



# NATURE IN TOURISM

## What Visitors Want

Nature plays an important role in developing and enhancing tourism experiences throughout NSW.

It is the natural environment that enables visitors to relax, unwind, and feel revitalised and refreshed. This feeling is an emotional reaction to their physical environment.

It can be something as simple as waking up to the sound of birds, witnessing wildlife coming to life at dusk, or star-gazing at night with the kids.

Such emotional reactions, prompted by nature alone, have the power to turn a short-break or a family holiday into a life-long memory.

NSW abounds with unique natural assets capable of emotionally moving visitors.

How well tourism operators promote, manage and capitalise on these natural assets determines whether visitors connect emotionally with a destination.

Visitors are either so emotionally moved by the nature-based component of their holiday experience that they want to tell their family and friends about it and plan a repeat visit, or they remain emotionally detached and simply move on to another destination and experience.

The secret to successful nature-based tourism is having a clear understanding of *What Visitors Want* from their nature experience.

Only then can tourism operators provide nature-based experiences which satisfy this demand, and are thus more likely to emotionally move visitors.

### The Research...

Tourism NSW conducted extensive research into *What Visitors Want* in their nature-based tourism experiences. This involved surveying potential visitors, as well as recent travellers who had taken part in nature-based activities.

### The Results...

The research results provide tourism operators with a valuable snapshot of *What Visitors Want* when it comes to nature-based holidays.

By examining the results in the areas outlined below, tourism operators will be better able to tailor their business to provide visitors with a satisfying and memorable nature-based tourism experience.





## NATURE IN TOURISM – What Visitors Want cont'd

### The Role of Nature in the Holiday Experience

Trying to define the role that nature plays in the holiday experience is difficult. The only clear conclusion to be drawn from research is that nature plays a very diverse role. It can:

1. *Enhance the experience* – meaning the natural environment forms a picturesque and relaxing backdrop to a particular activity. It adds to the emotional connection a visitor forms with a destination or experience.
2. *Be crucial to the experience* – meaning the holiday activity would not exist or would be severely compromised without nature. This type of holiday experience is about being immersed in, and surrounded by, nature.

*Nature is shorthand for relaxing and becoming revitalised and escaping the stresses of the city.*

It is vital that tourism operators recognise and understand the role that nature plays in their destination and experience. It may enhance their destination, by providing a magnificent natural setting, or it may be crucial to their operations and thus their continued viability. Understanding this important difference will help tourism operators effectively target their marketing activities.

Nature-based experiences can be passive or active, and often are a mix of both. Visitors can relax by enjoying the passive experiences of strolling along the beach, going on a scenic drive or marvelling at a beautiful view from a lookout. Nature also offers visitors the opportunity to take part in more active pursuits like swimming, canoeing, hiking or fishing.

More often than not, visitors enjoy the best of both worlds. Getting back to nature often includes relaxing and soaking up the atmosphere one day, and then getting active the next.

### Top Five Drivers for Nature-Based Tourism

Research identified five main drivers that visitors considered important when planning their nature-based tourism experience:

1. *The lure of the beach* – visitors favour locations close to water, sand, and surf. This includes locations near a beach, river, stream, lake or estuary.
2. *A room with a view* – visitors prefer accommodation with spectacular views and which let nature in.
3. *The great outdoors* – visitors want unspoilt locations where they can do their favourite activities such as fishing, swimming and walking.
4. *Food with a view* – visitors rated highly being able to drink and eat fine food in a wonderful natural environment.
5. *Animals in nature* – visitors want to be able to see and hear animals in their natural environment.

### The Ideal Nature Holiday

Despite the varying ages, interests and socio-economic backgrounds of the visitors surveyed, a quite consistent vision of the ideal nature-based holiday emerged. It is:

- A place with bushland and water (preferably a beach).
- Relatively unspoilt and not overdeveloped.
- A location with enough people around for security, but not overcrowded.
- Quiet with fresh air.



## NATURE IN TOURISM – What Visitors Want cont'd

- A location with some comforts within easy reach – that is, has well equipped and comfortable accommodation.
- A location with a town nearby with provisions, cafes, restaurant, crafts/antique shops.
- A place with lots of things to do whether sedentary and observational (such as enjoying the view or lazing on the beach) or more active (such as bushwalking, fishing, swimming).

*Look for new and interesting ways to let nature do what it does best – calm the soul, refresh the mind, and recharge the batteries.*

Many NSW destinations fit this ideal extremely well already. In fact, if nature was missing, this would constitute a serious gap for our domestic and international visitors.

Those destinations that don't fit this ideal, where development is insensitive and growth is poorly managed, will negatively impact on visitor satisfaction.

### Appeal To The Senses

The research also showed that visitors want to connect with nature using all their senses. They want to experience a heightened sensory awareness that may be missing in their everyday existence.

They want their getaway to provide them with opportunities to:

- *Feel* the sand between their toes.
- *Look* at the beautiful landscape.
- *Taste* the salt air.
- *Hear* the animals, birds, or nothing at all (and appreciate the quietness).
- *Smell* the flora and fresh air.

### Dare To Be Different

Just as nature provides a range of experiences, opportunities and marvels, so too should tourism operators.

The research showed that visitors don't want the same nature-based holiday wherever they go.

They want to experience something different, something out of the ordinary, and something which prompts an emotional reaction. They want to experience something special which will turn their short-break away into a lifelong memory.

Dare to be different. Dare to provide your visitors with a unique activity or physical setting which capitalizes on and enhances your natural surrounds.

In the eyes of your visitors, this will set you apart from the rest.