



North Coast News & Views Issue 183

Welcome to what promises to be an exciting year for the North Coast visitor economy! Encouraging feedback suggests we are expecting a successful summer season, and there's much to anticipate in the months ahead. The return of domestic travel to traditional patterns facilitates easier planning, while international visitation is on track to surpass pre-COVID levels, with visits at 79% and spending at 99% of the pre-COVID benchmarks for October 23, fuelling positive momentum. Your unwavering resilience has been pivotal in establishing our region as a highly sought-after destination.

In the wake of recent flooding events, our heartfelt thoughts go out to those affected. For any operators requiring assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out. Let's maintain our collaborative spirit, navigate challenges together, and ensure the North Coast not only recovers but thrives in the upcoming year.

Michael Thurston, General Manager

Deloitte Tourism Outlook Report - North Coast Impacts

Deloitte have released their [Tourism Outlook Report](#) highlighting the trends that they feel will influence our sector through to 2026. Below is a summary of key trends and impacts for the North Coast.

- **Resilient Domestic Tourism:** The region can expect continued strong domestic tourism. Australians, having rediscovered local destinations during the pandemic, are likely to keep traveling within the country, especially as domestic overnight trips and visitor spend are close to pre-pandemic levels.
 - **Gradual International Tourism Recovery:** International visitor expenditure is recovering, with the visiting friends and relatives (VFR) segment already exceeding pre-pandemic levels. The region could see more international visitors, especially from markets like China and India.
 - **Shift in Travel Preferences:** The North Coast of NSW, known for its natural beauty and outdoor activities, can capitalise on the increase in VFR and domestic tourism by offering new experiences that cater to families and domestic travellers.
 - **Economic and Price Factors:** Higher costs of living and economic uncertainty might affect consumer spending, but travel and entertainment continue to be priorities for Australians. The region should consider value-driven tourism offerings to attract cost-conscious travellers.
 - **Technology and Business Travel:** While business travel is recovering, it remains below pre-pandemic levels. The DNC Business Events program continues to explore opportunities in hosting business events and conferences to attract this segment.
 - **Exchange Rates and Fuel Costs:** The weaker Australian dollar makes domestic travel more attractive for Australians and Australia more affordable for international tourists. However, rising fuel costs could impact travel prices, potentially affecting the volume of tourists.
 - **Long-Term Growth:** Despite current challenges, the tourism outlook is positive, with domestic travel expected to fully recover to 2019 levels by 2024 and international arrivals forecasted to grow annually. The region should continue to develop its tourism infrastructure and marketing strategies to capitalise on this growth.
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North Coast Tourism Symposium And Tourism Awards

As we move into the planning cycle for the 2024 North Coast Tourism Symposium and North Coast Tourism Awards, we are reflecting on our endeavours to deliver a more sustainable event in 2023 and further measures we can put in place at this year's events.

Though every effort was made to reduce the carbon footprint of our events, there was some carbon generated. Using the Climate Active (Australia) average price per tonne of carbon pricing structure, we will be contributing \$467 towards a local biodiversity restoration program to deliver climate action in our region.

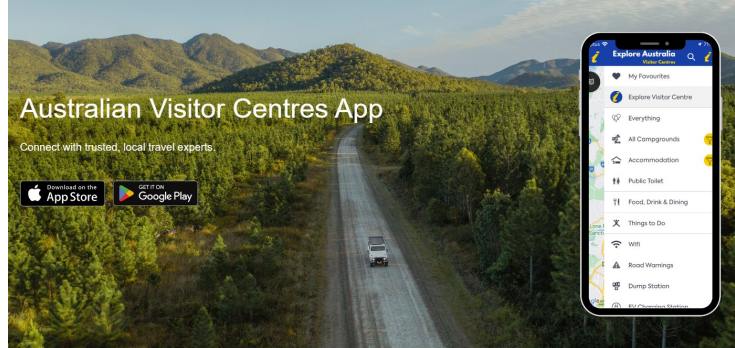
Read the [Event Emissions Snapshot Report](#) from last year's events.

NOTE: In case you missed it, please save the date for this year's North Coast Tourism Symposium and the North Coast Tourism Awards being held on **Thursday 1 August 2024 in Port Macquarie** with more details coming soon.

Australian Visitor Centres App

Born from an industry call to create a unified representation of the National Accredited Visitor Information Centre (AVIC) network/brand, the free Australian Visitor Centres App provides a seamless connection between travellers and AVICs. As such, the platform is the first and only app to represent the entire AVIC network, comprising of 400+ Centres nationwide, and in conjunction, presents over 50,000 travel points of interest. These features make the app every traveller's one-stop-shop for all road trip needs and inspiration.

Check the [Australian Visitor Centres App](#) website and let's all get behind supporting our Visitor Information Centres who provide a valuable service to our region's visitors.



\$10M Boost for Visitor Economy Digital Super Hub

Accommodation Australia's project to create a one-stop digital hub for hospitality, tourism and travel is full steam ahead following a \$10m federal government grant and the appointment of a new Project Manager.

The platform will allow employers, existing and prospective workers, students and international visitors to connect to education, employment and other vital career information. This will help boost the hospitality, tourism and travel workforce and promoting careers in the industry for the next generations to come.

[Read media release.](#)

National Sustainability Framework for the Visitor Economy

Recently, AUSTRADE released the [National Sustainability Framework for the Visitor Economy](#). The document outlines a shared understanding of sustainability in relation to the visitor economy to bring all participants together behind a consistent approach. It also marks an intention by all tourism ministers to provide leadership and to collaborate on making the visitor economy more sustainable.

Vibrant Streets Program For Councils

Councils across NSW will soon be able to temporarily close local streets to vehicles to host more community events and boost outdoor dining experiences. The NSW Government's \$15 million [Vibrant Streets program](#) will be available to councils from early this year and will help reduce the cost and complexity for communities to use the streets for events that attract locals and visitors.

More information is available on Transport for NSW's website about the [Neighbourhood Activity Guidelines](#) and the [Temporary Delegation](#).

Industry Welcomes New Migration Strategy

The Federal Government's new Migration Strategy has been welcomed by Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF) Australia, the Australian Hotels Association (AHA) and Accommodation Australia. TTF said the strategy would better address critical skills shortages and encourage the sector's growth.

[Find more information here.](#)

Industry Insights

The Booming Visitor Economy Market Segments In NSW

The strongest market segments for the NSW visitor economy have been revealed for the year ending September 2023.

New data from Tourism Research Australia (TRA) shows food and wine tourism, nature-based tourism, business events, Aboriginal tourism, caravan and camping holidays and Western Sydney all made growing contributions to the NSW visitor economy during the period.

These growing market segments align with the visitor experiences highlighted in the [NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030](#) under the "Showcase our Strengths" pillar, recognised for the breadth, depth and unique value of the offerings in these categories across the state.

Aboriginal Tourism On The Rise

New Tourism Research Australia data shows domestic overnight visitors to NSW are embracing Aboriginal culture in huge numbers.

TRA's National Visitor Survey shows a total of 277,900 domestic overnight visitors (15.4% increase year on year) participated in an Aboriginal cultural tourism experience in NSW in the 12 months to September 2023. These visitors stayed one million nights, contributing \$496.8 million in visitor expenditure to the state.

NSW Number One For Caravan & Camping Holidays

NSW continued its reign as the top destination for caravan and camping visitors nationally in the year ending September 2023. Australians spent 13.4 million visitor nights in commercial caravan parks or camping grounds in NSW in the year ending September 2023, up 34.5% on the previous year.

The largest age group among all caravan and camping visitors to NSW were visitors aged 35 to 54 years (1.8 million trips or 36.4%). The second largest age group was 55 and over (1.7 million trips or 34.3%), followed by visitors aged 15 to 34 years (1.5 million trips or 29.3%).

Visitor Survey Results

TRA's [NVS snapshot for the month of October 2023](#) is now published. It provides statistics on how Australian residents travelled during this period. In October 2023, Australian residents took 10.0 million overnight trips and spent \$9.9 billion.

The [IVS results for October 2023](#) are also available. International visitor spend in Australia was 89% of pre-COVID levels. Trips and nights to Australia were 79% and 89% of pre-COVID levels respectively.

Outdoor Census

This January, Outdoors NSW & ACT has launched the Outdoor Census and invites active industry participation. Conducted annually in January, this census aims to track industry changes, identify trends, and gather crucial data. This goes beyond a mere need for a peak body's understanding; it's about advocating for policy changes vital to the industry's well-being. It includes all businesses that are in outdoor recreation, outdoor education, adventure tourism and nature therapy. [Submissions close 31 January, 2024.](#)

Around The Region

Conde Nast Travellers Best Places To Go In 2024

The Northern Rivers joins the likes of Botswana's Okavango Delta, Santa Fe in New Mexico and Mongolia as one of Conde Nast Travellers [24 Best Places to Go in 2024](#)! This list is a collaboration between Conde Nast Traveller editors from around the globe who have researched, debated and vetted from a large pool of fantastic cities, regions, and countries with new reasons to visit. This is the list of places they believe should be on every traveller's radar for the year ahead. Go Northern Rivers!

15 Best Under-The-Radar Beach Towns In Australia

Delicious magazine has released their list of the [Top 15 Under the Radar beach towns in Australia](#), with Kingscliff and Crescent Head topping the NSW contingent.

Lismore Secures Global Tourism Ranking For 2024

Lismore has taken out a top tourism gong, listed as one of the world's ["Coolest Places to Visit in 2024"](#) by Qantas Travel Insider magazine. The global carrier and iconic airline ranked Lismore as No 11, alongside New York, Shanghai, London and Venice as 25 must-see tourist destinations.



New Commercial Outlets To Operate At Murwillumbah Railway Station

Tweed Shire Council has awarded licenses to Better by Bike, The Munch Bunch, and Cheeky Racing to operate shopfront spaces at the historical Murwillumbah Railway Station at the head of the Tweed section of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail. [Learn more.](#)

Caper Byron Bay 2024

Are you a local business in or around Byron Bay in the food, drinks, art or wellness space? Expressions of Interest for Venue Events and Festival Village stall holders for Caper 2024, being held 17-26 May, are now open, with applications accepted until late January 2024. Caper Byron Bay is all about celebrating the incredible food community, talented creatives and beautiful region in a way that reflects a vibrant Byron. [Find more information here.](#)

Ignite Mini coming to Kempsey

The RDA MNC Minis are three in-person events designed to relaunch the new [Regional Investment Framework](#) (RIF) and provide an opportunity for consultation on the priority areas of the RIF and other key aspects for our Mid North Coast Region. Each workshop will run from 9.00am to 3.00pm and will cover the same topics in each region. [Find more information here.](#)

ignite mini

Live topics and presentations on the needs of the Mid North Coast
Priority focus areas: RIF, Workforce, Childcare and Migration

SAVE THE DATES

FEBRUARY 2024

Thursday 1	Club Taree, Taree NSW 2430
Tuesday 6	Kempsey RSL Club, Kempsey NSW 2440
Thursday 8	Bellingen Golf Club, Bellingen NSW 2454

Industry Development And Other Opportunities

Selling Experiences Online Virtual Workshop

Join Destination NSW for this free, half-day Sell Online virtual workshop and find out how to increase bookings through online sales - both direct and indirect - by using online booking software, creating effective ATDW-Online listings, and working with online travel agents (OTAs) to grow online visibility.

When is it? Tuesday 6 February 2024 @ 10:30am via Zoom

Who is it for? The Sell Online virtual workshop will suit visitor economy businesses, including accommodation, tours and activities, and visitor attractions including museums, galleries, wineries, distilleries, breweries and farm gates that offer bookable experiences.

This workshop will be delivered virtually via Zoom.

Get insights and tips on:

- Taking online bookings
- Driving direct bookings through ATDW-Online
- Reaching further with online travel agents (OTAs)

[Register here.](#)

This virtual workshop is presented by Destination NSW as part of the [NSW First Program](#), designed to assist tourism businesses to develop, promote and sell tourism products and experiences.

NSW First - ATEC Host Market Specialist Training

Destination NSW has partnered with the Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC) to provide free access for internationally-ready NSW tour, attraction and accommodation businesses to access three ATEC Host online learning modules.

These include:

- China Host
- India Host
- Accessible & Inclusive Host

By completing these training programs, you will learn how to:

- Effectively attract and service visitors from key markets by being culture-ready, product & service ready, and marketing & trade ready
- Work effectively with key travel distributors

[Sign up now to express your interest](#) in the ATEC Host online learning modules. Places are limited.



Register for Destination Australia 2024

Registration to attend the 2024 Destination Australia Conference are currently open. The conference themed 'The next chapter for sustainable growth' will be an opportunity for industry to come together and focus on the future of Australian tourism. The full day conference, followed by a networking event will take place at the International Convention Centre (ICC) Sydney on Wednesday 13 March. [Register here to attend.](#)

Sustainable Storytelling Guides

EarthCheck, in partnership with Tourism Australia, has released two new communication guides for visitor economy operators and destinations. The Sustainability Storytelling guides are designed to support users in effectively communicating their sustainability efforts to a global audience via marketing and communications. Centred around a simple four-step framework, within the guides users will find easy-to-use templates and practical tips to craft compelling and authentic stories regarding their commitments to sustainability. The guides are aimed at those who already have sustainability policies, commitments, or action plans in place. [Find more information here.](#)

Sustainability Skills Microcredentials - Limited Spaces Still Available

Destination NSW has partnered with EarthCheck, the world's leading sustainable advisory and scientific benchmarking company for tourism, to fully fund a second round of Sustainability Skills Micro-credentials for NSW visitor economy businesses.

The Sustainability Skills Micro-credentials are:

- Sustainability 101
- Sustainability Management, and
- Sustainability and your Experience Delivery.

Completing these online courses will help visitor economy businesses to:

- Increase operational efficiency and reduce costs
- Increase their sustainability knowledge
- Deliver on visitor demand for sustainable experiences
- Implement practical solutions in their business
- Build a reputation through sustainable action.

Successful applicants will be notified by email and provided with log-in details to commence the micro-credentials. Participants have until 30 June 2024 to complete the three courses.

[Find out more and submit an expression of interest.](#)

2024 Regional Innovation Program (RIP)

Regional Australia has produced some of the greatest innovations the world has seen. RIP is about making sure regional innovators are given the support they need to succeed. The focus on these programs is about 'Action' - setting up and knocking over a whole bunch of tangible goals to get you where you need to be. Finding focus and through peer and mentor support getting out of your comfort zone to get the job done! [Find more information here.](#)

Funding And Other Opportunities

[Contemporary Music Touring Program](#)

The Contemporary Music Touring Program supports national touring activity undertaken by Australian musicians performing original Australian contemporary music. **Closes 5 March 2024**

[Electric Vehicle Destination Charging Grants](#)

The NSW Government are investing \$20 million to assist eligible regional NSW businesses and councils by co-funding the purchase and installation of EV chargers at their site. **Closes 3 May 2024**

[Employer Incentives For Apprentices](#)

The Australian Government offers a range of incentives to employers who hire apprentices, ranging from additional support for identified skill shortages, adult Australian apprentices, Australian apprentices with a disability and wage subsidies. **Ongoing**

Visitor Economy Stakeholder In Focus

Celebrating 35 Years Of Local Business - Byron Yoga Centre

Byron Yoga Centre celebrates a milestone - 35 years as a local business in Byron Bay. This also makes them the longest running Yoga Centre in Australia. An incredibly inspiring story by John Ogilvie, founder and CEO of Byron Yoga Centre.

John's journey with yoga began over 45 years ago when he was living in Melbourne. At that time, he had reached a low point in his life, struggling with drug addiction and a deep sense of emptiness. He checked himself into The Buttery - a local residential rehab centre on the Northern Rivers. It was here that he practiced the 12 step program and was reintroduced to yoga. By practicing what he learnt at The Buttery and daily yoga, eventually the black hole healed, but not without some scar tissue to remind him of where he came from.

In 1986 John taught his first yoga class. In 1988, Byron Yoga Centre was born in the Epicentre - an old meat factory in Byron Bay. In 2008 John purchased the property that would become the forever home for Byron Yoga Centre. 50 Skinners Shoot Rd - a breathtaking 30-acres just 1km from Byron Bay's town centre.

[Read the full story of John's journey here.](#)



North Coast Events

To aid your planning and to support local events, please note these upcoming events on the North Coast or find [all events on DNSW's website](#).

[Festival Of The Waters](#)

20-21 January 2024
Coraki and Woodburn

[The Australian Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year](#)

Ends 11 February 2024
Coffs Harbour

[Trial Bay Triathlon](#)

10-11 February 2024
Trial Bay

Stay Up To Date And Follow DNC On Social Media

Thank you for taking the time to read this update. Don't forget between our e-newsletters, you'll find us on the socials - head over to follow us on [LinkedIn](#). We also encourage you to share our updates with your networks, simply forward this email and they can [register here](#).
