

# Capital Country

Regional Tourism Plan 2003-2006



Within regional New South Wales the Capital Country region is the probably the most diverse in terms of range of attractions and activities, the depth of its markets and its national and international recognition, flowing from Canberra. It is a region with real potential to realise the opportunities for growth.

## Background

Tourism New South Wales (TNSW) in conjunction with each Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) and other regional stakeholders, is progressively developing plans for the tourism industry in each region of New South Wales, as detailed in the Regional Tourism Action Plan that was released in June 2000.

The wider planning objective of these plans is to influence the thinking of government agencies at all levels to include the needs of the tourism industry and its customers when developing their own infrastructure, land-use and community-based plans.

By establishing a more 'holistic' approach to planning for the future needs of regional tourism, these plans will assist the longer term development of a sustainable tourism industry as identified in Towards 2020 – New South Wales Tourism Masterplan, that is:

- Tourism growth and destinations in NSW are sustainably managed;
- A positive climate for investment and enterprises in NSW is maintained, and
- Tourism in regional and rural NSW is strengthened.

## The region

The Capital Country Region stretches from the Southern Highlands to include the local government areas surrounding Canberra and in the west to Young. There are 12 Councils: Boorowa, Crookwell, Goulburn, Gunning, Harden, Mulwaree, Queanbeyan, Tallaganda, Wingecarribee, Yarrowlumla, Yass and Young. The Australian Capital Territory also participates as an active member of Capital Country and its depth of nationally significant attractions and events are a major influence on visitation to the region from interstate and overseas.

The region includes the Southern Highlands, with mature gardens, picturesque villages and a mix of accommodation. It includes the National Parks and natural areas of Bungonia, the coastal escarpment, as well as Wombeyan and Wee Jasper, providing opportunities for nature and adventure experiences. There are three wine regions, the established Canberra Region with its three sub-regions, the Southern Highlands as an emerging region and the Hilltops Region, recognised for quality wines. It is also a major fruit growing area, centred on Young with its nationally recognised Cherry Festival.

The region is popular for weekend escapes; for driving and

discovery; for its heritage, reflecting early settlement; its gardens; its importance to those who drive for sport or for recreation. There is a major motor sport complex at Wakefield Park and the region is a popular destination for motor car and cycle clubs.

This plan seeks to build on these strengths and the established markets, drawn from Sydney, Canberra and the Illawarra, but also including international and interstate visitors. They come for events, sport, discovery, food and wine or for adventure and nature.



## Purpose of the Plan

This plan provides directions for Capital Country Tourism, as the Regional Tourism Organisation to lead the development of tourism in Capital Country. It reflects the participation of Tourism New South Wales, the Australian Capital Tourism Commission (ACTC), the 12 local government authorities and the agencies of the State and Federal Governments which have resources and programs which can directly impact on the development of tourism in the region.

## The Vision

By the end of the decade the region known as Capital Country will be recognised by the people of Sydney, Canberra and the Illawarra as providing the preferred inland tourist destination for day trips, short breaks, driving and for a diversity of special interests. It will be known as a place for fine wines and food, heritage, for exploring nature, buying something different, for its attractive villages, its gardens and its vistas. Its country hospitality will leave visitors with warm memories.

# Principal Directions

The principal directions of the Plan are directed towards building on the assets and market opportunities identified in the research.

- Rather than marketing Capital Country as a single region, recognise sub-regions and districts as regional destinations in their own right, reflecting their different characteristics their different markets and market perception. Capital Country Tourism is the administrative unit, the name is a common, over-riding regional descriptor.
- Present the region as a series of themed experiences and products rather than as a series of localities, capitalising on three of the principal themes within the Tourism New South Wales strategy of nature, food and wine and discovery/drive.
- Concentrate on niche markets and products which reflect the Region's products and experiences rather than generic mass marketing.
- Build on existing products, events and experiences in the short term with immediate benefit, rather than directing resources to new markets and activities which are slower to generate yield.
- Work through project teams or networks to implement the initiatives documented in the plan, with specific tasks and outcomes to be achieved and drawing on the best people for the task. The existing committee structure would not be continued.
- Build effective partnerships with key players, particularly the Australian Capital Tourism Commission, Tourism Managers and with Local Government which control much of the network and resources, to implement marketing programs and develop product and infrastructure.

- Establish a whole-of-region strategy for information services which meets the needs of travellers and provides a professional service to the travel industry.

# Main Themes

The Plan has selected the following themes which reflect the regions strengths and market opportunities.

- A Food and Wine Strategy to build the three recognised wine regions, the Southern Highlands, Canberra District and Hilltops as key elements of the visitor experience.
- A Discovery Self Drive Touring Strategy directed to increasing visitation to the Region from the extensive self-drive touring market.
- A Nature and Adventure Strategy to capitalise on the outstanding natural resources of the Region and to make it accessible to a wider market.
- Motor Sports, taking advantage of the important role of Wakefield Park as a motor sport venue, but widening the opportunity through more effective use of the Region's resources for enthusiasts.
- Business Tourism - meetings and incentive markets, already important in the ACT and the Southern Highlands but capable of being dispersed more widely. Events are also a key element in the Plan.

# Wine and Food

The wine and food strategy detailed in the Plan has as its goals:

- To encourage the further development of quality food and wine products and experiences within the Region, and
- To significantly raise the profile of Capital Country as a food and wine destination.





The term 'Wine and Food Tourism', as used in this Plan, includes the whole experience of cultural and culinary tourism. Research, supported by the historical development of successful 'wine tourism' regions in other localities, indicates that a 'wine tourist' is highly likely to be a person whose interests include music, gardens, history, fine arts, heritage, food, design, contemporary style, and fitness/sport.

The Plan identifies specific actions on a regional level, and for each of the three sub-regions. These include securing funding for food and wine coordinators within the regions, improving skills at the cellar-door and building the wine trails. Wine and food tourism is also closely linked to the agri-tourism strategy being developed in parallel with this Plan. Many of the tasks in implementing the recommendations would be undertaken by a Wine and Food Tourism Project Team bringing together the wine industry, tourism operators and Tourism Managers.

## Self Drive Touring Market

Building visitation to Capital Country by growing the self-drive visitor markets is the goal of the second theme. This will be achieved by a number of steps to make it easier for tourists to experience the region by:

- establishing a network of quality tourist drives across the region;
- improving the range of, and access to, information on tourist drives, and
- identifying opportunities for more off-highway and off-road scenic drives.

As part of the process, priorities for both short and long term road improvements will be identified by the Project Team responsible for realising the strategy. The program will leverage off promotions such as Tourism New South Wales'

Discovery Drive promotions and will promote to the ACT as well as the Sydney region. Particular emphasis should be directed to motor car and cycle clubs, both within the State and nationally.

## Nature and Adventure

Capital Country Region is rich in natural areas suitable for outdoor activities, including walking, mountain biking, caving and bird watching among other niche activities. While many areas are already popular, there is an opportunity to expand the range of activities and develop nature-based tourism consistent with the key Tourism New South Wales theme of Nature. The Plan proposes:

- Increasing the range of things to do in Capital Country;
- Developing a range of niche markets around the products and experiences available, and
- Fostering the growth of commercial support infrastructure, including accommodation and tours and encourage new adventure tour operators from within and outside the region.

Specific actions include the identification of key 'anchor' areas for the development of infrastructure to support outdoor activities, including such locations as Nerriga, Fitzroy Falls, Bundanoon and Wee Jasper. The Plan also recommends the development of 'freedom walks' where packs are carried to overnight stops for example on the Hume and Hovell Track from Yass. Such a program would attract a new outdoors market, including international walkers.



## Motor sports events and activities

The region has a range of motor sports facilities and events, with Wakefield Park, south of Goulburn, as a major motor sports centre attracting significant numbers of visitors to the region, particularly at weekends. There are also rally and club events at other locations. The Plan proposes to:

- Position the region as a centre for motor sports and related activities in New South Wales;
- Make Wakefield Park the anchor for motor sports and expand the facilities and the range of events, and
- Use motor sports to attract visitation to the region across a range of segments.

The strategy proposes working with the relevant agencies to facilitate the expansion of Wakefield Park and to encourage such activities as driver training, conference and incentive events.



## Other markets

The coach market is already important to the region but has potential to be further developed, particularly charter coaches on day and overnight tours. The actions involve improving the ability of operators to reach the coach companies and providing the coach companies with a regional planner.

Niche markets include conference and events, the book town project in Berrima and building the events market. Specific strategies include the development of a conference planner, assisting the development of events through coordination, communication and assistance to events. Golf is also seen as a market with real potential for the region.

## Infrastructure

The Plan identifies three areas where infrastructure improvements would enhance service delivery. Thus includes developing an efficient integrated information service, including internet, visitor information services and regional information displays and standard information for room compendiums. A priority is developing an effective database for the region through the State Tourism Data Warehouse, which is maintained by the operators themselves.

Tourism signage is a major issue, and the Plan seeks an integrated approach, working closely with Tourism Attractions Signposting Assessment Committee (TASAC) and building on the new regional gateway signs. Wine regions are an area where signage is critical to finding locations, while at local level improved village information will enhance the visitor experience, indicating where to go and what to see. Signage is also important in supporting the bypassed towns and villages.

The Plan identifies a number of areas where new or upgraded accommodation would strengthen the Region. Accommodation within the vineyards is one area where additional facilities would strengthen the wine and food strategy.

## Capital Country Tourism

The mission of Capital Country Tourism, as the regional tourism organisation is:

To provide the catalyst for growing tourism through facilitating product, infrastructure and market development, coordinating regional marketing programs in conjunction with industry and government, and providing regional leadership.

To implement the Plan CCT will establish a number of project teams, drawn from Tourism Managers, industry and other agencies which will operate on a short term basis to achieve a specific set of outcomes. The existing Marketing and Development Committees will not continue to operate. CCT will be involved in securing external funding from Federal and State agencies for regional initiatives and securing funding for project officers or consultants.

Tourism Managers will play an important role in implementing the Plan. CCT will also identify local champions who will act locally and regionally to implement change as well as community based committees to achieve change at the local level.

CCT's role in marketing the region is a joint effort by CCT, TNSW and the ACTC. The name Capital Country is a regional description rather than a brand. It is used in collateral, signage, web marketing and at local level to maintain a regional context. The positioning of the region is:

'A place for people looking for change, with freedom to move or stay, offering variety, diversity and style in a natural setting,'

The importance of working closely with the ACTC, with its resources, marketing programs for Canberra and the region is critical to achieving the plan. The importance of Canberra as a market for the Region is also emphasised.

Communication with industry is essential to ensure awareness and participation in the programs of CCT, with the newsletter being enhanced in format and content in cooperation with ACTC. CCT has limited funds and resources, and raising funds to implement these programs is an important part of its role. Funding for food and wine coordinators for example, may be through programs such as Australian Government Partnerships and there are a range of other programs and stakeholders which have resources which can be applied to achieving the strategies in this plan.

The plan identifies priority actions for Capital Country Tourism over the three years of the Plan. The immediate task is to establish Project Teams to implement the product and market development strategies. Teams to plan and implement improvements in information services and in signage, in conjunction with a number of other stakeholders, are also a high priority.

Within CCT the development of a Business Plan, the expansion of the newsletter as the major communication with the industry and other stakeholders and the marketing planning process in conjunction with TNSW are high priorities.

## Expected Outcomes

With adequate human and financial resources to implement this Regional Tourism Plan, the expected outcomes over would be:

- Higher levels of domestic and international visitation;
- Extended length of stay;
- Higher yield;
- Expanded range of specialised accommodation;
- High levels of visitor satisfaction;
- Increased cooperation, networking and product coordination within the industry with a 'whole of region' approach; and
- Increased economic employment and other benefits for the community.

## For More Information

To find out more information or to obtain a copy of the Tourism Plan, contact the Executive Officer of Capital Country Tourism Inc:

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