

# CEO Commentary

## Tasmanian Tourism Snapshot for the year ending June 2014



The latest results from the Tasmanian Visitor Survey continue to back up the anecdotal evidence I regularly receive from the local industry. That is, that Tasmania has been seeing significant gains in terms of visitor numbers, nights being spent in the state, visitor spending and holiday arrivals.

The latest results for the 2013-14 financial year show that around 1 058 000 interstate and international visitors came to Tasmania on regular air and sea passenger services during the 12 months to June 2014. This was substantially more than the 961 000 people who visited us during the previous financial year.

The amount of money they spent in Tasmania is also really important, so it was great to see total visitor expenditure grow by 18 per cent. It means that in the 2013-14 financial year, our visitors actually spent on average, more per person and more per night when they were here, than they did in the previous financial year. For example, average spending per visitor grew from \$1 519 to \$1 633.

The latest figures also reveal that the total nights our visitors spent in the state during the financial year grew by 12 per cent to around 9.44 million nights, or just over 1 million more nights than the same time last year. That represents an increase in their average length of stay in Tasmania from 8.7 nights to 8.9 nights.

I am especially pleased to see that the number of interstate and international visitors who came here specifically for a holiday grew by 25 per cent to 478,300 visitors. Tourism Tasmania's promotional efforts focus on the holiday travel market, so it is pleasing to see strong results like this.

And while visitors from our key source markets of Victoria and NSW grew by three per cent and 11 per cent respectively, the standout performer for Tassie during the year was Queensland with a gain of 30 per cent.

Our economic and market analysis last year and earlier this year showed there was great potential for Tasmania to attract more visitors from Queensland, and these latest figures bear this out. They show that we attracted 150 800 visitors from Queensland in 2013-14, which was about 35 000 more than in 2012-13.

The result validates our marketing efforts in Queensland last spring to capitalise on the research and the additional airline capacity out of Brisbane. This opportunity remains and we are currently promoting Tasmanian holidays in Brisbane as part of our *Go Behind the Scenery* campaign for spring.

The latest Tasmanian Tourism Snapshot also continues to reveal the important role that our air and sea carriers play in the overall success of the industry. According to the latest aviation figures, during the 2013-14 financial year our airline partners provided almost 4.06 million seats between Tasmania and Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

This represented a four per cent increase in airline seat capacity to Tasmania during the year. In fact, we saw increased capacity on almost all routes between Hobart, Launceston, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, which undoubtedly contributed to the 10 per cent growth in visitors travelling to our state by air.

However, the airlines were not the only carriers to attract and benefit from more passengers. In 2013-14 we also saw around 112 000 interstate and international visitors travelling on the Spirits of Tasmania, which is about 10 per cent more than in the previous financial year. The Spirit's return to positive passenger growth is good news for the state and the regions, which all showed positive growth in the latest figures.

It is good to see all four regions sharing the gains. It validates our observations from the *Go Behind the Scenery* campaign regarding the popularity of the regional itineraries, touring packages and regional content being promoted through the campaign.

Of course, achieving results like these in each region is not a solo effort. Our four regional tourism organisations play an important role in marketing our state, and I look forward to working closely with each of them over the coming year to get our visitors going behind the scenery and exploring beyond the major population centres. In doing so, I encourage you all to support and keep in touch with your regional tourism organisation. It's the only way to make sure their marketing and industry development efforts best represent your interests.

The latest results for Tasmania regarding international holiday visitors were also very positive. According to the International Visitor Survey, the number of visitors who came to Tasmania from overseas last financial year increased by 4 per cent to 162 300 visitors. This was driven by a substantial 18 per cent increase in international visitors coming here specifically for the purpose of holidaying in the state.

It was also good to see that most of our main international markets showed growth, especially the USA and Asia. Almost 52 000 visitors came to Tasmania in 2013-14 from our four most important Asian markets of China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. This is the largest number of visitors ever from these combined markets, and is evidence that the realignment our international marketing resources over the last eighteen months is starting to bear fruit.

In fact, I have only just returned from our 2014 Asia Sales Mission. This year, 16 Tasmanian operators joined me to promote the state and their businesses through face to face meetings with over 300 senior travel agent, airline, media and Tourism Australia representatives in Singapore, Malaysia, China and Hong Kong. Last year, six operators joined me for our Asia Mission, so having 16 join me this time for the sales mission, was a fantastic show of support and commitment by our tourism industry to the Asia region.

Major programs like the 2014 Asia Sales Mission and our *Go Behind the Scenery* campaign are the precursor to a very hectic and exciting season ahead for Tourism Tasmania. Not only will we be hosting some of the world's most influential foodies here for Tourism Australia's *Invite the World to Dinner* gala event in November, but there's also the possibility of a visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping the same month. These two events alone are expected to generate significant awareness and word of mouth endorsement for Tasmania, and I encourage you to consider how you are preparing your business for what may follow.

As we work towards these events, our new Executive Director of Marketing, Guy Taylor, is settling in well and I look forward to him applying his own stamp on our five year marketing strategy and plans. We now have our new Chairman, James Cretan, and two new Directors, which also brings our Board back to full strength.

These appointments, combined with our existing team of passionate and skilled people, will set us up well for the future. Right now, we have a really busy season ahead to focus on, and with the support of the new team, I am confident that we will have many more good news stories to share with you this year.

**John Fitzgerald**  
**CEO, Tourism Tasmania**