

Tourism and Demography



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Families in Nature Tourism

Introduction	56
Nature Tourism in North Queensland	56
Families in Nature Tourism	57
Methodology	58
Findings	59
Implications for the Future of Family Tourism	65
Conclusion	67

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Families in Nature Tourism: Trends in Holiday Locations and Activities

Heather Zeppel and Jonathan Sibtain

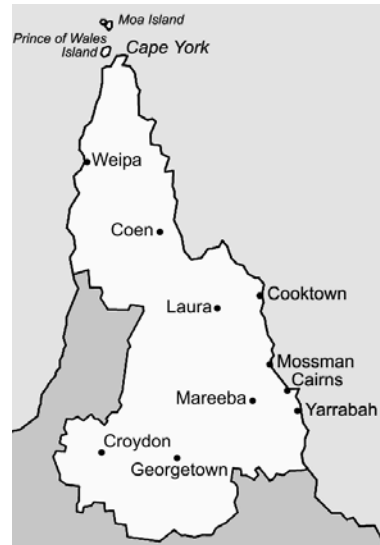
Objectives

The purpose of this chapter is to:

- ◆ Review key trends in nature tourism holiday locations and activities for families;
- ◆ Provide a demographic and holiday profile of families visiting Cairns, Australia;
- ◆ Evaluate choice of family accommodation and nature tourism activities in Cairns;
- ◆ Assess family motivations for travel and selection of alternative destinations;
- ◆ Highlight key demographic and product trends for families in nature tourism.

Introduction

This chapter reviews family participation in nature-based tourism in Cairns, Australia, where the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics rainforests are key drawcards. There are a large number of nature tourism experiences for families and other visitors in Cairns, based around reef, rainforest, and wildlife attractions. However, the family tourism market segment has been little studied in Cairns. Key demographic and product trends for families in nature tourism include the smaller size of most families, level of discretionary income and choice of nature-based locations and activities.



In developed countries, a notable trend is the decreasing size of families. In Australia in 1911 the average household was composed of around 4.5 people but today the average household size is around 2.6 (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2008). The number of blended families and step-families in Australia has also increased by 50% in the past decade (Kurosawa, 2009). In terms of holiday destination choice, families, depending on family size, children's ages and parental incomes, limit their choice of holiday locations and activities. However, 'there is a strong demand for nature holidays which are suitable for families that are also affordable and not too physically intimidating' (Preece *et al.*, 1997). This includes outdoor activities, wildlife attractions, nature-based theme parks, beach resorts and cruises targeting families. This chapter explores family participation in nature-based tourism. It discusses key factors such as nationality, age, income, family type and activities.

Nature Tourism in North Queensland

The international tourist destination of Cairns in Tropical North Queensland, Australia, offers a large number of nature tourism experiences for visitors ranging from wildlife parks, marine activities on the Great Barrier Reef, rafting and river cruises, walking tracks, waterfalls and other activities in the Wet Tropics rainforest. Family-based nature tourism in Cairns is a subject that has received little coverage or research attention. Family

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