

Opinion OURS & YOURS

The future is golden as number of visits soars

Rachel Hancock



The Gold Coast has long been one of Australia's most loved and recognised cities. In fact, at a global level, more than half of international travellers when considering Australia know the Gold Coast – behind only Sydney and Melbourne. Not bad for a regional city.

But recognition alone won't sustain our international visitor economy.

In an increasingly competitive global tourism market, growth comes from making smarter choices, guided by data, informed by experience and focused on long-term value for our visitor economy.

And just as importantly, it needs strong relationships with those on the ground, our strongest advocates to drive the international traveller to purchase that next airline ticket, hotel booking or bucket-list experience.

The good news is international visitation to the Gold Coast continues to build momentum. Tourism Australia data shows Chinese visitation reached a five-year high for the year ending September 2025. Indian visitation increased by 35 per cent and New Zealand remains our largest international market, delivering more than 200,000 visitors annually.

Over the past year alone, about 650,000 international visitors contributed \$1.4bn to the Gold Coast economy, with spend alone up 14 per cent year on year. And they are staying longer, an extra two nights to be exact, for an average length of stay just under 15 days.

These results reflect our approach to international growth. Traveller behaviour is constantly shifting. Visitors want value, new products and experiences and connectivity, and our strategies must evolve alongside expectations.

Research shows that, for Australia, markets with shorter travel times offer the greatest opportunity for sustained growth. Asia in particular is forecast to grow at a faster pace than Western markets, making it central to the Gold Coast's long-term international outlook.

At the same time, we need to be laying the groundwork in emerging markets such as Indonesia and

Vietnam, where the future is already taking shape.

Getting that balance right is so crucial to building our city's international visitor economy.

Aviation access and capacity remain one of the most critical enablers of international growth, and it is an area where we cannot take the foot off the pedal. With Experience Gold Coast leading the city's aviation strategy, our focus is clear. We must retain existing services while working closely with airport and airline partners to attract new routes and increased capacity.

Continuing to build stronger partnerships with both Gold Coast Airport and Brisbane Airport will ensure the city remains globally accessible. The Gold Coast is perfectly positioned to take a multi-airport approach and reinforce the Gold Coast as a leading gateway to Australia.

Equally important are our in-market relationships. Trade missions, aviation engagement and targeted business development activity all play a role in ensuring the Gold Coast remains visible, trusted and competitive.

Over the year ahead, Experience Gold Coast will continue to deepen our international engagement, including a dedicated mission to Japan later this month, activity in New Zealand alongside Tourism and Events Queensland in March, and strong representation at Tourism Australia's major Marketplaces across South-East Asia, Japan and Korea.

These missions are not just about being seen. They are about converting interest into bookings, strengthening trade capability and building long-term partnerships that deliver results.

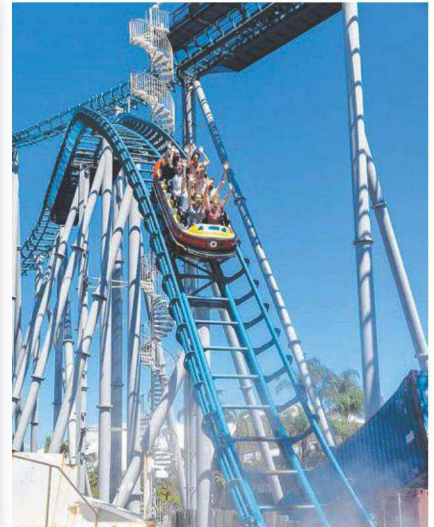
Keeping across consumer insights is equally important. How travellers are inspired, research destinations and ultimately book travel is constantly changing. Our marketing approach must remain relevant, localised and agile in each market. That means using the right mix of media, social content, influencers and public relations, supported by fresh content to ensure we get cut through, build demand and keep the Gold Coast front of mind.

Beyond leisure travel, business events and study tours continue to be quiet achievers for the Gold Coast. They drive year-round visitation and attract travellers who stay longer and spend more.



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The Gold Coast is enjoying a tourism boom, with figures showing the average length of stay is growing and has now reached almost 15 days.



Late last year we launched a dedicated international bid fund focused on Asia and short lead time opportunities, helping the city compete more effectively for business events and incentive group travel.

At a ground level, connection matters. Last year more than 1500 international trade agents experienced the Gold Coast through familiarisations and in-market

missions, involving hundreds of our city's tourism operators. These exchanges help both international sellers tell our story authentically and help local operators stay aligned with changing global expectations.

Experience Gold Coast plays a key role in championing our city to the world, but delivering a great visitor experience doesn't stop with us. It belongs to all of us. The next time you

see a busload of international visitors enjoying the city, or a group of people wearing lanyards crossing the street, take a moment to smile and say g'day. That simple welcome is often what turns a great holiday into a lasting connection – and a reason to return to the Gold Coast again and again. **Rachel Hancock is Head of Visitor Economy and Corporate Relations at Experience Gold Coast**