

Riverina

Regional Tourism Strategy 2003-2006





SOME KEY FACTS ABOUT TOURISM TO THE RIVERINA

- Nearly 40% of domestic visitors to the region come from regional NSW. 21% come from Victoria and 19% from Sydney.
- 35% of domestic visitors come to visit friends or relatives: 29% for holiday or leisure and 23% for business.
- 84% of domestic visitors come to the region by car.
- The length of stay by domestic visitors is 3 nights or less, on average.
- The key months for domestic visitors to visit the region are between the summer months of November and April.

GROWING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM TO THE RIVERINA

A 3-year Regional Tourism Plan has been prepared for Riverina Regional Tourism (RRT) to help support and grow sustainable tourism to the Riverina region.

A consultative process was carried out in late 2002 and early 2003 to formulate the Plan. Workshops were attended by nearly 100 stakeholders; structured interviews were carried out; meetings held with tourism operators and presentations were conducted for Shire and City Councils in and around the region.

2 reference groups constituted by key representatives of the region were established to test findings and recommendations for the Tourism Plan.

This paper gives a brief overview of the high priority strategies that will be implemented by RRT in accordance with the Regional Tourism Plan over the next 3 years.

TOURISM TO THE RIVERINA

Riverina is an emerging tourism destination. Tourism has the potential to become a highly valued income and employment generator in the Region.

The region attracted, in the year to end-December 2001, an estimated 1.1 million domestic overnight visitors and some 22,000 international visitors.

While the Riverina region has few major icon attractions, it can offer visitors unique agricultural; riverine and historical experiences.

ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GROWTH TO THE RIVERINA

In the course of preparing the 3-year Tourism Plan, a number of issues were identified as needing to be addressed to grow sustainable tourism to the Riverina.

- A wider range of tourism product is required, including interactive experiences and attractions and packaged tour options.
- More consistency is required in the quality of visitor attractions which, in many cases, are currently regional assets rather than visitor attractions per se.
- A higher standard of public infrastructure is required, including for townscapes and landscaping; public toilet facilities; signposting, interpretation, information bays and viewing platforms.
- Service standards, particularly in the retail sector, need to be enhanced in the region.
- The understanding and awareness of the economic benefits of tourism at a local community and at a local government level needs to be improved.
- A clear point of difference for the region, as a visitor destination, needs to be identified and promoted.
- RRT needs to be better resourced: it is currently under resourced to implement the strategies to achieve sustainable tourism growth.

KEY STRATEGIES FOR RIVERINA REGIONAL TOURISM INC.

By implementing the Tourism Plan, RRT will be poised to grow sustainable tourism to the Riverina. Some of the key strategies to be implemented in the next 3 years are noted below.

1. Income and Support

- RRT's income base will be increased to a realistic level to meet stakeholder expectations. Income streams will need to include corporate partners; tourism industry partners; sponsors; Local Government and State Government.
- Support for RRT's operations will be sought from stakeholders (via cooperative ventures etc.) and from the community and Local Government, including via education and training initiatives.
- A community awareness program will be developed and implemented to increase the local community's understanding of the economic benefits of tourism to the region.
- Emphasis will be placed on product development and marketing projects that can generate greater stakeholder involvement and benefit.



2. Improved Operations

- 2 Sub-Region Tourism Action Groups will be formed to better represent the eastern and western stakeholders of the Riverina. Representatives for the Groups will be chosen from the tourism industry and from Government etc. The Groups will be lynch pins between RRT and its stakeholders. Because they will be members of the Groups, tourism operators will become key decision makers in the region's development.
- Additional staff will need to be engaged by RRT. Specifically, a Project Manager will be required to assist with the co-ordination and implementation of projects via the Sub-Region Tourism Action Groups.

3. Product and Infrastructure Development

- A detailed tourism product and infrastructure audit will need to be undertaken to create an inventory; to identify assets in the region that need enhancement, to identify product gaps and to provide an indication of the health of the tourism industry (occupancy levels, yield and return on investment etc.).
- The tourism product base in the region will be substantially developed over time, including by facilitating new and enhanced product.
- Industry training; up-skilling and accreditation will be facilitated by RRT to improve standards throughout the region and to help foster a competitive edge.
- Some tourism product options have been identified for development (see box).

4. Marketing

- Accurate and up-to-date qualitative and quantitative market research data will be accessed, results analysed and disseminated to all stakeholders.
- Marketing of the region will be conducted in a more tightly focused fashion, by placing an emphasis on building and promoting a more clearly defined regional identity based around the riverine and agricultural nature of the region.
- Special interest group niche markets will be targeted to improve the overall yield of visitor markets to the region (a yield driven rather than a numbers driven focus).
- Strategies will be implemented to build on the large VFR market to the region, linking to events, themed activities and trails.
- A marketing plan (with key result areas and performance indicators) will be prepared for the region and updated annually.

5. A New Tourism Boundary

- The administrative boundary of the region will be redefined for tourism purposes to create a destination offering homogenous product and a destination that can be more clearly distinguished from others. Specifically, Tumut and Tumbarumba Shire Council areas will be included within the region governed by Tourism Snowy Mountains (they offer an alpine rather than a riverine experience).
- Inter-regional markets and product development initiatives will be fostered with shires in the northern Murray Region and other adjoining areas.

SOME TOURISM PRODUCT OPTIONS

- New and upgraded accommodation facilities, including B&Bs; farm-stays; backpacker accommodation and boutique lodges.
- New and upgraded retail facilities, with extended shop opening hours.
- Improved townscapes via beautification programmes.
- Passive river-based activities (on the Murrumbidgee River).
- Packaged tour product to include transport options to and within the region.
- A growers' market showcasing locally grown produce.
- Trails, circuits and loops, including food trails, antique and bric-a-brac trails.
- A calendar of events and festivals.
- Cultural trails linking the galleries and museums of the region.

Tourism New South Wales, in conjunction with each regional tourism organisation is progressively developing tourism plans for each region of New South Wales. This ongoing project will assist the longer term development of a sustainable tourism industry through supporting delivery of the following “whole of government” outcomes as identified in Towards 2020 – New South Wales Tourism Masterplan:

- tourism growth and destinations in NSW are sustainably managed;
- a positive climate for investment and enterprises in NSW; and
- tourism in regional and rural NSW is strengthened.”

Expected Outcomes

With adequate human and financial resources to implement this Plan the expected outcomes over time will be:

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

The Benefits of Sustainable Tourism

- Improved multiplier effect of visitor spending;
- Employment opportunities increased;
- Diversification of the regional economy;
- Improved facilities for local communities;
- Opportunities for new business and expansion of existing businesses;
- Improved transport services;
- Potential to create export markets for local products;
- Increased educational opportunities;
- Preservation of natural assets; and
- Conservation of heritage.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To find out more information or to obtain a copy of the Tourism Strategy, please contact the Executive Officer of Riverina Regional Tourism Inc.

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