



Norfolk Island Revamps Tourism Thrust to Boost Visitor Numbers

Australia's closest and most accessible overseas destination, Norfolk Island, has totally revamped its tourism thrust to capitalise on opportunities arising from the global financial crises.

In the most wide ranging changes yet, Norfolk Island Tourism has implemented a five year tourism blueprint to broaden the island's appeal, develop new product, upgrade service standards and streamline booking channels.

The revamp was announced at today's opening of the island's inaugural Norfolk Island Tourism Exchange (NITE) by Tourism Minister Geoff Gardner.

New initiatives in place or underway include:

- a Marketing Partnership Program with the 11 wholesalers selling Norfolk Island in Australia
- increased focus on co-operative partnerships with wholesalers in New Zealand
- rebranding of the destination to change the perception of the island in key target market segments
- conducting the Norfolk Island Tourism Exchange biannually to enable wholesalers and travel agents to meet directly with island tourism operators to develop holiday packages and experiences
- establishing Norfolk Island as a cruise destination with visits from Carnival Australia and a range of expedition cruise ships in 2010
- overhauling the island's retail sector based on findings from a comprehensive retail survey into visitor shopping requirements in conjunction with a leading retail expert from James Cook University
- upgrading the island's special events program to attract a wider range of visitors of all ages and interests, and
- the appointing a dedicated Marketing Manager to support the Marketing Partnership Program and seek out new ways to promote Norfolk Island as an affordable and exciting holiday destination.

Mr Gardner said Norfolk Island was ideally located to provide convenient and easily accessible holidays for increasing numbers of Australians and New Zealanders affected by the global downturn.

"Large numbers of people are still looking for offshore breaks, but rather than fly to the US, Europe, Asia or even Fiji or the Cook Islands they will find that their dollars go further and they can stay longer on Norfolk Island," he said.

"This is especially so with Australians, because Norfolk Island is an A-dollar destination and there are no exchange rates to deal with."

Mr Gardner said Norfolk Island's five year tourism strategy aimed to achieve 350,000 commercial visitor nights a year and a 50 per cent increase in visitor spend by June 2012.

"Tourism is far and away Norfolk Island's most important industry, and with Australia and New Zealand accounting for more than 95 per cent of total arrivals we are determined to get those markets humming."

Detailing the new initiatives, Norfolk Island Tourism General Manager Terry Watson said the Marketing Partnership Program would see at least \$1m a year channeled into consumer advertising programs to raise the island's profile and promote holiday packages.

"Recent research shows that more than 80 per cent of our visitors book through the trade, so we are determined to protect and enhance our relationship with wholesalers and travel agents to keep these channels as open as possible," Mr Watson added.

He said \$1m had been allocated to a series of television and print ads in the current financial year, while 16 Australian and New Zealand wholesalers were taking part in the tourism exchange.

"We are looking at staging the exchange every two years to enable our wholesalers to update on product and speed date new packages and experiences with local operators."

Mr Watson, who moved to the island after running Tweed Tourism in northern New South Wales, said extensive branding work had resulted in a new-look travel planner and visitor maps and the appointment of a specialist marketing manager to drive our marketing program and work directly with the trade in Australia and New Zealand.

"We are also working with the region's biggest cruise ship operator, Carnival Australia, about an annual cruise program beginning with visits by the *Pacific Sun* next year which carries 1950 passengers.

"This has an historic edge to it because Carnival operates P&O Cruises, which pioneered cruising in this part of the world by sending the *Strathaird* from Sydney to Norfolk Island in 1932.

"But one of the most exciting developments of all is what's come out of an extensive study by James Cook University retailing expert Bruce Prideaux, who believes we can greatly enhance our positioning as a shopping destination.

"Norfolk Island has long enjoyed a reputation for duty free and low cost shopping, and Bruce's recommendations cover everything from a makeover of the Burnt Pine shopping precinct to a major overhaul of service standards and product range."

Home to descendants of the Bounty mutineers, Norfolk Island boasts its own language, a colourful convict history, dramatic coastal scenery, pristine beaches, coral lagoons, 35 restaurants and cafes, low cost shopping, one of the world's most scenic golf courses and such exciting adventure activities as kayaking, mountain biking and scuba diving.

For general information visit www.norfolkisland.nf.

Media contacts:

Bill Gray/Sarah Vickery

Released: March 19, 2009.

MG Media Communications

02 9904 0011