



TAMAR RIVER/kanamaluka

Destination Action Plan 2016–2019

July 2016

SUPPORTED BY





Acknowledgments

The development of the Tamar River/kanamaluka Destination Action Plan has been facilitated by Tourism Northern Tasmania with the support of the Department of State Growth.

The process brought together representatives from all stakeholder groups that benefit from the visitor economy; local government, state government agencies, industry and the community, to develop a plan. This Plan seeks to identify the challenges and opportunities facing the Tamar River and to establish achievable affordable priorities that if delivered would increase the Tamar River competitiveness.

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Images used within this document are courtesy of Tourism Tasmania, Rob Burnett, Richard Strong, Kylie Crerar, Chris Crerar.



Introduction

Tourism Northern Tasmania is supporting the Destination Action Plan process for the Tamar River in recognition of the potential of the region, and to build on the key pillars of the Northern Tasmania Destination Management Plan.

The Destination Action Plans are an implementation initiative of the Tasmanian Visitor Economy Strategy 2015-2020 (T21): Priority #4: Building capability, capacity and community.

A core strategy is to recognise that visitors to the region are primarily attracted to destinations and experiences. Therefore the development, marketing and management of the region's destinations are pivotal to the success of the whole region.

The Destination Action Plan for the Tamar River identifies priority strategies and actions which if implemented over three years will enhance competitiveness of the Tamar River as a primary visitor destination of the region. These strategies will also facilitate regional collaboration and cooperation.

The Plan has been prepared by a facilitated workshop process involving business and community representatives who considered and reached consensus on tourism development, marketing and management opportunities and challenges. The group then identified and agreed on the key priorities and actions that would make a positive difference to the growth and sustainability of the Tamar River visitor economy and experience.



General description of the Tamar River environs

The Tamar River/kanamaluka is Australia's largest navigable waterway, a 70 km long tidal estuary in Northern Tasmania, formed by the merging of the North Esk River and South Esk River at Launceston, and flows to its mouth at Low Head, north of the second largest settlement George Town and into Bass Strait.

The Tamar Valley in which the river flows, features beautiful vistas of vineyards and orchards, jetties, pontoons and boats, and a contemporary mix of agriculture, viticulture, architecture, and industry both modern and heritage, making for a rich community proud to share stories and lifestyle with visitors to the region.

Objectives

The common objectives for tourism are:

1. To increase visitor numbers
2. To increase visitor length of stay
3. To increase visitor expenditure
4. To increase visitor dispersal (geographically and seasonally)
5. To increase visitor satisfaction.



Our collective strengths

- Wine route, farm gates, fresh produce
- Tamar Triple Pass – attractions spread throughout the Valley, along the river
- Scenic river and valley vistas
- Launceston as the hub, base
- Easy airport access
- Gourmet package: wine, berries, music, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra
- Australian Maritime College – one of the best maritime institutions in the world
- International students, their friends and visitors, studying opportunities, international conferences
- Heritage-lighthouse, wooden boats
- Cycling
- Unique underwater environment, wetlands, pontoons for river access
- Narawntapu – one of the best accessible wildlife parks in Australia.



Vision for the future – 10 years time

- Australia's leading culinary and nature-based destination
- Access to river enhanced
- Higher yield
- Beautification of visitor areas, visual amenity
- Exceptional service in all businesses
- Maintenance and development of public spaces, which complements clean and green
- Increased activities, cruising, kite surfing, wind surfing, more river activities
- Retain boutique-ness
- Investment attraction – public and private
- Visitors 'connected' – memorable experience, community valued
- Well planned itinerary options – deepen the experience
- Brand positioning – delivered
- Expanded visitor opportunities
- Impress beyond history
- Play to strengths
- Exotic – value
- International flights
- Competitive option
- International conferences/global perspective
- Expose a more beautiful destination
- Interpretation – secrets exposed
- Cycling accessibility
- Expose what the locals do on a weekend – that's what the visitor wants to know!



Our challenges

- Investment attraction – lack of new public and private investment – needs social licence
- Lack of new product development and renewal
- Failure to get balance between community and tourism
- Overcome industry apathy and confusion
- Ownership and management of land and experiences
- Lack of strong leadership from local and state governments
- Complexities around management of River due to multiple agencies
- Highest costs – for port and no genuine low cost airline
- Vulnerability of operators to economy
- Exposure to risk of policy change away from tourism
- Focus on what is wrong, instead of what is right
- Lack of accessible food services and service culture
- Product failure against our aspirations.



Our opportunities

- Identify shovel ready projects for funding, development and investment
- Focus on our current natural assets and improve the experience – river, coast and beaches, product and infrastructure
- Delicious food experiences – ‘green’ – influence re local produce
- Authentic Cellar Door experiences – meet the makers, premium cool climate wine
- Increase River use (such as Pennicot Journeys, other international examples)
- Increase offshore marine attractions and activities (such as fishing)
- Gourmet food product and development – small producers, farm gate tourism
- Leverage Tamar Valley brand equity and positioning – fresh air and food
- On-land interpretation – a visitor centre to be a focal point, natural values
- Tasmanian endemic animal feature – but missing the Tasmanian Devil at Beauty Point (Tasmania’s icon) – could be a captive breeding program
- Beauty Point tourism precinct (wharf) – use the development to pull visitors north to the coast from Launceston
- Deep water port – cruise ship opportunities
- All-season destination, especially winter opportunities
- Business continuity – support to mitigate risks
- Improve visitor experience on arrival (e.g. improve signage)
- Packaging of diverse offerings – regional brand
- Utilise the ‘local’ market – Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) - pride in where I live and why
- Australian Maritime College (AMC) – one of the best in the world – scientific tourism, international students and VFR, here for four years
- Target market segmentation
- Chinese market
- Consolidate and support existing product – brand connection potential
- Build on strengths
- Visitor Information Centres (VIC’s) – future purposed
- Valley to share stories and content to market
- Coastal appeals: Narawntapu National Park, Badger Head, Bakers Beach
- Natural environment – Tamar Wetlands, Holwell Gorge.



DIAGNOSTIC RATING

Industry research has established that the following factors are present in successful destinations that are achieving the above objectives. The workshop participants considered these factors relative to the Tamar River in reaching consensus on the priority strategies and actions. A focus on continuous improvement of all these factors will contribute to the competitive growth and sustainability of the visitor economy of the Tamar River.

Success factors

Characteristics	Rating	Comments
1. Strong local organisations focused on their core role of visitor servicing.	5.0	Improve coordination. Visitor servicing focus.
2. Strong regional organisations focused on their core role of regional marketing and development.	6.1	Strengthening but work to do. Communication and engagement enhancement.
3. Local and State Government support.	5.3	Supportive but not strategic, multiple councils around river requires coordination and collaboration.
4. Strong, consistent and effective leadership by individuals or organisations.	5.5	Needs development.
5. Strategic planning for the region with economic, social, environmental and cultural objectives supported by local destination plans.	5.0	In progress, needs cohesion.
6. Consistent visitor service excellence.	3.2	Inconsistent. Need and opportunity to improve.
7. Research driven cooperative marketing.	4.6	New media challenging – Tourism Northern Tasmania to lead.
8. A breadth and depth of tourism infrastructure, experiences and events matched to market demand.	5.9	Development required.
9. Risk management plans in place.	4.7	Include visitor management plans.
10. Supportive communities which understand the value of tourism.	4.9	Attention required.



Investment attraction

- Cross use of audits
- Planning provisions
- Prospectus – desired development
- Facilitate development to attract other businesses
- Engage communities in advance.

Leverage/deepen brand (reputation) equity

- We have the recognition – how to leverage and build on it, as opposed to creating a brand
- Define the brand, or refresh it
- Identify products and services alignment
- Develop the narrative
- Consistent communication
- Top 5-10 things to do (e.g. in a month – send out a monthly broadcast so all businesses have a share)
- Community awareness and engagement
- Inform/engage local visitor market
- Media engagement.

Maintain and upgrade visitor infrastructure

- Audit of visitor infrastructure
- Weeds and rubbish removal (open up vistas)
- Contact points with the river – identify, promote, access
- Focus on key experiences and points of interest
- Signing/wayfinding audit and action.

Build and improve current product diversity

- Target visitor interests (TripAdvisor etc.)
- Audit to identify the top 5-10 or 20 key experiences
- Identify how to improve.

Industry engagement and participation

- Strategy to build LTA's membership
- Business services vs membership
- Awards and recognition
- Visitor business reviews
- Business database activation.

Visitor service excellence

- Could be a pilot/leader for Tas Visitor Engagement Strategy
- Tas Visitor Engagement Strategy
- Celebrate business and service excellence (e.g. Champions)
- Success stories
- 'Tool Kit' = best practice
- Tourism excellence program TICV
- Peer mentor program (e.g. Peppers as mentor)
- Visitor touchpoints – make them exceptional
- Excellent business partnerships
- Service beyond tourism/visitor/primary providers.



Action Plan implementation

The following Action Plan outlines priorities and actions as a guide for the Tamar River to collaboratively and cooperatively implement the Plan. To facilitate this, an Implementation Leadership Group of representatives will be formed. While the Plan identifies primary organisational responsibilities and in many cases joint responsibility, it is reasonable to expect that the Implementation Leadership Group will consider and review this progressively. One key consideration will be the availability and securing of resources to progress the implementation of the Plan in a timely manner. It may also be appropriate and necessary to involve other organisations and to seek funding for specific projects.

The Plan does not commit any organisation to the actions proposed but is a guide to pursuing priorities and actions which will make a positive difference to the achievement of the tourism objectives noted above.

The priority actions have been assigned a KPI priority rating as a guide. These ratings are:

- HIGH** within the first year
- MEDIUM** within one to two years
- LOW** within three years

Progress of implementation of the Plan will be undertaken annually by Tourism Northern Tasmania in consultation with the Implementation Leadership Group. This may result in a revision and updating of the Plan. Regardless, a new plan will be prepared in three years.

PRIORITY 1 Infrastructure development and investment

Actions	Responsibilities	Priorities
<p>1. Research (and visit other destinations) to seek ideas for contemporary development, which would add value to the Tamar River product and experience offerings and market competitiveness. Undertake this work first to identify GAP analysis. Consult with local government re a database of local priorities. Prepare an Infrastructure and Product Development Plan, with consideration to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Short term maintenance and renewal of public visitor infrastructure and amenities ▪ Development and improvements to public visitor sites, infrastructure to improve access, interpretation and services ▪ Consult with Councils to identify appropriately zoned sites for development of new accommodation and attractions. ▪ Identify opportunities to rezone appropriate sites for development and undertake public consultation as part of the process before any development proposals are sought. ▪ Prepare an 'Investment Opportunity Prospectus' of desired development of new accommodation, attractions and services. Incorporate a well-developed demand analysis and business case assessment. ▪ Facilitate cooperation between State Government, Councils and Tourism Northern Tasmania (TNT) to market the identified development opportunities. 	LTVTA, CoL, WTC, GTC, TNT, State Government agencies including PWS, NRM, TasPorts	High
<p>2. Undertake an audit of visitor infrastructure, products and experiences (accommodation, attractions and services). Identify needs and opportunities for maintenance, renewal and development including gaps relative to contemporary visitor demand and competition. Consider relevance and consistency with Tamar River market positioning and visitor expectations. Consult with Local Government re local priorities. Reference the Infrastructure Audit undertaken by TNT.</p>	WTC, LTVTA, TNT	High
<p>3. Develop a program for regular inspection of visitor amenities, services and sites to identify needs for maintenance, upkeep and visitor experience enhancement.</p>	LTVTA, CoL, WTC, GTC TVINs can ask visitors	High
<p>4. Consider opportunities to enhance the visitor connection to the river environs including new interpretation and story-telling of the heritage, natural environment and contemporary use of the river. Ensure this is not piecemeal – research and collaborate with e.g. UTAS</p>	LTVTA, CoL, WTC, GTC	
<p>5. Review the Tamar River Touring Route and its collateral (print and digital) to ensure access, viewing points, services, amenities, signing, the 'river stories' and connection to the diversity of accommodation, attractions and experiences are maximised to encourage increased length of stay and expenditure.</p>		High
<p>6. Review way finding and site specific signing (from a visitor perspective) to identify opportunities and need for improvement. Prepare a plan for improvement in consultation with Councils and TNT to ensure regional consistency. Consider opportunities to embrace technology e.g. WIFI hotspots.</p>		High
<p>7. Reference Visitor Engagement Blueprint.</p>		High



PRIORITY 2 Refresh and consistently promote a unique market positioning and brand identity for the Tamar River

Actions	Responsibilities	Priorities
1. In consultation with key stakeholders, undertake a destination positioning review process to refresh and leverage the Tamar River brand equity. Refresh the WTC Brand – connecting the Tamar Valley Brand – build on work done.	TNT – regional priority	High
2. Develop a brand positioning style guide and narrative. Encourage operators, businesses and organisations to adopt and promote the brand consistently.	Tourism Tasmania, TNT, Councils	High
3. Identify the ‘hero’ products and services, which exemplify the Tamar River brand and positioning and implement a public relations communications plan to consistently promote. Ensure that signature images are consistently used in advertising and promotion by the region and Tourism Tasmania.		High
4. To expose the diversity of attractions and experiences of the Tamar River, identify and promote the ‘Best 5 Things to Do’ each month on websites, in VIC’s and the media.		High
5. Establish regular media coverage of the stories, attractions, operators and characters of the Tamar River to inform and engage locals and for the VFR market.		High



PRIORITY 3 Product and experience development

Actions	Responsibilities	Priorities
1. Undertake a comprehensive independent product and experience audit, identify the top 10-20 experiences and consider how to improve and add visitor value. Do a scorecard – using TripAdvisor. Missing fresh produce, farm gates, generational stories, apple history.	Independent audit, co-operative approach by all parties	High
2. Identify gaps in the product and experience offering relative to market demand, visitor expectations and competition.		High
3. Establish an annual or bi-annual program of visits to other destinations to assess competition and for product and experience improvement ideas. (Refer to Priority 1). Use the Sense T project – to recruit visitors/participate in the audit.	Councils, LTVTA, TNT, Industry: Federal, RACT, UTAS Sense-T	Medium - ongoing
4. Consider the development of an events strategy including the merits of developing a new ‘signature’ event to reinforce the brand and disperse visitation to a low seasonal period. Audit existing events.	Councils	Medium
5. Explore the opportunities to develop a Tasmanian Devil Experience as it is the known brand outside the State – R&D, collaboration required.		Medium
6. Expand the opportunities to expand the free WIFI in every hotel room via television networks (use it to spread the message ‘Free WIFI’).		High



PRIORITY 4 Develop seamless visitor service excellence

Actions	Responsibilities	Priorities
1. Participate in the Tasmanian Visitor Engagement Blueprint project, possibly as a pilot destination. Identify what we need to build and invest in. Consistent flow of information, signage, interpretation, visitor centres. Requires an Initiatives Fund to get it moving (Federal, Grants etc).	4 x RTO's Tourism Tasmania	Hlgh, Medium, Low
2. Celebrate business success and service excellence via a public relations media program. This could be a monthly 'Service Champion' award for business and employees. Engage the community in a nominations process.		Hlgh, Medium, Low
3. Develop a toolkit for business operators focused on business development tips, ideas and case studies. Consider 'Business to Business' peer mentoring and a common approach to service standards and practice 'The Tamar Way'.		Hlgh, Medium, Low
4. Investigate opportunities and take advantage of the THA 'Great Customer Experience' training program and the 'Tasmanian Retailer Development Program' (State Growth). Link to Workforce Skills Audit – what a region needs to do to have an adequate workforce. TICT – customer experience programs (Tourism Boost Workshops).	TasTAFE Reg. Training Orgs (RTOs) THA, TICT	Hlgh, Medium, Low
5. Identify the key visitor touch points of the Tamar River and consider how to make them exceptional service experiences. Train the staff and volunteers servicing visitors at these touch points in service excellence.		Hlgh, Medium, Low
6. Support emerging product providers such as 'Farm Gate' – include them and other sectors of relevance.		Hlgh, Medium, Low



PRIORITY 5 Increase industry engagement and participation

Actions	Responsibilities	Priorities
<p>1. Develop a strategy to grow the membership and business participation with Launceston Tamar Valley Tourism Association. Consider a change of business model to a business services provider rather than a membership model. Use database marketing to communicate and sell business services such as networking events, communication updates, website listings, training, business mentoring, business planning, preferred supplier deals etc. Research business service needs and services offered by other business organisations.</p>	Chamber of Commerce CityProm	High
<p>2. Consider the development of a Service Excellence Awards and Recognition program. (Note TNT Champions of Tourism and Chamber of Commerce Excellence Awards).</p>	TNT Chamber of Commerce	High
<p>3. Establish a business networking event series (Business After Dark) with short 'How to' presentations and guest speakers on business development topics e.g. How to effectively use visitor review online sites (Trip Advisor), digital marketing, etc.</p>	LTVTA	
<p>4. Consider a Leadership Program – addresses community via Service Clubs re Visitor Economy. Leadership and learning: incubates and addresses next generation (refer City of Melbourne Uni graduates, differing backgrounds, local operators, casual workers in Hospitality industry). OR Secondary Schools – invite them to be part of the DAP – update websites, recruit students to help DAP development.</p>		
<p>5. Focus on Welcome to Visitors 'Tourist Police' – inform people at airports etc. Volunteers in red in Melbourne City. A call centre/a help hotline for visitors to locals.</p>		