



# Sustainable Tourism Action Plan



**NORTHERN  
TERRITORY  
TOURISM NT**



# Sustainable Tourism

## What is sustainable tourism?

Sustainable tourism is defined by the UN World Tourism Organisation as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.”

Here in the Northern Territory, we aim to come together as an industry to protect and restore our natural environment, hold sacred Aboriginal cultures, learn from Aboriginal Territorians and enrich our diverse local communities as we share our unique and stunning backyard with visitors from Australia and around the world. We strive for economic resilience and prosperity as we work towards becoming a world leader in sustainable tourism.



## It's about people, planet and profits

Sustainable tourism ensures that development meets the triple bottom line principles of:

- Social and cultural sustainability: focuses on equitable, healthy, connected and diverse communities, providing a good quality of life for all
- Environmental sustainability: focuses on the conservation of nature and the responsible use of natural resources
- Economic sustainability: focuses on the long-term viability and prosperity of a business, industry and community.





Butterfly Gorge  
Nature Park

## Why do we need a Sustainable Tourism Action Plan?

Simply put, we need a Sustainable Tourism Action Plan because it is the right way forward, both as a government and an industry. In fact, sustainable tourism is the only way forward for a strong, prosperous and responsible industry that focuses on growth and future proofing our sector whilst positively impacting the Territory's natural and cultural environment, and contributing to the wellbeing of local communities.

Climate change poses an uncertain and unprecedented risk to the environment, biodiversity and the living cultural values of the NT. Tourism is closely connected to each of these values and is therefore highly sensitive to the impacts of climate change. Together we must be ready, reducing our carbon footprint while developing adaptation responses and transitions, so that as a connected and integrated industry we mitigate the risks of climate change, and become leaders confident in our resilience and proud of our sustainability outcomes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has acted as a catalyst for travellers to reconsider their own impact and demand more from businesses and governments to drive sustainable development.\* Sustainability is fast becoming an important decision-making factor for travellers with recent research finding that 90% of consumers are looking for sustainable options.\*\* It is important however, that sustainability is authentic, with the same research finding that seven out of ten consumers avoided a travel option because they felt it was not truly committed to sustainable practices.\*\*

Consumers are increasingly willing to contribute to the sustainable development of a region and will seek products and experiences that allows them to have a positive impact on the local community. However, a recent study found that 70% of consumers feel overwhelmed by starting the process of being a more sustainable traveller.\*\* It is therefore important for the tourism industry to promote their sustainable offerings, responding to the traveller's desire to easily understand the operator's level of sustainability and access to sustainable travel options.

## What is our aspiration?

- ▄ The Northern Territory is a compelling destination for authentic sustainable travel.
- ▄ NT tourism is a positive driver for sustainable development and the conservation of our natural and cultural landscape and heritage.

## What do we need to do?



### **Commit to sustainability:**



Sustainability is a promise we make to our visitors and sustainable travel is an experience we can deliver together, in partnership with our industry and our visitors, for the well-being of the Northern Territory community and the protection of our natural and cultural values. We need to look inwards first, ensuring that Tourism NT leads the way towards the Territory becoming a compelling destination for authentic sustainable travel.



### **Support industry:**



We need to support tourism businesses to take practical steps towards sustainability, including grant funding, education, tools and achievable actions to help future proof their business and increase their sustainable, responsible and regenerative travel offerings. Collectively this will drive a more sustainable, competitive and resilient Territory-wide tourism industry.



### **Engage our consumers:**



We need to create engaging and inspiring consumer targeted tools and promotional materials that can be used in partnership with industry to entice eco-conscious travellers to the NT and encourage them to practise sustainable travel while they are here. We need to be conscious of the risks posed by over-tourism and encourage regenerative travel offerings enabling consumers to help nourish our destinations.



### **Be bold and aspirational:**



We need a new kind of tourism that does not contribute to environmental damage, climate change, or negatively impact on our local communities, including Aboriginal people and cultures. We need to shape and manage tourism so that it is both commercially effective and environmentally, culturally and socially sustainable.



### **Respect Aboriginal traditional knowledge, cultural values and obligations:**



The NT is home to unique linguistic and cultural diversity, ancient knowledge systems and unique ecosystems. Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Territorians are experts in the management of land, waters and natural resources with a deep understanding of Country and preserving traditional knowledge for future generations of Aboriginal people. We can promote and continue to build sound sustainable practices taking the best of traditional knowledge and contemporary science.



### **Promote and reward:**



We need to raise awareness of the Territory's sustainable travel offerings, promoting hero products, events, experiences, itineraries and destinations, and supporting businesses who are on their pathway to sustainability. We need to encourage, celebrate, and reward tourism businesses that act responsibly, providing incentives or highlighting the benefits of sustainability – the bottom line advantage.



### **Nurture strategic partnerships:**



In collaboration with Regional Tourism Organisations and the NT tourism industry, we need to work in partnership across the travel, transport, infrastructure, and conservation sectors, supporting like-minded organisations to elevate our successes and achieve an authentically sustainable destination.



### **Start small and build credibility:**



We need to show that the Territory is serious about sustainability by concentrating on what we can achieve quickly, whilst continuing to aim for bold, aspirational, long term outcomes. The quick wins are a statement of intent and credibility that will encourage our industry, entice our consumers and sustain the enthusiasm of our stakeholders and partners.

## How are we going to do it?

### 1. Tourism NT: our commitment

Tourism NT will drive a more sustainable, competitive and resilient Territory-wide tourism industry through leadership, education, development and promotion. Our agency will look inwards to develop and nourish a culture of sustainability as a core value. We will:

- reduce our footprint including carbon, energy, waste, travel, and events
- use resources responsibly and encourage others in the industry to do the same
- advocate and educate for sustainability, showcasing examples of best practice
- partner with like-minded organisations to achieve greater successes
- develop and promote the Territory's sustainable travel offerings and stories.

### 2. Sustainable Tourism Grant program

The Northern Territory Government is providing sustainable tourism grant funding to assist tourism businesses take practical actions towards greater individual sustainability, which in turn will contribute to a more sustainable, strong and competitive Territory-wide tourism industry.

### 3. My Green Butler Pilot Project

My Green Butler is an innovative product aimed at accommodation providers who are dedicated to decarbonising and reducing waste in their business. It involves a mix of hardware, software, training and reporting that targets both the business and the consumers, motivating staff and guests to prevent wastage and reduce the use of electricity, gas, water and food waste. This cuts costs and carbon, increases guest satisfaction and builds reputation.

In collaboration with Hospitality NT and My Green Butler, Tourism NT is supporting a pilot project to test the My Green Butler product in both the Top End and Central Australia, reporting and presenting findings to the broader industry.

### 4. Sustainable Travel Toolkit

Tourism NT will develop and distribute a Sustainable Travel Toolkit to help both industry and consumers make a difference. The toolkit will include three components:

- 1) information, advice, tips and tools to help tourism businesses take practical steps towards sustainability
- 2) engaging consumer targeted tools and messaging that can be used in partnership with industry to educate and promote sustainable travel practices, enticing eco-conscious consumers to the NT and encouraging them to travel in responsible and regenerative ways
- 3) sustainable Travel Toolkit presentation and workshop for the NT tourism industry.



Banu Banu,  
East Arnhem Land



Glen Helen Gorge, West  
MacDonnell Ranges





## How does this Action Plan align with and meet government objectives?

This Sustainable Tourism Action Plan is aligned with the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's Tourism for Sustainability Development Goals and is designed to help the NT Government achieve its objectives of 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050.

The Action Plan supports the Australian Government's renewed focus and priorities, specifically Priority 4 in Thrive 2030:

- No 4.4 Implement an industry sustainability framework and education tools to assist businesses implement and further improve sustainability practices.
- No 4.8 Implement measures to address emissions reductions, and climate resilience and adaptation including through Australia's Long-Term Emissions Reduction Plan and the National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy.

The Action Plan is aligned with the NT's Tourism Industry Strategy 2030 and supports Tourism Australia's 2023 financial year priority to broaden the international appeal of Australia through Sustainability offerings.



[tourismnt.com.au](http://tourismnt.com.au)  
GPO Box 1155  
Darwin NT 0801 Australia  
Tel +61 8 8999 3900