

INTERNATIONAL MARKET UPDATE JANUARY 2026

Welcome to the first International Newsletter for 2026!

As we step into 2026, the Gold Coast continues to maintain its position as a popular destination of choice for international visitors, with over 650,000 guests visiting the city over the past 12 months.

The Australian summer delivered strong domestic and international visitation, with travellers drawn by the Gold Coast's distinctive mix of tropical climate, beautiful beaches, world-heritage hinterland, native wildlife, world-class dining, and wellness and leisure experiences.

In the year ending September 2025, international visitors spent $1.4 billion, with key markets showing strong growth: 214,000 from New Zealand, 63,000 from the UK, 60,000 from China, and 25,000 from India. Visitor nights rose 19% year on year, highlighting the city's global appeal.

In February, the Gold Coast will celebrate Chinese Lunar New Year, the Year of the Horse, an important cultural event that will attract both domestic and international visitors to the city.

Looking ahead, 2026 will focus on building momentum and supporting our partners, sharing new stories, products, and experiences that further expand our already diverse, high-quality destination offerings, providing value at every stage of the traveller journey.

WHAT'S NEW | EXPERIENCES



Happitat

World-first cliff park takes Gold Coast adventure to new heights

Happitat brings a range of adventure activities together on the cliffs of Lamington National Park. Experience a full day of adventure across zip lines, suspension bridges and via ferrata climbs, combined with serene rainforest walks and refreshing swimming holes.



King Claw

Dreamworld has officially launched King Claw, the new thrill ride to open on the Gold Coast this summer. Reaching 98km/h, soaring 42 metres high and delivering up to 4.6Gs, the extreme attraction sets a new benchmark for high-octane thrills in the Southern Hemisphere.



ONE Dolphin Presentation

Now showing at Sea World. One promise. One connection. One future. Celebrate the bond between humans and dolphins and the hope for our oceans in this all-new presentation. Through stunning storytelling and movement, ONE inspires connection and reflection.



Scooby Doo! Spooky Coaster

One of Australia's most iconic rides is back — and it's spookier than ever! Scooby-Doo! Spooky Coaster has returned following a multi-million-dollar refurbishment, ready to thrill a new generation of guests. Don't miss the chance to showcase this refreshed, fan-favourite experience to your clients.



Hello Kitty and Friends Cafe

Sanrio's whimsical café experience has arrived at Pacific Fair, bringing Queensland its first immersive world of kawaii fun. Visitors can explore three themed spaces while enjoying a playful menu inspired by Japanese flavours, including strawberry sandos, poke bowls, and themed bento boxes, perfect for fans of all ages seeking a multi-sensory dining adventure.



Hotel Jardin

Now open in Surfers Paradise, bringing luxe dining and nightlife to the Gold Coast. Stage one features the Lobby Bar, Piano Bar with live music, and SABA Kitchen by Chef Minh Le. Early 2026 will see the rooftop bar launch, offering cocktails under the stars amid cascading greenery.

AVIATION UPDATE

Bula! Direct Flights Bring North Americans Closer to the Gold Coast via Fiji

Fiji Airways is connecting the world to the Gold Coast with new direct flights from Nadi, starting 11 June 2026. Operating three times weekly (Mon/Thu/Sat) on Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft, this service makes it easier than ever for international travellers to experience the Gold Coast.

International passengers can now enjoy seamless one-stop connections to the Gold Coast from North America (Los Angeles, Dallas Fort Worth, Vancouver) via Fiji's hub, opening up the region to more visitors than ever before.

The route is projected to bring tens of thousands of international visitors to the Gold Coast, injecting over $51 million into the local economy annually, and supporting more than 100 jobs, proudly supported by the Queensland Government and Experience Gold Coast through the Connecting Queensland Fund.

Kia Ora! Qantas makes international return to Gold Coast Airport

From 16 June 2026, Qantas will connect Auckland to the Gold Coast with a new three-times-weekly nonstop service - further cementing Gold Coast Airport's position as Australia's most connected airport to New Zealand.

This marks the airline's first international flights on this route in nearly five years, adding over 50,000 seats annually and making it easier for New Zealanders and international travellers to experience the Gold Coast.

More than 65% of passengers travelling on flights from New Zealand into the Gold Coast are visitors, and this will provide even more options, particularly for business and premium travellers – with Qantas being the only airline offering business class on this route.

The route is proudly supported by the Queensland Government and Experience Gold Coast through the Connecting Queensland Fund.

CONNECT, INSPIRE & CELEBRATE

Unlock up to $70 per delegate for your next international incentive program on the Gold Coast.

Eligible programs must include 70 to 250 delegates, a minimum 2-night stay on the Gold Coast, a formal meeting or function and accommodation and experiences booked with Experience Gold Coast partners. Programs must be delivered by 30 June 2027. Funding applies at bid stage only and not available once the Gold Coast is confirmed as the destination.

This limited time offer is available until funding is exhausted.

Click here for more information.

EVENT ACTIVITY

If you see us at the following events, ensure you call past and say hi!

- Destination Australia 2026, 19 March 2026
- Queensland is Calling New Zealand 2026, 24 - 27 March 2026
- ATE26, 10 - 14 May 2026

Experience Gold Coast acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are situated, the Kombumerri families of the Yugambeh Language Region. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and recognise their continuing connections to the lands, waters and their extended communities throughout Southeast Queensland.

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