

**RAINFOREST TOURISM  
QUARTERLY REPORT # 1: RAINFOREST SURVEY  
TNQ Region  
January – March 2009**

This quarterly report forms part of a series of reports presented by the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTRSF) and James Cook University (JCU) on rainforest tourism in the Wet Tropics rainforests. The data presented in this report summarise the results from the **first quarter** (Q1) of data collection in the Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) region from **January to March 2009**. Overall, a total of **174 surveys** were returned for this quarter from rainforest locations. Results include socio-demographic characteristics, travel behaviour, alternative destinations, motivations and planning, rainforest activities, and environmental and cultural interpretation. This report compares the current quarter (January to March 2009) with the corresponding quarters in 2008 and 2007.



**1. INTRODUCTION**

MTRSF 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 and the project research team. Surveys were also collected 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, Q1 2009.**

Location	Sample
Northern	147
Cairns / Kuranda	18
Atherton Tablelands	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>



**3. LIMITATIONS**

During this period, limitations included the overall drop in visitor numbers to the region, and weather constraints making travel difficult to some on-site surveying rainforest sites. Additionally, surveys were only conducted in English, leaving for instance the Japanese and Chinese visitor market under-represented in this quarter's data.



**4. FINDINGS**

*Gender and origin of respondents*

The sample consisted of 52.9% females and 47.1% males. This differed slightly from Q1 2008, where 54.7% of respondents were female and 45.3% were male.

Figure 1 illustrates that survey respondents originated from both Australia (48.0%) (59.3% in 2008; 55.4% in 2007) and overseas (52.0%) (40.7% in 2008; 44.6% in 2007).

International visitors were mainly from the UK and Ireland (22.0%) (9.3% in 2008; 22.1% in 2007) and North America (13.9%) (7.8% in 2008; 11.1% in 2007).

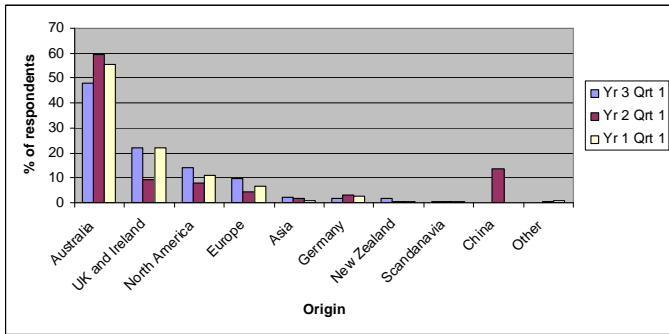


Figure 1: Origin of respondents, Q1 2007-2009.

**Occupation**

The major occupation groups of respondents were:

- **Professionals** (32.8%) (22.8% in 2008; 24.6% in 2007);
- **Self-employees** (11.5%) (9.7% in 2008; 8.5% in 2007);
- **Managers** (10.9%) (6.2% in 2008; 3.9% in 2007);
- **Office staff/clerks** (8.0%) (8.5% in 2008; 7.7% in 2007);
- **Retirees/semi-retirees** (6.9%) (9.3% in 2008; 24.3% in 2007) and;
- **Students** (4.0%) (9.3% in 2008; 6.3% in 2007).

**Age of Respondents**

As shown in Figure 2, the main age groups of respondents were: 20-29 years (25.4%) (34.2% in 2008; 25.1% in 2007), 30-39 years (20.8%) (19.8% in 2008; 18.0% in 2007) and 50-59 years (19.7%) (18.3% in 2008; 21.2% in 2007).

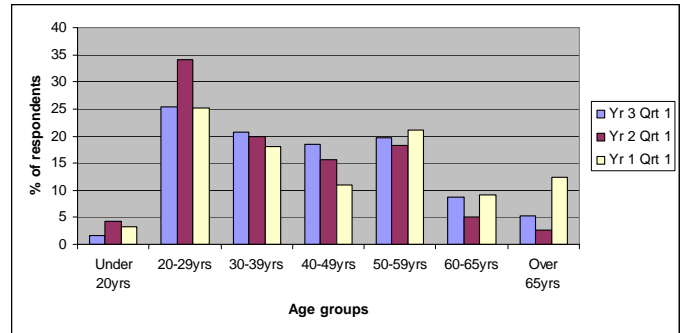


Figure 2: Age of respondents, Q1 2007-2009.

**Travel Party**

The composition of travel parties were:

- **Couples** (56.9%) (38.7% in 2008; 55.6% in 2007);
- **With friends** (16.7%) (23.0% in 2008; 17.6% in 2007);
- **Family with children** (8.6%) (12.9% in 2008; 6.7% in 2007);
- **Alone** (4.0%) (9.7% in 2008; 6.0% in 2007);
- **With relatives** (8.6%) (8.5% in 2008; 6.3% in 2007);
- **As part of a tour group** (5.2%) (7.3% in 2008; 7.4% in 2007) and;
- **With a club** (only 0.4% in 2007).

**Accommodation and Transport**

Table 2 illustrates the most popular accommodation types used by respondents.

Table 2: Accommodation used by respondents, Q1 2007-2009 (%).

Type	Q1 2009	Q1 2008	Q1 2007
Hotels / motels	23.4	28.4	34.7
Apartments	25.7	9.3	14.8
Resorts	27.5	20.4	29.9
Backpackers'	5.8	5.8	7.0
Friends / family	2.3	9.8	4.4
Caravan park	4.1	6.2	5.2
Camping	10.5	17.3	3.7
Bed 'n' breakfast	0.6	2.3	0.4

Table 3 illustrates the popularity of the different types of transport used by respondents to travel to and around the region while holidaying.

**Table 3: Mode of transport used by respondents, Q1 2007-2009 (%).**

Type	Q1 2009	Q1 2008	Q1 2007
Air	43.0	31.8	43.8
Rented car	32.0	17.6	23.7
Bus / coach	7.0	7.8	12.4
Private vehicle	9.9	40.8	14.8
Rented van	7.0	0.8	3.2
Other	1.2	0.8	1.1
Cruise boat	0.0	0.0	0.4
Rail	0.0	0.4	0.7

### Previous visits and length of stay

Just over seventy percent of respondents indicated that this was their first visit to Tropical North Queensland (56.8% in 2008). Those who had visited in the past had visited between one and three times (94.8% compared with 53.5% in 2008).

The overall average length of stay was 8.49 nights, which was a large decrease on Q1 2008 (average of 10.77 nights) and a large increase on Q1 2007 (average of 7.10 nights).

### Information sources

The most popular sources of information used by visitors are outlined in Table 4 below.

**Table 4: Information sources used by respondents, Q1 2007-2009 (%).**

Type	Q1 2009	Q1 2008	Q1 2007
Friends / family	47.1	35.4	35.2
Internet / WWW	43.9	21.9	24.6
Guide books	38.5	21.9	22.9
Travel agents	13.3	16.2	18.0
Have been before	16.1	15.8	20.1
TV documentaries	14.4	7.3	6.3
Ads in print	4.6	6.9	6.7
Visitor centres	9.2	6.2	9.9
Ads on television / radio	8.0	5.0	3.5

### Motivations to 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 5.

Overall, the top five motives for Q1 2009 were the same as those in Q1 2008 and 2007:

- **To visit the GBR** (4.36) (4.24 in 2008; 4.46 in 2007);
- **To visit the rainforests** (4.34) (4.15 in 2008; 4.38 in 2007);
- **To see Australian wildlife** (4.18) (3.84 in 2008; 3.99 in 2007);
- **Rest and relaxation** (4.13) (4.10 in 2008; 3.90 in 2007);
- **Experience the natural environment** (3.90) (3.90 in 2008; 4.10 in 2007).

For domestic visitors, rest and relaxation was the key motivator for visiting the region (4.31) (4.35 in 2008) followed by visiting the rainforests (4.30) (4.12 in 2008), whereas visiting the reef (4.36) (4.72 in 2008) and rainforests (4.37) (4.19 in 2008) were major draw cards for international visitors to the region.

**Table 5: Respondents' motivations for traveling to the region, Q1 2009.**

Motivation	Mean (Scale 1 to 5)		
	Overall	Domest.	Intern.
To visit the GBR	4.36	4.15	4.56
To visit the rainforests	4.34	4.30	4.37
Rest and relaxation	4.13	4.31	3.97
Experience the natural environment	3.90	4.02	3.78
See Australian wildlife	4.18	3.94	4.40
Walk in the rainforests	3.04	3.00	3.08
Visit a World Heritage Area	3.79	3.93	3.67
Climate	3.49	3.45	3.52
To spend time with family	3.57	3.67	3.48
Snorkelling and diving	3.80	3.91	3.70

**Previous holiday and alternative destinations**

The most popular destinations by regions given in response to “Where did you spend your last holiday?” were:

- **United States of America** (6.9%) (2.7% in 2008);
- **Thailand** (1.7%) (1.9% in 2008);
- **Tasmania** (1.1%) (2.3% in 2008);
- **Gold Coast** (1.1%) (4.6% in 2008) and;
- **Europe** (1.1%) (1.9% in 2008).

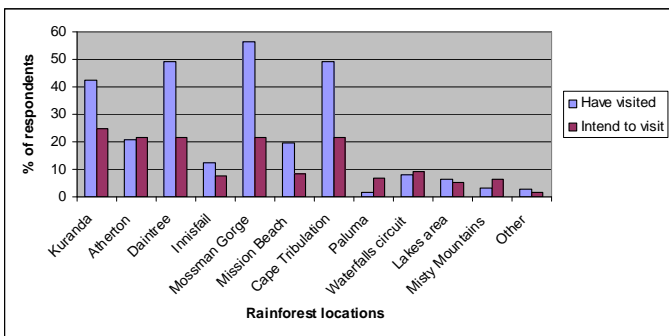
A large number of alternative destinations were given by respondents.

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

- **Sydney** (6.3%) (8.0% in 2008);
- **Fiji** (4.6%) (3.9% in 2008);
- **New Zealand** (1.7%) (9.3% in 2008);
- **Darwin** (1.1%) (3.9% in 2008) and;
- **Tasmania** (1.1%) (3.6% in 2008).

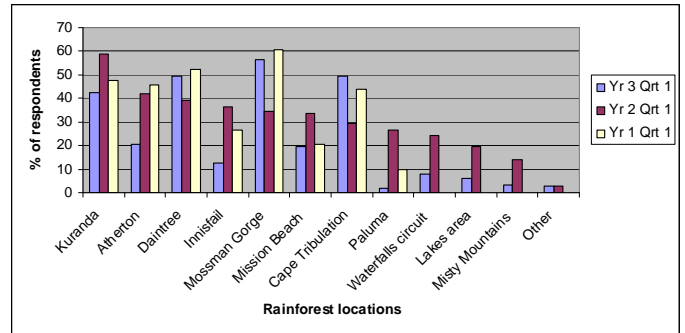
**Rainforest locations visited**

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



**Figure 3: Rainforest locations visited and intended to visit, Q1 2009.**

Figure 4 compares the rainforest locations visited by respondents in Q1, 2007-2009.



**Figure 4: Rainforest locations visited, Q1 2007-2009.**

Domestic and international visitors showed relatively similar rainforest location visitation patterns as shown in Table 6. The exceptions were lower numbers of international visitors to Daintree, Mossman Gorge and Atherton; and higher numbers of international visitors to Kuranda and Mossman Gorge.

**Table 6: Comparison of rainforest locations visited and visitors' origins, Q1 2009 (%).**

Location	Domest.	Intern.
Daintree	57.8	42.2
Mossman Gorge	62.7	51.1
Kuranda	36.1	47.8
Atherton	22.9	18.9
Cape Tribulation	31.3	25.6
Mission Beach	21.7	17.8
Innisfail	14.5	11.1
Paluma	1.2	2.2
Lakes area	10.8	2.2
Waterfalls circuit	14.5	2.2
Misty Mountains	4.8	2.2

**Time spent at rainforest locations**

Visitors tended to spend:

- Less than half a day at Kuranda, Atherton Tablelands, Cape Tribulation, Daintree, Mossman Gorge, the Innisfail region, Mission Beach region, Paluma and the Lakes area;
- Half to one day travelling around the Waterfall circuit; and
- More than one day travelling around other rainforest locations.

### *The importance of visiting rainforests*

Visiting the rainforest was considered fairly important to respondents with a mean of 4.09, (where 1 = *not at all important*, and 5 = *very important*). This was a higher mean value than Q1 2008 where the mean was 3.90, and a slightly lower mean when compared with Q1 2007 where the mean was 4.25.

Similarly, visiting national parks while on holidays was also fairly important (mean = 3.95), a very comparable mean from Q1 2008 of 3.66 and Q1 2007 of 3.69.

### *World Heritage rainforest knowledge*

Overall, 56.5% of respondents were aware that these rainforests were designated World Heritage Areas before they visited the region compared with 55.2% of respondents in Q1 2008 and 62.1% of respondents in Q1 2007. Just over seventy percent (66.2% in 2008) of domestic visitors and 43.2% (39.25% in 2008) of international visitors were aware of the World Heritage designation.

When asked if they would still visit the region if the rainforests were not a designated World Heritage Area, the majority of respondents responded 'Yes' (98.8%) (94.6% in 2008; 87.6% in 2007), with only 1.2% of respondents responding 'No'.

### *Rainforest experience*

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

Only 26.9% of respondents stated that they had visited other rainforests (26.6% in 2008). These rainforests were largely in Costa Rica (3.4%) (4.8% in 2008), Malaysia and Borneo (0.6%) (3.9% in 2008), New Zealand (2.3%) (2.0% in 2008), the Amazon (1.1%) (2.0% in 2008), Puerto Rica (1.1%) (1.9% in 2008), Papua New Guinea (1.1%) (1.0% in 2008) and Thailand (0.6%) (1.0% in 2008).

### *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 (Table 7).

Table 7: Interpretation of rainforest sites, Q1 2009.

The environmental information...	Mean
Was interesting and clear	4.45
Influenced my behaviour at the site	4.26
Helped me to understand the ecological processes of this site	4.19
Influenced my attitude towards environmental conservation	4.09
The cultural information...	Mean
Was interesting and clear	4.07
Influenced my behaviour at the site	4.04
Helped me to understand the cultural significance of this site	3.97
Influenced my attitude towards cultural respect	3.93

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

### *Rainforest activities*

Viewing rainforest scenery was the most popular rainforest activity to visitors, as indicated in Table 8.

Table 8: Respondents' interest in rainforest activities, Q1 2009.

Activity	Percentage		
	Overall	Domest.	Intern.
Viewing scenery	67.6	57.8	76.7
Viewing wildlife	70.5	62.7	77.8
Walking	88.4	86.7	90.0
Filming / photography	75.7	73.5	77.8
Swimming	39.9	38.6	41.1
Guided tour	38.2	30.1	45.6
Visiting information centres	43.4	36.1	50.0
General rest and relaxation	57.2	56.6	57.8
Hiking	43.9	44.6	43.3
Bird watching	32.9	30.1	35.6
Socialising	41.0	31.3	50.0
Reading site interpretation materials	27.7	21.7	33.3
Four-wheel driving	8.1	8.4	7.8
Camping	8.1	1.2	14.4
Bike riding	17.9	18.9	16.9
Rafting	24.9	31.3	18.9

***Overall visitor satisfaction***

Respondents were largely satisfied (mean = 8.52) 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 more than Q1 2008 (7.89) and slightly less than Q1 2007 (8.59).

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