



Destination Riverland Inc.

RIVERLAND TOURISM OUTLOOK

ISSUE 1 • DECEMBER 2012



*Confidence in tourism investment and
excellence in tourism operations.*



Message from the Chair

I'm delighted and proud to be introducing the first Riverland Tourism Outlook to you

There are exciting times ahead for Riverland tourism as we embrace a number of opportunities that present themselves — first and foremost the appeal of our river and its wildlife, our vibrant river communities and the superb produce that the river generates.

There are encouraging signs everywhere that the Riverland's visitor numbers have grown in 2012 and will continue to grow.

In our first year of operation, Destination Riverland (DR) has adopted a Strategic Plan to focus our activities. DR is all about "confidence in tourism investment and excellence in tourism operations".

The support of our Councils in Mid Murray, Loxton Waikerie, Berri Barmera and Renmark Paringa has enabled us to establish a new leadership model for tourism — one which will endure changes at the State and Federal Government levels and one that is flexible and enables us to respond quickly to funding opportunities whenever and wherever they arise.

I am pleased that we are re-establishing our Riverland brand on the Regional Visitor Guide and confident we are well on our way to establishing ourselves as a major tourism

region once again. Our focus on developing half day and full day river time itineraries in the region will attract more visitors and keep them here longer. Themed "river time" itineraries around food and wine, art and culture, nature and environment, history and heritage will be a new feature in the new Riverland Visitor Guide and in our planned website.



DR would like to thank all tourism stakeholders for your support in rebuilding the Riverland brand in 2012. We appreciate the voluntary and financial contributions from so many tourism operators who have helped us to run our promotional campaigns.

Enjoy the Riverland Tourism Outlook and I hope it inspires you in your tourism business endeavours.

On behalf of the Board and staff at DR I wish you a happy Christmas and a safe and prosperous tourism year in 2013.

Joau Hall
Chairperson
Destination Riverland

Visitors

Our visitor numbers to the Riverland are impressive with almost 1 million (960,000) visitor nights per year.

The South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC) reported in 2012 that the Riverland receives 804,000 domestic visitor nights and 157,000 international visitor nights per year. Domestic visitors stay an average of 3 nights and international visitors stay an average 26.2 nights.

The main reasons for domestic visitors coming to the Riverland are for a holiday (60%) and to visit friends and relatives (VFR

28%) which reinforces the vital role that our local hosts can play in sharing their favourite Riverland experiences.

Travellers from Adelaide are our most important market comprising almost 60% of domestic visitors followed by 21% from regional South Australia, 12% from Victoria and 4% from New South Wales.

International visitors represent 16% of visitors to the Riverland which is encouraging given the growth in backpacking and the opportunity to grow our visitors from New Zealand who just love our houseboat experiences.

DOMESTIC VISITOR PROFILE

Average annual visitors

PURPOSE	Holiday	VFR	Other	Total
Visits	153,333	81,000	32,000	266,333
%	58%	30%	12%	100%
Nights	486,000	227,000	91,000	804,000
%	60%	28%	11%	100%
ALOS	3.2	2.8	2.8	3.0

ALOS: Average Length of Stay

Annual Visitor Summary June 2010-2012

Average annual visitors

	Intrastate	Interstate	Total Domestic	International	Total Visits
Visits	206,000	60,000	266,000	6,000	272,000
%	76%	22%	98%	2%	100%
Nights	625,000	179,000	804,000	157,000	960,000
%	65%	19%	84%	16%	100%
ALOS	3.0	3.0	3.0	26.2	3.5

ALOS: Average Length of Stay

Several bounce-back strategies have been introduced to counter the effects of drought and high rivers by providing greater awareness of river conditions and emphasis on NOT using the “f” word (“flood”) when describing high river flows.

The SATC funded “Go with the Flow” campaign in 2011 and the “Best Backyard” campaign in 2012 used television, billboards and print media and encouraged holidaying on our river.

Evaluation of the Best Backyard campaign is incomplete but SATC has advised that the campaign generated significant on-line activity. During the period when SA Weekend Magazine featured three full colour centre spreads about the Riverland in the Saturday Advertiser there was a 115% increase in page views to the “Houseboats” search page on www.southaustralia.com from October 1st to November 16th 2012 compared to the same period in 2011.

The positive response to the campaign was assisted by the Riverland advertisement being one of the first regional press ads in market. From Oct 1st 2012 to Nov 30th 2012 there has been a 34% increase in the number of visits to the Murray River regional page in comparison to the same period in 2011.

The 5 Visitor Information Centres (VICs) in the Riverland report an increase in visitor enquiries from 2010/11 (90,740) to 2011/12 (96,292).

Three of our major hotels in the Riverland (Renmark, Berri and Loxton) all report an increase in occupancy and revenue in 2011/12 compared to 2010/11.

Finally, there are strong signs of growth in “destination weddings”(couples from outside the region) in the Riverland with the Renmark Community Club receiving bookings for 21 weddings in 2012 and 21 bookings so far for 2013. Forty three percent (43%) of the weddings planned for 2013 are “destination weddings”.

Events in 2012 — July to December

Events and event organisers make a significant contribution to the Riverland economy.

September 4 – P.S. Industry inaugural steaming to Wilkadene Woolshed Brewery

The event sold out with 100 fares attributed to the nostalgic aspect of boarding the P.S. Industry and travelling upstream to the old Wilkadene Woolshed.

September 19-20 – Riverland Field Days

The event was a financial success and will adopt a new special interest feature in 2013. Exhibitor numbers (400) and visitor number (14,500) remain stable.

October 20-21 – SA Sheep Dog Trials

The 2013 event anticipates higher entry levels with dog registrations to reach 100.

October 18-21 – Riverland Wine & Food Festival

This festival goes from strength to strength with a reported 15% increase in attendance in 2012 —1630 up from 1400. In addition 120 volunteers and stallholders brought total attendance to 1750.

Postcodes collected at the gate showed a 37% increase of visitors attending from Adelaide compared with 2011. Overall intra and interstate visitor attendances were up by 31% (from 466 to 612) with double the number of interstate visitors (38 to 85).

October 19-28 – Renmark Rose Festival

Record numbers enjoyed the 10 day festival which included the Floral Display in the Renmark Institute which attracted 3,000 people over three days. The Fair exceeded numbers over the past two years and an initiative to organise coaches from outside the area drew visitors from other SA regions, New South Wales and Victoria.

Ruston’s Rose Garden recorded 10,000 visitors through their magnificent garden and an estimated 30,000 people visited the many Riverland rose gardens on show.

November 3-4 – Murray Man Long Course Triathlon

The SATC sponsored 2012 event attracted 421 entries exceeding the target of 300. Strong support came from within SA with 70% of entries, followed by an encouraging 21% from Victoria and 5% from New South Wales.

Interesting statistics reveal that competitors used 1 tonne of ice, 1,000 Nippys drinks and soft drinks, 2000 litres of water



Photographs courtesy of Italo Vardaro



and 10,000 plastic cups, and more than 100 volunteers ensured a smooth running event.

November 10-11 – Riverstock Rockfest

Riverstock Rockfest continued to build on its success including Sunday’s Family Day numbers doubling to 800. Visitors from outside the region increased with numbers coming from Adelaide, Limestone Coast and Broken Hill.

December 1-31 – Loxton Lights Christmas Festival

The award winning month long festival is currently underway and was recently recognised at the SA Tourism Awards by taking out a Silver Award in the Festivals and Events category.

Volunteers

DR congratulates and sincerely thanks the many hundreds of volunteers who generously ensure that our regional events continue to be successful.

New developments

The Riverland Sustainable Futures Fund (RSFF) has enabled the Award Winning Emaroo Cottages to expand its operation into the Riverland. A new development at Paringa in 2013 will create three luxury villas overlooking the river with guided boating opportunities to explore the creeks and backwaters in comfort.

Owners Rick and Cathy Edmonds were winners at the 2012 SA Tourism Awards in the Luxury Accommodation category for the second time, indicating the high standards planned for the their Paringa development.

The RSFF has enabled award winning Loxton Community Hotel to accelerate upgrades of 30 of its rooms to 4 star rating and a complete redevelopment of its function room which hosted the release of the Destination Riverland Strategic Plan in August 2012.

Matt Major of Major Developments has acquired the River Murray Queen and established a unique 112 bed backpacking facility moored on the waterfront at Waikerie. Occupancy has been over 80% since July 2012.

Phil and Renske Reddy are the new proprietors of the historic and award-winning Overland Corner Hotel.

The Barmera Country Club is under new ownership and exciting plans are in place. Eight new electric golf carts have arrived heralding the beginning of an upgrade program involving the refurbishment of all 29 motel rooms, the restaurant and all entertainment areas.

Graham and Elspeth Radford (founder of Saltbush clothing) have opened Wigley Retreat B&B on the Murray downstream of Banrock Station.

Paul and Deb Kassebaum have opened The Winemakers Retreat in Winkie as a unique wine-themed getaway.

Successful owners of Berri Backpackers, Wiggo Hernes and Frankie Hendrick have opened the Berri B&B.

Kym and Karen Werner have established Canoe Adventure; a guided canoeing and canoe hire business in Berri.

Caudo Vineyards near Cadell has opened the first Riverland cellar door with river access via Hogwash Bend. Visitors can also gain access by road and if lucky enough they can travel via our now famous (infamous) Cadell Ferry and enjoy the spectacular 20 million year old limestone cliffs as they cross the river.

Greg and Mamiko Maskell at United Fuels Service Station along the Sturt Highway in Waikerie have re-branded their operation as Viewpoint Cafe featuring ceiling to floor windows overlooking the river with an expansive deck area, complementing the new Illalangi native foods garden overlooking the same spectacular stretch of river.

Most recently the Wilkadene Woolshed Brewery has released its Summer Ale, now being poured exclusively at Overland Corner Hotel and on tap at the Brewery. The Brewery has completed its new amenities which will enable increased functions and trading.

The Waikerie Caravan Park is planning to relocate the current park to the Waikerie riverfront and the Waikerie Hotel is planning major renovations in 2013.

The Morgan Riverfront Precinct Project Committee in conjunction with the Mid-Murray Council has completed concept plans for staged development of an open air riverfront recreational and museum space containing riverfront access pathways, open recreational play spaces for juniors

and teens, picnic and barbecue facilities, interpretive signage and new amenities.

The recently refurbished Berri Resort Hotel plans to re-open its Fairway Restaurant on the Old Sturt Highway in early 2013 for weekend dining with a local food and wine theme.

The Renmark Community Club has announced a \$3million upgrade to the Club's Murray Avenue facade, relocation of the gaming room and upgrades to the kitchen, bar and riverside alfresco area.

Promotions

Destination Riverland attended several shows targeting the Riverland's major markets including:

- The Adelaide Caravan and Camping Show in February 2012,
- The Adelaide Show in September 2012 where 12,000 colourful flyers were distributed by the SA Citrus Board to participants on the Yellow Brick Road. The flyers said "come to the Riverland where the world's best Navel oranges are grown".
- The Riverland Field Days in September 2012 where 250 postcards were sent to friends inviting them to "Come and stay with us in the Riverland."

The Riverland region received some fabulous promotions in 2012 —

- Channel 7's SA Life program on 18 November featured Above Renmark Houseboats and the new Wilkadene Woolshed Brewery, spectacular river scenery from Murtho Lookout and highlighted 5 "must do" experiences in the Riverland.
- As part of the Best Backyard campaign, the SATC coordinated a two page centrespread Riverland advertisement in the Advertiser's SA Weekend liftout. To date this advert has been printed three times with another two prints scheduled in early 2013.
- The recent Hottest 100 Wines publication distributed to Cellar Doors and Visitor Centres around South Australia

features a spectacular advertisement funded by SATC highlighting Riverland produce – in a similar style to the Best Backyard campaign advertisement.

- The 2012 SA Life FOOD & WINE magazine featured an 11 page section on the Riverland's passionate food and wine producers.
- The 2012 Adelaide Show magazine featured a full page Riverland advertisement distributed direct to more 400,000 Adelaide homes.

Awards

DR congratulates the Riverland award winners at the recently held South Australian Tourism Awards, all of whom continue to bring great prestige to our region. They include:

- The Loxton Christmas Lights (Silver – Festivals and Events) and
- the Renmark Rose Festival (Bronze – Festivals and Events)

DR encourages Riverland operators to enter the SA Tourism Awards. A win or a medal can enhance the appeal and reputation of a business and in turn the region as a whole, as well as help improve business performance through the application process.

DR also congratulates a good friend of the Riverland, South Australia's most famous and notorious fishmonger, Michael Angelakis, who was recently recognised as an Adelaide Food Legend at the annual Advertiser Food Awards.

Development Opportunities

Experiences

DR is working with the tourism industry including all Riverland VICs and our operators to develop specific "river time" trails to increase our appeal as a destination — using popular themes including "nature and environment", "food and wine", "arts and culture", "history and heritage" and recreational experiences such as our acclaimed golf courses and walking tracks and trails.





These specialised itineraries will be positioned as a key tool to package product for Riverland visitors and to unite the industry in delivering a range of memorable experiences. Themed “river time” itineraries will be available in the SATC’s Riverland Visitor Guide, on Destination Riverland’s planned website and selected printed copies available at VICs.

Tour operators

“River time” themed itineraries will also create an exciting opportunity for new tour operators to take advantage of the demand for guided travel between key attractions in the region.

Export ready

The Riverland has the opportunity to transition our tourism industry for the increasing demand in on-line bookings. This is an important step to increase our appeal to domestic and international markets.

The most commonly sought after experiences in several international markets are “wildlife” followed by “food and wine” — two key areas where the Riverland has ample offerings although not packaged and promoted through traditional wholesale and retail channels.

New Zealand is Australia’s largest market and market research shows that in South Australia the River Murray, houseboating, wine and food and golfing have high appeal. The Riverland has a massive opportunity to play a larger role in promoting and selling holidays to Kiwis using our packaged product combining these most appealing experiences.

The Chinese and Indian markets are the fastest growing international markets and Tourism Australia and the SA Tourism Commission are collaborating to ensure South Australia is ready. DR is working with SATC and Tourism Australia to ensure the Riverland benefits from this exciting potential.

Ecotourism

Our river, our wildlife and spectacular landscapes combined with indigenous and early European history create the opportunity for powerful stories with unique appeal to visitors wanting an eco-tourism experience.

Recent visits by the SATC United Kingdom sales team to the superb Birds Australia Gluepot Station (near Waikerie) reinforced that they would enjoy the Riverland’s unique and rare bird fauna.

Further to this – the development of a multiple day walking and boating trail along the river has enormous potential in the Australian domestic market and is an action within the SATC’s Riverland Destination Action Plan with potential to unite several existing tourism operators and create several new tourism businesses.

Destination Riverland activity

Partnerships

DR is working closely with our four Riverland Councils and providing regular updates on progress with implementing our strategic plan.

DR is working with the SATC to implement the Riverland Destination Action Plan (DAP) which includes a Brand Plan and a new logo. We are also pleased with the initiative to return to a Riverland branded Visitor Guide for 2013.

DR has supported Riverland Development Australia Murraylands and Riverland (RDA) to review tourism development priorities in the Murraylands and Riverland, and provided a template to support a tourism strategy in the Murraylands. DR supported clustering workshops in the Riverland to lift tourism business performance. DR also received significant support from RDA for office accommodation in the Berri RDA office precinct.

RDA and DR also collaborated in November to incorporate three training courses into the DR Food and Wine Tourism Forum.

DR is working closely with Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) and Food Riverland to increase awareness and use of Riverland regional produce. PIRSA was instrumental in DR developing the Food, Wine and Tourism Forum in November and Food Riverland coordinated the local food displays.

The Riverland Wine Industry Development Council (RWIDC) is developing a comprehensive website and is exploring shared content with DR on tourism experiences in the Riverland.

Our boating friends at Boating Industry Association of SA (BIASA) and Houseboat Hirers Association (HHA) have been working with us to improve boating tourism infrastructure in the Riverland region and to promote houseboat holidays.

The Department of Environment Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) contributed significantly to our Riverland promotion at the Adelaide Caravan and Camping Show and presented updates on camping in Riverland parks at our first Tourism Forum.

Our neighbouring tourism region Murraylands and its Murraylands Tourism Partnership have been brilliantly collaborative in several joint promotions and strategies to increase tourism on the Murray River.

Riverland "media" has been very supportive in helping to rebuild the profile of Riverland tourism, resulting in numerous stories presented in the Riverland's newspapers, radio and television.

Meetings

The Destination Riverland Board met 8 times across the Riverland during 2012.

Forums

To date, DR has convened two very successful tourism forums;

- August — to introduce the Destination Riverland Strategic Plan and
- November — to promote the use of Riverland food and wine in tourism.

The Food & Wine Tourism Forum was well supported by tourism operators with more than 40 people in attendance to discuss opportunities for the Riverland to achieve destination status for its food and wine.

Food and wine industry leaders and guest speakers Jim Carreker (The Louise, Barossa), Pip Forrester (Fleurieu region), Karen Ronning (Zema Estate, Coonawarra) and Jane Fargher (Prairie Hotel, Parachilna) encouraged the Riverland to self promote and capitalise on the many good things already on offer.

The key points from the Forum were for operators to become enthusiastic to self promote, to share their story (through their menu or website), to listen to their visitors needs and aspire to deliver their customers an unforgettable experience.

DR will follow up with training workshops in menu writing and "Aussie Host" skills, and support Food Riverland in the production of a Riverland Food Guide.

Projects

DR completed two important industry databases in August to ensure up-to-date information on Riverland tourism operators and Riverland events.

DR launched its Facebook page in September 2012 which has attracted many followers and "likes" and started many conversations about the Riverland and its "must do" attractions.



Food and Wine Tourism Forum speakers - left image: Justin Ross, Primary Industries & Regions SA. Right image: Jim Carreker, Appellation and The Louise in the Barossa Valley; Pip Forrester, food and wine identity from McLaren Vale; and Karen Ronning, Zema Estate in the Coonawarra.



Rebecca Jeisman joined DR in October 2012 and has embraced the development of a new visitor and tourism industry website. The website will showcase Riverland experiences, tourism operators and events using features such as themed travel itineraries, social media and a Riverland events calendar.

State and National Tourism trends

Tourism Australia (November 2012) reports a record six million visitors to Australia for the September 2012 year end, up three per cent compared to the 12 months to September 2011. While arrival figures have risen steadily and spend (A\$26.6 billion) in local currency from a number of key markets has also increased, the price competitiveness of Australia remains a challenge with our dollar continuing to be strong.

The SATC hosted a tourism industry briefing in November 2012 (SATC 2012) and presented trends and opportunities for the South Australian tourism industry in its major international markets.

The emergence of Emirates Airlines as a major carrier from Europe and Asia direct to Adelaide presents an exciting opportunity to grow tourism in this State.

The strongest demand for Australian holidays is led by New Zealand with over 1.1 million visitors and 35,000 Kiwis visiting South Australia in 2012 who just love our “big river” and our houseboats.

The United Kingdom remains South Australia’s most important international market — 560,000 UK visitors came to Australia during the year ended June 2012 and 54,000 UK visitors came to South Australia.

China is Australia’s third largest inbound market in terms of visitors, visitor nights and expenditure. Chinese visitors to South Australia have grown from 4,900 in 2004/05 to 20,000 in 2010/11.

Riverland events — January to June 2013

JANUARY

- 26–27 Riverland Speedboat Spectacular
- 26 Numerous Australia Day Celebrations across the region

FEBRUARY

- 1 Renmark Club Dinghy Dash for Cash
- 3 Magic 93.1 Riverland Dinghy Derby
- 23–24 Loxton Annual Mardi Gras
- 23 Nippy’s Loxton Gift Athletics Carnival

MARCH

- 30 Cadell Harvest Festival and MGA Insurance Giant Pumpkin Competition

JUNE

- 31 May–10 June South Australian Country Music Festival
- 1–2 38th Annual Tour of the Riverland (cycling)
- 8–10 26th Riverland Paddling Marathon
- 8–10 Moorook Music Festival

Further reading

- South Australian Tourism Commission (September 2012) – *Riverland Regional Tourism Profile 2010–2011*.
- South Australian Tourism Commission (November 2012) – *2012 International Industry Forum – Market Profiles*.
- Tourism Australia (November 2012) – *Quarterly Market Update*.

Disclaimer

Riverland Tourism Outlook has been prepared by Destination Riverland to reflect on industry achievements and provide a summary of tourism industry trends and activity that can influence tourism in the Riverland. The information presented will help to inform readers of potential tourism development opportunities. The interpretation and response to all information presented in this report is the responsibility of the reader.