

Scenic Rim

NATURE-BASED TOURISM STRATEGY

2023-2032



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgement of Country

Scenic Rim Regional Council acknowledges the traditional country of the Mununjali, Wangerriburra and Ugarapul Peoples of the Scenic Rim. We recognise that the Scenic Rim continues to have connections to cultural, spiritual, environmental, and economic importance and respect connection to Country. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, acknowledging the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples play in shaping the future of our Region.

To our government partner



Australian Government

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To our local tourism operators and industry organisations

Scenic Rim Regional Council would like to thank the following businesses and organisations for their valuable time and feedback, which has helped inform the development of this strategy:

Mt Barney Lodge
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ParkTours
Camp Moogerah
Canungra Sky Sports
Binna Burra Lodge
Camp Kokoda
Scenic Rim Adventure Park
Lost World Trail Festival
Cedar Creek Lodges
Elite Helicopters
Horizon Guides
Kerry Valley Secret

QLD MotoPark
O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat
Round Mountain
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Seqwater
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To our strategic advisors

This strategy has been informed by research papers and content developed by Extra-Mile Tourism Management, and Lucid Economics.

On the cover

Looking towards Mount Barney National Park from the top of Mount Maroon. Image by Lachlan Gardiner.

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MAYOR'S FOREWORD

Listed in Lonely Planet's Best in Travel as one of the world's Top Ten 'must-visit' regions for 2022, the Scenic Rim is an area of spectacular beauty. Just one hour from both Brisbane and the Gold Coast, it is renowned for its friendly, relaxed country lifestyle, award-winning local produce and scenic natural landscapes.

Nature-based tourism is one of Queensland's and the Scenic Rim's greatest competitive advantages. Seeking more active and adventurous experiences, and more enriching and connected moments in nature, our visitors are showing an increased interest in nature-based activities.¹

Tourism is an important industry in the Scenic Rim, attracting 1.7 million visitors and bringing in more than \$215 million in visitor expenditure in 2019, prior to COVID-19. Tourism is a major export industry for the region.

This strategy supports our region's broader regional prosperity and tourism objectives to increase the value of tourism to the regional economy by creating local jobs and building our region's brand equity. This will be achieved by building our market share of this key market segment and increasing commercial yield and visitation in all seasons. And importantly, by increasing the dispersal of visitors across the region and away from existing hotspot areas; being sensitive to the unique characteristics and requirements of the different localities and communities across the region.

With six magnificent national parks, and the Scenic Rim's spectacular UNESCO World Heritage listed Gondwana Rainforest in easy proximity to three large and growing urban centres, our region is well placed to support demand for nature-based experiences. We will do this by delivering and promoting transformative experiences that meet the nature traveller's needs and build awareness, protection and advocacy for our region's natural and cultural wonders.

Through this strategy, our nature-loving visitors will be spoilt for choice with opportunities to do more throughout the year in the Scenic Rim's natural areas, stay longer and spend more while they visit, and to share their love for our spectacular region with their friends and family.

Cr Greg Christensen

Mayor, Scenic Rim Regional Council



WHAT IS NATURE-BASED TOURISM?

NATURE-BASED TOURISM

Nature-based tourism is leisure travel undertaken largely or solely for the purpose of enjoying natural attractions and engaging in nature-based experiences. This can range from simple natural encounters to more immersive ecotourism experiences, where being in nature is the key driver for the experience. ²

ECOTOURISM

Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation. ³

ADVENTURE TOURISM

A niche of nature-based tourism, adventure tourism involves exploration or travel and connection with nature with a certain degree of risk, and which may require special skills and physical exertion. ⁴





THE BENEFITS OF BEING IN NATURE

Spending time in nature is essential for our physical, mental, social and spiritual health and wellbeing. Indigenous peoples have lived this fundamental connection for tens of thousands of years. More recently, a large and growing body of both scientific evidence and cultural knowledge has shown that spending time in nature leads to a range of benefits, including reducing stress, increasing self-esteem and improving creativity, concentration and productivity.

Being in nature is restorative. Breathing fresh air and immersing ourselves in forests and wide-open spaces helps us to strengthen our connection with others, to learn more about ourselves and what we are capable of. It brings us out of ourselves and our narrow concerns and connects us to a larger world.

Contact with nature not only makes us feel better emotionally, it can also play an important role in reducing the alarming global increase in non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes, as well as help prevent and treat mental health issues such as depression and anxiety.⁵

NATURE-BASED TOURISM IN THE SCENIC RIM

THE SCENIC RIM'S NATURAL AND CULTURAL WONDERS

Rainforest once covered most of the southern supercontinent, Gondwana, and it remains the most ancient type of vegetation in Australia. Few places on earth contain so many plants and animals which remain relatively unchanged from their ancestors in the fossil record.

Four national parks in the Scenic Rim are part of the Gondwana Rainforest of Australia and are UNESCO World Heritage listed in recognition of their outstanding universal significance in terms of their natural heritage. Lamington National Park, Main Range National Park, Mount Chinghee National Park, and Mt Barney National Park help to protect a diverse range of forests and woodlands, heaths and rocky outcrop communities including the most extensive areas of subtropical rainforest in the world, large areas of warm temperate rainforest and nearly all of the Antarctic beech cool temperate rainforest.⁶

Along with Tamborine National Park and Moogerah Peaks National Park, these areas are exceptional for their biological diversity, abundant natural beauty and steep and rugged mountain ranges. Within the National Parks, many species of plant found on the mountain summits grow nowhere else on earth. The region's cool subtropical rainforests and wet eucalyptus forests are a refuge for a treasure trove of unique plants, animals and distinctive vegetation types. The forests provide significant habitat and ecological connectivity for plants and animals and a sheltered and cooler place where diversity can potentially find respite from the changing climate. The mountains preserve living links to Australia's ancient past, and are home to numerous threatened species including Albert's Lyrebird, the Spotted-tailed Quoll and the Eastern Bristlebird.

The stories, rituals and traditions of the region's indigenous inhabitants are woven around the natural environment and highlight their connection to a living landscape.

EXPERIENCES CELEBRATING NATURE IN THE SCENIC RIM

There are many different ways that visitors to the Scenic Rim can engage and connect with nature.

The region is home to hundreds of kilometres of short walks in nature and overnight hiking trails. To the east, the popular Tamborine and Lamington National Parks provide access to magnificent high-altitude, moss-covered, beech forests. To the west, the Mount Barney and Main Range National Parks offer a more tranquil, rugged and rural setting.

For outdoor adventurers, many other natural areas outside the national parks provide the perfect challenge for rock climbers, hang gliders and abseilers, horse riders, mountain bikers and four-wheel drivers.

The area's two large lakes at Moogerah and Maroon are popular destinations for lovers of water sports and fishing, while Lake Wyaralong and many local waterways offer a more peaceful experience.

The region's national parks and diverse natural environments, from rainforests and waterfalls to lakes and rugged mountains, are strong drawcards for visitors seeking the following existing nature activities in the region.



SCENIC RIM'S NATURE-BASED EXPERIENCES ⁷

EXPERIENCE TYPE	ACTIVITY
Passive natural encounters	Sightseeing Short bush-walks Fishing Swimming Camping Glamping Caravanning Horse and camel rides Hot air ballooning Helitours
Exhilarating adventure	Mountain biking Ziplining Hang gliding Mountain road cycling
Ecotourism	Guided wildlife and ecology tours Environmental conservation activities Environmental education Citizen science Bird watching
Challenging Adventure	Overnight hiking Guided multi-day walks Rock climbing Via Ferrata

EXPERIENCE TYPE	ACTIVITY
Active adventure	Boating Jet skiing Water skiing Kayaking Day hiking Trail cycling Trail running 4WDing Trail bike riding
Outdoor education camps	Abseiling Canoeing Bush walking High ropes Mountain biking Orienteering Climbing Kayaking Flying fox Hiking



Visitors to the Scenic Rim benefit from a range of nature-based tourism operators already active in the region, including the following that show a strong commitment to sustainable tourism with Ecotourism certification from Ecotourism Australia: ⁸

- Araucaria Ecotours
- Binna Burra Mountain Lodge
- Country Charm Discovery Tours (Leisure Solutions)
- Horizon Guides
- JPT Tour Group
- Mt Barney Lodge
- O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat
- ParkTours
- Pterodactyl Helicopters
- Southern Cross Tours
- Spicers Scenic Rim Trail
- Tamborine Mountain Glow Worm Caves
- TreeTop Challenge

However, in 2019, 46% of recreational activities in the region⁹ had no guided or supported offering available to assist visitors who are inexperienced, do not own the necessary equipment, or seek more specialised, 'money can't buy' experiences; particularly for hiking and water sports such as fishing, kayaking, water-skiing and jet skiing.

SCENIC RIM'S NATURE-SEEKING VISITOR TRENDS

Established as a new Local Government Area in only 2008, awareness of the Scenic Rim as a destination is still relatively low across Australia. Those who are familiar with the region associate it with having distinctive nature and picturesque beauty, offering them both peace and quiet and a lot to do. They visit the region to get away to somewhere that's close and affordable and to satisfy their curiosity by experiencing new and different places with natural beauty, authentic locals and laid-back charm. For those who are not familiar with it, discovering new places is also important to satisfy their curiosity and desire to visit unique places. ¹⁰

In 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 1.1 million visitors to the Scenic Rim region engaged in nature-based activities during their visit, ¹¹ worth approximately \$27.5 million in visitor expenditure. ¹²

The region experienced solid growth in nature-seeking visitors over the previous five years, growing at an average annual rate of over 15%. This is well above the state and national average annual growth rates of 7.4% and 9% respectively for this market during the same time. ¹³

In 2019, key features of the Scenic Rim's nature-seeking visitors were:

70%
Day-trip visitors

70% visited from the Brisbane region

17% from the Gold Coast

3% from other interstate markets

1% from overseas



VISITORS ENGAGING IN OUTDOOR - NATURE ACTIVITIES ¹⁴

Of all visitors to the Scenic Rim, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 47% engaged in an outdoor nature activity during their visit. Destinations where a greater percentage of their visitors engaged in nature activities during their visit were the Whitsundays, the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast. ¹⁵

TOURISM REGION	DAY VISITORS	DOMESTIC OVERNIGHT	INTERNATIONAL	% OF TOTAL ANNUAL VISITORS TO THE REGION	TOTAL NO. ANNUAL VISITORS TO REGION ('000)
Whitsundays	48%	69%	99%	66%	1,367
Sunshine Coast	43%	65%	95%	52%	12,275
Gold Coast	40%	57%	93%	49%	14,162
Scenic Rim	45%	53%	91%	47%	1,784
Fraser Coast	25%	53%	99%	42%	1,833
Tropical North Queensland	22%	50%	96%	41%	6,298
Gladstone	26%	42%	96%	38%	1,100
Bundaberg	24%	39%	96%	32%	1,734
Townsville	24%	29%	96%	29%	2,981
Mackay	30%	20%	93%	26%	1,954
Capricorn	22%	22%	94%	24%	2,739
Brisbane	16%	22%	83%	21%	31,058
Southern Queensland Country	13%	24%	81%	17%	6,266
Outback Queensland	14%	11%	80%	13%	1,827

VISITORS ENGAGING IN ACTIVE OUTDOOR - SPORT ACTIVITIES ¹⁶

Of all Scenic Rim visitors, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 29% engaged in outdoor sporting activities during their visit. Only in the Whitsundays did a greater percentage of visitors engage in sporting activities than in the Scenic Rim. ¹⁷

TOURISM REGION	DAY	DOMESTIC OVERNIGHT	INTERNATIONAL	% OF TOTAL ANNUAL VISITORS TO THE REGION	TOTAL NO. ANNUAL VISITORS TO REGION ('000)
Whitsundays	19%	48%	86%	43%	1,367
Scenic Rim	21%	53%	49%	29%	1,784
Gladstone	23%	28%	80%	29%	1,100
Tropical North Queensland	11%	37%	65%	27%	6,298
Fraser Coast	11%	37%	81%	27%	1,833
Townsville	20%	23%	77%	24%	2,981
Sunshine Coast	18%	31%	57%	23%	12,275
Gold Coast	16%	26%	38%	21%	14,162
Mackay	14%	20%	68%	19%	1,954
Bundaberg	9%	27%	60%	18%	1,734
Outback Queensland	10%	15%	48%	13%	1,827
Capricorn	9%	15%	67%	13%	2,739
Brisbane	9%	15%	34%	12%	31,058
Southern Queensland Country	8%	12%	40%	9%	6,266

MAKING THE CASE FOR CHANGE

CREATING TRANSFORMATIONAL VISITOR EXPERIENCES



Challenges

Activities are not commercial

Excluding educational experiences, around 46% of the region's surveyed activities are currently not commercial, due to:

- The viability of a commercial operation
- The activity is not permitted at a location
- Private land zoning/ council approvals.

Resources and capacity of land managers

Key government bodies often require additional staffing, funding and resourcing if they are to support large new transformative projects.

Accommodation demand

During peak seasons, demand for accommodation may outstrip availability. As well as a loss of revenue for local businesses, this can impact negatively on the region's friendly and welcoming brand positioning.



Opportunities

Identify potential activities

Review trends and demand for day walks, multi-day walks, mountain-biking, rail, horse and cycling trails, rock climbing, 4WD and trail bike riding, water sports, and other recreational activities, and analyse opportunities to increase commercial yield without compromising the natural environment and water quality.

Unlock existing potential

Focus on joining up, stabilising, upgrading and clearly marking existing tracks on old logging and fire trails, improving capacity and facilities at hot spots and developing placemaking at new sites away from hotspots.

Identify potential accommodation needs

Review camping/caravanning trends and demand for public and private sites and undertake an assessment of all existing accommodation and bed-stock to identify potential sites and styles for new accommodation offers.



BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY AND BUSINESSES



Challenges



Opportunities

Navigating the maze

Navigating the competing responsibilities, priorities and processes of land and water managers to meet planning and permitting requirements and to build and maintain the facilities and infrastructure needed for the creation and delivery of major transformative experiences can require dedicated assistance and long-term collaboration and managerial and financial support from multiple government bodies and private land owners.

Industry collaboration

Forming a regional nature-based tourism committee of government agencies, tourism operators and land owners to meet regularly and collaborate on:

- the implementation of the strategy,
- the sustainable creation and management of visitor facilities, infrastructure and practices, and
- managing the impact of visitors on the local community, economy and environment.

Inconsistent delivery of experiences

A number of the experiences in the region are only available on weekends, or on-demand. This can present challenges for:

- operators in attracting and retaining skilled staff and building viable businesses,
- the ability to package an experience with others that are open all week, and for
- consumers to add activities once they are in the region.

Increasing viability

Provide opportunities for local tourism operators to learn how to improve the management of their business, the marketing of the experiences they offer, their partnerships and packaging with other businesses and about the nature destinations and experiences in our region.

Community resistance to tourism

Sustainable tourism activities, with the need to 'touch the earth lightly', can sometimes seem at odd with the agricultural practices of rural communities.

Demonstrate the value of tourism

Along with environmental outcomes, sustainable tourism delivers positive social and economic outcomes for local communities and a region's wellbeing. Securing ECO Destination certification and supporting tourism businesses to achieve ECO Certification will strengthen local understanding of the synergies and benefits from tourism.



ATTRACTING AND ENRICHING OUR VISITORS



Challenges



Opportunities

Seasonality

Visitation peaks during school holidays and in winter. Accommodation providers and tourism operators cannot always meet demand during these times and are under-occupied at others and mid-week, causing difficulties in keeping businesses viable and providing year-round employment.

Grow year-round visitation

Strengthen the availability of always-on nature-based experience opportunities with more frequent booking capabilities.

Undertake year-round marketing aligned to each forthcoming season. Turn negatives into positives by positioning Summer as the season to 'head for the hills' where it's cooler, and 'get wet in the green' for rainforest and waterfall guided walks and experiences, and positioning Winter as sunny days to explore and nights for warmth by the fire.

Visitor overcrowding

Some areas of the region, are being 'loved to death', with visitor overcrowding at Tamborine Mountain frustrating local communities and western areas experiencing overcrowding on trails from popular social media organised activities. The development of additional accommodation, facilities and activities in these hotspot areas may further compromise the locals' treasured peaceful way of life and diminish wildlife corridors.

Strengthen regional dispersal

Focus on promoting and developing experiences and placemaking at new sites away from hotspot areas to spread visitors more evenly across the region.

Engage with and educate event organisers, tour operators and visitors to raise awareness of the potential impacts of their activities.

Explore providing alternative experiences and suitable infrastructure to meet the visitor demands at overcrowded sites.

Low awareness of the Scenic Rim

As a relatively new LGA, awareness of the Scenic Rim region is low. It is often referred to as the Gold Coast hinterland or 'the green behind the gold', rather than as a distinct and desirable region to visit.

Raise awareness of region's name and offer

Position and promote the region as the leading, stay and play, year-round destination for enriching recreational activities in nature for residents and their visitors from Brisbane, Ipswich and the Gold Coast, and position the Scenic Rim's Gondwana rainforests as a bucket-list destination for interstate and international visitors to the Gold Coast and Brisbane.

Perceptions about the region

Visitors have misconceptions about the region's size, the range and difficulty of activities, travel routes and travel times within the region.

Provide packages and itineraries

Increase nature-based day tours from Brisbane and the Gold Coast for domestic and international markets by collaborating with connector and transfer tour companies.

Develop and promote trade-ready product and packages for domestic and international markets that provide ready-made itineraries and travel solutions.

Deliver campaigns that are focused on converting customer interest into operator and accommodation bookings.

Events

Events staged during peak visitation periods can compete for resources and accommodation and diminish the region's friendly and welcoming brand if overcrowding occurs and accommodation is not available.

Events

Events attract newcomers and special interest markets to the region. They are a catalyst for visitors to stay longer and return for the event each year.

Events staged during shoulder or off peak periods provide a welcome boost for local accommodation and businesses.

Packaging event tickets with accommodation, tours and other experiences encourages longer stays and introduces visitors to other regional attractions.

OUR NATURE-BASED TOURISM STRATEGY



PLAYING TO OUR STRENGTHS

The name, Scenic Rim, says it all. Just one hour from both Brisbane and the Gold Coast, the Scenic Rim is a region of spectacular natural beauty in South East Queensland.

Everywhere you turn, you will see sweeping valleys surrounded by volcanic mountain ranges. They are our region's greatest asset and are highly valued by visitors, residents and local businesses.

Tourism in nature and protected areas leads to increased knowledge, awareness and advocacy for a destination and the environment. Seeking new experiences in nature has always been a key driver for travel and demand continues to grow internationally from travellers looking to connect with nature and to travel ethically and sustainably.¹⁸

The Scenic Rim region boasts six National Parks and ancient UNESCO World Heritage listed Gondwana rainforests. With scenic mountain ranges, native forests, epic waterfalls and waterways, lakes and rural farmland, it is a haven for nature-lovers looking to relax and reconnect, or to challenge themselves with bushwalks, trail rides and water sports.

These natural assets are fundamental to the region's prosperity, attractiveness as a place to live and visit, and the wellbeing of its communities.

The area is renowned for its relaxed country lifestyle and its artisan food, wine and beverage producers. The main townships of Tamborine Mountain, Beaudesert, Boonah and charming villages such as Canungra, Rathdowney, Kalbar and Mount Alford provide visitors with an array of opportunities to replenish and recover from their nature activities with fresh seasonal produce, award-winning wines and local brews as well as a stroll through their unique local shops, galleries, cultural and historical delights.

The region boasts well-known nature resorts such as Binna Burra Lodge, Mt Barney Lodge and O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat, along with a range of secluded glamping and ecotourism accommodation, intimate bed and breakfasts and camping and caravan sites on public and private land.

Visitors to the Scenic Rim also benefit from the services of several tourism operators who are ECO Certified, along with many others who demonstrate a strong commitment to ecotourism values and to the operating standards of sustainable tourism management.





UNLOCKING OUR POTENTIAL

This strategy capitalises on the region's strengths in providing immersive and enriching experiences in nature in easy proximity to the growing urban centres of Brisbane, Ipswich and the Gold Coast.

Sustainable tourism creates better places for locals to live and for visitors to visit. Recognising the detrimental impacts that overtourism can have on our local communities and on our protected natural areas, this strategy focuses on unlocking greater value for our regional economy by increasing the commercial yield from our visitors, rather than on increasing visitor numbers. This will be achieved by improving opportunities for our visitors to stay longer and participate in guided and supported experiences, and by encouraging the dispersal of visitors across the region and across the seasons.

Visitors are actively seeking experiences that enrich and transform them by consciously connecting with, and appreciating, our extraordinary planet, its people and cultures. By meeting our visitors' needs with transformational experiences, the Scenic Rim has the opportunity to build a stronger, more resilient, sustainable tourism industry and exceed the expectations of our visitors.¹⁹ Overnight visitors spend more than day-trip visitors, providing a larger economic benefit. At the year ending March 2020, when COVID-19 began to impact travel behaviours, domestic overnight visitors to the Scenic Rim spent \$299 per visitor, compared to day-trip visitors, who spent an average of \$79.²⁰ With 74% of all Scenic Rim visitors at this time undertaking day visits, rather than overnight stays, there is significant potential in converting these daytrippers to overnight visits.

Through delivery of this strategy, by 30 June 2031, economic modelling shows that the region could attract 285,000 visitors to participate in nature-based experiences, generating an additional 221,000 visitor nights and \$40 million in visitor expenditure and creating over 160 new jobs.²¹

The strategy was developed following a comprehensive review of the region's nature-based tourism operators, a gap assessment for nature-based tourism in the Scenic Rim and a workshop with the Scenic Rim Adventure Tourism Reference Group conducted in 2019, followed by an analysis of visitor data, a further stakeholder workshop conducted in December 2020 and community consultation conducted in June 2021.

Scenic Rim's visitor economy relies heavily on the domestic drive markets from Brisbane and the Gold Coast and on the Visiting Friends and Relatives market from these major centres. With the increased desire of visitors seeking nature-based experiences due to COVID-19, there also has been a subsequent increase in the number of domestic overnight leisure visitors to Queensland taking part in nature-based activities.²² International visitors are a small and valuable market for the Scenic Rim, with one international trip worth seven domestic trips.²³

Activation of this strategy will target these important markets and increase Scenic Rim's regional prosperity and our operators' commercial yield by increasing visitor participation in paid nature-based tourism activities and overnight stays.

WHAT THE FUTURE LOOKS LIKE

OUR PURPOSE

To share and protect the Scenic Rim's natural places for the enjoyment, appreciation and benefit of our locals and visitors.



OUR GOAL

To establish the Scenic Rim as the preeminent destination for nature-based tourism in Queensland by 2032.



OUR 2032 VISION

The Scenic Rim's nature-based tourism experiences drive year-round, overnight visitation and stable employment in sustainable businesses for our local tourism industry. Even with its easy proximity to Brisbane and the Gold Coast, the region is renowned as a mini-break destination for enriching adventures and experiences in nature.

By 2032, when the Olympic rowing will be hosted in the Scenic Rim, the region will be the go-to destination for an immersive and enriching nature experience, for residents and their visitors from Brisbane, Ipswich and the Gold Coast.

Extended families will create lasting memories, relaxing and reconnecting with each other at holiday houses, camping and caravanning sites. Couples will step out from their luxurious eco-cabins to join a guided forest walk to a waterfall, with a cheeky side visit to a local winery or two. And younger friends who've arrived for rock-climbing or an adventurous sunrise mountain climb will stop afterwards at the nearest town to celebrate and replenish over a sumptuous late breakfast.

Experiencing the world-famous Gondwana rainforest will be a bucket-list experience for every international and interstate visitor to Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

Our visitors will know there's so many great nature-based experiences and other attractions in the region, that it's worth staying on for a few nights.

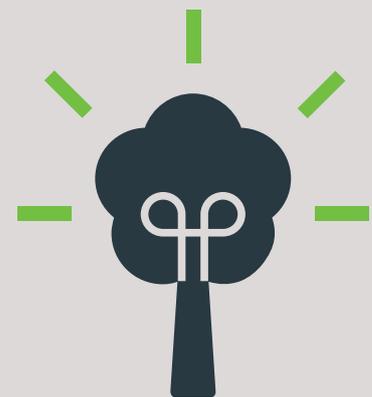
While here, they will also eat out, enjoy the local produce (and take some back home), and visit the local towns and villages for their unique shops, galleries and cultural and historical delights.

The region's business environment will be one where ecotourism thrives. Our local tourism operators, businesses and community will be inspired to positively support and contribute to the conservation and sustainability of Scenic Rim's cultural and natural environment and the destination will be respected by visitors and the local community for its sustainable management practices.

By spending time in nature, our visitors will deepen their understanding of themselves and their place in the world; of what they are capable of, of what they need in their life, or what life needs of them.

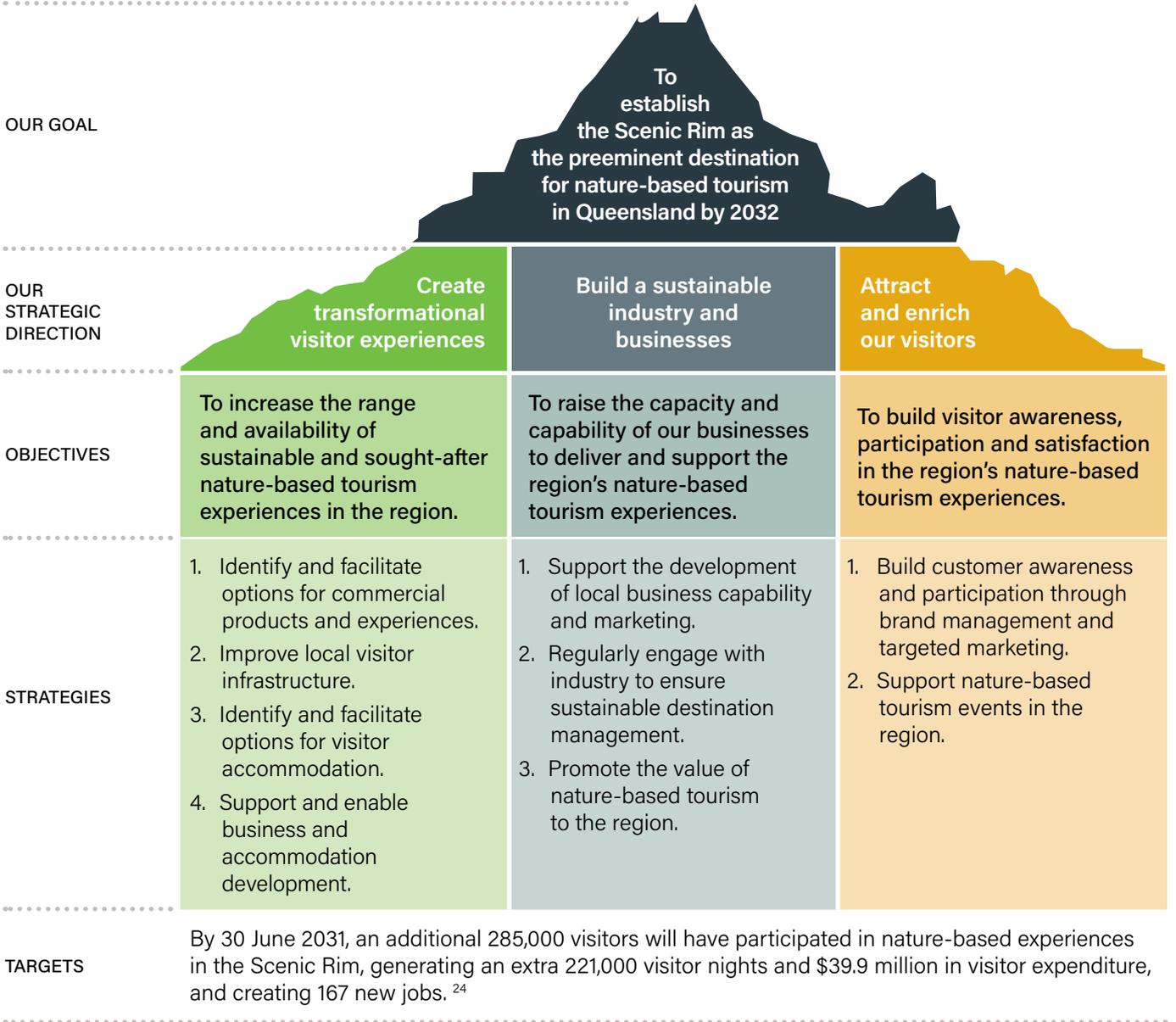
They will leave with an increased knowledge, a deeper appreciation and respect for the region's natural places and a heightened sense of responsibility for their own role in protecting this extraordinary and ancient landscape.

They will return home a different person. More connected and enriched. And excitedly anticipating their next visit to the Scenic Rim.

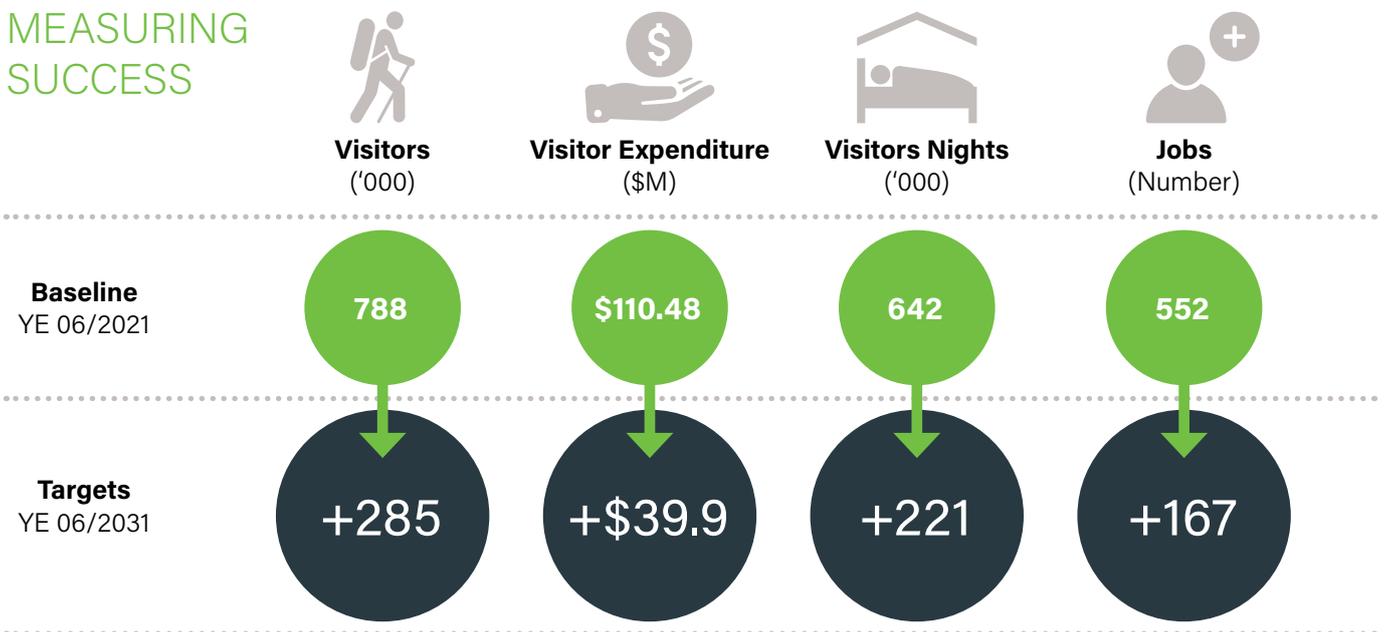




HOW WE WILL GET THERE



MEASURING SUCCESS



TO ACHIEVE THESE OUTCOMES WE WILL:

Be strategic

Being adventurous and spending time in nature are not everyone's preferred leisure activities. We will focus on reinforcing and building on our region's strengths and capitalising on the opportunities that attract visitors with an interest and inclination for spending time in nature. We will focus on providing experiences that maximise the potential of our region's natural and cultural features, best reflect market trends and demand, and deliver a competitive advantage.

Be sustainable

We support the sustainable growth of nature-based tourism experiences in the Scenic Rim and the sustainable management of our region. We will provide access and enriching experiences for our visitors balanced with the need to protect our cherished natural places, our cultural heritage and our local way of life. We will strive to deliver positive social, economic and environmental outcomes for our local community and the region's wellbeing.

Be targeted

We recognise that different activities appeal to different visitors, with some preferring a challenging physical pursuit and others seeking only a short, leisurely stroll to a waterfall. To grow our market share of nature-seeking visitors, we will target different high value traveller segments with the activities, positioning and promotions that match their particular life stage, interests and behaviours.

Put safety first

We are committed to keeping our visitors, our communities and our natural places safe. Our visitors need to know how to minimise risks to themselves and reduce their impact on the places they visit. We will encourage our visitors to behave appropriately and ensure the information and experiences we provide meet Australian safety standards.

Be resourceful

We will source and secure funding and partnerships to achieve the balanced and sustainable growth of nature-based tourism in our region.

OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS TO 2027



1. CREATE TRANSFORMATIONAL VISITOR EXPERIENCES

Increase the range and availability of sustainable and sought-after nature-based visitor experiences

1.1 Identify and facilitate options for commercial products and experiences

ACTION	LEAD	STAKEHOLDERS	MEASURE	INDICATIVE TIMING
1.1.1 Conduct a Tourism Impact Assessment for the region to create a comprehensive overview of ecotourism-oriented assets and attractions, ²⁵ and review needs and priorities for nature-based visitor infrastructure and signage.	Council	DES Seqwater Operators Land owners	Baseline assessment completed	Year 1
1.1.2 Review day-walk and overnight hiking trends and demand, infrastructure and facilities needed to enable greater regional and seasonal dispersal and appropriate commercial yield from walkers.	Council	DES DTIS Bushwalking Queensland Land owners	Identification and/or improvement of commercial experiences. Number of experiences listed on Visit Scenic Rim and Queensland.com. Number of operators in the Best of Queensland Experiences Program ²⁶	Years 2-3
1.1.3 Review mountain-biking trends and demand to potentially facilitate additional trails for increased commercial yield.	Council	DES Council Land owners		Years 3-5
1.1.4 Evaluate the potential for rail trail development and/or trails for walking, cycling and horse riding to potentially facilitate opportunities for increased commercial yield.	Council	Land managers Land owners		Years 2-5
1.1.5 Review trends and demand for rock-climbing and slacklining , and access issues, traditional owner spiritual significances to potentially facilitate access, community support and increased commercial yield.	Council	DES Land managers Land owners		Years 2-5
1.1.6 Review 4WD and trail bike riding trends and demand to potentially facilitate access, community support and increased commercial yield.	Council	Land managers Land owners		Years 3-5
1.1.7 Review trends and demand for water sports to potentially facilitate business opportunities for increased commercial yield.	Council	Seqwater		Years 3-5
1.1.8 Review trends and demand for ecotourism and indigenous tourism experiences to potentially facilitate business opportunities for increased commercial yield and visitor participation in activities that foster understanding, appreciation and conservation of the natural and cultural environment.	Council	Operators Ecotourism Australia BEDA		Years 2-5
1.1.9 Develop and provide education, interpretation and engagement for visitors about sustainability, biodiversity, biosecurity, cultural heritage and visitor safety.	Council	DES Seqwater Land managers Land owners		Years 3-5

1.2 Improve local tourism infrastructure

ACTION	LEAD	STAKEHOLDERS	MEASURE	INDICATIVE TIMING
1.2.1 Explore the development of a signage program to create and deploy wayfinding, interpretive, safety and access information signage across the region and for gazetted roads.	Council	Industry TMR DES	New signs Positive sentiment	Years 2 and 3
1.2.2 Assess and improve facilities such as parking, toilet facilities, camping, interpretation at prioritised walking/cycling trail heads, rock-climbing nodes, scenic lookouts and road reserves. ²⁷	Council	DES Seqwater Land managers and owners	Identification and/or improvement of visitor infrastructure	Ongoing

1.3 Identify and facilitate options for visitor accommodation

1.3.1 Undertake an assessment of existing accommodation and bed-stock as well as current levels of demand to determine where and what style of additional accommodation is appropriate. ²⁸	Council	Land owners BEDA	Assessment completed	Year 1
1.3.2 Identify and promote potential sites to host new accommodation opportunities.	Council	Land owners	Prospectus developed	Year 2
1.3.3 Review camping/caravanning trends and demands to potentially facilitate increased capacity, equity of facilities required at public and private sites, and including additional overnight experiences in, or adjacent to, National Parks. ²⁹	Council	DES DTIS Seqwater Land owners	Review completed	Year 1

1.4 Support and enable business and accommodation development

1.4.1 Provide a Council case manager to support the potential expansion or new development of accommodation, events or business investments.	Council	Proponents	Number of projects supported	Ongoing
1.4.2 Support local businesses to sustainably update, improve, expand and/or create new accommodation, events, school camps or tourism experiences, and to cooperatively package their offer with other providers (i.e. accommodation, food & wine).	Council	Operators DES Seqwater	Year-round accommodation occupancy Visitors participating. Repeat visitation. Seasonal and regional dispersal	Ongoing
1.4.3 Support local businesses to expand and create new jobs for locals through facilitation services and support	TBA	TBA	Jobs created	Ongoing
1.4.4 Ensure local planning processes and information are equitable and accessible for all proponents.	Council	Proponents	Information available Positive sentiment from operators	Ongoing

2. BUILD A SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY AND BUSINESSES

Raise the capacity and capability of our businesses to deliver and support the region's nature-based tourism experiences

2.1 Support the development of local business capability and marketing

ACTION	LEAD	STAKEHOLDERS	MEASURE	INDICATIVE TIMING
2.1.1 Provide opportunities for local tourism operators to learn to improve the management of their business and their marketing of the experiences they offer.	Council	DSR Industry	Number of operators participating. Operators reporting increased skills, self-efficacy and business results	Ongoing
2.1.2 Work with operators to enhance existing, or create additional, commissionable trade-ready tourism product.	Council	DSR BEDA Industry	Number of commissionable products.	Years 2-5
2.1.3 Develop suitable job development and training opportunities to upskill and grow the region's nature-based tourism workforce ³⁰	Council	BEDA Industry training providers	Number of program participants	Years 3-5

2.2 Regularly engage with industry to ensure sustainable destination management

2.2.1 Form a nature-based tourism committee to collaborate on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the implementation of this strategy, the sustainable management of the destination and the creation and management of visitor services and infrastructure, and managing the impact of visitors on the local community, economy and environment 	Council	DES DSR Industry	Half-yearly meetings	Years 1 - 5
2.2.2 Conduct a nature-based tourism forum to educate local operators and guides about the nature destinations and experiences in our region.	Council	DSR Industry	Forum completed	Years 4
2.2.3 Review Strategic Actions to June 2026 and set new Strategic Actions to June 2031.	Council	DSR Industry	New actions agreed	Year 5 (late 2026)

2.3 Promote the value of nature-based tourism in the region

2.3.1 Identify and promote the value of nature-based tourism to the local community and local decision makers and provide opportunities for them to experience the local nature-based tourism places.	Council	Industry TRA	Value of tourism promoted	Annual
2.3.2 Strengthen the region's nature-based tourism profile by supporting businesses to secure ECO Certification.	Council	Ecotourism Australia Industry	Number of operators with Ecotourism certification	Ongoing
2.3.3 Acquire and maintain ECO Destination certification for the region.	TBA Council	Ecotourism Australia Industry	ECO Destination certification	Year 1-2

3. ATTRACT AND ENRICH OUR VISITORS

Build visitor awareness, participation and satisfaction in the region's nature-based tourism experiences

3.1 Build customer awareness and participation

ACTION	LEAD	STAKEHOLDERS	MEASURE	INDICATIVE TIMING
3.1.1 Conduct market research using local operator data and quantitative surveying, to create a market segmentation map and segment profiles for our nature-seeking target customers. ³¹	Council	DSR Industry BEDA TEQ	Segments identified Baseline measures set.	Year 1
3.1.2 Create annual brand strategies and set targets to raise awareness of the Scenic Rim with residents and their visitors in Brisbane, Ipswich and the Gold Coast, and with interstate and international visitors to the Gold Coast and Brisbane. ³²	Council	Industry , DSR, BEDA, Destination Gold Coast, TEQ, Tourism Australia, Adventure Queensland, DTIS, DES, Tweed Shire	Unprompted awareness ³³ Positive sentiment ³⁴ Visitor numbers	Years 2-5
3.1.3 Create annual marketing plans and set targets to undertake targeted marketing activities that convert customer interest into bookings with local operators and guides, accommodation providers and services supporting the region's tourism industry.	Council	Industry BEDA TEQ DSR	Leads to operators Operator bookings % of all visitors participating Overnight stays ³⁵	Ongoing
3.1.4 Explore the promotion of nature-based tourism products and cooperative packaging with online travel agencies, trade distributors and trade events.		Industry Adventure Queensland	Number of inclusions	Years 2-3
3.1.5 Provide an engaging and frictionless experience to support visitors at all stages of the customer journey. ³⁶	Council	DSR ATDW	Customer satisfaction and positive sentiment ³⁷	Ongoing
3.1.6 Develop multi-day 'stay and play' itineraries (3 day, 5 day, 7 day) including maps, experiences, tours, hidden secrets and accommodation in digital and print.	Council DSR	Industry	Overnight stays ³⁸	Years 2-3

3.2 Support nature-based tourism events in the region

3.2.1 Support and market the sustainable delivery of nature-based tourism, citizen science, and adventure-related sporting events in the region.	Council	Industry DES Seqwater Land managers and owners	Number of event participants. Overnight stays for event.	Ongoing
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ALIGNMENT WITH OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Creating a 'Sustainable and Prosperous Future' for the Scenic Rim region is a key strategic pillar for the Scenic Rim Regional Council,³⁹ with the intention that, by 2023,

"an enhanced regional brand underpins sustainable economic growth for businesses, strong local employment opportunities and high-performing primary production and tourism industries".⁴⁰

In recognition of the strong competitive advantage provided by the region's abundant and spectacular natural environment, the development and implementation of a Nature-based Tourism Strategy for the region is a key action in the *Scenic Rim Regional Prosperity Strategy 2020 - 2025*.⁴¹

The preservation of the region's biodiversity and natural environment is crucial for a sustainable tourism industry. Working together, protecting our biodiversity, and enhancing our environment are key pillars of the *Scenic Rim Biodiversity Strategy 2015 - 2025*.

Tourism and Events Queensland has identified the Scenic Rim's World Heritage-listed Gondwana Rainforests as a 'jewel in the crown' of Queensland's natural assets,⁴² and 'Natural Encounters,' and

'Adventure and Discovery' are two of Tourism and Events Queensland's five key experience pillars.⁴³

Proximity and access from Brisbane to the Scenic Rim's 'majestic mountain peaks, fertile valleys and rainforests', is also identified by the Brisbane Economic Development Board⁴⁴ as a competitive strength and one of four key experience pillars for the city.

Experiencing nature and wildlife is identified by Tourism Australia as the primary driver of destination choice for High Value Travellers who generate a disproportionate share of overnight expenditure while engaging in domestic leisure travel.⁴⁵

Through their *Nature-based Tourism Strategy 2021 - 2024*, Tourism and Events Queensland aims to target this High Value Traveller and support the revitalisation and growth of, "a vibrant and sustainable nature-based tourism industry that delivers transformative experiences and supports the conservation of Queensland's natural and cultural assets".⁴⁶

Creating transformational experiences is central to growing consumer demand in line with their expectations and a key commitment of Tourism and Events Queensland through their *Ultimate Transformational Experiences Guide 2020* and mentoring and training programs.

This strategy aligns strongly with these national, state and regional tourism strategies and supports the sustainable growth of nature-based tourism in the Scenic Rim.



THE NATURE-SEEKING TRAVELLER

Representing approximately 1.1 million Queenslanders and 4 million Australians living interstate, High Value Travellers engage in domestic leisure travel for holidays or to visit friends and relatives.

They spend more than the average traveller (>\$2,000 per trip or \$300 per night for shorter trips) and are attracted to the experiences found in the Scenic Rim.

They are segmented into three main categories:

- Travelling with children
- 18-49 travelling without children
- 50+ travelling without children. ⁴⁷

Nature travellers love being in nature and the great outdoors. The following information displays some of their characteristics. ⁴⁸

Overview

Couples and families who love being in nature and the great outdoors

They care about making a difference when they travel

Travelling and being in nature is an antidote to routine

Household type



30%

Family with pre-school and school aged children

21%

Single or peer group flatting together

33%

Couple with no children

16%

Family with adult children



Travel

40%

Travel with just their partner

11%

Travel by themselves

28%

Travel as a family



11.1 weeks

Average booking lead time

5.6 nights

Average length of stay

55%

Have travelled overseas in the past **12 months**



65%

Highly educated with **undergraduate** or higher degree



\$2,873.40

Nature traveller average spend



\$2,815.60

Average HVT spend



EMERGING NATURE TRAVEL TRENDS

Experiences in nature have always been a key driver for global travel and as the world emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, research and expert opinion suggests that 'tuning into nature' is seen as an antidote for Coronavirus lockdowns.

This is expected to result in increased demand for experiences in open spaces and wild places as travellers look to escape crowds, regenerate and re-connect with themselves, family, friends, the environment and the world around them.

Global travellers are looking for:

- Active participation: with the ability to make a positive difference
- Reconnection: with self, nature and others
- A transformational experience: with moments of connection
- Travel that benefits or at minimum does no harm to the natural environment
- Mental health/wellbeing, rest or physical stimulation
- Hygienic and safe operational practices
- World-class natural settings with strong visual aesthetics
- Deeper understanding of Indigenous culture
- Experiences that broaden minds and offer the ability to learn something new.⁴⁹

Discerning travellers are looking for 'guilt free experiences' as a counter-balance to the negative impacts of human consumption.⁵⁰ They are shifting away from experiences that have a detrimental impact on the environment and the local community and avoiding over-strained areas and unsuitable or uncertified practices.⁵¹

ENDNOTES

- 1 Tourism Research Australia, Local Government Area Profile 2019 - Scenic Rim
- 2 Tourism and Events Queensland
- 3 Ecotourism Australia.
- 4 Adventure Travel Trade Association
- 5 Facilitating nature-based solutions, Health and Well-being Specialist Group, International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)
- 6 Gondwana Rainforests of Australia, UNESCO World Heritage Convention, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/368/> World Heritage Places - Gondwana Rainforests of Australia, Australian Government, <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/parks-heritage/heritage/places/world/gondwana#resources>
- 7 Developed by Extra-Mile Tourism Management in 2019 on behalf of, and with contributions from, the Scenic Rim Regional Council
- 8 Ecotourism Australia.
- 9 Extra Mile Tourism, 2019
- 10 Consumer Brand Awareness Research, Brother & Co/Roy Morgan Research, July/August 2019
- 11 Using Tourism Research Australia's (TRA) Outdoor / Nature activity and Active Outdoor / Sport activity definitions, with data sourced in 2020 from the National and International Visitor Surveys
- 12 Extra Mile Tourism, 2019
- 13 Lucid Economics, Tourism Research Australia 2020
- 14 Tourism Research Australia.
- 15 Lucid Economics, Tourism Research Australia 2020. Due to small sample sizes, data is for calendar years with three-year averages. TRA defines Nature Activities as "going to the beach, visiting national parks or state parks, visiting botanical or other public gardens, going whale or dolphin watching, visiting farms, bushwalking and rainforest walks, visiting the reef and birdwatching".
- 16 Tourism Research Australia.
- 17 Lucid Economics, Tourism Research Australia 2020. Due to small sample sizes, data is for calendar years with three-year averages. TRA defines Sporting activities as "fishing, golf, scuba diving, snorkelling, water activities / sports, surfing, snow skiing, cycling, exercise, gym or swimming, play other sports, other outdoor activities nfd".
- 18 Tourism and Events Queensland's Nature-based Tourism Strategy 2021-2024, page 2
- 19 The Ultimate Transformational Experience Guide, Tourism and Events Queensland, October 2020
- 20 Lucid Economics, Tourism Research Australia data YE March 2020
- 21 Lucid Economics, 2020
- 22 Tourism and Events Queensland's Nature-based Tourism Strategy 2021-2024, page 7
- 23 Adele Labine-Romain, National Travel, Hospitality and Services Lead, Deloitte, VTIC conference 2022
- 24 Lucid Economics, 2022
- 25 Including natural and cultural sites and experiences, such as natural and scenic qualities, ecology, cultural sites, key tourism infrastructure and facilities and assets and sites that are currently not open to tourism due to conservation and potential vulnerability to visitor use
- 26 Participating in the 'Best of natural encounters' category
- 27 Ensuring environmental impacts are monitored and measured, in accordance with the Scenic Rim Regional Council's Biodiversity Strategy 2015-2025 and Action 9.2a of the Biodiversity Strategy Implementation Plan 2020-2025, to, 'Seek resources and deliver on-ground improvements for Council-owned natural areas that are impacted by increased use from Council's tourism marketing and promotion
- 28 By comparing capacity versus occupancy (demand) throughout the year and across the region
- 29 And in line with recommendations from Council's Camping Facilities Strategy Review
- 30 In line with the Educational and Workforce Development pillar of the Scenic Rim Regional Prosperity Strategy 2020-2025
- 31 To clarify the life stages, behaviours and attitudes, size and value for each segment, to establish our positioning and competition for each segment, and to set baseline measures for each segment's awareness, sentiment and spend. Source operator data for qualitative research on their customer's demographics, expenditure, length of stay, activities undertaken and repeat visitation patterns, before validating findings with quantitative research
- 32 Firstly by positioning the region as the leading, stay and play, year-round destination for enriching recreational activities in nature for residents and their visitors in Brisbane, Ipswich and the Gold Coast, and to be known as a distinct region, rather than as the Gold Coast hinterland. And secondly, positioning the Gondwana rainforests as a bucket-list destination for interstate and international visitors to the Gold Coast and Brisbane, with promotions focused on the appreciation and conservation of this unique natural environment
- 33 In market research, survey participants are able to say where the region is, and they describe the Scenic Rim as providing 'the region with the best and easiest access to nature.' 'Scenic Rim' is included as a distinct region by stakeholders like Adventure Queensland, rather than parcelled into Brisbane or the Gold Coast
- 34 In market research, survey participants use the words 'scenic' and 'nature', when describing the region (unprompted).
- 35 As measured by Tourism Research Australia
- 36 Key stages are inspiration, organising, experiencing - from discovering an experience that's right for them and dreaming about their visit to planning and booking, experiencing and sharing stories of their adventures afterwards with friends
- 37 Expressed in brand performance market research surveys
- 38 As measured by Tourism Research Australia
- 39 Scenic Rim Community Plan 2011- 2026, page 15
- 40 Scenic Rim Regional Council Corporate Plan 2018 - 2023, page 10
- 41 Scenic Rim Regional Prosperity Strategy 2020 - 2025, page 38
- 42 Tourism and Events Queensland's Nature-based Tourism Strategy 2021-2024, Practical advice on how you can re-imagine your visitor experience to better meet the needs of an ever-evolving nature-based tourism market. July 2021
- 43 Tourism and Events Queensland's Marketing Strategy 2025 Executive Summary page 5
- 44 Visitor Economy 2031, Vision for the Brisbane Region, Brisbane Marketing, Brisbane Economic Development Board, September 2019, page 13
- 45 Tourism Australia's Consumer Demand Project July 2018. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Overseas Arrivals and Departures, December 2018. Tourism Research Australia, International Visitor Survey, December 2018. Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, December 2018.
- 46 Tourism and Events Queensland's Nature-based Tourism Strategy 2021-2024, page 23
- 47 High Value Traveller research commissioned with BDA Marketing Planning, 2017, Tourism and Events Queensland, Marketing Strategy 2025, page 4
- 48 D&M Research on Queensland High Value Travellers in 2019, Tourism and Events Queensland's Nature-based Tourism Strategy 2021-2024, page 25
- 49 Tourism and Events Queensland's Nature-based Tourism Strategy 2021-2024, Practical advice on how you can re-imagine your visitor experience to better meet the needs of an ever-evolving nature-based tourism market. July 2021
- 50 Trendwatching 2019, Tourism and Events Queensland's Nature-based Tourism Strategy 2021-2024, page 6
- 51 Landor 2019, Tourism and Events Queensland's Nature-based Tourism Strategy 2021-2024, page 6.





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