

Blue Mountains

Regional Tourism Plan 2004-2007



Lookout, Wentworth Falls



Background

The New South Wales' Towards 2020 Masterplan recommended the preparation of Regional Tourism Plans in order to establish a strong destination management approach for the State.

This process commenced for the Blue Mountains Region, comprising the local government areas of the Blue Mountains, Lithgow and Oberon, in December 2003.

Under the guidance of Tourism New South Wales and the region's tourist authority, Blue Mountains Tourism Limited (BMTL), Global Tourism & Leisure Pty Ltd (GT&L) was engaged to develop a clearly defined strategic framework for developing, managing, and marketing tourism in the Blue Mountains region between mid 2004 and mid 2007.

Tourism in the Blue Mountains

From the mid 1800s the Blue Mountains enjoyed a reputation as Sydney's premier tourism destination for recreation and relaxation. Even with the development of new regional tourism destinations, the area continued to welcome a large share of the tourism market.

Despite its iconic natural and built assets, the mid 1990s saw a stagnation in visitor numbers, and a subsequent decline in overall visitation and visitor nights. Due to poor brand image the Blue Mountains had become overlooked, indistinct and un compelling. Its unique experiences went unrecognised.

The first step in combating this problem was addressed in 2003 with the repositioning of the Blue Mountains' image and the launch of a new brand. The commissioning of a three year Regional Tourism Plan and Implementation Program represents the next step in restoring the Blue Mountains tourism industry and returning the region to its rightful position as one of Australia's foremost tourism regions.

This plan offers a framework for delivering on the promise of the new brand by creating and connecting particular experiences to those who are seeking them.

It identifies the measurable objectives, strategies and actions which can be undertaken between mid 2004 and mid 2007 in order to achieve a turnaround in tourism for the Blue Mountains. The associated Implementation Program details specific tasks, time frames, responsibilities and resources which enable the plan to be successfully actioned.

Although focussing on a three year period, this plan provides a framework for subsequent development of the region's annual Marketing Plans, and, provides the foundations for any longer term regional strategic plans.

Terrace Falls, Hazelbrook



The Blue Mountains Regional Tourism Plan provides the opportunity to rejuvenate the Blue Mountains and create a range of unique and compelling experiences. It will see a new beginning for tourism - the Blue Mountains major employer and leading economic contributor - and the role it plays in enhancing the lives and livelihoods of its residents and its visitors.

Planning for the Future: The Process

The Blue Mountains Regional Tourism Plan was developed after extensive consultation with all stakeholders. Steered by a Committee of representatives from Blue Mountains Tourism Ltd, Blue Mountains City Council, City of Lithgow, Oberon Council, Tourism New South Wales and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the development of the 'experience-based' Blue Mountains Plan included: a research analysis; a destination and experience audit; local industry and council consultation; and external industry consultation.

Based on findings from these activities, GT&L:

- Conducted a SWOT Analysis;
- Recognised the region's 'Core Experiences';
- Identified best prospect target markets;
- Created a unique selling proposition;
- Developed a Vision, Objectives, Strategies and Actions, and
- Prepared an Implementation Plan.

Solitary Restaurant, Katoomba



Delivering on the Brand

Following the development of the Blue Mountains brand in 2003, the plan looks to deliver on the promise of this new brand by creating and connecting particular experiences to those who are seeking them.

CORE EXPERIENCES

Four core experiences were identified as the key appeals of the Blue Mountains:

- Nature Based Experiences
- Heritage Experiences
- Arts and Culture Experiences
- Indulgence and Rejuvenation Experiences.

TARGET MARKETS

Based on the See Australia (2000) market segmentation study, the target markets which best match the Blue Mountains destination image, experiences, activities, infrastructure and objectives are:

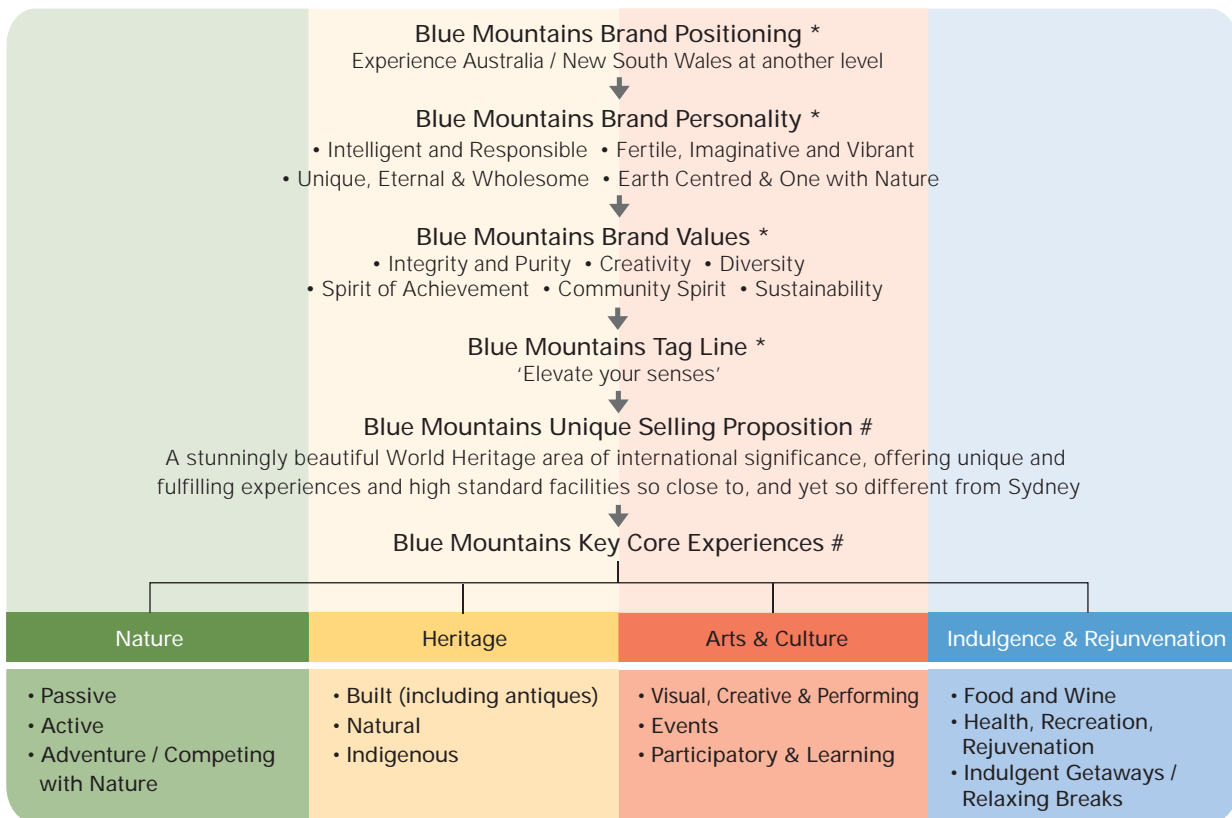
- Pampadours – luxury travellers (overnight prime market)
- True Travellers – adventure travellers (overnight prime market)
- Wanderers – touring travellers (overnight prime market)
- Groupies – peer group travellers (backpackers)
- Compatriots – family travellers (for day visitation)

GEOGRAPHIC TARGET MARKETS

The Blue Mountains Regional Tourism Plan also identifies the following target geographic markets:

- Domestic: Sydney
- International: UK, Germany, and USA

The following diagram illustrates how the Plan's framework for developing visitor experiences is linked to the brand positioning. The Blue Mountains brand encapsulates the key elements of the region which make it unique and thereby distinguish it from other tourist destinations.



* denotes steps undertaken during the Blue Mountains brand development exercise in 2003.

represents the associated elements subsequently determined during development of the Blue Mountains Regional Plan in 2004.

Leura Village Fair



Zig Zag Railway





The Vision

“The Blue Mountains region will become Australia’s premier nature-based recreation destination and an internationally recognised leader in sustainable tourism practices!”

Anvil Rock, Blackheath

Moving Forward

The following objectives and associated strategies are to be implemented over the next three years to return the Blue Mountains region to its rightful position as one of Australia’s foremost tourism regions.

1. BRAND DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

Strengthening of the brand and regional appeal through development of a compelling unique selling proposition and the delivery of iconic, memorable experiences that connect with best prospect customers.

- 1.1 Institute a brand management and marketing strategy aimed at maximising stakeholder involvement and joint ownership.
- 1.2 Develop a compelling and unique point of differentiation for the region.
- 1.3 Develop a range of experiences based on core visitor appeals and connect them with the sectors of the market seeking them.

2. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

Increase in the positive economic and social contribution of tourism through the achievement of sustainable and measurable growth, profitability and yield for the tourism industry and all businesses that provide service to visitors and the tourism industry.

- 2.1 Institute an effective and targeted marketing program aimed at increasing visitor engagement, expenditure and length of stay.
- 2.2 Broaden the engagement of visitors with communities to strengthen their appreciation of the local area’s culture and heritage.

3. SUSTAINABILITY

Destination development and marketing practices which help protect and promote the region’s heritage assets and values through sustainable tourism initiatives.

- 3.1 Work with councils / major land management agencies to
 - (i) Develop monitoring strategies that identify / mitigate adverse visitor impacts and
 - (ii) Facilitate more harmonious interaction between visitors, communities and the environment
- 3.2 Develop authentic Indigenous heritage experiences for visitors.

4. EXPERIENCE / PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Establishment of cooperative networking, marketing, development and communication amongst the tourism industry, the broader business community and municipal councils throughout the region as the foundation for future development and enhancement of visitor experiences.

- 4.1 Encourage the establishment of business networks related to the development of robust and identifiable experiences and of complementary business opportunities. (Refer to proposed model for Blue Mountains Experience Network)

5. FUNDING

Securing of appropriate resources for the promotion and development of sustainable and profitable tourism.

- 5.1 Establish a broader and more adequate and equitable funding base for the better promotion of the Blue Mountains brand and the broadening of the economic outcomes from tourism.

6. IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY

Improvements in the delivery of professional visitor services through enhanced training, accreditation and a better understanding of visitors, their needs, aspirations and levels of satisfaction.

- 6.1 In association with relevant business and industry associations, establish training and accreditation programs to encourage improved customer service and business management.
- 6.2 Develop a regular visitor exit or post visit survey as the basis for monitoring visitor needs, aspirations and satisfaction levels.

7. ENHANCED VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Delivery of an enhanced visitor experience through the development of improved and integrated interpretation and information provision, and facilitation.

- 7.1 Based on the experience development strategy, undertake a comprehensive information and interpretive strategy to appropriately guide, inform and ensure engagement with the area’s experiences.

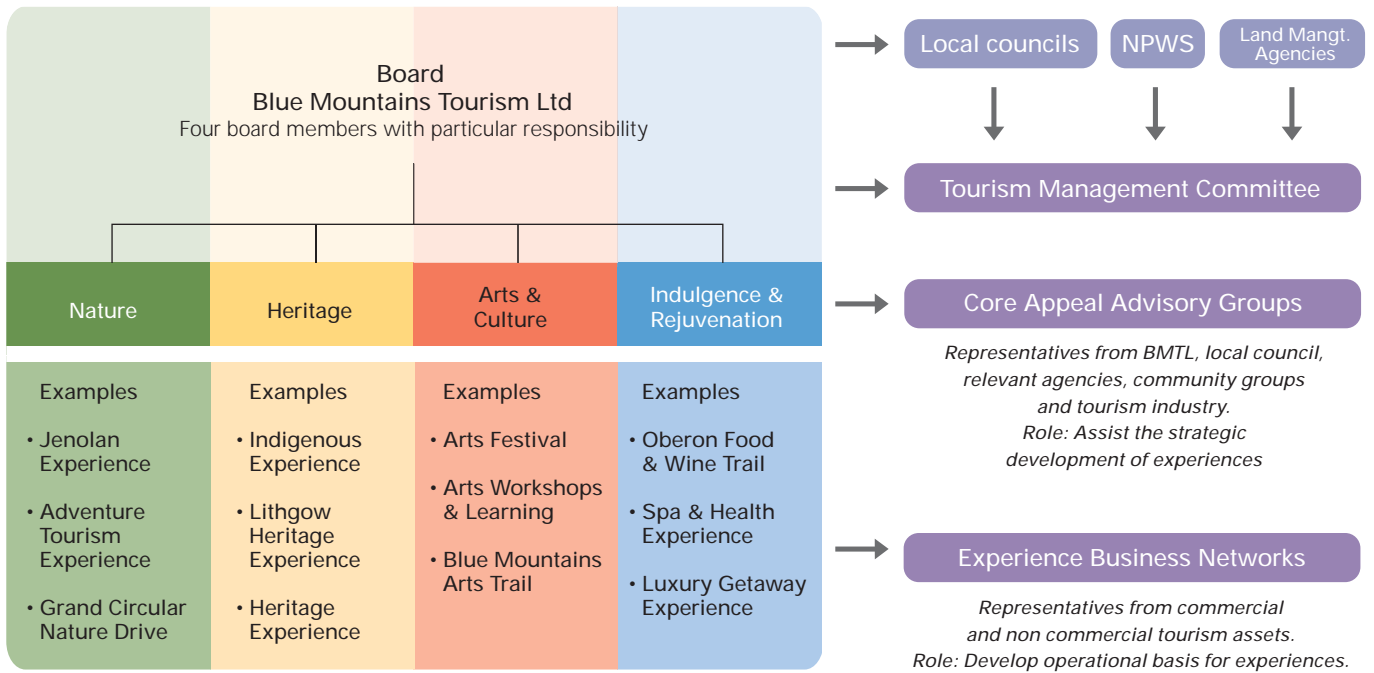
Making it Happen

The Implementation Program which accompanies the Regional Plan, identifies 70 specific tasks to be undertaken from June 2004, including responsibility, timing and, where applicable, additional budget requirements.

Whilst all tasks are considered important steps to ensuring the plan's success, key priorities identified include:

- Staging workshops as a means of establishing Core Experience Business Networks and Advisory Groups, and subsequently developing experience based touring routes;
- Developing experience based cooperative marketing opportunities targeting qualified market segments;
- Achieving a balance in cooperative and brand advertising;
- Creating a Tourism Management Committee represented by BMTL, local councils and land management agencies;
- Facilitating linkages between training providers, prospective employers and potential employees, and
- Introducing an integrated interpretation strategy for the region and its experiences.

Proposed Structure for Blue Mountains Experience Networks



Limestone Lake, Jenolan Caves



Plan Outcomes

The Blue Mountains Regional Tourism Plan and Implementation Program will lead to:

- Increasing the visitor appeal of the Blue Mountains region;
- Increasing the revenue to and profitability of Blue Mountains tourism businesses;
- Increasing the Blue Mountains market share;
- Creating employment growth for the Blue Mountains community, and
- Generating greater community participation in and benefits from tourism.



Grose Valley, Blue Mountains

For Further Information

To find out more information, or to obtain a copy of the Blue Mountains Regional Plan, please contact:

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To find out more information about New South Wales' Regional Tourism Plans, please contact:

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Tourism New South Wales

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