

STRATEGIC TOURISM PLAN²⁰²¹ -2024



MURRAY RIVER, LAKES & COORONG
TOURISM ALLIANCE



murray river
lakes & coorong

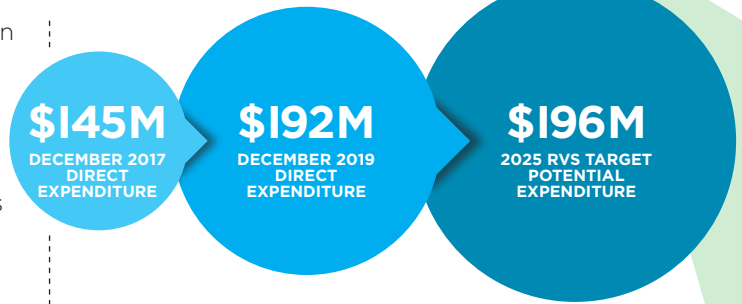
The Murray River, Lakes and Coorong tourism region includes diverse environments – from the Mallee to the Murray River and Coorong National Park with its wild beaches and extensive ecosystems.

The focus of the MRLC Tourism Alliance (MRLCTA) Strategic Plan is to grow the value and opportunities for our region, while also supporting ‘all of River’ partnerships to build the visitor economy along the length of the Murray in South Australia. The 2021-2024 Strategic Plan sets out the priorities clearly.

In developing this Plan, the MRLCTA considered government and regional tourism plans, tourism data, existing tourism assets, and input from stakeholders and tourism operators.

The clear priority of this Strategic Plan is to grow tourism expenditure in the region by 7% per annum. We will achieve this through marketing, partnering, communicating, collaboration and engaging our industry.

Our stakeholders overwhelmingly identified ‘Marketing’ (Driving Demand) as the focus of the MRLCTA, but there was also widespread recognition that accelerating the region’s tourism growth requires greater density of quality products and experiences. The region’s authentic experiences provide an important drawcard for visitation, and demand can be expanded through complementary investment.

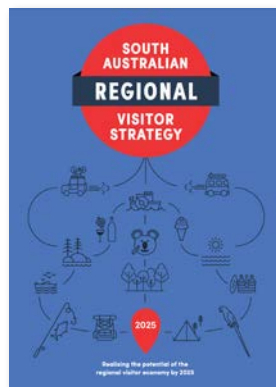


We have identified three highlights that will be a recurrent theme in our communications with funding partners, neighbouring regions and operators:

- ▶ Leveraging our region’s authentic products and experiences.
- ▶ Cross-regional collaboration to ‘draw’ visitors into and across regions.
- ▶ Using data to target opportunity and demonstrate Return on Investment to attract new initiatives and investment.

Our philosophy is that as demand increases, businesses will see opportunity to grow, and their investment will create new and exciting product that in turn drives higher demand.

Attracting new investment, as well as upgrading existing products and experiences are also critical elements in driving regional growth.



The key elements of the strategy are aligned with South Australian Visitor Economy Sector Plan 2030 and the South Australian Regional Visitor Strategy 2025 are:

- MARKETING**
- COLLABORATION**
- EXPERIENCE & SUPPLY DEVELOPMENT**
- LEISURE & BUSINESS EVENTS FOCUS**
- INDUSTRY CAPABILITY**
- INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT**

Front cover image, courtesy of Meningie photographer Kirsty Ridley.

Source: International Visitor Survey, National Visitor Survey, Tourism Research Australia, December 2019.

MRLCTA Strategic Plan Summary

MARKETING

1. Implement a regional tourism marketing strategy.
2. Increase representation on Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW).
3. Identify and promote the region's 'hero quality experiences'.
4. Collaborate with promotional leaders to maximise cost effective trade and marketing activities.
5. Monitor day trip numbers and encourage initiatives that build longer stays.
6. Ensure effective communication that demonstrates visitor economy benefits to stakeholders.
7. Review the current website with aim to delivering an industry-leading consumer website.

COLLABORATION

1. Support collaboration between hero products and experiences.
2. Work with RDAMR to build development processes for tourism businesses.
3. Support the development of Aboriginal cultural tourism opportunities.
4. Develop touring route opportunities with focus on Murray Coorong Trail.
5. Drive ROI focused representation at travel and trade events.
6. Review visitor information servicing to ensure it delivers in the digital economy and within the priorities of this plan.
7. Work with key stakeholders including SATC and TiCSA, regional industries and community groups to advocate for tourism as a growth sector.
8. Identify and communicate opportunities from emerging trends and markets.

EXPERIENCE & SUPPLY DEVELOPMENT

1. Audit tourism infrastructure and product to identify and target gaps.
2. Encourage the growth of accessible on-water experiences.
3. Promote and encourage the development of major projects in the region.
4. Leverage SATC and in-bound distribution channels to attract air travellers.
5. Partner with DEW to identify tourism opportunities including Murray Coorong Trail and International Dark Sky Reserve.

LEISURE & BUSINESS EVENTS FOCUS

1. Ensure themurrayriver.com is a reliable source of information on regional events.
2. Leverage Adelaide-based events as a source of visitors to our region.
3. Develop a Regional Event Strategy to promote MRLC as attractive/accessible 'regional event hub'.

INDUSTRY CAPABILITY

1. Efficiently and effectively allocate our resources.
2. Advocate for improving efficiencies and removing barriers to business.
3. Conduct an annual review and update of this Strategic Plan.

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

1. Streamline the process of supporting grant applications.
2. Lobby for funding and infrastructure development.
3. Encourage operators to capitalise on public infrastructure and seek partnerships.

Marketing

SATC PERSPECTIVE

It is essential that South Australia drives a consistent and collective marketing message to deliver the right message to the right markets and consumers.

Consumer research indicates that SA has highly appealing experiences including nature, wildlife, food and wine – but low awareness of these is impeding growth.

Communication channels and messaging is based on a strong understanding of consumer and target segment needs.

MRLCTA APPROACH

A majority of resources (financial and human) will be allocated to marketing in order to drive demand.

Our philosophy is that as demand increases, there is incentive for new product to develop and our aim is to foster a catalyst for such growth.

We support SATC's goal of consistent, united and collective messaging, and will continue to highlight the importance of offering and promoting experiences that capitalise on our competitive advantage.

STRATEGIES

- 1** Develop a MRLC tourism marketing strategy that leverages the work of local business operators (tourism and non-tourism) and the SATC, highlights cross-regional product and touring routes, and provides clear guidance to operators on the most effective messages, channels and mechanisms for collaboration.
- 2** Engage our regional businesses and tourism assets to list on the ATDW to provide trade and visitors with the greatest opportunity to find, buy and experience their products.
- 3** Identify the features of 'hero quality experiences'; guide operators to deliver exceptional services; and facilitate training and development to improve operator capacity and capabilities through partners such as SATC, TICSA and RDAMR.
- 4** In collaboration with regional product, support SATC famils to highlight and promote regional tourism assets. Prioritise quality and experience in famils, trade and consumer promotions.
- 5** Identify and encourage initiatives that grow day trip numbers and conversions to longer stays in the region with greater visitor spend.
- 6** Continue production and expand the reach of communication materials that focus on the value of the visitor economy and how businesses in the broader visitor economy profit from tourism.
- 7** Review the functionality of the current website with a focus on consumer needs including search, content and user-friendly experience – with the aim of delivering industry-leading consumer website.



Collaboration

SATC PERSPECTIVE

SA needs to continue developing a stronger and more collaborative industry, across Government entities at all levels and diverse private sector business entities and operators.

In addition, integrating complimentary visitor experiences and cross promotion enables a higher level of customer experience and will drive increased yield.

Collaboration also extends to working in partnership with local communities to develop an appreciation for the role tourism plays at the local economy level.

MRLCTA APPROACH

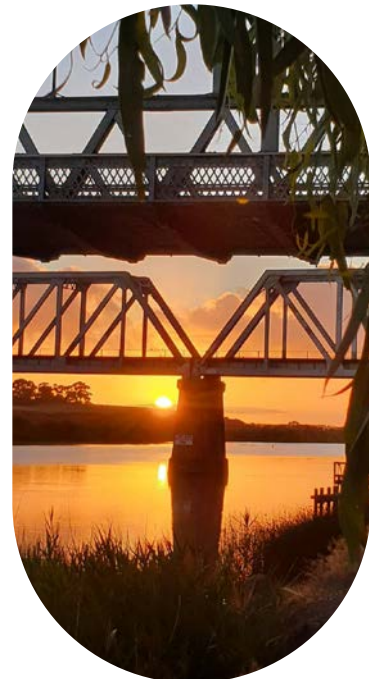
We will use our networks, groups and influencers to communicate with SMEs, to build positive visitor economy attitudes and regional capability.

Our regional tourism products and experiences (heroes) will be encouraged to collaborate to achieve stronger penetration into target markets, and consider how smaller operators can complement activities and promotions.

Our communications will appeal to a wide community audience, using stories and data to encourage better understanding of and engagement with the visitor economy.

STRATEGIES

- 1** Support collaboration between existing hero product/ experiences and build new 'heroes' to lead growth by sharing information about forthcoming activities and promotions, and identifying opportunities for smaller operators to partner in marketing and new initiatives.
- 2** Work with RDAMR to set up a screening and business development process so that new and growing tourism enterprises have the right help, by the right agency, at the right time.
- 3** Engage the local Aboriginal peoples to encourage the promotion and development of cultural experiences and sites across the region.
- 4** Build the regional value proposition to increase day trip visitation and engage operators in Touring Route marketing.
- 5** Encourage operators to be involved in relevant travel and tourism trade events where exposure and consistent brand presence delivers a commercial value so that representation is cost-effective and ROI focused.
- 6** Evaluate Visitor Information Servicing to identify visitor servicing models that reflect and capitalise on collaborative new technologies and the interdependence of servicing across regional boundaries.
- 7** Focus communications activity on groups and organisations with strong membership and community business networks. Engage group leadership in the communication of key messages.
- 8** Identify and communicate opportunities from emerging trends and markets (eg. China, International Students, Nomad Travel, Soft 4WD).



Experience & Supply Development

SATC PERSPECTIVE

There is great opportunity to further develop existing assets into outstanding tourism experiences including improving and new quality accommodation options.

A priority is developing linkages between accessible experiences to create clusters that support regional dispersion (e.g the development of itineraries and trails).

MRLCTA APPROACH

We collect, analyse and interpret data and evidence to assist operators to make sound investment and development decisions.

We identify specific opportunities that make a significant contribution to regional tourism growth and promote the development of product and marketing to accelerate these.

STRATEGIES

- 1** Undertake a comprehensive audit of tourism infrastructure, product, accommodation, food and beverage and use this information to identify gaps, target new investment to address latent demand, and encourage bundling and collaborative marketing.
- 2** Encourage the growth of accessible on-water experiences for visitors.
- 3** Support the work of major projects by communicating tourism opportunities which expand the visitors' perceptions of the region and build multiple visit demand (e.g. The Bend Motorsport Park, Bridgeport Hotel, Monarto Safari Park, Murray Coorong Trail, International Dark Sky Reserve).
- 4** Engage with SATC to disperse a greater proportion of in-bound air travellers to the region, where we can demonstrate a greater engagement with regional 'heroes' and 'exceptional experiences'.
- 5** Partner with DEW to identify tourism opportunities across DEW managed resources and promote these opportunities to potential operators and investors.

Leisure & Business Events Focus

SATC PERSPECTIVE

Events and festivals help grow awareness of SA as a diverse and attractive destination and a trigger giving reasons to visit SA now.

Developing events that take place in low and shoulder seasons are important in increasing and spreading visitation over the year. Business events also have a key role particularly in Adelaide and adjacent regions for pre and post touring by high yielding participants.

MRLCTA APPROACH

We will link events, operators, and potential suppliers and volunteers to expand the event program to boost local economies through increased trade.

Connections will be developed with the Adelaide event and conference market to create interest in pre/tour/post activities for participants and partners of Adelaide conferences, incentive groups and events.

We encourage local engagement and support promotion of the region as 'event capable'.

STRATEGIES

- 1** Engage event coordinators to maintain up-to-date event listings via ATDW.
- 2** Strengthen MRLCTA's access to large Adelaide-based events and identify strategies to enable regional operators to capitalise on tours, pre/post event activities and speciality experiences.
- 3** Develop a Regional Events Strategy that articulates our regional capability and the economic value of events. Support regional event organisers with grant applications and marketing.

Industry Capability

SATC PERSPECTIVE

The *South Australian Tourism Plan 2030* identifies capability and capacity development in a range of key areas including:

- ▶ Business training.
- ▶ Enhancement in digital skills, customer service standards and professionalism in the wider visitor economy.
- ▶ Tailoring experiences to emerging markets (including use of quality consumer research to guide operational and investment decisions).
- ▶ Development and availability of commissionable product.
- ▶ Support for innovation and entrepreneurship.
- ▶ Streamlining and simplifying regulations (will lead to increased private investment and development of visitor experiences).

STRATEGIES

- 1** Ensure the MRLCTA's resources are effective, flexible and can be scaled to adapt and support new opportunities or funding arrangements. This includes being incorporated as an association to enable sourcing extra resources through grant applications
- 2** Advocate to government for the removal of 'red tape' barriers to trade.
- 3** Undertake an annual review and update of the Strategic Plan to ensure its relevance for emerging opportunities.

MRLCTA APPROACH

The issues acknowledged by SATC are also relevant in the region, but may be beyond the influence of the MRLCTA.

This section reflects our intent to provide a professional, effective and accountable organisation which advocates for the visitor economy and which has a measurable effect on tourism growth in the region.

Infrastructure Investment

SATC PERSPECTIVE

SATC recognises that public infrastructure continues to be an important enabler of tourism including road infrastructure, hiking and cycle trails, signage, telecommunication connectivity and accessible aquatic facilities.

STRATEGIES

- 1** Streamline the process of supporting grant applications.
- 2** Lobby for strategic approaches to funding and infrastructure development for priority projects and leverage national success stories to support infrastructure investment by Councils.
- 3** Work with stakeholders to improve access to and encourage operators to capitalise on existing public infrastructure and seek aligned partnerships.

MRLCTA APPROACH

Our stakeholders identify infrastructure as a priority for the region, particularly river infrastructure such as moorings, signage and frontage. Our local Councils provide significant community infrastructure that also supports tourism and events.

MRLCTA will influence infrastructure by lobbying responsible agencies, providing letters of support to grant applications, participating in organisations with a mandate to deliver better infrastructure, and providing insights to RDAMR for its Regional Roadmap priorities.

The purpose of the Murray River, Lakes & Coorong Tourism Alliance (MRLCTA)

MRLCTA is responsible for the holistic development of tourism, including marketing, promotion and advocacy in the Murray River, Lakes & Coorong region. We are committed to building our region's visitor economy through a destination management approach underpinned by a strong strategic direction in line with industry, government, community and industry aspirations for our region.

The Murray River, Lakes & Coorong region comprises the local government areas of Rural City of Murray Bridge, Coorong District Council, Mid Murray Council, Alexandrina Council, District Council of Karoonda East Murray and Southern Mallee District Council.

Our core focus areas are:

Destination marketing: Ensure effective communication with potential visitors to influence their destination preference, intention to travel and ultimately their final destination and product choices. This should include broad representation of the regional tourism product;

Destination development: Coordinate and develop amenities, facilities, products and services that support the region to deliver quality experiences for visitors and enhance residents' well-being; and

Destination management: Coordinate tourism, industry, government and community leaders in planning for the future and for management of the region as a destination.

**Murray River, Lakes
& Coorong Tourism Alliance**
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**murray river**
lakes & coorong