



## REEF TOURISM QUARTERLY REPORT # 6 Quarter 2, Year 2 | Southern GBR April – June 2008

This quarterly report forms part of a series on reef tourism in the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) produced by James Cook University (JCU) and funded by the Australian Government's Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTRSF), which is administered in North Queensland by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre. The aims and methodology of this research are presented in the introduction below. The data presented in this report summarise the results obtained during the second quarter of the project's second year (N = 34); the results from the same quarter in the first year of data collection (N = 555); and the overall results for the period between November 2006 and June 2008 (N = 3950). The results include socio-demographic characteristics, travel behaviour, alternative destinations, motivations and planning, and reef experience.

**Note:** These data are the first collected from this region. To illustrate trends, these data are compared with those collected from the entire GBR during the second quarter in Year 1, and with the entire GBR dataset averaged across all quarters. These data are provided in the text in brackets after the figures for this quarter (Quarter 2, Year 2).



### 1. INTRODUCTION



The research described here falls under the MTRSF research program to identify **sustainable use and management of marine resources of the Great Barrier Reef** and specifically the **analysis of tourism use and impact on the Great Barrier Reef for managing sustainable tourism**. This program will identify annual visitor usage patterns of the GBR to enable the identification of key trends and drivers of visitor patterns. Results are presented quarterly.



### 2. METHODOLOGY



The principle methodology for this research is visitor surveys distributed through participating operators. Crew from these marine tourism operators distribute and collect the surveys at four locations across

the Great Barrier Reef (Port Douglas/ Cairns, Townsville, the Whitsundays, and the Capricorn Coast). Results are available in an aggregate form as well as regionally, such as the report presented here. Currently, ten operators are involved in this research. A total of 34 surveys were conducted in the second quarter of Year 2.

Data are collected on reef visitors' socio-demographic characteristics, and travel patterns, motivations, activities, alternative destinations considered and levels of satisfaction (including expectations and best and worst experiences).



### 3. LIMITATIONS



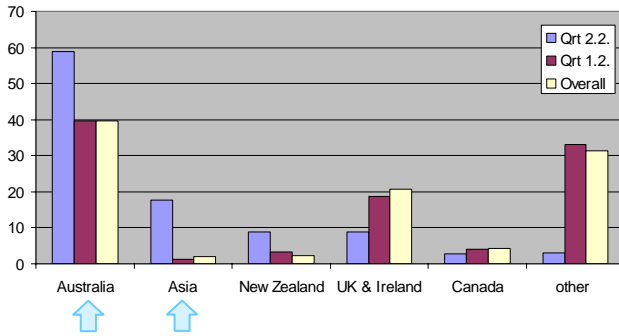
Data from the Asian market have yet to be collected. Sampling bias by crews must also be considered.

## 4. FINDINGS

### Origin of Respondents

This quarter's sample consisted of slightly fewer men, 45.5% (46.8%;<sup>1</sup> 42.6%;<sup>2</sup>) and women, 54.5% (53.2%; 57.4%). Nearly two thirds of the respondents, 65.0% (39.6%; 39.3%), were from Australia, of which 28.0% were from Queensland (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Origin of respondents.



### Employment

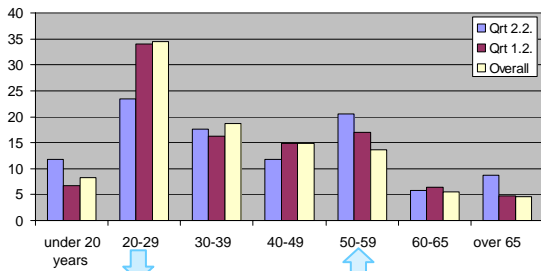
In terms of **employment**, the most common responses were (as a percentage of the total):

	Quarter 2, Year 2	Quarter 2, Year 1	Overall
Professionals	29.4%	23.0%	26.3%
Self-employed	17.6%	5.8%	8.4%
Students	11.8%	19.2%	17.0%
Tradesmen	8.8%	5.3%	4.0%
Retired	8.8%	9.4%	8.4%

### Age of Respondents

Respondents in this area of the GBR fell predominantly into the 20-29 year age bracket (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Age of respondents.



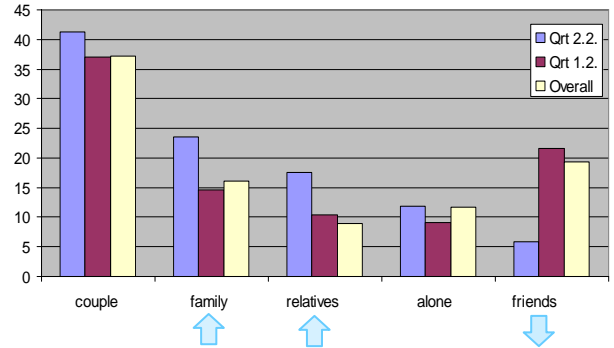
<sup>1</sup> Quarter 2, Year 1, GBR sample.

<sup>2</sup> Overall GBR sample.

### Travel Party

The majority of respondents were travelling as couples or with their family (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Respondents' travel party (%).



### Previous Visits

For 52.9% (76.2%; 75.4 %) of respondents, this was their first visit to the region. The average length of stay was 2-7 (2-5; 2-7) nights.

### Accommodation and Transport

The majority of respondents stayed in hotels or resorts (Figure 4) and flew to the region (Figure 5).

Figure 4: Respondents' choice of accommodation (%).

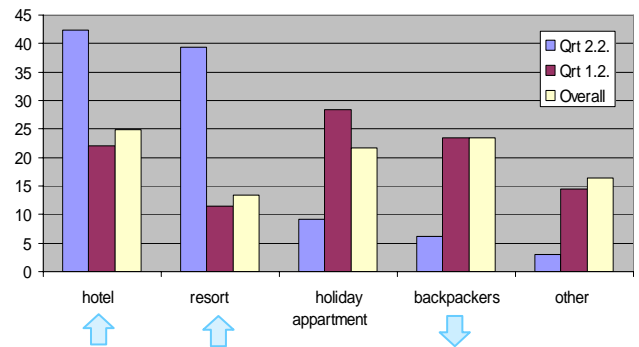
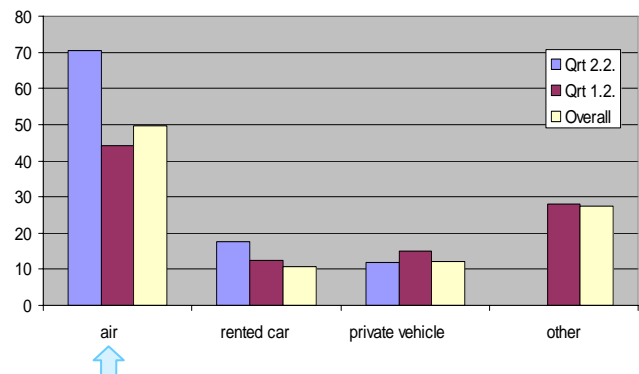


Figure 5: Respondents' choice of transport (%).



### Last Holiday Location

The most popular single destinations given in response to "Where did you spend your last holiday?" are provided in the table below.

OVERALL RESPONDENTS (N=34)	
New Zealand	11.8%
Mexico	8.8%
Hawaii	5.9%
Thailand	5.9%
INTERNATIONAL RESPONDENTS (N=14)	
New Zealand	28.6%
Mexico	21.4%
Hawaii	14.3%
Thailand	14.3%
DOMESTIC RESPONDENTS (N=20)	
Italy	10.0%
Magnetic Island	10.0%
Victoria	10.0%
Port Stephens	10.0%

A thematic/regional analysis of the same results (last holiday location) shows the following trends:

OVERALL RESPONDENTS (N=34)	
Australia, excluding Queensland	24.2%
Europe	21.2%
NZ, Pacific and South-east Asia	21.2%
Queensland	15.2%
North America (inc. Caribbean)	9.1%
Africa and Latin America	9.1%
INTERNATIONAL RESPONDENTS (N=14)	
NZ, Pacific and South-east Asia	46.2%
Africa and Latin America	23.0%
Europe	15.4%
North America (inc. Caribbean)	15.4%
DOMESTIC RESPONDENTS (N=20)	
Australia, excluding Queensland	40.0%
Queensland	25.0%
Europe	25.0%
NZ, Pacific and South-east Asia	5.0%
North America (inc. Caribbean)	5.0%

### Alternative Destinations Considered

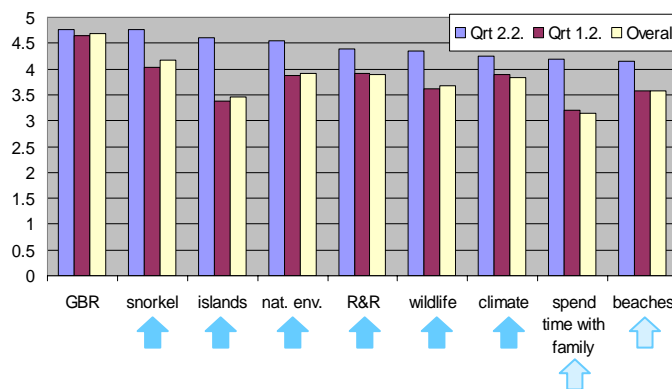
The most popular alternative destinations considered when planning this trip were:

Destination	
Heron Island	12.5%
Fiji	12.5%
Cairns	10.0%
Sydney	7.5%

### Motivations

The most important motivations (measured on a scale of 1 = not at all important, to 5 = very important) for visiting the region include visiting the reef, rest and relaxation and snorkelling (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Respondents' motivations to visit the region (mean).



### Information Sources

The sources of information used by respondents when planning their trip to the region are shown in the table below.

	Quarter 2, Year 2	Quarter 2, Year 1	Overall
Internet	↑ 38.1%	19.6%	23.6%
Friends and Relatives, or other	↓ 29.4%	42.0%	41.7%
Guidebook	20.6%	29.5%	29.7%
Previous trip	↑ 20.6%	13.2%	11.6%

### Previous Visits to the Reef

For 45.5% (72.9%; 71.2%) respondents this was their first visit to the reef.

### Choice of Tour Operator

Visitors' most common reasons for choosing their reef tour operator were:

	Quarter 2, Year 2	Quarter 2, Year 1	Overall
Availability/proximity	↑ 32%	11.4%	9.7%
Destination	↑ 28.0%	3.6%	7.0%
Recommended by friend / relative, or other	20.0%	17.6%	19.8%
Ecocertification	↑ 16.0%	0.0%	0.5%

### Diving Profile

When asked if they planned to dive the reef, 54.5% (34.7%; 39.6%) of respondents said yes. 25.0% (39.6%; 32.5%) of these respondents had no previous diving experience, 8.6% (19.7%; 24.3%) had one to four dives, 16.6%(11.4%; 12.0%) had five to 10 dives and 49.8% (31.8%; 29.2%) had more than 10 dives.

### Visits to Other Reefs

Over 57.6% (44.6%; 46.2%) of respondents said they had visited other coral reefs before coming to the Great Barrier Reef. The most commonly cited alternative reef destinations were the South Pacific 20.6% (7.7%; 10.5%), the Caribbean 17.6% (1.8%; 9.0%), and South-east Asia 17.6% (14.8%; 15.2%).

### Activities Undertaken

The most common activities undertaken during the trip were:

	Quarter 2, Year 2	Quarter 2, Year 1	Overall
Snorkelling	↑ 87.9%	77.0%	71.6%
Glass-bottom boat	↑ 75.8%	42.1%	41.2%
Swimming	↑ 69.7%	47.8%	45.1%
View marine mammals	↑ 60.6%	47.5%	38.2%
Diving	↑ 53.2%	37.2%	42.5%

### Satisfaction Levels and Recommendations

Satisfaction ratings (measured on a scale of 1 to 10) were generally high, with scores of 9 and 10 accounting for 78.8% (51.5%; 52.3%) of the all responses. The mean satisfaction score was 9.15 (8.29; 8.34).

87.5% (85.1%; 85.0%) of respondents felt that they got value for money, and 94.1% (85.9%; 89.9%) said that they would recommend the trip to others.

The first four factors that **influenced satisfaction** (either positively or negatively) include:

	Quarter 1, Year 2	Quarter 1, Year 1	Overall
National environment	↑ 38.2%	26.9%	22.3%
Staff / service / professionalism	↓ 35.2%	51.6%	42.9%
Weather / sea state (sea sick)	↓ 17.6%	27.8%	23.1%
Diving / snorkelling	14.7%	15.4%	12.8%

Tourists' **best experiences** included:

	Quarter 2, Year 2	Quarter 2, Year 1	Overall
Marine life	↑ 58.8%	31.3%	27.7%
Diving / snorkelling	↓ 35.3%	46.1%	40.9%
Staff / service / professionalism	↓ 0.0%	11.0%	9.7%

Tourists' **worst experiences** included:

	Quarter 2, Year 2	Quarter 2, Year 1	Overall
Weather / sea state (sea sick)	↓ 20.6%	37.9%	33.5%
None	↓ 20.6%	30.3%	26.8%

When asked if the trip met their expectations, visitors recorded the following answers:

	Reef		Trip	
Not at all	0.0%	1.3%; 1.3%	0.0%	0.9%; 0.9%
Not very much	0.0%	4.3%; 4.3%	0.0%	2.4%; 2.4%
Somewhat	15.2%	32.3%; 32.3%	18.8%	34.8%; 34.8%
Very much	84.8%	62.1%; 62.1%	81.2%	61.8%; 61.8%

**For further information about this project contact James Cook University:**

**Project Leader**  
**Professor Bruce Prideaux**  
[Bruce.Prideaux@jcu.edu.au](mailto:Bruce.Prideaux@jcu.edu.au)  
**Phone: (07) 4042 1039**

**Project Manager**  
**Dr Alexandra Coghlan**  
[Alexandra.Coghlan@jcu.edu.au](mailto:Alexandra.Coghlan@jcu.edu.au)  
**Phone: (07) 4042 1763**

**For future updates, visit**  
[www.rrrc.org.au/publications](http://www.rrrc.org.au/publications)