.

On average, cruise passengers participated in around five self-guided activities in Darwin (up from three in 2009). 'Walking around and general sightseeing' was the most common self-guided activity (87%), followed by 'shopping' (80%) and visiting the 'Smith Street Mall' (69%).

Tours (both pre-paid and purchased on the day) and shopping present the greatest yield growth potential.

On average, passengers spent more on organised tours and shopping than other items. With only one-third currently undertaking paid tours, there is an opportunity to grow visitor yield through increased tour participation. The development of day itineraries (which focus on tours and shopping) could give cruise visitors ideas to make the most out of their Darwin visit.

Planning increased cruise passenger spend while in Darwin.

The more than two-thirds (70%) of passengers who did some planning to inform their choice of day tours and activities in Darwin had higher average spend than those who had not planned. This suggests efforts to encourage a higher rate of planning among cruise visitors could prove beneficial. Targeting an increase in use of the Darwin Visitor Information Centre (at 14% in this study) may also assist.

Travel agents played an important part in the cruise booking process.

A high proportion of visitors booked their cruise through a travel agent, 39% in person, 20% online and 15% by phone. This highlights the valuable role travel agents could play in advocating and pre-selling on-shore activities in Darwin as part of the booking process.