

# *Queensland's* national parks

an economically important tourism resource



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF QUEENSLAND  
AUSTRALIA



Queensland  
Government



National parks are important environmental resources, giving protection to the flora, fauna and ecosystems that underpin a healthy environment for us all to live in and pass on to future generations. National parks not only play a vital role in the environment but also contribute social, cultural and economic value to our society.

The University of Queensland and the Queensland Department of Environment and Science undertook research into the economic value provided by national parks to the Queensland economy in 2018. This research focused on understanding the economic value of Queensland's national parks as a tourism and recreation asset in terms of benefits to the Queensland economy.

Authors of the University of Queensland report are Sally Driml, Richard Brown and Claudia Moreno Silva.



# National parks—a snapshot

Queensland is home to



**312**

national parks<sup>1</sup>

and



**234**

conservation parks<sup>1</sup>

with national park visitation in Queensland continuing to grow.

## How many people visit national parks?

In the year ending March 2018,



**2.4 million**

domestic (Australian)  
overnight visitors

and



**2.6 million**

daytrip visitors

visited a national or state park while in Queensland.

This is up from 1.3 million domestic overnight visitors and 1.1 million daytrip visitors in 2009.

While data are not available on exactly how many international visitors visit a national park while in Queensland, for Australia as a whole 45% of international visitors in the year ending March 2018 visited a national or state park, and 1.4 million of these visitors made a stopover in Queensland<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This study includes national parks and conservation parks as defined under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. Current as at July 2020.

<sup>2</sup> These visitor numbers are from Tourism and Events Queensland: <https://teq.queensland.com/research-and-insights/economics-and-specialised-reports/national-state-parks-visitation>



# How important are national parks in attracting visitors?

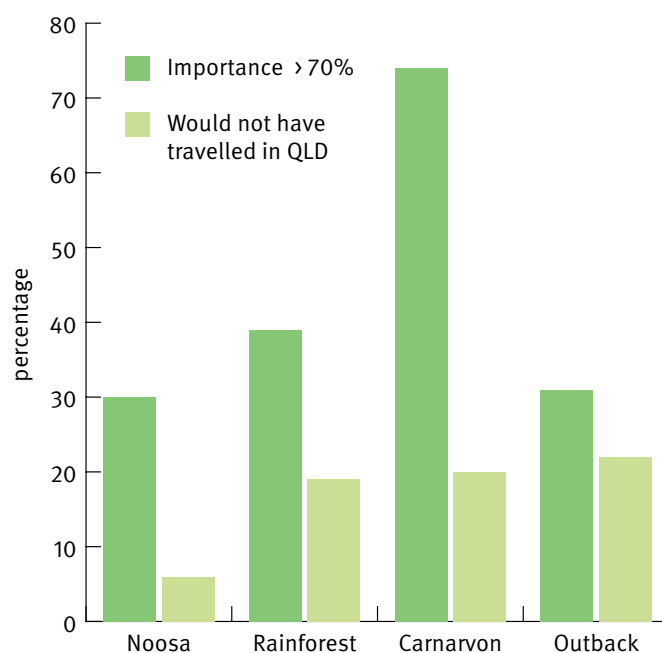
To understand the influence of national parks in relation to visitation, visitors to national parks were asked how important national parks were to their decision to visit the national parks and adjacent regions.

Data collection from visitors to national parks was concentrated in four locations representative of four types of park category:

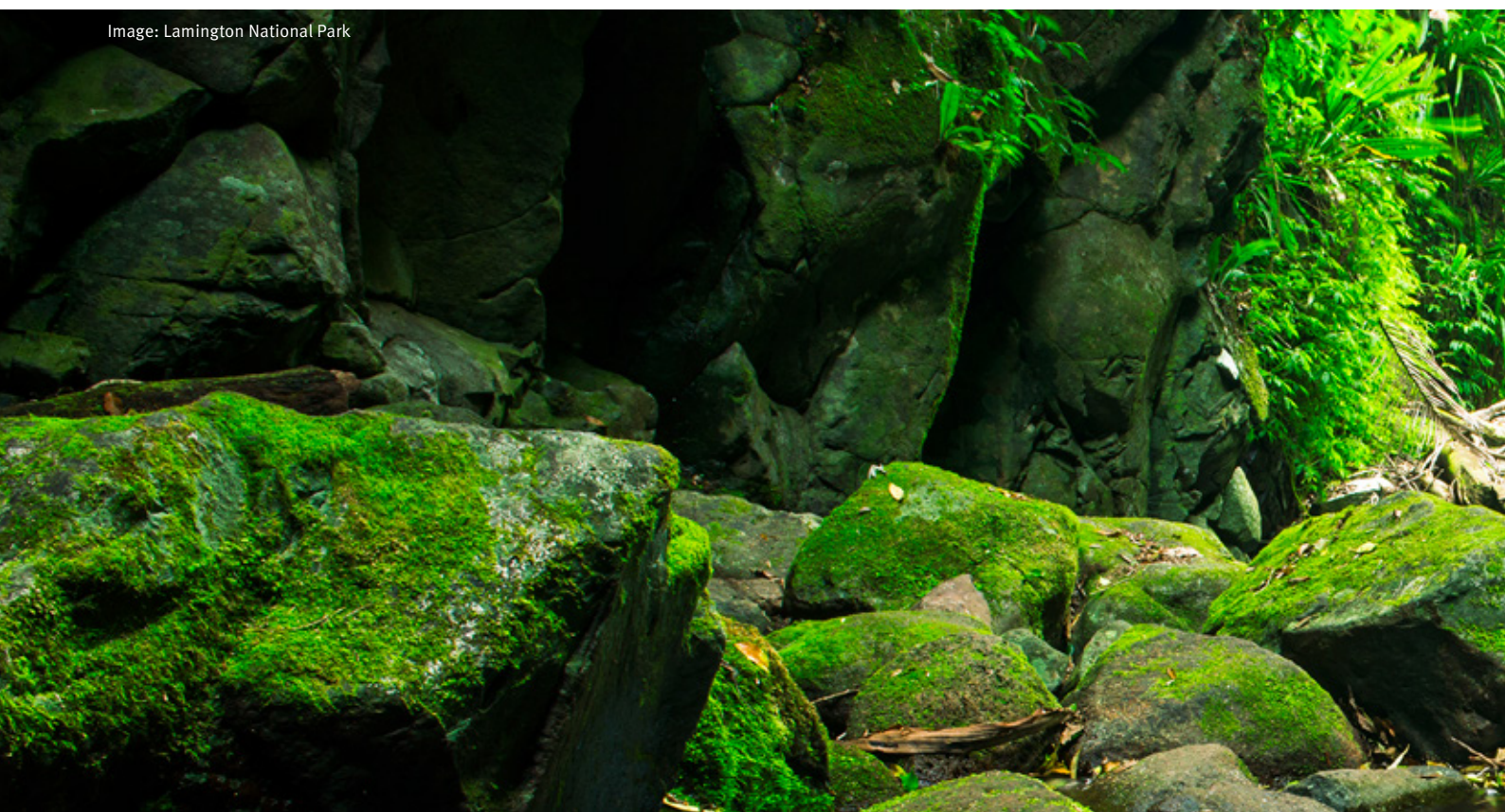
- 'Urban' (represented by Noosa National Park)
- 'Iconic'<sup>3</sup> (represented by Daintree National Park and nearby rainforest national parks)
- 'Remote' (represented by Carnarvon National Park)
- 'Outback' (represented by several outback national parks).

As would be expected, responses varied across the different park categories. However, in each case, many of the visitors said that the importance of visiting the national park to their whole trip was 70% or more. Also, a notable number of visitors said that they would not have travelled in Queensland at all if they could not visit the national parks.

## Indicators of importance of national parks as an attraction



3 Refers to high profile national parks where visitor numbers are high.





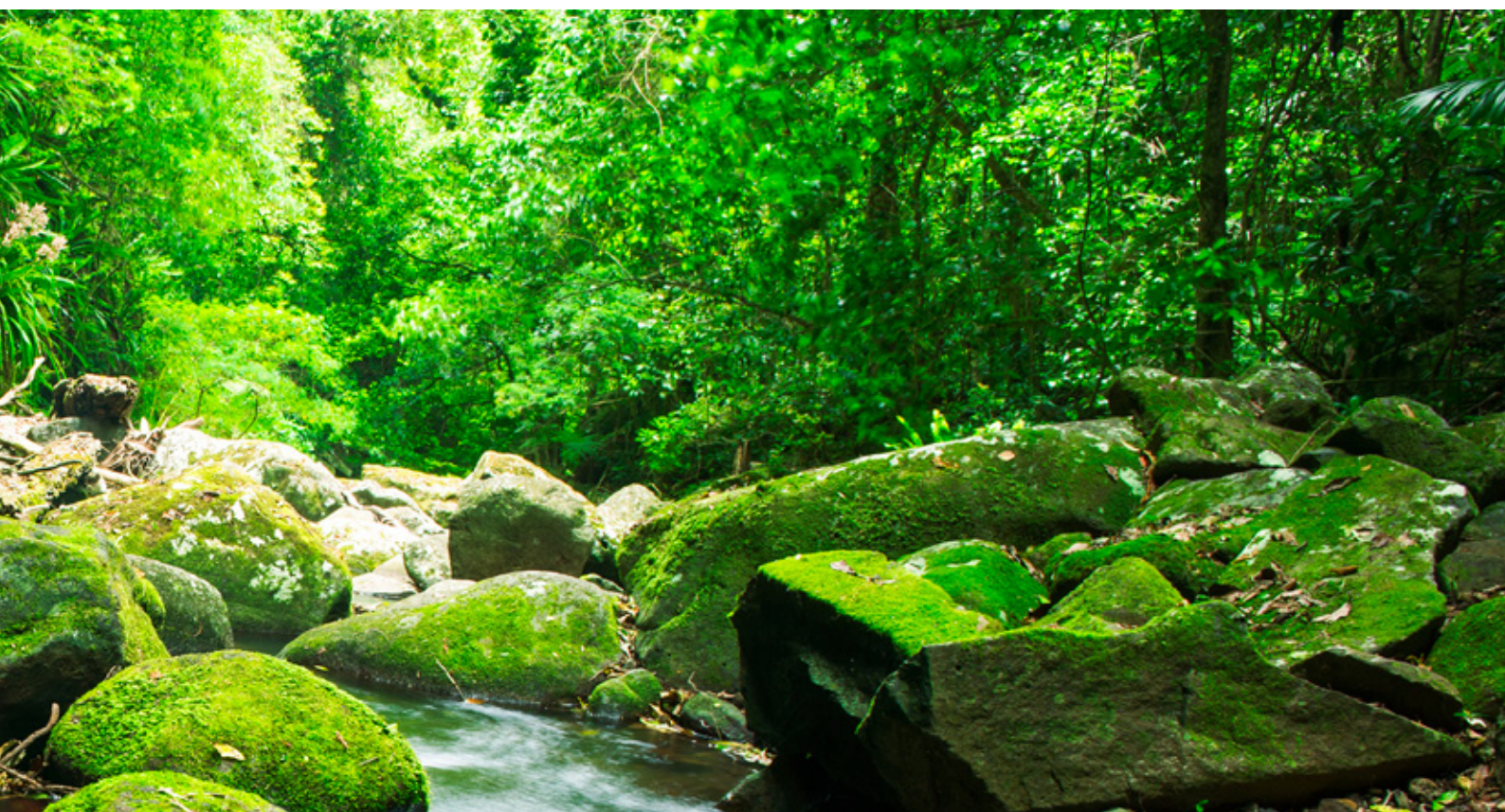
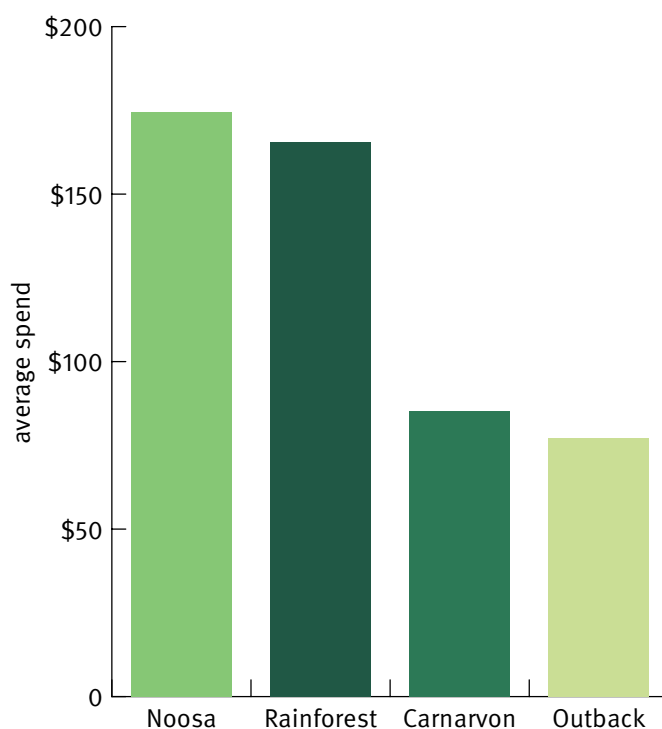
# How much do national park visitors spend daily?

As entry to national parks in Queensland is free and visitors usually provide their own transport and accommodation arrangements, one way to understand the economic benefits of national parks is to calculate the spending that visitors make in the surrounding region, in association with their visits to national parks.

Visitors spend money in the vicinity of national parks on accommodation, transport, tours, food and beverage etc. in addition to any in-park costs such as for camping.

The highest spenders are domestic overnight visitors, who usually stay in the region surrounding the national parks. International visitors generally spend a little less per day, while daytrip visitors spend 25% to 40% of what overnight visitors spend.

**The average spend, per person, per day, in regions by domestic overnight visitors to four types of national parks surveyed**



# How much do all national park visitors spend in Queensland?

Two levels of visitor spending are reported here. National Park Associated Spending (NPAS) is spending in a region by all the people who visit a national park in that region. A subset of that is National Park Generated Spending (NPGS) which is spending by visitors for whom national parks were 'very important' to their travel decisions<sup>4</sup>. In 2018, NPAS in Queensland was \$3.71 billion. Of this, NPGS was \$2.64 billion.

## National Park Associated Spending (NPAS)

**\$3.71  
billion**

## National Park Generated Spending (NPGS)

**\$2.64  
billion**

# What is the contribution of this spending to the Queensland economy?

The positive impact of this visitor spending for the Queensland economy is generation of Gross State Product (GSP) and employment. Contribution to Queensland Total GSP was \$2.74 billion for NPAS and \$1.98 billion for NPGS. Total employment supported by NPAS was 24,190 full-time equivalent jobs while NPGS supported 17,241 full-time equivalent jobs in Queensland.

## NPAS Total GSP

**\$2.74  
billion**

## NPAS Total Employment

**24,190  
jobs**

## NPGS Total GSP

**\$1.98  
billion**

## NPGS Total Employment

**17,241  
jobs**

<sup>4</sup> This was defined as visitors who said the national park was their only or main destination, all those who nominated importance at over 70% and visitors who would not have travelled in Queensland if they could not visit the national parks.

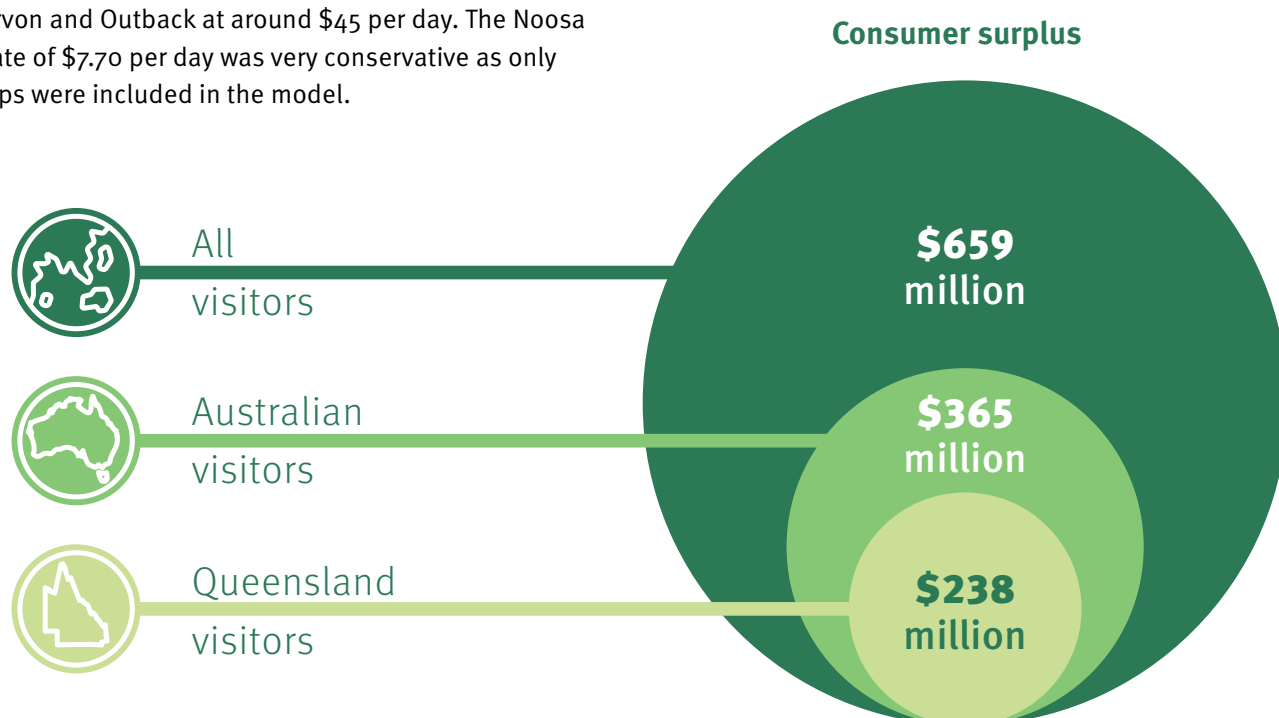
# What's the additional 'non-market' value of national parks to visitors?

As national parks often have no or low access prices (no market), the value of benefit to visitors is always above what they have to pay (this non-market benefit is referred to as a 'consumer surplus').

The consumer surplus for four types of national parks was calculated using a well-regarded non-market valuation technique for Noosa, Rainforest, Carnarvon and Outback national parks. Per visitor-day, Rainforest national parks returned the highest value of \$150 per day, with Carnarvon and Outback at around \$45 per day. The Noosa estimate of \$7.70 per day was very conservative as only day trips were included in the model.

For the year 2018, the total consumer surplus to visitors was estimated at \$659 million to all visitors from all origins, with subsets of \$365 million to all Australian visitors and \$238 million to Queensland resident visitors.

National parks conserve the environment over time so these benefits can be enjoyed for many years into the future. The discounted present value over 30 years, for all visitors, is \$16 billion.



# What is the return on investment in visitor management in Queensland's national parks?

A general or average return on investment in visitor management was estimated by comparing the benefits of Gross Value Added<sup>5</sup> due to visitor spending plus consumer surplus against the cost of visitor management<sup>6</sup>. Using the NPGS and consumer surplus to Queensland residents only, the ratio of benefits to costs was estimated at \$6.30 in benefits to every \$1 in cost<sup>7</sup>. This demonstrates a positive return on investment.

5 Gross Value Added is Gross State Product minus taxes.

6 The average annual spending over the previous six years by the Queensland Government on national park visitor management (not including other conservation management) was \$100 million; information from the Department of Environment and Science.

7 This is a general or average return and does not necessarily indicate the likely return for a particular project.



# More information

This information is from a report produced by researchers from The University of Queensland under a collaborative agreement with the Department of Environment and Science.

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Image: Birdsville | © Tourism and Events Queensland

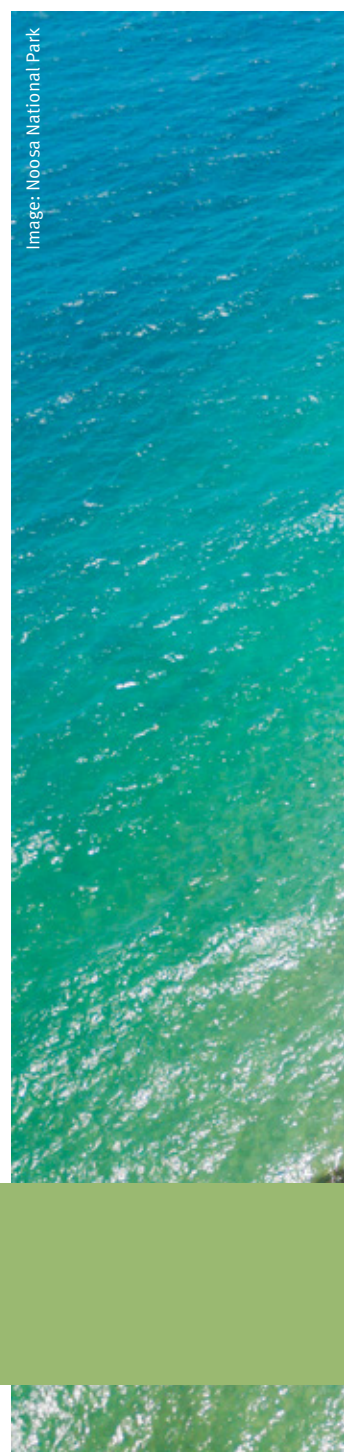


Image: Noosa National Park