



HUON VALLEY

Destination Action Plan 2017-2019

August 2017

Acknowledgments

The development of the Huon Valley Destination Action Plan has been facilitated by Destination Southern Tasmania (DST) with the support of the Department of State Growth (DSG).

The process brought together representatives from 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 Huon Valley region and to establish achievable affordable priorities that if delivered would increase the destination's competitiveness.

This is an action focused plan that identifies specific priorities and actions that if cooperatively acted on by stakeholders will contribute to the achievement of agreed objectives in the short term (rolling three years). As such, the Plan does not purport to be a comprehensive strategic plan, but is deliberately focused on identifying the key challenges and opportunities facing the destination and to establish achievable and affordable priorities and actions to address them. It should be a 'bottom-up' plan, driven by the Huon Valley businesses that benefit from visitors and the local community, while acknowledging State and regional strategic plans and programs.

Destination Southern Tasmania would like to thank all who participated in the plan development process:

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Sadie Chrestman – Fat Pig Farm

Heather Cuthbertson and Robert Durand – Cygnet Folk Festival

Paul Dimmick – Huon Valley Escapes

Rebecca Enders – Franklin Progress Association

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Introduction

This Destination Action Plan (DAP) for the Huon Valley (HV) identifies priority strategies and actions that if implemented over three years will establish the district's position as one of Tasmania's premier tourism destinations. DAPs are an implementation initiative of the *Tasmanian Visitor Economy Strategy 2015-2020 (T21)*, Priority #4: *Building capability, capacity and community*.

This DAP 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 Huon Valley visitor economy and experience.



The visitor economy

Visitors to the Huon Valley and Far South regions are substantial contributors to the local economy. Visitors include leisure tourists (intrastate, interstate and international), visitors to friends and relatives, business visitors, students and day trippers. Their expenditure is 'new money' contributed to the local economy which supports jobs, real estate value and the provision of services, facilities and activities in the community.

INTERSTATE AND INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

The Tasmanian Visitors survey (TVS) only collects data on visitors to Cygnet and Huonville. For the year ending March 2017, total visitation to the Southern Trove region was 218,029 (up 15.7% on the previous year). Table 1 represents a break-down of visitation to Cygnet and Huonville. It is important to look at longer term trends because variations from one year to the other can be caused by a number of factors, such as the influence of a large number of seasonal workers in any one year.

TABLE 1: INTERSTATE & INTERNATIONAL VISITORS YEAR ENDING MARCH 2014 TO MARCH 2017

HUONVILLE	March 2014	March 2015	March 2016	March 2017	% Change 2016-2017
Passed through	54,979	58,581	56,535	63,168	+12%
Looked around	74,219	71,355	78,572	73,771	-4%
Stayed overnight	21,849	25,279	28,249	27,955	-1%
Total visitors	149,047	155,215	163,356	164,894	+1%
Total nights	70,489	146,065	251,984	98,215	-61%
CYGNET	March 2014	March 2015	March 2016	March 2017	% Change 2016-2017
Passed through	25,925	38,645	40,165	46,960	+17%
Looked around	28,237	36,513	37,897	35,350	-7%
Stayed overnight	7,130	13,233	16,666	15,073	-10%
Total visitors	61,292	88,391	94,728	97,383	+27%
Total nights	50,011	66,962	80,003	110,108	+38%

Source: Tasmanian Visitor Survey year ending March 2017



The visitor economy cont.

INTRASTATE VISITORS

Total township visitation (day and overnight)

- Geeveston/Dover: 111,000 (up 34% on 2015)
- Huonville/Franklin: 191,000 (up 61% on 2015)

Total overnight visitation

- Geeveston/Dover: 14,000 visitors stayed 31,000 nights (down 3% on 2015)
- Huonville/Franklin: 6,000 visitors stayed 13,000 nights (down 28% on 2015)

NB: The National Visitors Survey (NVS) data used for Intrastate figures use a very small sample size for Tasmania and caution is advised when using these figures.

EMPLOYMENT

The tourism industry in Southern Tasmania provides the most significant contribution to the State's tourism sector in terms of output, employment, wages and salaries and other economic indicators (Economic Impact Analysis in Southern Tasmania 2013):

- Tourism sector represents 7.1% of total employment in Southern Tasmania (approximately 6,800 jobs)
- Tourism in the south is estimated to generate \$973.4 million in economic output
- Major tourism related industries are accommodation and food services
- Tourism contributes \$1,849.5 million to the Southern Tasmanian region, accounting for nearly 13,000 jobs.

Source: *Tasmanian Visitor Survey year ending March 2017, Economic Impact Analysis in Tasmania's South 2013, Remplan.*

Objectives

The common objectives for tourism are to increase the yield from visitors by increasing:

- Visitor satisfaction
- Visitor length of stay
- Visitor expenditure
- Visitor dispersal (geographically and seasonally)
- Visitor numbers.

The primary objective of this Plan is to maximise the visitor experience and increase visitor satisfaction. This will in turn result in more visitors, increased dispersal of those visitors across the region, increased length of stay and visitor expenditure.



DIAGNOSTIC RATING

Industry research indicates that the following factors are present in successful destinations that are achieving their objectives. A focus on continuous improvement of all these factors will contribute to the growth and sustainability of the visitor economy of Huon Valley.

NOTE: Average rating was affected by some participants rating characteristics as '5' indicating that they did not know, particularly for Cooperative Marketing.

Success factors

Characteristics	Rating	Comments
1. Supportive communities which understand and appreciate the value of tourism.	5.79	Opportunity for improvement, collaboration with other business and community groups including the Kingborough Community Enterprise Centre.
2. Strong network of local tourism businesses focused on their core role of visitor servicing and working in collaboration with the Regional Tourism Organisation.	6.21	The basis of a strong industry network exists but requires commitment by many rather than a few. An area that could yield positive results if sufficient buy-in is achieved.
3. Strong regional organisations focused on their core role of regional marketing and development and working cooperatively with local tourism businesses and local government.	7.38	A strong result and DAP should provide basis to build stronger communication and engagement with local businesses and Council.
4. Support from Local Government for visitor servicing, destination development and infrastructure.	6.07	Opportunity to strengthen collaboration with Huon Valley Council to identify agreed priority areas.
5. Strong, consistent and effective leadership by individuals or organisations.	5.33	Opportunity for an industry-based leadership group to embrace this role with support from Council and DST.
6. Strategic planning for the region with economic, social, environmental and cultural objectives supported by local destination plans.	5.00	DAP should provide blueprint to move forward.
7. Excellence in visitor services that leads to satisfied visitors, positive word-of-mouth promotion and repeat visitation.	6.27	Opportunity to increase effectiveness, particularly in improved wayfinding and information distribution through traditional and existing Southern Trove and Huon Valley digital channels.
8. A breadth and depth of tourism infrastructure, experiences and events matched to market demand.	6.88	Opportunity to develop new contemporary visitor experiences and supporting infrastructure. In particular, support for a new iconic development(s) in the region.
9. Research-driven cooperative marketing which contributes to and maximises the effectiveness of industry and government contributions.	5.50	This requires ongoing leadership and collaboration between industry operators as in current Southern Trove program.
10. Risk management plans in place that identify and address potential threats and crises e.g. fire, flood.	5.40	Seek industry input into visitor risk mitigation and recovery planning through relevant Local and State Government channels.

Our challenges

Below is a list of challenges identified by the participants. Those near the top of the list received the most consensus in being considered the most pivotal; those further down the list were identified by one or two participants as being of high importance.

- Attracting new investment into the region
- Poor wayfinding and use of emerging technologies
- Consumer awareness of Huon Valley product
- Maintaining authenticity and character of place, whilst continuing to develop tourism in the region
- Access to a skilled workforce – local literacy rates
- Community understanding of the value of tourism
- Operators not working together
- Engaging local community
- Need to embrace the agri-enterprise identity before another region does, leverage our points of difference
- Poor roads, lack of public transport and safety of some roads is compromised
- Meeting visitor expectations
- Hobart & Beyond branding putting Hobart first
- Wi-Fi access and poor phone reception
- Food regulations and impact on small agri-businesses
- Cultural understanding and difficulty in encouraging indigenous product.



Our opportunities

STRONG INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP

- Strong, cooperative industry leadership that has wide community and other industry sector support
- Establish a DAP implementation group
- Develop strategies that focus on getting visitors out of Hobart, stressing accessibility and diversity of experience

IMPROVED VISITOR EXPERIENCE

- Leverage wooden boat experience through providing access to activities on water and around social enterprise
- Leverage Tahune and other forest heritage through experiences that demonstrate links to other sectors such as boat and furniture building
- Develop contemporary wayfinding systems that link complimentary experiences and stories with traditional sources of visitor information such as signage and Visitor Information Centres
- Encourage the development of another new iconic visitor experience south of Hobart (e.g. Cockle Creek or Lake Geeves), depending on outcome of feasibility study

- Develop activities around nature and adventure – bird-watching, aurora, mountain bike trails, rafting, caving, etc.
- Operationalise the waterways/agri-enterprise experience, link to farm gate activities and other experiences
- Investigate the feasibility of a further festival, perhaps a blossom festival in spring or one focussed on the Franklin foreshore
- Consider French connection in cooperation with Far South
- Develop cooperative tools for sharing stories for visiting journalists and leveraging digital channels

IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE

- Investigate the establishment of a food production hub for shared use by small producers
- Improved roads and signage.





Action Plan implementation

The following Action Plan outlines priorities and actions as a guide for stakeholders to collaboratively and cooperatively implement the Plan. To facilitate this, an Implementation Leadership Group of representatives will be formed. A 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 on page 5.

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

A review of progress of implementation of the Plan will be undertaken annually by DST in consultation with the Implementation Leadership Group. This may result in a revision and updating of the Plan. A new plan will be prepared in three years.

The following organisations and groups have been identified to have a role to consider the DAP and to progressively work together to implement the priority actions:

- Huon Valley Council (HVC)
- Destination Southern Tasmania (DST)
- Department of State Growth (DSG)
- Tourism Tasmania (TT)
- Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS)
- Huon Visitor Information Centre (HVIC)
- Local tourism industry (LTI)
- Tahune Airwalk (TA)
- Franklin Progress Association (FPA)
- Kingborough Community Enterprise Centre (KCEC)
- Geeveston Community Centre (GeCo)
- Southern Trove (ST).

IMPLEMENTATION LEADERSHIP GROUP (ILG)

- Polly Venning
- Lisa Britzman
- Naomie Clark-Port
- Rebecca Enders
- Ea Lassen

The core role of the ILG is not to implement actions, it is to manage the implementation process, monitor progress and ensure that KPI's are reviewed annually. It is important that the ILG keeps all of these groups informed of progress and engaged as required.



Summary of priorities

1. To ensure strong, local industry leadership
2. To develop and improve the visitor experience
3. To improve infrastructure and ensure resource availability

It is important that the ILG reviews the priorities as a matter of priority to ensure that they are achievable before wider circulation of the Plan. Only priorities regarded as High have been allocated responsible organisations unless that responsibility is obvious.



PRIORITY 1 To ensure strong, local industry leadership

Actions

Actions	Organisations	Priorities
1. Establish a DAP Implementation Leadership Group (ILG).	All, ILG	High
2. Ensure strong local industry leadership to improve perceived value of the visitor economy to the region to younger generations. Consider school presentations, work experience and mentoring programs.	LTI, HVC, DST, ST, local schools and training facilities, KCEC, GeCo	High/Ongoing
3. Collaborate and agree on a single simple message the region wishes to send to visitors and be united on the communication of that message. Take into consideration the brand work already developed around 'Waterways and Rural Enterprise', support branding work currently being coordinated by HVC and opportunities with Southern Trove.	LTI, HVC, DST	High/Ongoing
4. Encourage new investment, particularly in a new iconic development in region.	HVC, LTI, DST	Ongoing



PRIORITY 2 Maximise community engagement and collaboration opportunities

Actions

Actions	Organisations	Priorities
1. Develop a communications plan to encourage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Industry cohesion b. Widespread community support (with particular attention to inclusiveness), and c. Stronger collaboration with state and local government. 	All, ILG	High
2. Use existing tools and networks for sharing stories and gathering industry intelligence.	ILG, LTI, DST, HVC	High/Ongoing
3. Communicate Huon Valley experiences to TT for inclusion in itinerary development.	ILG, DST, LTI	High/Ongoing
4. Encourage all operators to register on the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) and take opportunities offered for State and regional marketing programs.	DST	Ongoing
5. Encourage stronger community engagement in larger events such as Mid-Winter Festival and Cygnet Folk Festival.	DST, HVC	High/Ongoing
6. Investigate the feasibility of a spring festival, perhaps based on French, blossom or wooden boat theme.	HVC, LTI, DST, Cygnet Folk Festival, Willie Smith's	Ongoing



PRIORITY 3 Improved visitor experiences

Actions

Organisations

Priorities

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Operationalise the Waterways/Rural Enterprise positioning agreed in the regional branding work: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Leverage wooden boat experience by providing access to activities on the water, promoting social enterprise, etc. b. Leverage forest heritage through demonstrating links to other sectors such as wooden boat building, fine furniture and the development of nature-based and adventure activities such as aurora watching, bird watching, rafting, mountain biking, etc. 	<p>DST, LTI, HVC, FPA, Wooden Boat Centre</p> <p>TA, PWS, LTI (especially tour operators and adventure experiences) furniture makers</p>	<p>High/Medium</p> <p>High</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Develop contemporary wayfinding systems that link complimentary experiences, taking guidance from the recently completed Tasmanian Visitor Engagement Strategy. 	<p>LTI, HVC, HVIC, DST, DSG</p>	<p>High/Medium</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Remove old Huon Trail interpretative signage and erect a new entry sign using a signature image at a key entry point to the Valley. 	<p>DST, HVC</p>	<p>High/In Progress</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Explore options to improve evening dining options for visitors, particularly in low season. 	<p>LTI</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Consider ways of further developing French theme, perhaps in collaboration with Far South. 	<p>LTI, HVC, FS, DST</p>	<p>Medium</p>



PRIORITY 4 Improve visitor infrastructure and industry capability

Actions	Organisations	Priorities
1. With the support of DST, continue to advocate for the improvement of public infrastructure in the region such as roads, walking tracks, toilets and signage.	HVC, DSG, PWS, DST	High/ Ongoing
2. Join other small producers in engaging with the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) regarding regulations constraining small food and beverage producers and contribute to agritourism strategy currently being developed by DSG.	HVC, DST, producers DSG, DPIPWE	Medium
3. Investigate the feasibility of a food production facility that could be shared by small producers.	HVC, DST, producers DSG, DPIPWE	Medium
4. Encourage participation in the Tasmanian Hospitality Association customer engagement training program.	ST, THA	Medium
5. Liaise with Skills Tasmania and GeCo regarding the use of introductory skills and cooperative labour hire along the lines of that undertaken with horticultural sector through 'Huon Valley Works'.	HVC, GeCo	Medium