

# Gulf Savannah Tourism Strategy

2018-20



***Australia's Adventure Drive***

## **This Strategy is to support:**

- Tourism Operators
- Small Business Owners
- Shire Councillors and Officers

It contains the Gulf Savannah's tourism rationale and clear, collaborative Actions to build tourism in the region for everyone's benefit.

Please ensure all businesses, community stakeholders, Local Government Councillors and Officers and other tourism partners receive this document to build a unified approach to community benefit through tourism.

**Further information:**

**Savannah Way Limited**

[info@savannahway.com.au](mailto:info@savannahway.com.au)

## The Importance of Tourism to the Gulf Savannah

Tourism is vital for **everyone** in the Gulf Savannah, bringing many economic and social benefits.

Tourism brings approximately **67,000 visitors** to the region who spend **\$65 million** on purchases from accommodation and tours to fuel and tyres, groceries to auto electrical services.

Tourism employs approximately **14% of workers** in the Gulf Savannah and offers many a seasonal or part-time role that **enables them to live (and spend) in the region**.

**Small businesses** drive tourism, and most are deeply engaged in their community.

Virtually **all businesses** in the region benefit from visitors through:

- Visitors as customers
- Local Tourism Businesses as customers
- Local Amenity and Services that are only possible because of visitors, such as government funding for roads, flights, parks, signage and business support services

Visitors do not come without significant **marketing effort outside the region**. It is vital to motivate and convert our potential visitors **when they are planning their holiday** – possibly to Bali, Tasmania or somewhere near us.

## Tourism Industry Structure

Marketing outside the region is conducted by **leading operators** and the network of **Tourism Organisations**, who promote the **Gulf Savannah** and/or **Savannah Way** through their powerful digital platforms (Websites and Social Media), Media and Sales Distribution contacts. They also provide vital education and networking roles.

National Tourism Organisation (Tourism Australia / TA)

State Tourism Organisation (Tourism and Events QLD / TEQ)

Regional Tourism Organisation (Tourism Tropical North Queensland / TTNQ)

Local Tourism Organisation (Savannah Way Limited / SWL)

The Gulf Savannah also receives significant support from our neighbouring Regional Tourism Organisation, the Outback Queensland Tourism Association (OQTA). Other organisations that support the Gulf Savannah include Savannah Guides, Gulf Savannah Development and various government agencies. Our region's partnerships are critical to the Gulf's promotion and growth.

## Building Tourism in the Gulf Savannah

Local networks are critical to connect the Gulf Savannah with national and international market:

- **Shire Councils** can promote their destination, develop infrastructure, link events and maintain local networks. Their core connection to Savannah Way Limited brings strategic and economic outcomes
- **Tourism Businesses** can connect to mainstream tourism channels through Tourism Organisations
- **Local Businesses** can review their offerings to visitors and tourism operators

Working to promote the Gulf Savannah together, linked to the Regional, State and Australian Tourism Organisation Framework through Savannah Way Limited, is fundamental to the Gulf Savannah's tourism future.

## **The Ongoing Gulf Savannah Tourism Strategy**

The current Gulf Savannah Tourism Strategy keeps alive the aspirations of many stakeholders to build tourism in the region. Previous plans have included:

### **Queensland's Outback, Gulf and Western Downs Tourism Opportunity Plan**

Identifies several catalyst projects and identifies target markets for the Outback and Gulf Savannah.

### **Outback, Gulf and Western Downs Experiences Development Strategy 2011**

Consumer research determined that the experiences they take home - not the products that they purchase motivate consumers to travel. Recommendations were made around opportunities to create deeper experiences.

### **Gulf Savannah Tourism Research Report 2013**

Visitors across the Gulf Savannah were surveyed for key behaviours and preferences. Some key facts include:

- The Gulf Savannah tourism industry was worth \$65 million to the region in 2012. The average spend for leisure visitors was \$79.11 per day, or \$910 for their trip into the Gulf Savannah.
- 67,000 visitors came to the Gulf Savannah in 2012. 58,000 for leisure and 9,000 for business
- Leisure visitors came from Queensland (36%), NSW (27%) and Victoria (19%). 5% came from overseas
- Australian couples comprise (59%), groups of friends (16%) and families (9%)
- 69% of leisure visitor nights were spent in commercial sites, 24% in bush (or 'free') camps
- The average length of stay for leisure visitors was 11.5 days
- High satisfaction ratings - 74% 'Very Satisfied' due to the friendliness of locals, VICs and customer service

### **Gulf Savannah Tourism Futures Conference**

Savannah Way Limited and Savannah Guides hosted the Gulf Savannah Tourism Futures Conference at Undara Experience on 27 March 2015, bringing together 28 tourism leaders, Local Government and industry stakeholders to develop a collaborative strategic direction for tourism in the Gulf Savannah. Presenters included Tourism and Events Queensland, Tourism Tropical North Queensland, Outback Queensland Tourism Association, Savannah Way Limited and Platinum Member Councils Etheridge, Carpentaria and Burke Shires.

### **Tropical North Queensland Destination Tourism Plan**

This overarching plan provided a framework for the Gulf Savannah Tourism Strategy.

### **Gulf Savannah Tourism Summit**

On 8-9 March 2018 Savannah Way Limited hosted this event at Undara Experience with 44 participants sharing information and reviewing the 2015-17 Strategy to build a streamlined 2018-20 Strategy.

### **The Strategy from Here**

The Gulf Savannah Tourism Strategy continues to guide Local Government and tourism related businesses on priority areas for focused action and partnerships for better outcomes. Cooperative action in line with the strategy will build Gulf Savannah tourism through visitors' length of stay, expenditure and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. It will also significantly enhance lifestyles in the communities of the Gulf Savannah.

This Strategy document is maintained by Savannah Way Limited and updated periodically.

Stakeholder input is welcome at any time. Please contact:

Russell Boswell - Manager, Savannah Way Limited E: [info@savannahway.com.au](mailto:info@savannahway.com.au) T: 0408 772 513

## Gulf Savannah Tourism SWOT

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Strengths</i></b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Weaknesses</i></b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Opportunities</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to International Airport</li> <li>• On major, linked Drive Routes</li> <li>• Savannah Way brand and brag value</li> <li>• SWL, TTNQ, TEQ Links and Marketing Activity</li> <li>• Authentic Outback Experiences</li> <li>• Increasing diversity of Stories and Experiences</li> <li>• Unstructured Journey</li> <li>• Remoteness / Silence / Space</li> <li>• Wildlife and Nature</li> <li>• Indigenous/European/Mining/Agricultural heritage and experiences</li> <li>• VIC Network</li> <li>• Diversity and reliability of weather</li> <li>• Savannah Guides’ professional development</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Threats</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New market segments – Domestic and Asian, particularly self-drive</li> <li>• Natural assets / areas further development including Geotourism</li> <li>• Wildlife / Bird Watching / new National Parks</li> <li>• Fishing – Events, Discovery Centre</li> <li>• Expanding Shoulder / Off Season Events</li> <li>• Indigenous experiences</li> <li>• European heritage and historic precincts</li> <li>• Educational Experiences</li> <li>• More local guides</li> <li>• Pulling people through the entire region</li> <li>• Cultural Competency education</li> <li>• Increased contact and collaborative planning</li> <li>• Adapting this Strategy at Shire level</li> <li>• TTNQ / OQTA linkages</li> <li>• Social Media collaboration</li> <li>• Expanding VIC activity</li> <li>• Cairns airport artwork outback elements</li> <li>• Digital content availability on mobile phones</li> <li>• State Regulation flexibility eg remote buildings</li> <li>• Sustainability theme across industries</li> </ul>

## 2015-17 Achievements

Key Actions from the Gulf Savannah Tourism Strategy have been completed, and additional opportunities seized:

- SW website converted to mobile friendly and Wordpress platform to enable easier updating
- 11 ATDW itineraries written and loaded to enable their access via national, state and regional tourism websites
- GS Research Report utilised by several grant applicants
- TTNQ enables RACQ online and magazine promotion of three Gulf events
- SWL is monitoring the Chinese market to link operators to potential visitation
- SWL participated in cooperative stands at Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane Caravan and Camping shows
- TTNQ Touring promotion through “This is My Paradise” videos online
- SWL’s Gulf Savannah Visitor Guide increasing advertisers and distribution to 20,000 in 2016
- TTNQ funded the development of the “Lava Tubes, Gems and Gorges Trail” A3 tear off map
- “Lava Tubes, Gems and Gorges Trail” reprint facilitated by SWL and funded by Etheridge Shire Council
- Tablelands and Cairns VIC briefings on Gulf Savannah news and travel tips
- TTNQ facilitates RACQ Savannah Way / Overlanders Way strip map production
- Shires shared records of last two years of media advertising for comparison and possible cooperative ads
- Savannah Way Instagram established
- ATDW education undertaken with tourism operators by SWL
- German agent website [www.savannahway.de](http://www.savannahway.de) supported through updates from SWL
- State funded GSD program “Developing the Gulf” creates 30 Gulf videos and 500 images
- “Developing the Gulf” also included operator education on websites and social media
- Ongoing road improvements
- Rest area and fatigue management site improvements
- SWL coordinating DTMR funded signage for town entry and natural attractions
- SWL and Undara fighting new symbol instead of SW logo on directional signs at political level
- Councils, SWL and GSD telecommunication lobbying and contact sharing
- Commonwealth funded Les Wilson Barramundi Discovery Centre (Karumba) completed through SWL and Carpentaria Shire facilitation
- Savannah Guides Schools at Undara, Adels Grove, Cobbold Gorge and Burketown
- Savannah Guides support for Bynoe Tours and Gangallida Garawa Rangers’ Yagurli Tours
- GSD’s Commonwealth funded Small Business Advisory Service providing strategic advice and planning support
- Additional ASBAS NATI program, specifically tourism focused, run by GSD
- SWL Teleconferences linking the Tourism Agendas of all Shire Councils along the route
- QPWS opening three new Gulf National Parks
- SWL Manager Russell Boswell appointed to TTNQ’s Board
- SWL attempts to gather a Gold Prospecting cluster of operators in the Etheridge Shire
- Numerous letters of support between SWL, GSD, Councils and operators for funding applications
- OQTA “Outback Mates” program opened to Gulf Savannah operators and VICs
- TTNQ funded Cummings Economic Impact research document on the Gulf Savannah region
- TTNQ Board meeting at Undara June 2016
- SWL joins Mutton Hole Wetlands Advisory Committee
- SWL participated in Developing Northern Australia Conferences in 2016 and 2017, building links across the north
- Etheridge Shire and SWL develop Geotourism concepts with Angus Robinson
- Annual Gulf Tourism conference established from 2018 onwards

## Gulf Savannah Tourism Strategy – 2018-20 Actions List

How can YOU contribute to these Actions? Please report achievements to Savannah Way Limited.

Key Area	Action Area	Action By
<b>Tourism Marketing</b>	Maintain key activity – SW website, SW brochure, Gulf Savannah Visitor Guide, e-newsletter, Caravan Show presence	SWL
	Build digital content – images and words from locals and visitors	GSD, Operators, Councils
	Build media engagement / PR	SWL, TTNQ, TEQ
	Marketing campaign to Cairns, Townsville, Mount Isa residents	Operators, SWL, OQTA
	Develop international market awareness esp Europe and Asia	SWL, TTNQ, TEQ
	Build Hire Car linkages and promotions	Operators, SWL
	Create fly/drive itineraries and packages	Operators, SWL
	Expand OQTA School Subsidy program engagement	Operators
	Geocaching expansion – more fun sites and promotion to families	Operators, SWL
	Barramundi Discovery Centre campaign	CSC, Operators, SWL
	Link to TEQ and OQTA Drive Strategies	SWL
	Target new niche segments	Operators
	SEGRA 2018 (Mackay), Global Eco 2018 (Townsville) conferences	SWL, Operators, TTNQ
	Build linkages with Chillagoe, Herberton and Tablelands	SWL, TTT, Operators
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Fatigue Mgt / Free Camping Areas – consistent policy and signage	Councils
	Mobile coverage lobbying	Councils, FNQROC
	Signage – removal of old signs	Councils
	Town beautification, visitor facilities	Councils
	Google My Business Listings for attractions and businesses	Operators, Councils
<b>Events</b>	Event Calendar content sourcing and promotion	Councils, SWL, TTNQ
	Coordination of Fishing events and promotion	Councils, SWL
	ATDW and “It’s Live in QLD” listings	Event planners, Councils
	Encourage shoulder season events	Councils
	Events Workshops / Training Resources distribution	SWL
<b>Partnerships</b>	Build operator participation in marketing and SWL membership	SWL, Councils, Operators
	TNQ and Outback linked itineraries	TTNQ, OQTA, SWL
	Increased Caravan / RV park collaboration	SWL, Operators
	Create locally adapted Shire Action Plans	Councils
	Structure increased network communication	Councils, SWL
	Increase VIC collaboration	VICs, Councils, SWL
	Annual Gulf Savannah Tourism Summit	SWL
	Link to agricultural (non-tourism) projects and stakeholders	Councils, GSD, Operators
	Maintain DTMR linkages	SWL
<b>Experience Development</b>	Develop Indigenous, Bird Watching, Fossicking, Fishing, Astronomy experiences and local food produce offerings	Operators, Councils
	Strengthen branding in experiences	Operators, SWL, Councils
	Geotourism concept development	ESC, SWL
<b>Training</b>	Maximising yield for businesses	SWL
	Increase Tour Guide training through Savannah Guides Schools	SGL
	Storytelling and Experience Development Training	SWL, GSD
	Digital and Social Media inc TTNQ Digital collaboration tool	GSD, SWL, TTNQ
	Seasonal staff as regional ambassadors - resources	Operators, SWL
	Hospitality/best practice awareness training for existing operators	Councils, SWL, GSD
<b>Specific Sites</b>	Burketown Thermal Springs development	BSC
	Mutton Hole Wetlands	CSC
	Les Wilson Barramundi Discovery Centre	CSC
	Lawn Hill / Riversleigh Tourism Plan & Waanyi Cultural Centre	BSC
	Talaroo Hot Springs	EAC, SWL, SGL
<b>Research</b>	Repeat Consumer Research in 2022 and 5 yearly	SWL