

Pastoral tourism case study

Curtin Springs Station, NT

Location

85km east of Ayers Rock Resort, along the Lasseter Highway in Central Australia, Northern Territory.

Land tenure and primary business type

Diversified pastoral and tourism business. Pastoral lease and freehold/special purpose excised from lease under non-pastoral use permit to allow tourism business.

Competitive advantage

Strategic location on the main road to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and the closest visitor facilities to Ayers Rock Resort. Provides an opportunity for story telling of the pastoral industry, history and remote life.



Tourism offerings

- Curtin Springs Wayside Inn provides a range of services to support the self-drive and group tour markets, including:
 - 27 accommodation rooms including ensuite, budget and family
 - campground
 - store, bar, restaurant and fuel station
- Curtin Springs Paper selling handmade paper from native grasses and tours of paper making process
- Curtin Springs Walks providing private guided tours. This was established to grow Curtin Springs as a destination not just a support service, and to increase visitor value.



Growth journey

Established in 1956 when Peter and Dawn Severin bought Curtin Springs Station, before Uluru was a tourist destination. As awareness of Uluru grew, Peter and Dawn offered the only services to visitors. Curtin Springs was the first Central Australian tourist stop developed outside of Alice Springs and was the first Wayside Inn in the region. Business has continually grown and diversified over the years as visitor numbers have grown and as funding has permitted.

Future growth plans

Taking some time to restaff and financially recoup losses from the impacts of COVID on the industry.

Working to establish a regional opportunity for beef processing so that Curtin Springs beef can be served to customers. Currently the nearest slaughter option is 1800km away, making it a 3600km food mile journey from paddock to plate!

Viability and benefits

Tourism has enabled the long-term viability of the whole business in marginal grazing country. Ongoing fluctuations relating to income, expenses and profit from both sides of the business supplement each other when needed. Every year since Peter and Dawn's arrival, the business overall has run at a profit. Generally, what is earned from tourism is re-invested into tourism (facilities, staff, supplies); what is earned from cattle is re-invested into cattle (fencing, supplies, staff etc).

Advice to pass on to others looking to start a tourism business

- keep good data and reports – this will help with planning, resource allocation, measuring performance, comparing profit across years and identifying trends. Good data helps with good decision-making and justification for the bank!

- huge commitment of time, finances, emotional and physical energy. Do not expect that a manager will make the same commitment to a business as the owner will. You need to be IN the business every day it is operating
- have your business plan and marketing strategies in place. Being remote, covering for and attracting staff can be difficult – ensure staff have a variety of skills and are committed to be adaptable as needed
- wide range of licenses, approvals, insurances and potentially accreditations need to be in place before you open the doors
- pick your customer market VERY carefully. Do your market research – if you offer high end, you MUST deliver high end. The product you present to market must be the product you deliver
- participate in the tourism industry. Be involved with trade shows and industry familiarisations, this is your biggest support network
- sometimes you can simply just be the venue and have the touring partners take care of everything else, so always consider partnerships
- be very strategic in planning infrastructure development. You need to ensure that what you invest in will generate a return, whether it's cattle or visitors! The bank will need this evidence to support you
- choose a merchant bank that can provide front of house support and aren't specific to pastoral
- we take the stewardship of our land very seriously and do what must be done to protect what is a million acre wildlife corridor. This may include reducing cattle numbers and access, invasive species removal, fire management and native habitat protection.

Our location gets them in the door, the story is what they remember.

