

## RAINFOREST TOURISM QUARTERLY REPORT #1: Year 2 TNQ Region January – March 2008

This quarterly report forms part of a series of reports presented by the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF) and James Cook University (JCU) on rainforest tourism in the Wet Tropics rainforest. The data presented in this report summarise the results from the first quarter of data collection in the Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) region from January to March 2008. Overall, a total of 260 surveys were returned for this quarter from rainforest locations. The results include socio-demographic characteristics, travel behaviour, alternative destinations, motivations and planning, and potential activities. This report marks the first barometer which compares the current quarter with the corresponding quarter for last year. This barometer also introduces a number of new questions related to interpretation.



### 1. INTRODUCTION

MTSRF research Project 4.9.2 *Sustainable Nature-based Tourism: Planning and Management* aims to identify major issues relating to tourist motivations and behaviours for visiting the Wet Tropics and to identify key trends and drivers of Wet Tropics visitor patterns including economic contribution.



### 2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this research was visitor surveys collected by tour operators, tourist attractions, the project research team and at visitor information centres throughout the region. The study locations and sample for this quarter are shown in Table 1.

Data was collected on rainforest visitors' socio-demographic characteristics, travel patterns, motivations, activities, travel expenditure, alternative destinations considered, and satisfaction.

Table 1: Survey locations and sample size

Location	Sample
Northern	39
Cairns-Kuranda	101
Atherton Tablelands	28
Central Coast	5
Southern	87
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>



### 3. LIMITATIONS

During this period, limitations included difficulties encountered by visitor information centres in survey collection. Additionally, the surveys are in English and Chinese, leaving for instance the Japanese tourist market under-represented in this quarter's data.



### 4. FINDINGS

#### *Gender and origin of respondents*

The sample consisted of 54.7% females and 45.3% males. This differed slightly from Qrt 1 2007 where 50.4% of respondents were male and 49.6% were female.

Figure 1 illustrates that survey respondents originated from both Australia (59.3%, 55.4% in 2007) and overseas (40.7%, 44.6% in 2007).

International visitors were mainly from the UK and Ireland (9.3%, 22.1% in 2007) and North America (7.8%, 11.1% in 2007).

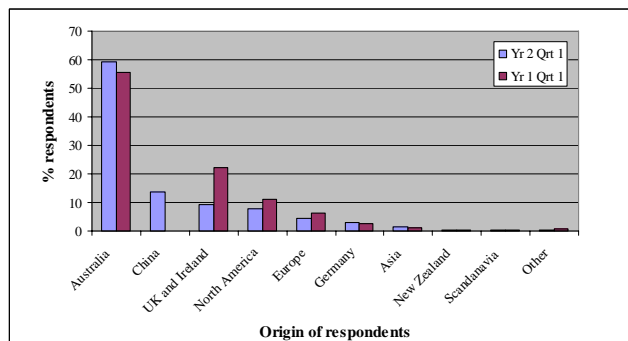


Figure 1: Origin of respondents

### Occupation

The major occupation groups of respondents were:

- Professionals (22.8%, 24.6% in 2007);
- Self-employees (9.7%, 8.5% in 2007);
- Retirees/semi-retirees (9.3%, 24.3% in 2007);
- Students (9.3%, 6.3% in 2007)
- Office staff/clerks (8.5%, 7.7% in 2007) and;
- Managers (6.2%, 3.9% in 2007).

### Age of respondents

As shown in Figure 2, the main age groups of respondents were: 20-29 years (34.2%, 25.1% in 2007), 30-39 years (19.8%, 18.0% in 2007) and 50-59 years (18.3%, 21.2% in 2007).

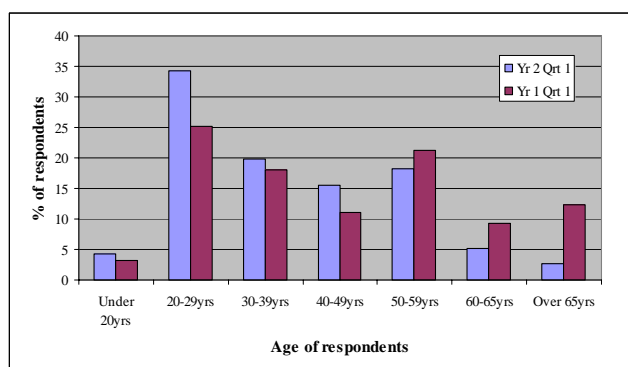


Figure 2: Age of respondents

### Travel Party

The composition of travel parties were:

- Couples (38.7%, 55.6% in 2007);
- With friends (23.0%, 17.6% in 2007);
- Family with children (12.9%, 6.7% in 2007);
- Alone (9.7%, 6.0% in 2007);
- With relatives (8.5%, 6.3% in 2007);
- As part of a tour group (7.3%, 7.4% in 2007) and;
- With a club (only 0.4% in 2007).

### Previous visits and length of stay

56.8% of respondents indicated that this was their first visit to Tropical North Queensland. Those who had visited in the past had visited between one and three times (53.5%).

The overall average length of stay was 10.77 nights, which was a large increase on the Qrt 1 2007 average of 7.10 nights.

### Accommodation and transport

Table 1 illustrates the most popular accommodation types used by respondents.

Table 1: Accommodation used by respondents

	Qrt 1 Yr 2 (%)	Qrt 1 Yr 1 (%)
Hotels/Motels	28.4	34.7
Holiday apartments	9.3	14.8
Resorts	20.4	29.9
Backpacker hostels	5.8	7.0
Friends and relatives	9.8	4.4
Caravan park/cabins	6.2	5.2
Camping	17.3	3.7
B&B	2.3	0.4

Table 2 below illustrates the popularity of the different types of transport used by respondents to travel to and around the region while holidaying.

Table 2: Transport used by respondents

	Qrt 1 Yr 2 (%)	Qrt 1 Yr 1 (%)
Air	31.8	43.8
Rented car	17.6	23.7
Bus/coach	7.8	12.4
Private vehicle	40.8	14.8
Rented campervan	0.8	3.2
Other	0.8	1.1
Cruise boat	0.0	0.4
Rail	0.4	0.7

**Information sources**

The most popular sources of information used by visitors are outlined in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Information sources used by respondents**

	Qrt 1 Yr 2 (%)	Qrt 1 Yr 1 (%)
Friends and family	35.4	35.2
Internet	21.9	24.6
Tourist guide books	21.9	22.9
Travel agents	16.2	18.0
Been before	15.8	20.1
TV documentaries	7.3	6.3
Other	6.9	6.7
Ads print	6.2	9.9
Visitor centres	5.0	3.5
Ads on the TV/radio	3.1	3.2

**Motivations for travel to the region**

The most important motivations (measured on a scale of 1 = not at all important, to 5 = very important) for visiting the region are listed in Table 4.

Overall, the top five motives for Qrt 1 2008 were the same as in Qrt 1 2007. These were:

- Visit the GBR (4.24, 4.46 in 2007);
- Visit the rainforest (4.15, 4.38 in 2007);
- Rest & relax (4.10, 3.90 in 2007) and;
- Experience natural environment (3.90, 4.10 in 2007) and;
- See Australian wildlife (3.84, 3.99 in 2007).

For domestic visitors, resting and relaxing was the key motivator for visiting the region (4.35) followed by visiting the rainforest (4.12), whereas visiting the reef (4.72) and rainforest (4.19) were major drawcards for internationals to the region.

**Table 4: Motivations for travelling to the region**

Motivation	Mean		
	Overall	Dom	Int'l
Visit the GBR	4.24	3.84	4.72
Visit the rainforest	4.15	4.12	4.19
Rest & relax	4.10	4.35	3.76
Experience the natural environment	3.90	3.92	3.89
See Australian wildlife	3.84	3.56	4.18
Walk in the rainforest	3.73	3.85	3.56
Visit a World Heritage area	3.67	3.58	3.80
Climate	3.57	3.67	3.43
Spend time with family	3.56	3.83	3.16
Snorkelling & diving	3.54	3.32	3.82

**Last holiday and alternative desinations**

The most popular destinations by regions given in response to "where did you spend your last holiday?" were:

- Gold Coast (4.6%);
- United States of America (2.7%);
- Brisbane (2.3%);
- Tasmania (2.3%);
- Europe (1.9%) and;
- Thailand (1.9%).

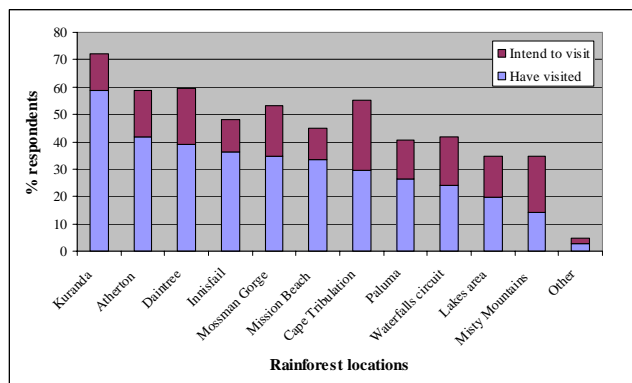
A large number of alternative destinations were given by respondents.

Overall, the most popular alternative destinations considered when planning this trip were:

- New Zealand (9.3%);
- Sydney (8%);
- Darwin (3.9%);
- Fiji (3.9%) and;
- Tasmania (3.6%).

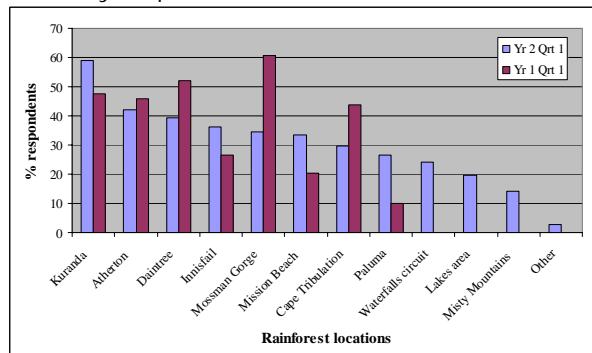
**Rainforest locations visited**

The rainforest locations that respondents had visited or intended to visit were Daintree, Mossman Gorge, Cape Tribulation and Kuranda (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3: Rainforest locations visited and intended to visit, 2008**

Figure 4 compares the rainforest locations visited by respondents in Qrt 1 in 2007 and 2008.



**Figure 4: Rainforest locations visited, 2007 & 2008**

Domestic and international visitor showed relatively similar rainforest location visitation patterns as shown in Table 5. The exceptions were lower numbers of international visitors went to Atherton and Kuranda (14.7%); and higher numbers of international visitors went to Cape Tribulation (18.3%) and Mossman Gorge (25.1%).

**Table 5: Comparing rainforest locations visited and visitor origin**

Location	Dom (%)	Int'l (%)
Daintree	45.8	30.5
Mossman Gorge	40.5	26.7
Kuranda	66.7	48.6
Atherton	54.2	24.8
Cape Tribulation	33.3	24.8
Mission Beach	42.5	19.0
Innisfail	46.4	21.0
Paluma	41.8	3.8
Lakes area	24.8	12.4
Waterfalls circuit	30.7	15.2
Misty Mountains	20.3	5.7

**Time spent at rainforest locations**

Visitors tended to spend:

- Less than ½ day at Mossman Gorge and the Lakes area;
- Half to 1 day in Kuranda and Misty Mountains;
- Greater than 1 day at Atherton, Cape Tribulation, Daintree, Innisfail, Mission Beach, Paluma and the Waterfalls circuit.

**Importance of Visiting Rainforests**

Visiting the rainforest was considered fairly important to respondents with a mean of 3.90, (where 1 = not at all important, and 5 = very important). This was a slightly lower mean value than Qrt 1 2007 where the mean was 4.25.

Similarly, visiting national parks while on holidays was also fairly important (mean=3.66), a very comparable mean from Qrt 1 2007 of 3.69.

**World Heritage rainforest knowledge**

Overall, 55.2% of respondents were aware that these rainforests were designated World Heritage Areas before they visited the region compared with 62.1% of respondents in 2007.

66.2% of domestic visitors and 39.25% of international visitors were aware of the World Heritage designation.

When asked if they would still visit the region if the rainforests were not designated World Heritage Area, the majority of respondents said 'yes' (94.6% compared with 87.6% of respondents in Qrt 1 2007), with only 4.1% of respondents who said 'no', and a further 1.4% who said they were 'unsure'.

**Rainforest experience**

Respondents were asked if they had visited other rainforests elsewhere in Australia and overseas.

Only 26.6% of respondents stated that they had visited other rainforests. These rainforests were largely in Costa Rica (4.8%), Malaysia and Borneo (3.9%), New Zealand (2%), the Amazon (2%), Puerto Rica (1.9%), the Philippines (1%), PNG (1%), St Lucia (1%), Nepal (1%), Panama (1%), Thailand (1%), Columbia (1%) and Grenada (1%).

**Environmental and cultural interpretation**

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement (on a scale where 1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree) with selected statements relating to the interpretation at rainforest sites (see Table 6).

**Table 6: Interpretation at rainforest sites**

The environmental information...	Mean
Was interesting and clear	3.84
Influenced my site behaviour	3.47
Helped me to understand the ecological processes of this site	3.68
Influenced my attitude towards environmental conservation	3.54
The cultural information...	Mean
Was interesting and clear	3.64
Influenced my site behaviour	3.37
Helped me to understand the cultural significance of this site	3.54
Influenced my attitude towards cultural respect	3.46

Generally, visitors agreed that the interpretation was interesting and clear, but that it did not heavily influence their site behaviour or attitudes.

### *Rainforest activities*

Viewing rainforest scenery was the most popular rainforest activity to visitors, as indicated in Table 7.

**Table 5: Interest in rainforest activities**

Rainforest activities	%		
	Overall	Dom	Int'l
Viewing scenery	70.9	69.3	74.0
Viewing wildlife	57.0	52.9	64.9
Walking	70.3	75.2	62.6
Film/Photography	54.2	50.3	60.6
Swimming	48.4	44.2	50.7
Guided tour	28.3	20.9	41.3
Visiting information centres	28.1	21.6	39.4
General relaxation	51.0	57.5	40.9
Hiking	28.2	28.8	26.7
Bird watching	23.1	22.2	25.0
Socialisation	35.3	41.2	24.4
Reading site interpretation	22.1	26.9	18.8
4WD	17.8	19.6	14.0
Camping	22.8	28.1	12.8
Bike riding	7.5	9.2	4.7
Rafting	6.6	11.5	2.9

### *Overall satisfaction*

Respondents were largely satisfied (mean = 7.89) with their rainforest visits during their holiday in the region (on a scale where 1 = very unsatisfactory, and 10 = very satisfactory). This mean value was slightly less than Qrt 1 2007 with an overall satisfaction of 8.59.

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