

SUMMARY SHEET



**ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF KAKADU NATIONAL PARK  
TO TOURISM IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

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**Objectives of Study**

This study evaluates the economic value of Kakadu National Park (KNP) based solely on the park's worth as a tourism asset. This assessment is based on the park's ability to motivate a visit and corresponding expenditure from interstate and overseas. In addition, the park's ability to retain Territorians within the state for their holiday expenditure is also considered. The main objectives were to:

- Estimate the contribution of KNP to the region through tourism expenditures using the Carlsen and Wood (2004) approach;
- Compare and contrast the profile of visitors to the Kakadu sub-region of the Top End using both the Northern Territory Travel Monitor (NTTM) and Kakadu National Park Visitor Economic Survey data; and
- Provide a general picture of historical and current tourism markets within the sub-region and the broader Top End region of the NT.

**Methodology**

The research plan was based on a combination of collecting information from visitors to KNP in 2004 specifically for this project as well as leveraging the historical data available from the NTTM surveys.

**Key Findings**

The study found that reported visitor numbers have been higher than sub-regional estimates originating from the NTTM. When comparing multiple data sources, it was found that all showed a declining trend in visitor numbers. This study showed:

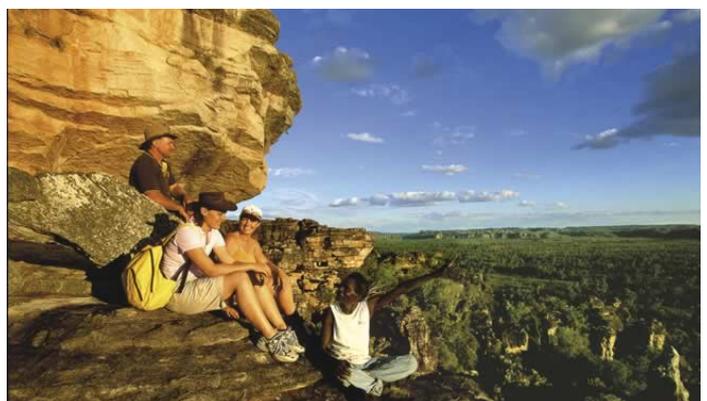
- The proportions of holiday-pleasure visitors in the Top End that visited KNP has been fairly stable;
- The decline has been with the international markets from 1998/9; and
- This deterioration in visitor numbers may not be due to anything the park is or is not doing but rather be the consequence of external factors, including restrictions in air access to the Top End.

The NTTM visitor values were used to establish the lower boundary of visitation in KNP. The information suggests that KNP ought to be considered as a major driver for tourists and visitors appreciate the Park's values and fundamental attributes in terms of a landscape that incorporates culture, nature, wilderness, wildlife and other important attributes.

Tourism contributes around \$58.1 million to the Top End and NT regions, and KNP contributes approximately \$15 million to the Top End region. This value, while conservative, represents a yearly additional financial injection in the region due purely to KNP, and authorities in charge of tourism in the sub-region would be justified to spend up to this amount to maintain the tourism assets within the park.

**Future Action**

The value estimates derived in this report must be contrasted with KNP's budgetary history, in particular by investigating the split between activities supported by past KNP budgets and the extent to which the latter support appropriate and sustainable tourism activity benefiting selected stakeholders. This would likely suggest some redirection of public funds towards the maintenance of tourism assets. Furthermore, the analysis suggests a need for enhanced coordination between the NT and the Director of National Parks to maintain tourism activities that contribute to the livelihoods of traditional owners of the park, preserve the heritage at the core of its attractiveness and provide net economic tourism injections on a regional scale.



*Guided tour, Kakadu National Park  
(image courtesy of KN-Travel Australia)*

**Kakadu National Park holds the key to the region's iconic features and yet it is not in a position (in terms of its own aspirations, resources and budgets, leadership and organisational limitations) to do everything for all interested parties.**