

## RAINFOREST TOURISM QUARTERLY REPORT # 1: RAINFOREST SURVEY TNQ Region November 2006 – January 2007

This quarterly report forms part of a series of reports presented by the Australian Government's Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF), 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 first quarter of data collection in the Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) region from November 2006 to January 2007. Overall, a total of 367 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

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 principle methodology for this research was visitor surveys distributed by staff through tour operators, tourist attractions, and visitor information centres throughout the region. Surveys were also distributed by the MTSRF research team at various WTWHA locations. The study locations and sample for this quarter are shown in Table 1. The surveys were distributed by six tour operators/attractions, three visitor information centres, and at two rainforest locations by MTSRF team interviewers.

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	199
Atherton Tablelands	80
Kuranda	20
Innisfail	38
Mission Beach	6
Tully	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>367</b>



### 3. LIMITATIONS

During this period, limitations included very poor weather, flooding and low visitor numbers at both on-site locations and within tour groups. Additionally, since the surveys were only in English, the Japanese and Chinese tourist markets were under-represented in this quarter's data.



### 4. FINDINGS

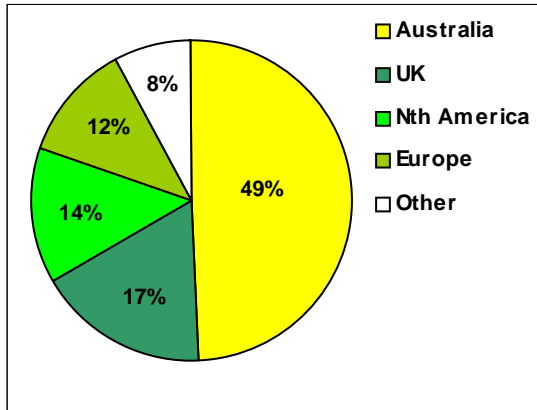
The sample consisted of 55.0% females and 45.0% males.

### Origin of Respondents

Survey respondents originated from both overseas (51.0%) and within Australia (49.0%), as shown in Figure 1.

Australian visitors were mainly from Queensland (32.2%), New South Wales (30.6%), and Victoria (25.6%). International visitors were mainly from the UK (34.2%), North America (27.3%) and Europe (23.0%).

Figure 1: Origin of Respondents (N = 367)



### Occupation

Overall, the most common types of occupation respondents indicated were:

- Professionals (28.9%);
- Retired/Semi-retired (14.4%); and
- Students (10.6%).

Domestic visitors' main occupations were:

- Professionals (26.1%);
- Retired/ Semi-retired (16.5%);
- Self-employed (10.8%); and
- Students (9.7%).

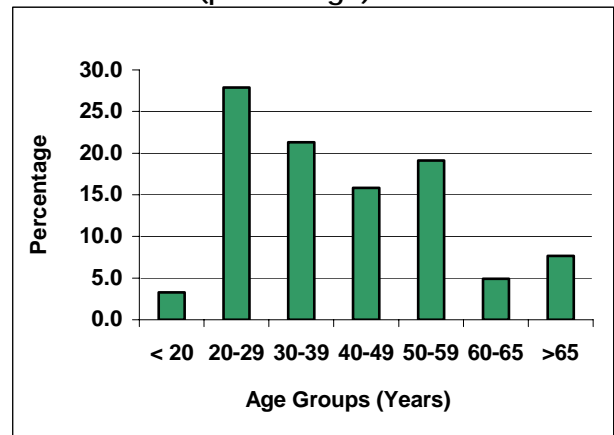
International visitors' main occupations were:

- Professionals (31.0%);
- Retired/ Semi-retired (12.3%);
- Students (11.8%); and
- Management (10.7%).

### Age of Respondents

As shown in Figure 2, respondents were primarily 20-29 years old (27.9%), 30-39 years old (21.3%) and 50-59 years old (19.1%).

Figure 2: Age of Respondents (percentage).



### Travel Party

The majority of respondents in the overall sample were travelling:

- As a couple (50.1%);
- With friends (15.8%); or
- Family with children (15.0%).

The main travel party for both domestic (54.5%) and international (45.5%) visitors was "as a couple".

### Previous Visits and Length of Stay

65.1% of respondents said this was their first visit to Tropical North Queensland. Those who had visited in the past had visited between one and three times (65.2%).

The overall average length of stay was 8.55 nights (minimum = 0, maximum = 120). International visitors averaged 7.18 nights, while domestic visitors averaged 10 nights in the region.

### Accommodation and Transport

The most popular accommodation types were hotel/motel (32.2%), resort (23.3%), holiday apartment (12.8%) and backpacker hostel (10.8%).

Overall, air transport (44.1%) dominated as the way of accessing the region. Other major forms of transport were rented car (20.5%) and private vehicle (19.2%).

### Information

The most popular sources of information used by visitors were friends and family (39.0%), tourist guide books (33.4%), and the Internet (32.2%).

### 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.

**Table 2: Motivations.**

Motive	Mean
Visit the Great Barrier Reef	4.41
Visit the rainforest	4.33
Experience the natural environment	4.08
See Australian wildlife	3.98
Rest and relax	3.93
Snorkelling and diving	3.61

### 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: Last Holiday Location (N = 367).**

Domestic	n =	International	n =
New Zealand	12	North America	13
Melbourne	8	Italy	12
Gold Coast	7	France	11
Perth	6	Thailand	9

### Alternative Destinations Considered

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

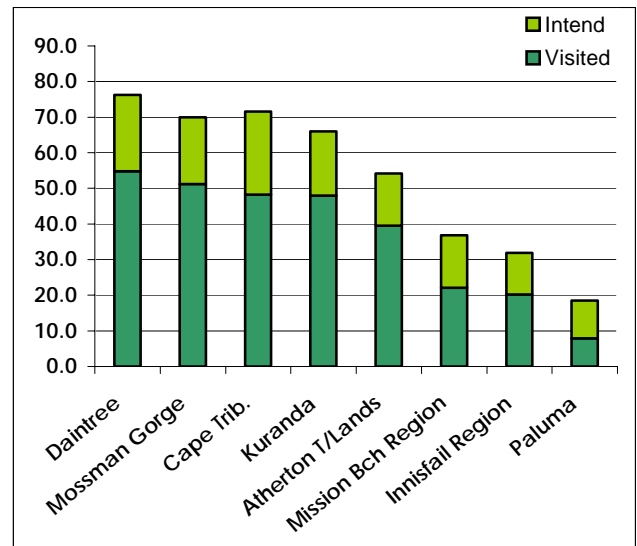
**Table 4: Alternative Destinations.**

Destination	Percentage
AUSTRALIA	
Sydney	8.4
Melbourne	6.5
Whitsundays / Airlie Beach	5.2
Alice Springs / Uluru	4.9
Darwin	4.9
Perth	4.6
ASIA-PACIFIC	
Fiji	6.3
Thailand	4.1
Bali	2.5
NEW ZEALAND	12.0
USA	10.9

### Rainforest Locations Visited

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

**Figure 3: Rainforest Locations Visited.**



### Time Spent at Rainforest Locations

Visitors tended to spend:

- Less than ½ day at Mossman Gorge, Innisfail / Wooroonooran / Palmerston;
- Half to 1 day at Daintree, Cape Tribulation, Kuranda, Atherton Tablelands and Paluma; and
- Greater than 1 day at Mission Beach / Tully / Cardwell.

### Importance of Visiting Rainforests

Visiting the rainforest was considered important to respondents with a mean of 4.20, (where 1 = not at all important, and 5 = very important).

Similarly, visiting National Parks while on holidays was also important (M = 3.72).

### WHA Rainforest Knowledge

Overall, 61.6% of respondents were aware that these rainforests were designated World Heritage Areas before they visited the region.

When asked if they would still visit the region if the rainforests were not designated WHA, the majority of respondents said ‘yes’ (84.6%). A further 13.2% said they were ‘unsure’.

### Rainforest Experience

Respondents were asked if they had visited other rainforests elsewhere in Australia and overseas. In Australia, 43.6% had visited other rainforests, with Tasmania being the most cited by respondents (11.3%). In overseas locations (43.4%), South American rainforests were the most cited (12.4%), which included sites such as Costa Rica and the Amazon.

### Satisfaction Levels and Agreement

Respondents were highly satisfied (M = 8.49) 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 5).

**Table 5: Level of Agreement with Statement.**

Statement	Mean
The level of interpretation was adequate.	3.16
I came to see unique wildlife.	3.07
I came to experience rainforest scenery.	3.34

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 6).

**Table 6: Potential Activities.**

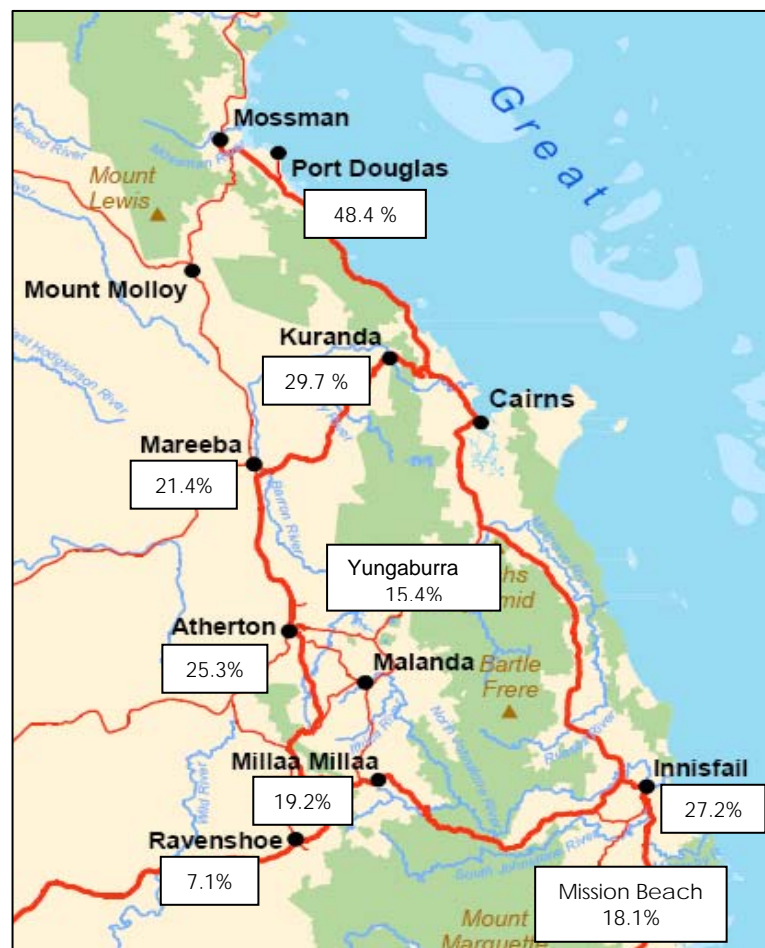
Activities	Mean
Short rainforest walk, e.g. ½ hour to 1 hour	3.42
Self-drive along a rainforest drive/road	2.92
Up to 1 day walk/hike – with tour guide	2.35
Up to 1 day walk/hike – unguided	2.23
Overnight walk/hike – with tour guide	1.88
Overnight walk/hike – unguided	1.69

### Locations Driven Through in TNO 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 TNO.

As shown in Figure 4, the Cairns–Port Douglas 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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