Are we there yet?

The current and future value of tourism to the **Northern Territory**

Discovery series

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About the NRMA

Better road and transport infrastructure has been a core focus of the NRMA since 1920 when our founders lobbied for improvements to the condition of Parramatta Road in Sydney. Independent advocacy was the foundation activity of the organisation and remains critical to who we are as we approach our first centenary.

From humble beginnings, the NRMA has grown to one of the largest tourism and travel companies in Australia, representing over 2.6 million Australians. As our business has grown and diversified, so too has our national footprint and customer base, providing motoring, mobility and tourism services to 4.9 million customers across the country.

Today, the NRMA works with policy makers and industry leaders to advocate for increased investment in transport solutions to make mobility safer and easier, provide access to affordable travel options and experiences, and ensure communities remain connected to business and employment opportunities. The NRMA is passionate about facilitating tourism and travel across Australia, recognising the vital role travel plays in how Australians connect and recharge, and discover the country.

By working together with all levels of government to deliver integrated tourism and travel options we can give the community a real choice about how they get around and explore the country. The NRMA believes that integrated transport networks, high-quality public transport and improved visitor facilities are essential to solve the challenge of growing congestion and provide for the future growth of our communities.

Discovery series

The NRMA is passionate about travel. We aim to inspire people to connect, explore and discover this great country through quality tourism and transport services.

As the backbone of many regional communities and an employer of over half a million Australians, we need to ensure the tourism industry continues to grow. The NRMA will champion investment in transport and visitor infrastructure, partnerships to profile our regions and technology to link visitors with the most iconic and best kept secrets this country has to offer.

Introduction

The Northern Territory is synonymous with Australian tourism. The territory is home to many of the natural and cultural icons that attract visitors the world over to our shores including Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Kakadu and Kings Canyon.

There were 3.5 million visitors to the NT in 2016-17, staying 13.2 million nights and spending $2.7 billion. This activity generates 9,000 direct jobs in tourism across the territory.

The NRMA is committed to the NT tourism industry and the communities it supports. The NRMA's NT *Are We There Yet?* paper highlights the importance of tourism to the NT and its regions, trends in visitation and expenditure, and the value of drive tourism and caravan and camping to many of the state's iconic regional destinations.

The NT has seen stable growth in visitation over the five year period to 2016-17, with domestic overnight visitation growing on average four times faster than international visitation at 12 per cent to 1.6 million visitors. These visitors spent $2.0 billion or 74 per cent of total visitor expenditure in the NT. International visitation grew on average three per cent to 302,000 visitors in 2016-17.

Fifty six per cent of total visitor expenditure occurs outside Darwin, with 82 per cent of total visitor expenditure generated by domestic visitors. This highlights the importance of fostering Australia's love affair with the great Aussie holiday.

Kakadu Arnhem received the largest number of total visitors outside Darwin with 791,000 visitors in 2016-17, an average annual increase of 10 per cent. Alice Springs experienced the largest number of total visitor nights at 1.9 million. Further, Barkly experienced the largest average annual change of 24 per cent in visitor expenditure to $104 million in 2016-17.

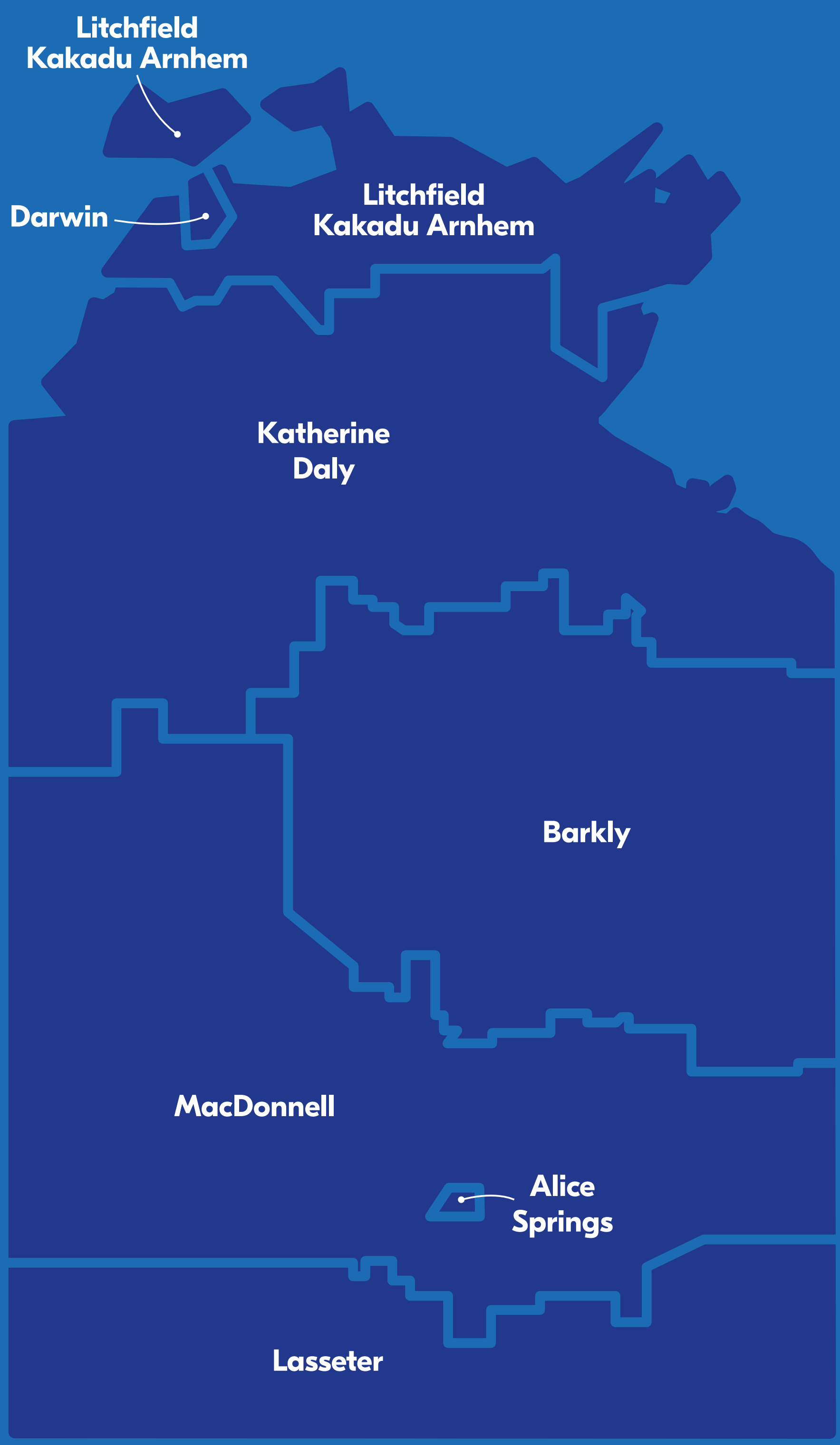
Encouraging visitors to discover our regions and stay longer is a core focus of the NRMA. It's important to note that 68 per cent of visitors to NT undertake travel by car, with 96 per cent of self-drive trips undertaken by domestic visitors.

Kakadu Arnhem received the largest number of total self-drive visitors outside Darwin with 624,000 visitors, while self-drive visitors who visited Alice Springs generated $167 million. Both Lasseter and Kakadu Arnhem saw the largest international self-drive visitor spend outside Darwin at $30 million, a 9 per cent average annual change in both regions.

Further, caravan and camping generated $212 million in visitor expenditure, of which 88 per cent occurs in regions outside Darwin.

The NRMA believes with the right level of investment, planning and industry partnerships, that visitor nights in the territory could grow to 17.2 million, generating $3.5 billion in overnight visitor expenditure in the NT by 2026-2027. With the industry approaching the cusp of the 2020 Tourism Industry potential target, now is the time to review our performance and plan for the future.

Northern Territory tourism regions



Tourism summary

Headline figures

9,000
people employed in the sector

3.5 million visitors —
91 per cent are domestic visitors

2.2 **million visitors to regional NT — 64 per cent of total visitation**

International visitor expenditure totalled $486 million in 2016-17 - an average annual growth rate of 8%

$2.7
billion in total visitor expenditure

Domestic overnight visitation grew four times faster than international visitation —
12%

Domestic overnight expenditure totalled
$2 billion
representing 74 per cent of total spend

56% of expenditure occurs outside Darwin — $1.5 billion

Industry potential

Visitor nights could grow to
17.2
million by 2026-27 — 7.7 million outside Darwin

$1.9 billion in overnight visitor expenditure could be spent in regional NT

Direct overnight
visitor expenditure
could increase to $3.5 billion in 2026-27

Self-drive visitor nights could increase to
5.9
million by 2026-27

Caravan and camping

Visitors who stayed in a caravan or camping ground spent
$212 million in 2016-17

79%
of caravan and camping visitors to the NT are domestic

Lasseter —
largest number of international caravan and camping visitors outside Darwin — 21,000 — however there was a decline in visitation of 2 per cent p.a.

In the regions

Alice Springs received the largest spend by domestic overnight visitors outside Darwin —$329 million — an average annual increase of

21%

Lasseter - largest spend by international visitors –

$178 million

55% of regional spend

Kakadu Arnhem - largest number of visitors outside Darwin — 791,000, a

10% **average annual increase.**

Katherine Daly

— largest average annual growth in international visitation of 4 per cent to 44,000 in 2016-17

Alice Springs - largest number of total visitor nights outside Darwin at

1.9 million

Barkly experienced the largest average annual increase in visitor expenditure of 24 per cent to

$104 million

Caravan and camping

216,000

caravan and camping visitors

87% of caravan and camping expenditure occurs outside Darwin

Katherine Daly - largest number of caravan and camping visitors outside Darwin - 83,000. Largest total spend of

$59 million

outside Darwin

Self-drive

2.4 million visitors

took a self-drive trip in 2016-17

96% of self-drive trips were by domestic visitors

The number of domestic overnight visitors who took a self-drive trip in the NT has grown on average 14 per cent each year, 6 per cent for international visitors

Visitors who took a self-drive trip spent **$1 billion in 2016-17**

Kakadu Arnhem

largest number of self-drive visitors outside Darwin - 624,000 visitors — 9 per cent average annual increase

70 per cent of self-drive visitor expenditure occurs

outside Darwin

Lasseter and Kakadu Arnhem — both received the largest spend by international self-drive visitors

$30 million

— a 9 per cent average annual increase

Alice Springs

45 per cent average annual increase in expenditure by self-drive visitors

$167 million

Economic contribution of tourism

Total tourism visitation						Total tourism nights		
		Visitors (000)				Nights (000)		
Stopover region	**Financial year**	**Int'l**	**Dom. overnight**	**Dom. daytrips**	**Total**	**Int'l**	**Dom. overnight**	**Total**
Darwin	2011/12	125	520	516	1,160	1,741	3,152	4,894
	2016/17	138	716	643	1,497	2,411	4,323	6,733
	Av. Annual change	2%	8%	5%	6%	8%	7%	8%
Barkly	2011/12	18	94	np*	113	48	286	334
	2016/17	18	143	29*	190	84	256	340
	Av. Annual change	0%	10%	np	14%	15%	-2%	0%
Alice Springs	2011/12	119	206	33*	359	891	969	1,861
	2016/17	121	319	58*	498	538	1,313	1,850
	Av. Annual change	0%	11%	15%	8%	-8%	7%	0%
Kakadu Arnhem	2011/12	39	159	335	533	180	563	743
	2016/17	41	291	458	791	146	1,065	1,210
	Av. Annual change	1%	17%	7%	10%	-4%	18%	13%
Katherine Daly	2011/12	37	222	131	390	250	797	1,047
	2016/17	44	311	251	606	241	1,012	1,253
	Av. Annual change	4%	8%	18%	11%	-1%	5%	4%
Lasseter	2011/12	142	110	3*	255	417	345	762
	2016/17	167	213	1*	381	438	843	1,281
	Av. Annual change	3%	19%	-16%	10%	1%	29%	14%
MacDonnell	2011/12	7	55*	95*	157	19	175*	195
	2016/17	8*	89	160*	257	52*	462	514
	Av. Annual change	1%	13%	14%	13%	34%	33%	33%
Regional NT	2011/12	211	611	597	1,419	1,806	3,136	4,942
	2016/17	231	1,044	956	2,231	1,499	4,951	6,449
	Av. Annual change	2%	14%	12%	11%	-3%	12%	6%
NT	**2011/12**	**264**	**1,017**	**1,112**	**2,393**	**3,547**	**6,288**	**9,835**
	2016/17	**302**	**1,607**	**1,599**	**3,508**	**3,909**	**9,273**	**13,183**
	Av. Annual change	**3%**	**12%**	**9%**	**9%**	**2%**	**9%**	**7%**

Source: Tourism Research Australia

Total tourism expenditure						
		Regional expenditure ($M)				Employment
Stopover region	**Financial year**	**Int'l**	**Dom. overnight**	**Dom. daytrips**	**Total**	**Total**
Darwin	2011/12	118	731	109	958	4,400
	2016/17	162	927	104	1,193	
	Av. Annual change	7%	5%	-1%	5%	
Barkly	2011/12	6	40	np	47	200
	2016/17	3	98	np	104	
	Av. Annual change	-10%	29%	np	24%	
Alice Springs	2011/12	42	161	np	212	1,600
	2016/17	73	329	np	420	
	Av. Annual change	15%	21%	np	20%	
Kakadu Arnhem	2011/12	32	118	38	187	1,300
	2016/17	48	177	54	279	
	Av. Annual change	10%	10%	8%	10%	
Katherine Daly	2011/12	23	143	23	189	1,000
	2016/17	18	166	23	207	
	Av. Annual change	-4%	3%	0%	2%	
Lasseter	2011/12	127	86	np*	213	400
	2016/17	178	275	np*	452	
	Av. Annual change	8%	44%	np	22%	
MacDonnell	2011/12	4	np*	np*	35	100
	2016/17	np*	15	np*	32	
	Av. Annual change	np	np	np	-2%	
Regional NT	2011/12	234	576	73	883	4,600
	2016/17	324	1,060	112	1,494	
	Av. Annual change	8%	17%	11%	14%	
NT	**2011/12**	**352**	**1,307**	**182**	**1,841**	**9,000**
	2016/17	**486**	**1,987**	**216**	**2,687**	
	Av. Annual change	**8%**	**10%**	**4%**	**9%**	

*one or more of the estimates is subject to high sampling variability. In these instances, the estimates and growth rates reported should be treated with caution.

Self-drive tourism

		Drive tourism				Total tourism nights		
		Visitors (000)				Nights (000)		
Stopover region	**Financial year**	**Int'l**	**Dom. overnight**	**Dom. daytrips**	**Total**	**Int'l**	**Dom. overnight**	**Total**
Darwin	2011/12	34	122	459	615	357	640	997
	2016/17	48	191	616	854	1,037	671	1,708
	Av. Annual change	8%	11%	7%	8%	38%	1%	14%
Barkly	2011/12	13	61	np*	74	33	178	211
	2016/17	14	123	29*	166	20	210	230
	Av. Annual change	2%	20%	np	25%	-8%	4%	2%
Alice Springs	2011/12	26	75	27*	127	107	313	421
	2016/17	26	152	57*	234	181	547	728
	Av. Annual change	0%	21%	22%	17%	14%	15%	15%
Kakadu Arnhem	2011/12	24	104	306	434	92	327	419
	2016/17	26	176	423	624	83	480	563
	Av. Annual change	2%	14%	8%	9%	-2%	9%	7%
Katherine Daly	2011/12	25	174	121	320	94	591	685
	2016/17	34	262	245	542	179	775	954
	Av. Annual change	8%	10%	21%	14%	18%	6%	8%
Lasseter	2011/12	29	55	3*	88	79	177	256
	2016/17	32	111	1*	144	114	390	504
	Av. Annual change	2%	20%	-16%	13%	9%	24%	19%
MacDonnell	2011/12	5	30*	95*	130	15	65*	80
	2016/17	4*	65	160*	229	43*	301	344
	Av. Annual change	-4%	23%	14%	15%	38%	72%	66%
Regional NT	2011/12	56	381	552	989	421	1,652	2,072
	2016/17	67	668	914	1,649	621	2,703	3,324
	Av. Annual change	4%	15%	13%	13%	10%	13%	12%
NT	**2011/12**	**67**	**460**	**1,011**	**1,538**	**778**	**2,292**	**3,070**
	2016/17	**87**	**781**	**1,529**	**2,397**	**1,658**	**3,374**	**5,032**
	Av. Annual change	**6%**	**14%**	**10%**	**11%**	**23%**	**9%**	**13%**

Source: Tourism Research Australia

Drive tourism expenditure					
		Regional expenditure ($M)			
Stopover region	**Financial year**	**Int'l**	**Dom. overnight**	**Dom. daytrips**	**Total**
Darwin	2011/12	21	108	100	229
	2016/17	59	146	101	307
	Av. Annual change	36%	7%	0%	7%
Barkly	2011/12	5	26	np*	31
	2016/17	1	80	np*	84
	Av. Annual change	-16%	42%	np	34%
Alice Springs	2011/12	5	37	np*	51
	2016/17	18	132	np*	167
	Av. Annual change	52%	51%	np	45%
Kakadu Arnhem	2011/12	21	43	32	97
	2016/17	30	68	47	145
	Av. Annual change	9%	12%	9%	10%
Katherine Daly	2011/12	12	105	np	132
	2016/17	13	103	22	138
	Av. Annual change	2%	0%	np	1%
Lasseter	2011/12	21	38	np*	59
	2016/17	30	111	np*	141
	Av. Annual change	9%	38%	np	28%
MacDonnell	2011/12	3	np*	np*	15
	2016/17	np*	10	np*	26
	Av. Annual change	np	np	np	15%
Regional NT	2011/12	67	249	59	385
	2016/17	92	504	103	701
	Av. Annual change	7%	20%	15%	16%
NT	**2011/12**	**88**	**357**	**159**	**614**
	2016/17	**151**	**650**	**204**	**1,008**
	Av. Annual change	**14%**	**16%**	**6%**	**13%**

*one or more of the estimates is subject to high sampling variability. In these instances, the estimates and growth rates reported should be treated with caution.

Caravan and camping

Caravan and camping visitation					Visitor nights		
		Visitors (000)			Nights (000)		
Stopover region	**Financial year**	**Int'l**	**Dom. overnight**	**Total**	**Int'l**	**Dom. overnight**	**Total**
Darwin	2011/12	10	37*	47	82	187*	270
	2016/17	13	27*	39	61	231*	292
	Av. Annual change	6%	-6%	-3%	-5%	5%	2%
Barkly	2011/12	9	32*	41	14	133*	147
	2016/17	6	29*	36	9	64*	73
	Av. Annual change	-6%	-2%	-3%	-7%	-10%	-10%
Alice Springs	2011/12	13	38*	51	37	152*	189
	2016/17	12	50*	62	42	182*	224
	Av. Annual change	-2%	6%	4%	3%	4%	4%
Kakadu Arnhem	2011/12	15	46*	61	49	157*	205
	2016/17	12	60*	72	37	196*	232
	Av. Annual change	-4%	6%	4%	-5%	5%	3%
Katherine Daly	2011/12	16	65	81	46	256	302
	2016/17	17	66	83	50	242	292
	Av. Annual change	2%	0%	1%	1%	-1%	-1%
Lasseter	2011/12	24	18*	42	64	62*	126
	2016/17	21	52*	74	57	221*	278
	Av. Annual change	-2%	37%	15%	-2%	51%	24%
MacDonnell	2011/12	3	2*	4	6*	4*	10
	2016/17	1	7*	8	2*	16*	18
	Av. Annual change	-10%	53%	16%	-12%	64%	18%
Regional NT	2011/12	41	126	167	215	763	979
	2016/17	42	166	208	197	920	1,118
	Av. Annual change	0%	6%	5%	-2%	4%	3%
NT	**2011/12**	**44**	**135**	**179**	**298**	**950**	**1,248**
	2016/17	**45**	**171**	**216**	**259**	**1,151**	**1,410**
	Av. Annual change	**1%**	**5%**	**4%**	**-3%**	**4%**	**3%**

Source: Tourism Research Australia

Caravan and camping expenditure

		Regional expenditure ($M)		
Stopover region	**Financial year**	**Int'l**	**Dom. overnight**	**Total**
Darwin	2011/12	5	34*	39
	2016/17	6	21*	27
	Av. Annual change	4%	-8%	-6%
Barkly	2011/12	3	13*	16
	2016/17	0	13*	13
	Av. Annual change	-20%	0%	-4%
Alice Springs	2011/12	2	10*	12
	2016/17	6	24*	30
	Av. Annual change	40%	28%	30%
Kakadu Arnhem	2011/12	14	27*	41
	2016/17	14	30*	44
	Av. Annual change	0%	2%	1%
Katherine Daly	2011/12	5	37	42
	2016/17	5	34	39
	Av. Annual change	0%	-2%	-1%
Lasseter	2011/12	17	9*	26
	2016/17	19	40*	59
	Av. Annual change	2%	69%	25%
MacDonnell	2011/12	1	1*	2
	2016/17	0	0*	0
	Av. Annual change	-20%	-20%	-20%
Regional NT	2011/12	41	96	137
	2016/17	45	141	186
	Av. Annual change	2%	9%	7%
NT	**2011/12**	**45**	**130**	**175**
	2016/17	**50**	**162**	**212**
	Av. Annual change	**2%**	**5%**	**4%**

*one or more of the estimates is subject to high sampling variability. In these instances, the estimates and growth rates reported should be treated with caution.

2026-27 projections

Visitor nights and self-drive visitation

Northern Territory	All tourism nights (000)				
	Darwin		Regional Northern Territory		
	International	Domestic overnight	International	Domestic overnight	Total
2017-18	2,604	4,119	1,619	4,306	12,649
2018-19	2,774	4,277	1,690	4,437	13,177
2019-20	2,914	4,418	1,764	4,551	13,648
2020-21	3,067	4,560	1,835	4,666	14,128
2021-22	3,226	4,702	1,912	4,781	14,621
2022-23	3,391	4,843	1,992	4,895	15,122
2023-24	3,561	4,986	2,072	5,011	15,630
2024-25	3,736	5,130	2,156	5,128	16,150
2025-26	3,920	5,276	2,243	5,247	16,686
2026-27	4,112	5,424	2,333	5,367	17,236

Northern Territory	Self drive tourism nights (000)				
	Darwin		Regional Northern Territory		
	International	Domestic overnight	International	Domestic overnight	Total
2017-18	833	741	518	2,325	4,418
2018-19	888	770	541	2,396	4,594
2019-20	933	795	564	2,458	4,750
2020-21	981	821	587	2,520	4,909
2021-22	1,032	846	612	2,582	5,072
2022-23	1,085	872	638	2,643	5,238
2023-24	1,139	897	663	2,706	5,406
2024-25	1,196	923	690	2,769	5,578
2025-26	1,254	950	718	2,833	5,755
2026-27	1,316	976	747	2,898	5,937

2026-27 projections

Expenditure — capital city and regional Northern Territory

Northern Territory	Overnight visitor expenditure ($m)		
	Darwin	Regional Northern Territory	Total
	Total	Total	Total
2017-18	1,122	1,439	2,561
2018-19	1,176	1,488	2,664
2019-20	1,223	1,534	2,757
2020-21	1,272	1,579	2,851
2021-22	1,323	1,626	2,948
2022-23	1,374	1,673	3,046
2023-24	1,426	1,720	3,146
2024-25	1,479	1,769	3,248
2025-26	1,534	1,819	3,353
2026-27	1,591	1,870	3,461

Data notes:

Source

- Tourism Research Australia (TRA)

Employment

- Estimates for each tourism region have been sourced from TRA's 2016-17 Regional Tourism Satellite Accounts.

Visitor Estimates

- Components may not add to totals as visitors may visit more than one tourism region on a trip.

Expenditure Estimates

- Expenditure excludes all motor vehicle, capital and major equipment purchases and for international visitors any pre-purchased international airfares and 70 per cent of pre-purchased packages assumed to be spent outside Australia.
- For self-drive, expenditure for each tourism region refers to total expenditure in that region by visitors who arrived by self-drive vehicle.
- For caravan and camping, expenditure for each tourism region refers to total expenditure in that region by visitors who stayed in a commercial caravan park or camping ground during their visit.

Tourism Region Estimates

- Tourism regions estimates for nearly all metrics are based on the region boundaries which applied in 2017. The caravan and camping expenditure estimates are based on 2018 region boundaries. The differences between 2017 and 2018 region boundaries are negligible.
- Where a tourism region is asterisked (*) one or more of the estimates is subject to high sampling variability. In these instances, the estimates and growth rates reported should be treated with caution.
- The Gold Coast tourism region is included in Regional Queensland estimates.

Inclusions and Exclusions

- Regional, State and National totals include relevant estimates from tourism regions where data has been confidentialised and not published (i.e. np cells).
- Regional, State and National totals exclude stopovers by visitors to unspecified, offshore and/or transit locations.

Projections

- Visitor overnight forecasts derived from TRA data
- Self-drive visits and visitor nights have been calculated using a five-year average of the percentage self-drive represents of all tourism
- Expenditure forecasts have been calculated using visitor nights as a pro rata proxy
- Care should be used when using forecasted numbers. Domestic and international geopolitical and economic events outside the scope of this report can impact both domestic and international visitor numbers, travel patterns and expenditure.

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