

# CEO Commentary

## Tasmanian Tourism Snapshot for the year ending December 2016



If you thought 2015 was a great year for Tasmania's visitor economy, then I'm pleased to say that 2016 was substantially better – and just as importantly, better for all our regions.

The latest figures show the number of visitors coming to Tasmania on scheduled air and sea services in 2016 grew by seven per cent on the previous year. To be more precise, our island state welcomed around 1 236 400 interstate and international visitors during 2016.

This result is great news. It's the first time ever that we have passed the 1.2 million visitor mark, and goes a long way to keeping us on track with the growth rate needed to reach the government and industry's joint T21 visitor economy goals by 2020.

And all our tourism regions have shared in this growth, with visitor numbers to the south of the state growing by a healthy five per cent, while the Cradle Coast region saw seven per cent more visitors last year. The east coast continued its stellar performance with 10 per cent more interstate and overseas visitors, while northern Tasmania was the standout region for 2016 with an 11 per cent increase in numbers, due in part to a bumper December quarter.

Another positive sign for the team at Tourism Tasmania and our marketing partners is the really healthy growth in the number of holiday travellers coming to the state last year. Even the visiting friends and relatives travel sector grew, which lifted our overall leisure growth rate back into double-digit figures.

The airlines and Spirit of Tasmania have continued to help us out here, with airlines scheduling over 165 000 extra seats on major routes to and from Tasmania in 2016. It was good to see that our visitors as well as locals responded to this increased capacity with all these extra seats and more being booked.

The Spirits of Tasmania also continued their success story with an 11 per cent jump in interstate and international visitors travelling on the ships in 2016. The TT Line continues to do a great job of attracting more visitors to Tassie and the results show they are being rewarded for their effort.

Tasmania's positive profile amongst the travel trade in our main international source markets also gives me great confidence about our future prospects from the USA, Europe and Asia.

Tourism Tasmania is currently looking at its marketing approach to various international markets. This includes an assessment of the best markets to support the T21 growth targets, and a review of the approach we will take in each of our chosen markets to generate more demand and bookings to travel here. It is not a 'one size fits all' approach. Some markets for example may need a greater emphasis on raising awareness of our destination before we can focus all our attention on sales-generating activities.

Speaking of international visitors, this time last year I proudly reported that a record 211 800 international visitors had come to Tasmania in 2015. Twelve months on and the International Visitor Survey shows that the number of international visitors coming to Tassie during 2016 grew by a further 11 per cent, setting a new record of 235 700 visitors.

However our growth has not necessarily been generated by the same markets that have driven Australia's growth. We have continued to see above average visitor growth from the USA and Asia markets like Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, whereas in Australia the volume mainly came from countries like China and New Zealand.

While we have seen a decline in visitors to Tasmania from mainland China over the past year, their numbers have stabilised in recent quarters and also been bolstered by significant growth in visitors from Hong Kong. Collectively there was a five per cent increase in visitors from greater China, amounting to just over 47 000 visitors.

I returned late last month from a week-long Asia Tourism Sales Mission, where 14 Tasmanian tourism operators and I met with a number of travel trade and media representatives. I am pleased to report that the growing awareness and popularity of Tasmania amongst the Chinese, Hong Kong and Singaporean travel industry augurs well for Tasmania in the years ahead.

There is no doubt the profile of our award-winning tourism products and experiences, combined with our premium food and drink experiences, are helping to turn us into a must-visit destination for more international and interstate travellers.

This was very evident in the popularity of our inaugural #TassieStyle summer advocacy competition and campaign, which finished at the end of February. More than 42 000 entries were received on our social media platforms, revealing people's personal experiences of our island state over the three months of #TassieStyle. The promotion and competition has performed far better than we ever imagined, and I want to extend a big thank you to all the local tourism operators and promotional partners who jumped on board and encouraged so many visitors and locals to post photos of their TassieStyle experience.

But the marketing didn't end there. Our latest version of Go Behind the Scenery marketing push kicked off on 26 February. It continues the promotion of our state as a great leisure destination and uses a new approach to encourage people to plan and book their travel ahead of our coming winter season.

We know that Australians found the previous videos featuring local characters very engaging. So we have taken the proven appeal of these videos and combined them with an innovative and fun online mapping experience to entice people to plan an autumn holiday in Tasmania. The campaign is also being supported by cooperative marketing with a range of commercial travel partners to generate more bookings and sales to Tasmania over the coming months. I am really pleased to report that we are already seeing very positive results.

And by the time the next Tasmanian Tourism Snapshot is published, our interstate winter promotion will also have been 'done and dusted'. This promotion will build on last year's marketing activity but focus on the unique emotive experience on offer in a Tasmanian winter holiday. Tassie's program of great winter events is one part of the story and will be used to encourage people to plan and book their trip here.

With all this marketing going on, combined with our amazing Tassie tourism experiences and some great new businesses to open this year, I am confident our visitor economy will continue to grow and break more visitor records in 2017.

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