East Gippsland International Tourism Action Plan 2016-18
EAST GIPPSLAND INTERNATIONAL TOURISM ACTION PLAN 2016-18

Background
This East Gippsland International Tourism Action Plan has involved key stakeholders to identify achievable short and medium term actions over the next three years that can make a difference to the international visitor experience and for the local tourism industry. The Action Plan addresses activities relevant to the formal inbound international market and those relevant to the informal international market visiting East Gippsland from Melbourne in increasing numbers. These latter visitors are primarily from Asian backgrounds and are currently motivated primarily by the fishing and crabbing opportunities on the Gippsland Lakes. The development of this plan also acknowledges that it complements existing plans and the established domestic market which remains the core source market in East Gippsland. Improvements in the product or experience for one target market will benefit the other.

Current International Tourism Structures and Plans
International tourism to East Gippsland is managed and influenced by various organisations and their plans. In summary:

- Tourism Victoria: Victoria’s 2020 Tourism Strategy; International Marketing Opportunities 2015/16
- Sydney Melbourne Touring: Strategic Plan 2016-18 and promotion of Sydney Melbourne Coastal Drive
- Australia’s Coastal Wilderness: Masterplan and Experiences Development Strategy 2011
- Tourism Australia: Current campaign focus ‘Coastal and Aquatic’ part of Tourism 2020 Strategy
- Destination Gippsland: Gippsland Tourism Strategic Directions 2013-18; Marketing Action Plan 2015-16
- East Gippsland Marketing: Marketing Plan 2015/16
- Business Tourism East Gippsland: Annual Plan 2015/16

Success Factors for Regional Destinations in Australia
Industry research has established that the following factors are present in successful destinations across Australia. A focus on continuous improvement in all of these factors will contribute to the competitive growth and sustainability of international markets and the overall visitor economy of East Gippsland.

1. **Strong local tourism organisations focused on their core role of visitor servicing** – Comments: there are 11 Business Tourism Associations/Chambers of Commerce & Industry/Ratepayers Associations (BTAs/CCIs) in East Gippsland that have an important role in providing industry networking opportunities, local visitor information and collective engagement with regional and state tourism structures. The capacity of BTAs/CCIs varies and they are dependent on key individuals in each town to provide voluntary services. However, the value of these organisations for the tourism industry is considerable.
2. **Strong regional tourism organisations focused on their core role of regional marketing and development** – Comments: Destination Gippsland works with East Gippsland Marketing and Business & Tourism East Gippsland to provide regional tourism functions, including a Gippsland International Marketing Program and industry and product development support. This area is considered to be performing well.

3. **Local Government Support** – Comments: East Gippsland Shire Council acknowledges the important role tourism performs for the local community and visitor economy. It invests a significant budget into providing a range of tourism services and business related operations.

4. **Strong consistent and effective leadership by individuals and/or organisations** – Comments: there is always potential to improve this area to ensure East Gippsland product inclusion in state and national marketing campaigns is maximised and the region is represented at key international tourism events. There are a number of businesses that have been actively engaged in international marketing and trade channels for a number of years and should be acknowledged and supported.

5. **Strategic planning for the region with economic, social, environmental and cultural objectives supported by local destination plans** – Comments: Council has recently completed a new Economic Development Strategy and the initiative to develop an International Tourism Plan is an important positive step. EGM and BTEG have their own strategic plans, as do a number of BTAs/CCIs.

6. **Consistent visitor services excellence** – Comments: an area that is improving but there is always more to do, particularly for international markets with cultural differences.

7. **Research driven cooperative marketing** – Comments: this is an opportunity that could be expanded as more marketing partners actively participate in international marketing. Currently eight East Gippsland businesses are formally engaged with either the Destination Gippsland or Sydney Melbourne Touring International marketing programs. The investment and effectiveness of these businesses is significant and has helped establish East Gippsland in international itineraries. More businesses supporting them will further strengthen the region’s recognition.

8. **A breadth and depth of tourism infrastructure, products and events matched to market demand** – Comments: there are many opportunities to improve the tourism infrastructure to support and protect the natural assets in East Gippsland. The Action Plan consultation process identified Bullock Island as an example in Lakes Entrance however there are many more infrastructure gaps or improvements that could be made to assets managed by Council, Parks Victoria, DELWP or Gippsland Ports.

9. **Risk Management plans** – Comments: East Gippsland has experienced a number of serious bushfires, floods and algal blooms in recent years that have had a negative tourism impact and Council and the tourism industry have plans in place to respond to these. Responses to risks with a Gippsland wide impact are normally led by Destination Gippsland.
10. **Supportive communities, which understand and value tourism** – Comments: there are mixed levels of engagement and support by the wider community for tourism. Promoting the value of tourism is important and part of the balance needed in maintaining the values and qualities of towns and the environment. The benefits and potential of Asian visitors fishing in the Lakes is not fully understood by many local residents.

**Research**

International Visitor statistics East Gippsland (Overnight travel to East Gippsland Region by international visitors aged 15 and over)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Gippsland International Visitors</td>
<td>29,800</td>
<td>25,300</td>
<td>31,500</td>
<td>30,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Gippsland International Visitors</td>
<td>56,300</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>60,100</td>
<td>65,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market share (EG/Gippsland)</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average length of stay (EG)</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>3.2 days</td>
<td>6.5 days</td>
<td>4.8 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure per visitor (Regional Victoria average)</td>
<td>$876 (2010)</td>
<td>$950 (est)</td>
<td>$981</td>
<td>$1052</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Top 10 Country of origin of international overnight visitors to Gippsland (total 65,700)**

1. United Kingdom 16.0%
2. Germany 13.8%
3. New Zealand 7.8%
4. USA 7.6%
5. France 7.4%
6. Mainland China 6.1%
7. Canada 5.4%
8. Netherlands 4.4%
9. Switzerland 3.0%
10. Hong Kong 2.2%

*International Visitor Survey data, Tourism Research Australia, year ending June 2015*
Asian fishing market
Please note that there are no accurate statistics on how many Asian fishing visitors come to East Gippsland. It is difficult to distinguish between Melbourne based Asian visitors and those visiting Australia from overseas. It is estimated that the total visitation would be in the range of 3,000-10,000 per year with Lakes Entrance the main destination. Of significance is the size of the population of Asian/Australians in Melbourne and the potential this has for East Gippsland. There are approximately 800,000 people with Asian backgrounds with a high proportion living in the south-eastern suburbs.

Census, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011

Vision
East Gippsland becomes an internationally recognised tourism destination through innovative marketing and industry and product development actions.

Based on EGSC Economic Development Plan 2014-18

Tourism objectives
Common objectives for tourism destinations are to increase:

- Visitor numbers – international arrivals are often dependent on global economic conditions and effectiveness of Tourism Australia
- Length of stay – can be extended by the variety of experiences and product packaging*
- Visitor expenditure – yield per person per day important, especially with the Asian fishing market
- Dispersal – important that international visitors are encouraged to visit throughout the year and to travel and tour to multiple East Gippsland destinations*
- Visitor Satisfaction – repeat visitors, build the reputation of East Gippsland as a must-see region on an international visitor itinerary

*These are the priority areas. All of these objectives are important for East Gippsland, however particular emphasis needs to be made on increasing the length of stay and dispersal.

Challenges and opportunities for success
Regional tourism in Australia has been operating in a challenging economic environment in recent years. In the development of this International Tourism Action Plan, tourism industry and community leaders were asked to identify the main challenges that need to be overcome and the best opportunities to pursue for East Gippsland to be a more successful international tourism destination. This is a summary from the workshops and consultation conducted:

Challenges to overcome (traditional international visitor market):
- Perceived cost for businesses participating in international programs
- Relatively small number of businesses investing in international marketing programs
- Limited roads infrastructure or transport options to access National Park attractions
- Hinterland areas not included in international marketing. Only the coast and lakes areas are featured
Challenges to overcome (Asian fishing market):

- Poor knowledge of this market. How many visitors, how much do they spend, how long do they stay?
- Difficulty in communicating with this market to change behaviours such as improving environmental practices (rubbish removal, recycling crab nets...)
- Community concern and perception that these are low yield and unwanted visitors

Opportunities for improvement (traditional international visitor market):

- Investment in major infrastructure (e.g. Bullock Island or Jemmy’s Point)
- Develop a strong community engagement program about tourism, in particular the benefits of attracting international visitors
- Create stronger working relationships between industry and international tourism partners such as Tourism Victoria, Destination Gippsland, Sydney Melbourne Touring and Tourism Australia
- Improved awareness and development of arts and cultural experiences to complement core tourism products
- Increased role of Visitor Information Centres to lead the communication with international visitors in and outside VIC’s
- Develop multi-lingual signs and interpretive materials to improve engagement and understanding of international visitors in East Gippsland
- Support key tourism businesses to become eco-tourism accredited and participate in international programs
- Strengthen profile of hinterland experiences e.g. the Great Alpine Road, to complement coast and lakes profile

Opportunities for improvement (Asian fishing market):

- Conduct research into this market to better understand the economic, environment and social impacts they are creating
- Multi-lingual signage in key locations to educate visitors about responsible fishing
- Develop a themed Crab Festival
- Encourage more accommodation businesses to supply outdoor cooking and other appropriate facilities
- Provide cultural awareness training and education for the tourism industry and broader community

International Tourism Action Plan implementation

The following International Action Plan outlines priorities and actions as a guide for key stakeholders to collaboratively implement the Plan. To facilitate this, an industry led International Tourism Committee has been formed. The Plan initially has identified organisational responsibilities for each action, however the Committee will review this on an ongoing basis. The Plan is written without specific funding or resource requirements however it is expected that where funds are needed they will either be supplied by the participating organisations or separate efforts to secure funding will be made. Oversight of the Plan will be undertaken by the East Gippsland International Tourism Committee strongly supported by East Gippsland Shire Council with the additional support of Destination Gippsland.

Abbreviations: BTEG – Business & Tourism East Gippsland; EGSC – East Gippsland Shire Council; EGM – East Gippsland Marketing; DG – Destination Gippsland; DELWP – Department Environment, Water, Land and Planning; GP – Gippsland Ports; TA - Tourism Australia; TV – Tourism Victoria (soon to become Visit Victoria); RDV – Regional Development Victoria; PV - Parks Victoria; ACW – Australia’s Coastal Wilderness; SMT – Sydney Melbourne Touring; GLaWAC – Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation; MPA – Mallacoota Progress Association
**ACTION PLAN**

**Priority 1: Marketing**

Marketing activities are a high priority and the most relevant way for East Gippsland to improve the region’s engagement with Tourism Australia and Tourism Victoria. Financial and in-kind resources will be needed to take advantage of the opportunities available to position East Gippsland in international markets over the longer term.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Timing priority</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Participate in Tourism Australia marketing opportunities: in particular the Coastal and Aquatic campaign in 2016. Provide regular social media and PR content; and send a delegate to the Australian Tourism Exchange each year (Gold Coast in May 2016)</td>
<td>DG with EGM</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Participate in Tourism Victoria opportunities: send delegate to Victoria’s International Exchange in November, nominate industry representative for International Mentoring Program, invite and host TV staff on an annual East Gippsland famil visit</td>
<td>DG with EGM, BTEG and TV</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Encourage business participation in the Destination Gippsland and Sydney Melbourne Touring co-operative marketing and international industry development programs. Investment in this will leverage existing opportunities and maximise industry and government investment</td>
<td>EGM, BTEG &amp; EGSC with DG</td>
<td>High – timing urgent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ensure Mallacoota and Croajingolong National Park experiences are included in all Australia’s Coastal Wilderness National Landscape marketing and communications opportunities</td>
<td>EGSC with DG and MPA</td>
<td>High - Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Review and improve the main international marketing tools such as photography, video and destination website content to ensure East Gippsland visitor information is prominent, consistent, of high quality and in relevant languages</td>
<td>EGM with BTEG &amp; EGSC and DG</td>
<td>High-Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Initiate and host media and international trade familiarisations focused on internationally ready and emerging businesses and experiences</td>
<td>DG with SMT, EGM and EGSC</td>
<td>High-Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Develop a series of 1-7 day itineraries for each international target market identifying the ‘top 10 things to do’ throughout the year, including hinterland, lakes and coast experiences. Wildlife viewing would also be a key theme of these itineraries</td>
<td>EGM &amp; BTEG with EGSC, and DG</td>
<td>High-Medium</td>
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*Timing priority: High – within the first year; Medium – within two years; Low – within three years*
**Priority 2: Industry and Product Development**

To meet the needs of future international visitors there must be attention given to develop new visitor products and experiences; and improvement of the international ‘readiness’ of the East Gippsland industry. This should be developed with cultural awareness of the different international markets that will be attracted to East Gippsland.

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<tr>
<td>1. Provide appropriate incentive support for accreditation for selected nature based businesses in East Gippsland, particularly tour operators (cruises, walking, kayak, cycling, wildlife etc). This could include recognition and training by Eco Tourism Australia, Tour Guides Australia and Wildlife Australia.</td>
<td>EGSC with BTEG</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Provide two levels of cultural awareness training and education. Practical ‘how to’ case studies and mentoring for businesses to learn from best practice examples dealing with the Asian market; and general cultural awareness workshops for the broader business community. East Gippsland VIC’s are a crucial communication link to international visitors. Multi-language fact sheets distributed by the VIC’s and to key industry contact points is also recommended.</td>
<td>BTEG with DG and EGSC</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Deliver ‘International ready’ workshops that target existing tourism businesses and help with their understanding of the changes necessary to take the next step to be successful in the international marketplace. This can include packaging, pricing, commissions and distribution of international products</td>
<td>BTEG with DG, EGSC and TV</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Undertake specific research into the Asian fishing market (visitor numbers and profile, economic impact, satisfaction levels)</td>
<td>EGM with EGSC, DG and RDV</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Encourage more accommodation businesses to supply outdoor cooking facilities, and other facilities, desirable for international markets</td>
<td>BTEG, EGM and EGSC</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Implement an international visitor service excellence training program for regional businesses and event organisers. This could include a visitor survey and benchmarking visitor satisfaction and conducting a ‘mystery shopper/visitor’ program</td>
<td>BTEG with EGSC and DG</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Improved awareness and development of arts and cultural experiences to complement core tourism products</td>
<td>EGSC with BTEG</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Investigate the potential of developing an annual ‘Crab Festival’</td>
<td>EGSC with BTEG, EGM</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Develop Aboriginal cultural events and activities</td>
<td>GLaWAC with EGSC, BTEG and DG</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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*Timing priority: High – within the first year; Medium – within two years; Low – within three years*
Priority 3: Infrastructure

During the consultation it was identified that improving key infrastructure was a high priority to enable greater access for visitors, to encourage further investment and develop year-round visitor experiences. This needs to be a co-ordinated mix of large projects requiring significant government funds and smaller investments to improve the existing products and visitor experiences. It also needs to be considered with other ‘mainstream’ tourism infrastructure planning.

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<th>Timing priority</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Form an ‘East Gippsland Investment Team’ to conduct research, develop business cases, provide focused advocacy, and present evidence based proposals to government for major tourism infrastructure projects such as at Bullock Island (recreational fishing), Jemmy’s Point (interpretation and look-out), Gippsland Lakes Trail (linked walking, cycling, paddling experiences around the lakes). This process should include a State Government representative on the team to provide the initial and necessary buy in from the start for any larger infrastructure projects.</td>
<td>EGSC, BTEG &amp; EGM with RDV and DG</td>
<td>High-Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Develop an Infrastructure Plan for small to medium sized projects and improvements in East Gippsland. This plan should provide direction, approximate costs and benefits for projects with the aim of making the Asian fishing market more lucrative and more sustainable (signage, rubbish bins, recycling facilities, toilets…)</td>
<td>EGSC, BTEG &amp; EGM with RDV and DG</td>
<td>High-Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Install multi-lingual signage in key locations to educate visitors about responsible fishing</td>
<td>EGSC with DEWLP, PV</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Support the ongoing improvement of the interpretive materials and signs for the Bataluk Trail to introduce international visitors to local Aboriginal sites of cultural significance</td>
<td>EGSC and GLaWAC</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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</table>

*Timing priority: High – within the first year; Medium – within two years; Low – within three years*
**Priority 4: Partnerships and Communication**

There is an identified need to improve the communication and networks between all stakeholders in East Gippsland in relation to international marketing. Relationships need to be developed and/or strengthened and a co-operative ‘Team East Gippsland’ approach created.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Develop a Communications Plan that identifies international marketing opportunities within the existing range of collaborations, newsletters, websites, visitor guides in order to share information, and to cross-promote partner stakeholders and destinations</td>
<td>EGM with DG, BTEG &amp; EGSC</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provide opportunities and encourage all tourism businesses to join their local Business Tourism Association and connect to the wider international tourism industry structures (Business Tourism East Gippsland, Destination Gippsland, Sydney Melbourne Touring, Tourism Victoria, Australia’s Coastal Wilderness, Tourism Australia)</td>
<td>BTEG with EGSC</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Discuss and agree on the roles, responsibilities and relationships between all local tourism stakeholders involved in international tourism development in East Gippsland</td>
<td>DG with TV, EGSC, EGM, BTEG</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Timing priority: High – within the first year; Medium – within two years; Low – within three years*
International tourism structure East Gippsland:
Available international resources:
The following links lead to resources from the key organisations involved with international marketing. The can assist individual businesses as well as East Gippsland’s key stakeholders learn more about international markets and the efforts being made to attract them to Australia and our region.


http://www.sydneymelbournetouring.com.au


Acknowledgements:
The development of this plan has had the support and input of the East Gippsland Shire Council, Business Tourism East Gippsland, East Gippsland Marketing, the East Gippsland International Tourism Committee and industry leaders. Sydney Melbourne Touring, Tourism Victoria and Tourism Australia have all contributed to the plan. Destination Gippsland has been the Project Manager.

December 2015