

RAINFOREST TOURISM QUARTERLY REPORT # 3: RAINFOREST SURVEY TNQ Region May – July 2007

This quarterly report forms part of a series of reports presented by the Australian Government's Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTRSF), represented in North Queensland by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, and James Cook University (JCU) on rainforest tourism in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA). The data presented in this report summarise the results from the third quarter of data collection in the Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) region from May to July 2007. Overall, a total of 430 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.



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 principle methodology for this research was visitor surveys distributed by staff through tour operators, tourist attractions, and visitor information centres throughout the region. The study locations and sample for this quarter are shown in Table 1.

Data is 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
Daintree	354
Atherton Tablelands	50
Kuranda	26
Innisfail	-
Mission Beach	-
Tully	-
Total	430



3. LIMITATIONS

During this period, limitations included difficulties encountered by visitor information centres in survey collection. Additionally, since the surveys were only in English, the Japanese and Chinese tourist markets were under-represented in this quarter's data.



4. FINDINGS

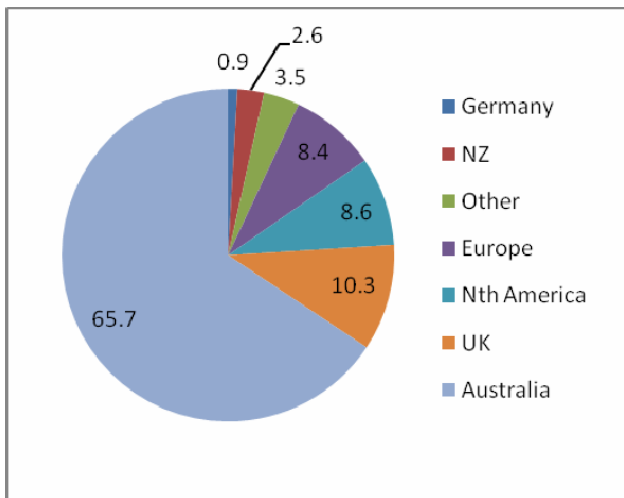
The sample consisted of 53.0% females and 47.0% males.

Origin of Respondents

Survey respondents originated from both within Australia (66.0%) and overseas (34.0%), as shown in Figure 1.

Australian visitors were mainly from Victoria (32.7%), New South Wales (30.2%), and Queensland (16.4%). International visitors were mainly from the UK (29.9%), North America (25.2%), Europe excl. Germany (24.5%).

Figure 1: Origin of Respondents (N = 367) (percentage of total respondents).



Occupation

The major occupation groups of respondents were:

- Professionals (29.8%); and
- Retired/Semi-retired (17.2%).

Other occupations were self-employed (7.8%), management (7.3%), and office/clerical (7.3%).

Domestic visitors' main occupations were:

- Professionals (28.5%);
- Retired/ Semi-retired (22.1%);
- Self-employed (7.8%); and
- Management (7.1%).

International visitors' main occupations were:

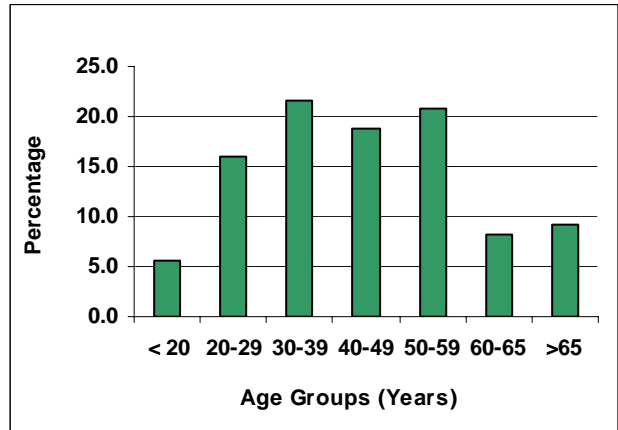
- Professionals (32.0%);
- Students (18.4%); and
- Self-employed (11.6%).

Age of Respondents

As shown in Figure 2, the main age groups of respondents were: 30-39 years (21.5%), 50-59 years (20.8%), 60-65 years (18.3%)

and 40-49 years (18.7%). Domestic visitors were mainly aged 50-59 years (22.4%), 30-39 years (21.4%), or 40-49 years (18.5%). International visitors were mainly aged 20-29 years (24.1%), 30-39 years (22.1%), 40-49 years (18.6%), and 50-59 years (17.2%).

Figure 2: Age of Respondents (percentage).



Travel Party

The composition of travel parties were:

- Couples (50.2%);
- Family with children (17.7%); or
- With friends (14.0%).

The main travel party for both domestic (56.2%) and international (39.5%) visitors was "as a couple".

Previous Visits and Length of Stay

63.3% 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 (73.9%).

The overall average length of stay was 8.74 nights (minimum = 0, maximum = 90). International visitors averaged 7.22 nights, while domestic visitors averaged 9.57 nights in the region.

Accommodation

The most popular accommodation types were resorts (25.0%), hotel/motels (23.8%), holiday apartments (20.5%), and caravan park/cabins (11.3%).

Domestic visitors tended to stay at resorts (30.0%), holiday apartments/units (22.0%), hotel/motels (19.9%), or caravan park/cabins (14.4%).

International visitors tended to stay at hotels/motels (31.0%), backpackers hostels (20.0%), holiday apartment/units (17.7%), or resorts (15.2%).

Transport

Overall, air transport (44.1%) dominated as the method of travel to the region. Other major forms of transport were rental cars (29.1%) and private vehicles (16.9%).

Domestic visitors' main forms of transport were air (47.8%), rental cars (24.5%), or private vehicles (22.7%). International visitors' mainly used rental cars (38.4%), air (36.3%), or bus/coach (12.3%).

Information

The most popular sources of information used by visitors were friends and family (24.4%), internet (17.7%), tourist guide books (16.2%), been before (12.8%), travel agent (7.6%), and TV documentary (7.6%).

Domestic visitors' main information sources were friends/family (25.8%), internet (16.7%), been before (16.5%), and tourist guide books (13.4%). International visitors mainly used friends/family (23.2%), tourist guide books (23.2%), the internet (20.2%), and travel agents (14.6%).

Motivations

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 2 below. International visitors placed a slightly higher motive to visit the reef (M = 4.60) as opposed to domestic visitors (M = 4.02).

Table 2: Respondents' motivations to visit.

Motive	Mean		
	Overall	Dom.	Internat.
Visit the rainforest	4.35	4.36	4.34
Visit the reef	4.23	4.02	4.60
Experience the natural environment	4.18	4.21	4.14
Rest and relax	4.10	4.30	3.72
Climate	3.93	4.04	3.73
See Australian wildlife	3.85	3.66	4.21
Visit beaches	3.63	3.60	3.70

Last Holiday Location

The most popular single destinations given in response to "where did you spend your last holiday?" are provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Respondents' previous holiday location (N = 367).

Regions	Overall %	Domestic %	Intern. %
Australia	45.6	64.6	13.1
Europe	17.4	7.9	29.7
Asia-Pacific	10.1	8.9	8.3
New Zealand	8.0	9.6	4.8
Nth America	7.8	1.4	22.8
UK	5.9	4.6	12.4
Other	2.6	2.5	5.5

Alternative Destinations Considered

A large number of alternative destinations were given by respondents.

Overall, the most popular (single) alternative destinations considered when planning this trip are shown in Table 4.

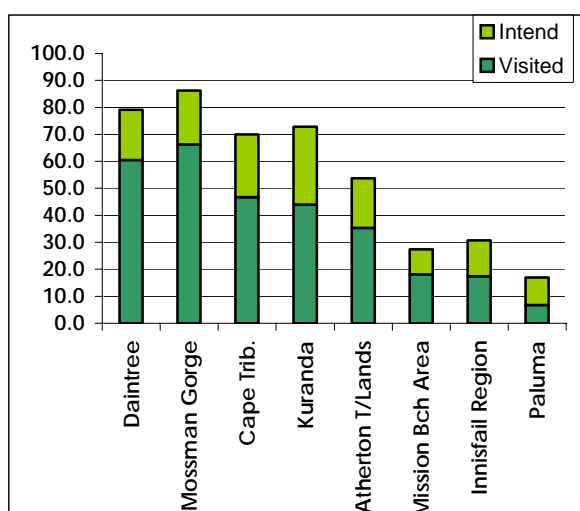
Table 4: Alternative destinations considered by survey respondents.

Destination	Percentage
AUSTRALIA	
Tasmania	4.7
Darwin	3.4
Sydney	3.4
Alice Springs	3.1
ASIA-PACIFIC	
Fiji	2.8
NEW ZEALAND	7.6

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.



Domestic and international visitor showed relatively similar rainforest location visitation patterns as shown in Table 5.

The exceptions were lower numbers of international visitors to the Atherton Tablelands (8.4%) and Kuranda (14.7%); and higher numbers of international visitors to Cape Tribulation (18.3%) and Mossman Gorge (25.1%).

Table 5: Rainforest locations as chosen by domestic and international visitors.

Location	Percentage	
	Domestic	International
Daintree	21.4	24.9
Mossman Gorge	18.4	25.1
Kuranda	16.3	14.7
Atherton Tablelands	13.7	8.4
Cape Tribulation	13.3	18.3
Mission Beach Region	7.1	3.4
Innisfail Region	6.9	4.5
Paluma	3.0	0.8

Time Spent at Rainforest Locations

Visitors tended to spend:

- Less than half a day at Mossman Gorge and Paluma;
- Half to one day at Cape Tribulation, Kuranda, Atherton Tablelands and the Innisfail region; and
- Greater than one day at Mission Beach / Tully / Cardwell.

Importance of Visiting Rainforests

Visiting the rainforest was considered important to respondents with a mean of 4.28, (where 1 = not at all important, and 5 = very important). Similarly, visiting National Parks while on holidays was also important (M = 3.85).

World Heritage Area Rainforest Knowledge

Overall, 69.0% of respondents were aware that these rainforests were designated World Heritage Areas before they visited the region.

82.0% of domestic visitors and 45.5% 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 WHA, the majority of respondents said 'yes' (90.3%). A further 8.3% said they were 'unsure'.

Rainforest Experience

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

In Australia, 47.4% had visited other rainforests, with Tasmania being most cited by respondents (16.6%).

Rainforests in overseas locations were visited by 34.4% of respondents, mostly in South America (13.9%) and New Zealand (11.5%).

Satisfaction Levels and Agreement

Respondents were highly satisfied (M = 8.47) with their rainforest visits during their holiday in the region (on a scale where 1 = very unsatisfactory, and 10 = very satisfactory).

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement (on a scale where 1 = strongly disagree, and 4 = strongly agree) with selected statements relating to their rainforest experience (see Table 6).

Table 6: Levels of agreement with statements.

Statement	Mean
The level of interpretation was adequate.	3.18
I came to see unique wildlife.	2.98
I came to experience rainforest scenery.	3.45

Generally, visitors agreed that the interpretation during their rainforest experience was adequate, and that they had indeed come to see unique wildlife and experience rainforest scenery.

Rainforest Potential Activities

Short rainforest walks were the most popular potential activity of interest to visitors when rated on a scale of 1 = not at all interested, and 4 = very interested (see Table 7).

Table 7: Potential activities.

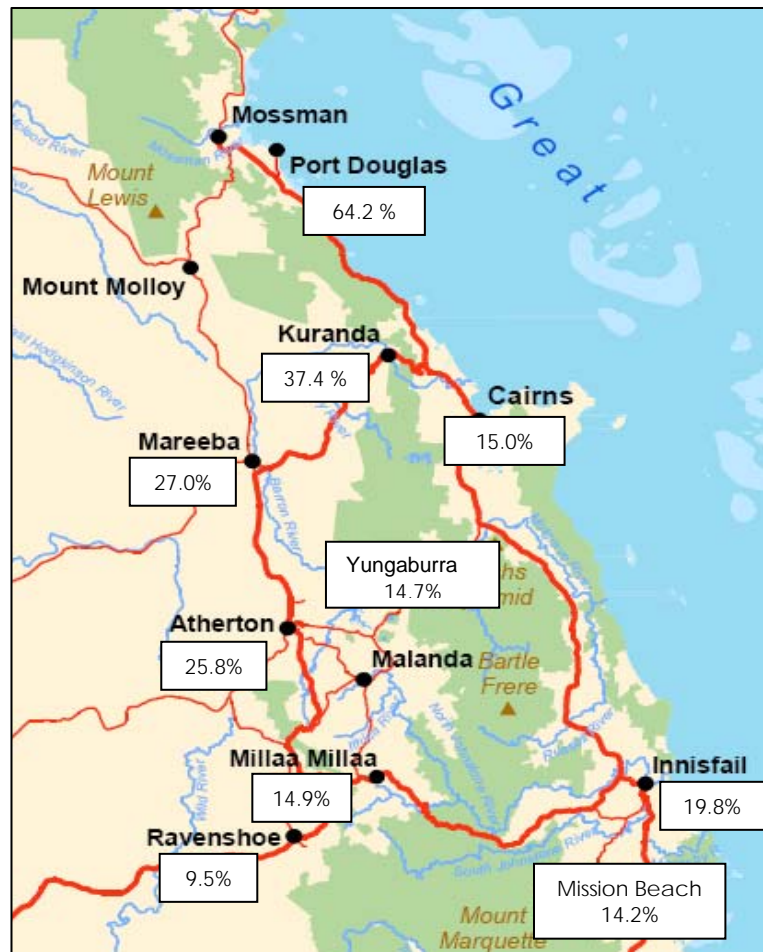
Activities	Mean
Short rainforest walk, e.g. ½ hour to 1 hour	3.57
Self-drive along a rainforest drive/road	3.02
Up to 1 day walk/hike – with tour guide	2.38
Up to 1 day walk/hike – unguided	2.29
Overnight walk/hike – with tour guide	1.85
Overnight walk/hike – unguided	1.67

Locations Driven Through in TNQ Region

Visitors who used private or rented vehicles during their trip were asked to indicate which towns they had driven through during their holiday in TNQ.

As shown in Figure 4, the Cairns–Port Douglas, Kuranda and the Cairns–Mareeba–Atherton–Millaa Millaa–Innisfail loops are the most popular routes taken by these drive visitors.

Figure 4: Locations driven through.



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