



Northern Territory Drive Tourism Strategy 2021-2030

ANNUAL REPORT CARD
Year Ending December 2023

This is the second annual report card for the Northern Territory Drive Tourism Strategy 2021–2030 (the Drive Strategy), detailing outcomes of the year ending December 2023, towards developing the Northern Territory (NT) offering as a drive destination for the holiday market.

“ To deliver self-drive outback adventure experiences that showcase the Territory’s iconic natural environments and unique cultural identity. ”

The NT Drive Tourism Strategy, launched in 2021, was developed to accelerate drive tourism in the Territory.

The Northern Territory boasts a plethora of road trip options to suit both adventurous 4WD enthusiasts and motorists who prefer sealed roads. The Territory’s vast and unique landscape provides significant opportunities for self-drive holidays and economic development opportunities for our regions.

Unlocking these opportunities requires the collaborative effort of stakeholders.

A project implementation team led by Tourism NT oversees delivery of the strategy and progress is reported in this annual report card.

Key outcomes of the year ending December 2023
Total self-drive visitors to the NT were 792,000, up 12% on YE Dec 2022. The spend for self-drive visitors for the same period for the NT was \$867 million, up 6.1% compared to YE Dec 2022.



The Drive Strategy has four key focus areas:



Attract new growth markets:
increasing visitor numbers.



Improve the current visitor experience:
increasing length of stay.



Increase regional dispersal:
improving outcomes for regional areas.



Enhance brand reputation:
attracting key visitor markets.

Achievements under the strategic pillars in 2023



Enabling Infrastructure:

infrastructure that meets and exceeds the needs of the drive market.

- Mereenie Loop – Detailed design, planning and investigation submissions received and assessed. Preliminary stakeholder consultations were commenced.
- Kakadu Roads - Concept design for upgrades to major Kakadu tourism roads including: Jim Jim Falls Road, Kubara Road, Maguk Road, Gunlom Road, Gimbat Road and Magela Creek Crossing, presented to Traditional Owners; consultation remains ongoing.
- Savannah Way – The first 48km of sealing Carpentaria Highway to dual lane road is complete with a further 59km awarded to a contractor in late 2023.
- Outback Way – 28km sealed with a further 58km in design and undergoing stakeholder consultation.
- Construction began on a new campground in Judbarra/Gregory National Park.
- In line with DIPL's Rest Facilities Strategy new ablation facilities have been installed on the Roper Highway with truck rest areas constructed on Stuart Highway, Barkly Highway, Plenty Highway and Tanami Road, enhancing visitor amenity and safety.
- Through NRMA's Electric Fast Charger collaboration with the Federal Government, Erldunda had an electric vehicle fast charger installed. In addition, chargers in Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs began construction.
- DIPL continues to implement the NT Electric Vehicle Strategy, including grants for eligible businesses to install electric vehicle charging infrastructure.



Better Together:

strengthen partnerships to deliver our vision.

- A drive study was undertaken to gain more insights into drive visitor movements and satisfaction. This study will further form baseline data to track the progress of the Drive Strategy.
- Tourism Top End is collaborating with Australia North West Tourism and Tourism Tropical North Queensland to reinvigorate the Savannah Way tourist drive through increased coordination of marketing approach and advocacy.
- Allocated over \$400,000 of funding to local governments to improve visitor services and amenity.
- Organisations in East Arnhem reconvened the East Arnhem Regional Transport Committee to improve mapping, information sharing and advocacy for the transport network across East Arnhem Land.
- Tourism NT staff attended Local Government Association of the Northern Territory conferences to educate local governments on tourism.
- Tourism NT attended the Northern Territory Cattleman's Association annual conference to educate pastoral leaseholders on tourism diversification opportunities.
- Tourism NT and Tourism Central Australia began discussions on opening a Visitor Information Centre in Yulara.
- Tourism NT and Tourism Top End met with West Australian state and regional tourist organisations to discuss the impact of the Fitzroy Bridge collapse on visitor and tourism operators. A new bridge was built and reopened December 2023.



Achievements under the strategic pillars in 2023



Digitally Enabled:

enhancing the visitor experience through digital technology will be a game changer for the Territory.

- Telecommunications funding announced for 7 new sites under round 7 of the Australian Government's Mobile Blackspot Program, including 5 tourism sites: Banka Banka, King Ash Bay, Renner Springs, Victoria River Roadhouse and Yilpara (Baniyala).
- Additional telecommunications came online at Cahill's Crossing, Leliyn (Edith Falls), Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve, Eelsey National Park and 2 new sites at Keep River National Park.
- Upgrades to Karlu Karlu Conservation Reserve WiFi to enhance download and upload speeds.



Marketing:

enhancing the Territory's brand reputation and encouraging new visitor markets.

- Tourism NT partnered with Tourism Holdings Limited to undertake a trade familiarisation trip for 10 agents and wholesalers.
- Implemented drive tourism theming for the NT Muster 2023 trade event, the annual domestic travel trade roadshow run by Tourism NT.
- 6,500 drive guides were downloaded from Tourism NT's drive tourism consumer site, with 63,000 total visitors to the site. Total advertising impressions exceeded 45 million.
- Established broadcast partnerships with SBS's Adam and Poh Great Australian Bites and Channel 7's Sunrise.
- Major brand partnership established with GoPro AUNZ.
- Held a total of 6 public relations and social media familiarisations with a drive focus.
- Tourism NT undertook UK and Europe collaborative marketing campaign for the Explorers Way drive route with the South Australian Tourism Commission.
- Working with industry, Tourism NT undertook a dedicated Big Rivers photo shoot increasing imagery in regional locations along the Savannah Way.

Drive market performance

Expenditure by drive visitors

Darwin (excludes outer Darwin)
\$284 M (↑17%)

Litchfield Kakadu Arnhem
\$53 M (↓7.0%)

Katherine Daly
\$181 M (↓14%)



Barkly
\$34 M (↑42%)

Alice Springs MacDonnell
\$100 M (↓9.1%)

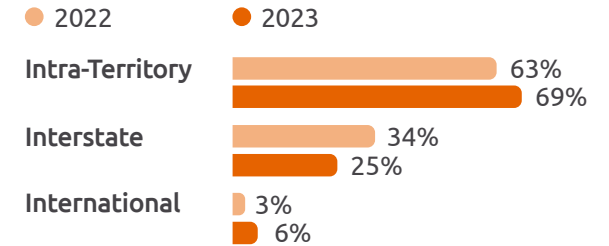
Lasseter
\$207 M (↑20%)

Regional visitor numbers and nights of drive tourists

Region		Total visitation 2023	Total visitation 2022	Average nights 2023	Average nights 2022
Greater Darwin	Domestic	314,000	326,000	2.4	2.4
	International	29,000	9,000	17.5	20.1
Kakadu Arnhem	Domestic	95,000	106,000	3.3	3.4
	International	9,000	2,000	2.2	2.6
Katherine Daly	Domestic	233,000	232,000	2.8	3.3
	International	12,000	5,000	10.3	16.8
Barkly	Domestic	47,000	57,000	1.8	2.7
	International	7,000	1,000	1.9	1.4
Alice Springs MacDonnell	Domestic	124,000	132,000	3.2	5.2
	International	12,000	3,000	6.9	2.9
Lasseter	Domestic	104,000	108,000	4.4	4.5
	International	15,000	6,000	3.6	4.9

Average length of stay (ALOS) is reported for nights.
Note: Caution is required when interpreting results with arrows due to low sample size.

Drive source markets



Top Interstate	2021–2023	2018–2020
Victoria	26%	23%
New South Wales	25%	22%
South Australia	17%	22%
Queensland	14%	19%
Western Australia	12%	11%
Tasmania	4%	2%
ACT	3%	1%

Top International	2021–2023	2018–2020
Germany	13%	15%
United Kingdom	8%	9%
New Zealand	6%	4%
United States of America	6%	6%
France	6%	9%
Netherlands	5%	6%
Switzerland	3%	4%
China*	3%	10%

*China includes China, Hong Kong and Taiwan

Domestic source market percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. International source market percentages do not add up to 100% as only the top ten markets have been included. A 3 year average has been used for interstate and international source markets due to low sample size for some markets for yearly data.

Future Focus

- Project Implementation Team members to continue to advocate and assist within their agencies to streamline the completion of full sealing of the Mereenie Loop.
- Continue to support NRMA in rolling out their Electric Fast Charger Network.
- Analyse drive study data to better inform areas for development.
- Increase fly-drive packages available through key distribution partners.
- Develop tourism telecommunications advocacy document.
- Undertake a study to identify Aboriginal tourism product and gaps on major drive routes.
- Foster stronger partnerships with local governments with the aim to encourage investment in supportive tourism infrastructure.
- Increase drive holiday deals and value-added messaging while educating travel trade on NT drive holidays.
- Undertake 'always on' marketing to ensure drive holidays are in market longer and more consistently.
- Leverage the 'difference' in market to show the NT as a unique destination to undertake a drive holiday.

Further information

For further information please contact Tourism NT:
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08 8999 3981

Read the Northern Territory Drive Tourism Strategy [here](https://tourismnt.com.au/research-strategies/strategies/drive-tourism-strategy) (tourismnt.com.au/research-strategies/strategies/drive-tourism-strategy)

