

INTERNATIONAL MARKET UPDATE
JUNE 2026



INTERNATIONAL TEAM UPDATE: ATE 2026

Experience Gold Coast was proud to attend Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) 2026 in Adelaide, alongside more than 35 of our valued industry partners.

ATE provides an important platform to connect with international travel buyers, wholesalers and distribution partners from across the globe, helping reinforce and strengthen existing relationships, while fostering new business relationships and opportunities for the Gold Coast.

Across the event, the Experience Gold Coast conducted more than 250 appointments, showcasing the breadth of our destination's tourism offering, including new experiences and products.

We extend our sincere thanks to all participating industry partners for your

collaboration and look forward to reconnecting with our global distribution partners next year at ATE 2027 in Sydney.



WHALE WATCHING: A MUST-EXPERIENCE GOLD COAST WINTER ATTRACTION

Each winter, the Gold Coast becomes the stage for one of nature's most extraordinary spectacles, as an estimated 35,000 humpback whales migrate along Australia's iconic Humpback Highway.

From late May through early November, these gentle giants pass remarkably close to our coastline, transforming the Gold Coast into one of Australia's premier whale watching destinations.

What makes the Gold Coast experience unique is the rare combination of world-class marine encounters and exceptional accessibility. With deep ocean waters located just minutes offshore, visitors can depart from Main Beach, Surfers Paradise or Coolangatta and be watching whales breach, tail slap and play within 20–30 minutes.

Whether enjoying a luxury cruise, an intimate eco-safari, or spotting pods from the shoreline against the backdrop of the Surfers Paradise skyline, whale season delivers a distinctly Gold Coast experience, where extraordinary wildlife encounters meet premium tourism experiences and an iconic coastal lifestyle.

WHALE WATCHING GUIDE



INTERNATIONAL VISITORS TO BENEFIT FROM GOLD COAST LIGHT RAIL EXPANSION

EXPLORE THE GOLD COAST FOR ONLY 50 CENTS PER TRIP

The Gold Coast's public transport network is in for a major upgrade with the Gold Coast Light Rail Stage 3 in final testing, ahead of the commencement of services to Burleigh Heads scheduled to commence mid-2026.

The expansion will add 6.7km of track between Broadbeach South and Burleigh Heads, providing visitors easy access to Gold Coast's southern beaches and famous visitor attractions.

The extension will introduce eight new stations, further enhancing seamless connections between the Gold Coast's key accommodation precincts, beaches, dining hubs, attractions and event venues. The expansion will make it easier than ever for visitors to explore from the northern corridor through to the iconic southern beaches of Burleigh.

Adding to the Gold Coast's position as a value for money holiday destination, public transport across the Gold Coast currently operates under the State Government's 50-cent flat fare initiative, allowing **visitors to travel across the Gold Coast's tram, train and bus network for just 50 cents per journey,** an affordable and convenient way to experience more of the Gold Coast.

For international trade partners, the expanded network further strengthens the Gold Coast's position as a connected, value for money and visitor-friendly destination, supporting affordable transport and enhanced visitor experience. For project updates, click the "Learn More" button below.

LEARN MORE

GOLD COAST TOURISM EXPERIENCES SHINE IN 2026 BEST OF QUEENSLAND EXPERIENCES PROGRAM

The Gold Coast's tourism industry has once again been recognised among Queensland's leading visitor destinations, with a record 372 local tourism experiences acknowledged through the 2026 Best of Queensland Experiences Program.

Delivered by Tourism and Events Queensland, the nation-leading program supports the growth and delivery of high-quality visitor experiences across the state, recognising operators demonstrating excellence in customer experience, digital capability and industry best practice.

To achieve recognition, tourism businesses must meet a comprehensive set of criteria, including consistently strong customer reviews, a high-quality online presence, secure booking capability, industry accreditation, and active engagement with their local tourism organisation.

This year also marks the introduction of new Gold and Silver status tiers alongside the established Teal status, providing additional recognition for top-performing operators while maintaining a clear benchmark for tourism quality across Queensland.

The Gold Coast's 2026 Gold status experiences highlight the strength, diversity and maturity of the region's visitor economy, spanning immersive touring experiences, nature-based attractions, wellness retreats, premium accommodation and dining experiences.

Congratulations to the Gold Coast's 2026 Best of Queensland Gold status experiences:

- Australian Sunset Safaris
- Citrique Restaurant at JW Marriott Gold Coast
- Currumbin RSL
- Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary
- Go Ride a Wave Surf School & Hire
- Gwinganna Retreat & Spa
- Hopo Gold Coast Ferry & Sightseeing Cruises
- Hot Air Balloon Gold Coast
- Jet Ski Safaris
- JW Marriott Gold Coast Resort & Spa
- Kiff & Culture
- Odyssey Jet Ski Tours
- One Spa at RACV Royal Pines Resort
- RACV Royal Pines Resort Gold Coast
- Sea World Cruises & Buffet Dinner Cruise
- Sea World Whale Watch
- Southern Cross Tours

The strong result further reinforces the Gold Coast's position as one of Australia's leading tourism destinations and highlights the ongoing commitment

of local operators to delivering exceptional visitor experiences across the region.

To view the full assessment criteria and current Best of Queensland Experiences listings, visit Tourism and Events Queensland.

WELCOME TO THE TEAM: SUSAN GRIFFITHS

We're delighted to welcome Susan Griffiths to the team as our new International Marketing Specialist (SE Asia, India & Taiwan). Susan brings fresh energy and regional expertise to these key markets, and many of you may already know her or have crossed paths with her across the region. She looks forward to reconnecting with familiar faces and building new relationships with suppliers and stakeholders alike.

You can find all details for our team below.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Gold Coast Marathon, 4-5 July**
- **Pacific Airshow Gold Coast, 14-16 August**
- **Boost Mobile Gold Coast 500, 23–25 October**

EXPERIENCE GOLDCOAST.

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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