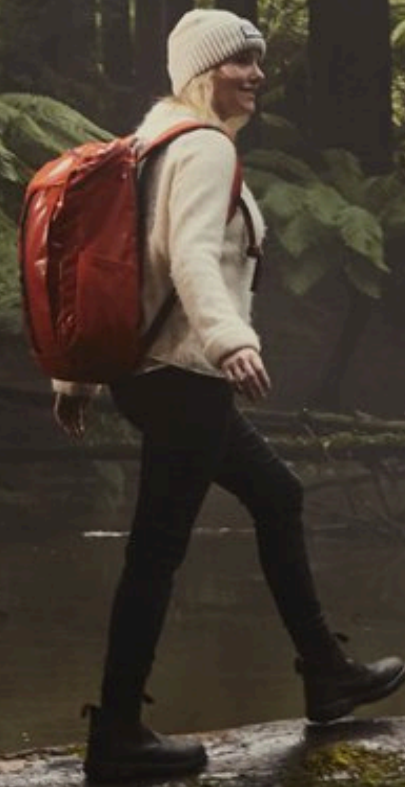


OTWAYS

DESTINATION ACTION PLAN

2025 – 2030



Acknowledgements

Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd acknowledges the Gulidjan and Gadubanud peoples of the Eastern Maar Nation as the traditional custodians of the Country we refer to as The Otways. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging. We recognise and respect their unique cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship to Country.

The development of the Otways Destination Action plan has been facilitated by Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Ltd. The process brought together representatives from stakeholder groups that benefit from the visitor economy, local government, industry and the community to develop a plan.

Specifically we would like to thank the individuals that participated in the plan development process.

Facilitators: Leith Thomas/Liz Price

Destination action plan leadership group:

Shannon McCartney – Cape Otway
Lightstation

Cr Marg White – Colac Otway Shire Council

Cr Stephen Hart – Colac Otway Shire Council

Cr Chris Potter – Colac Otway Shire Council

Cr Graham Costin – Colac Otway Shire

Council

Anne Howard – Colac Otway Shire Council

Ian Seuren – Colac Otway Shire Council

Fiona Maw – Colac Otway Shire Council

Adrian Healey – Colac Otway Shire Council

Paul Rogasch – Great Ocean Road Coast and
Parks Authority

Heidi Taylor – Colac Otway Shire Council

Helen Chambers – Johanna Farm Cottages

Boz Klemen – Otway Artisans

Andrew Nosedo – Otway Estate

Sally Richardson – Otway Distillery

Dean and Gabrielle – The Perch

Stephen Amezdroz – Redwoods Rest

Liz Ronson – The Roost Johanna

James Thomas – Heroes Vineyard

Tom Dennis – Tarndie / Otway Harvest Trail

Jordan Wood – Johanna Seaside Cottage /
Holiday Great Ocean Road

Jo Birley – Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism

Liz Price – Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism

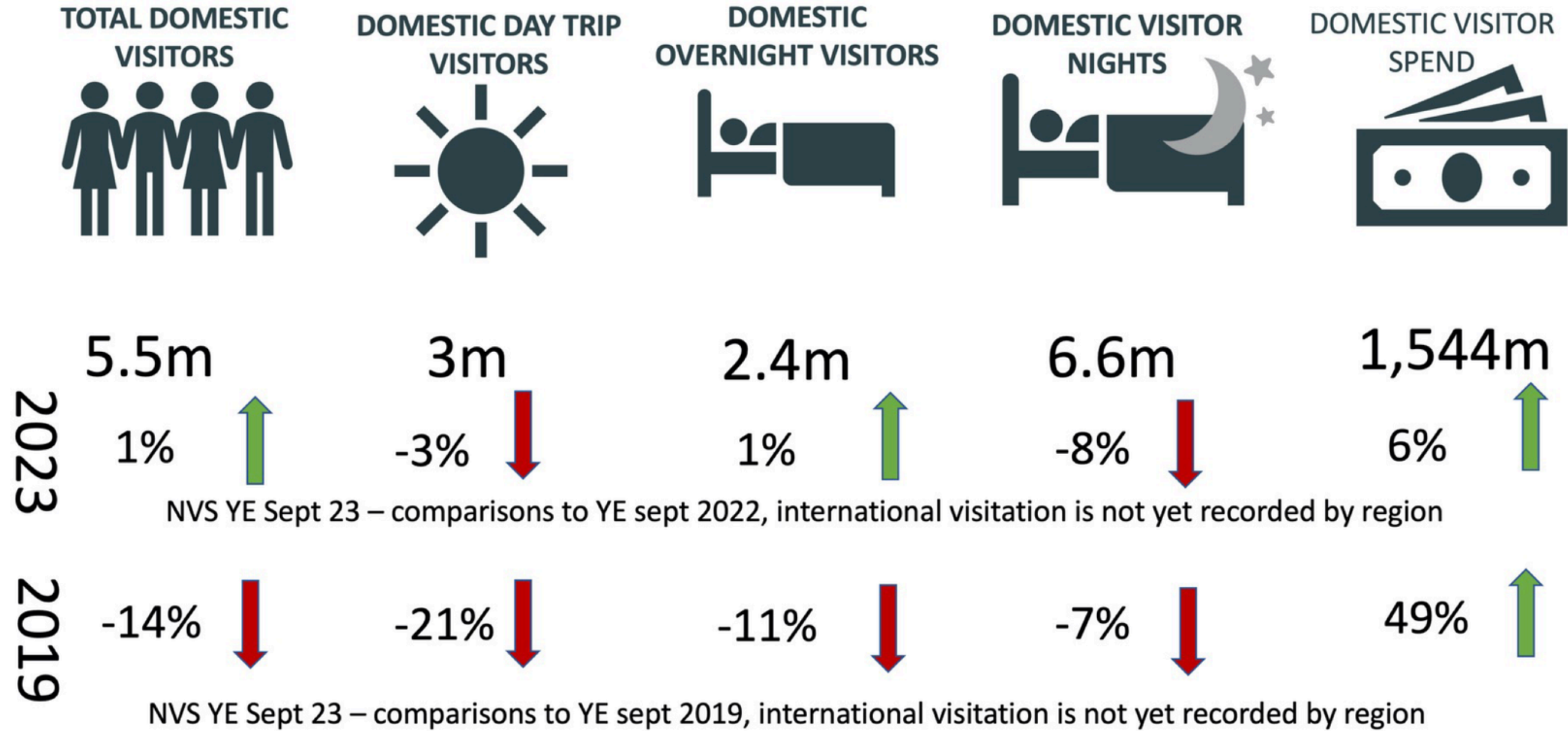


Introduction

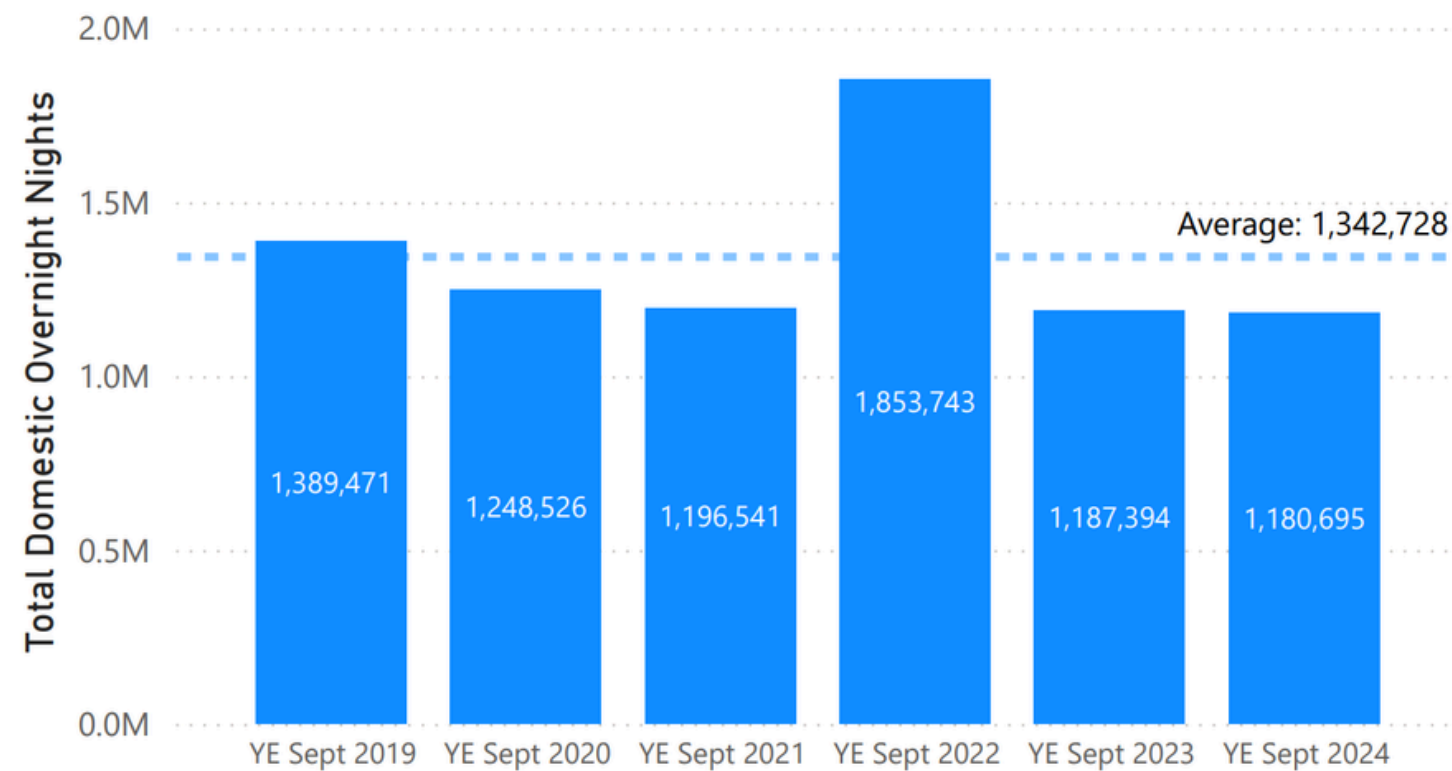
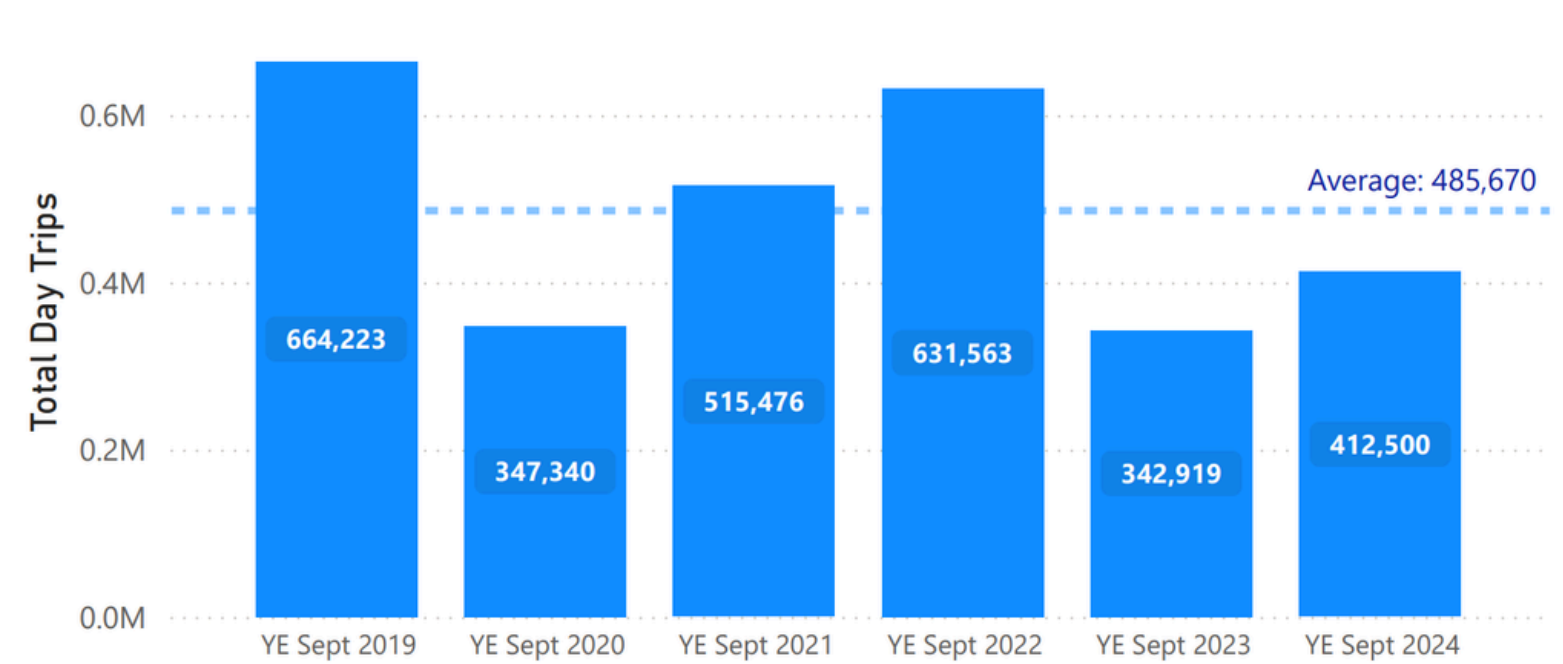
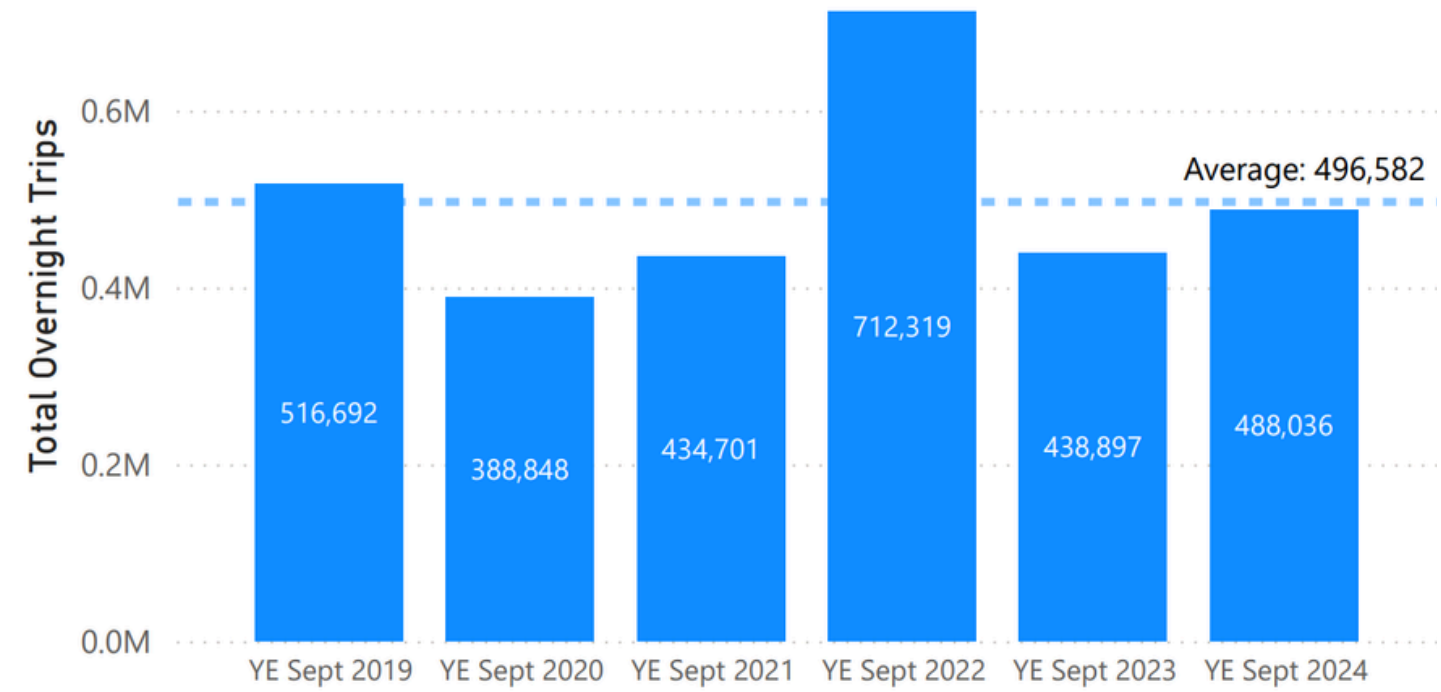
This Destination Action Plan identifies priority strategies and actions for the Otways which, if implemented over the next three to five years, will enhance its competitiveness within the Great Ocean Road region and beyond. These strategic actions will also be reflected in the region-wide Master Plan for the Visitor Economy to facilitate regional collaboration and cooperation.

The Otways Destination Action Plan has been prepared through a facilitated workshop process involving business and community representatives who considered and reached consensus on challenges to address and tourism development, marketing and management opportunities. The group has identified and agreed upon the key priorities and actions that will make a positive difference to the growth and sustainability of the Otways' visitor economy and experience.

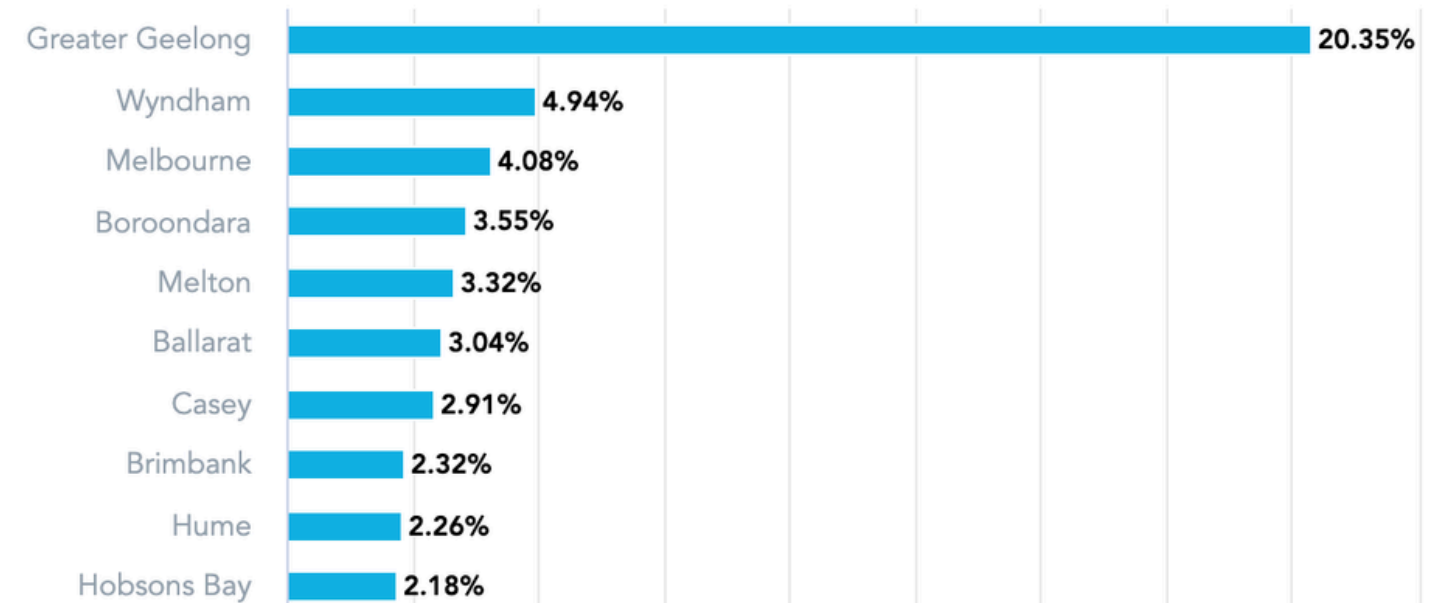
Great Ocean Road region domestic visitation YE September 2024



Colac Otway domestic visitation YE September 2024



Top ten visiting LGAs (Localis 12 months to Feb 2025)





Objectives

Visitor economy objectives for the Great Ocean Road Region are:

- To increase visitor length of stay
- To increase visitor expenditure
- To increase visitor dispersal (geographically and seasonally)
- To increase visitor satisfaction –build a visitor servicing culture
- To increase industry and community engagement, participation and support

Additional destination objectives for the Otways region are to:

- Develop new and diverse product offerings
- Foster collaboration, particularly with agriculture, community and cultural sectors
- Position the Otways region as a multi-day destination
- Attract new markets seeking sustainable and nature-based experiences

Our vision

The Otways vision is to be Victoria's signature nature experience enabling visitors to completely immerse themselves in and connect to Big Nature. The surrounding network of villages and towns deliver all the creature comforts, premium locally grown food, wine and cultural offerings, adventure and cosy accommodation.

Visitors who appreciate the communities and the wonderful opportunities to connect in nature want to stay to enjoy all the Otways has to offer and regularly return to recharge and restore.

It's a place with so much to explore but equally enjoyed just being in the moment.



Our Values

Rejuvenation Community
Accessibility Diversity Sustainability
Adventure Nature Culture
Authenticity Connection
Generosity Premium

Opportunities

- Promote the Otway's as a more exclusive destination of the Great Ocean Road region with an array of unique, premium offerings,
- Grow the capacity of individual products and experiences to build their own brand and visibility, and target appropriate audiences for their business
- Grow industry and business online profiles
- Grow adventure tourism product
- Grow awareness in domestic markets by targeting growing audiences in Melbourne's West and Geelong
- Enhance accessibility at Otways experiences for visitors
- Increase the length of stay and grow regular and repeat visitation
- Better communicate the depth of the region's history, offerings and culture
- Develop more agri-tourism products to extend opportunities for visitation
- Develop or highlight products to grow night-time economy,
- Establish new venues in the region suitable to grow event markets
- Explore sustainable options for affordable housing for workers and short-term worker accommodation
- Foster connection between tourism operators and collaboration with other sectors to develop new initiatives to enhance the region's offerings
- Strengthen relationships with Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation to support and promote cultural tourism

Challenges

- Lack of awareness of what the Otways offers, limits the region's stakeholder's ability to leverage the unique identity of the Otways
- The absence of a clear gateway or hub makes distinguishing the region for visitors more challenging
- Day trip visitation habits restrict engagement with experiences and offerings
- Limited transport options and the distance between activities limits visitor dispersal across the region
- Access to nature-based attractions is largely restricted to those with cars
- Lack of affordable housing for staff creates workforce shortages, impacting operations and offerings
- Limited public amenities restrict the ability of townships to cater to visitors
- Geography of the Otways and distance between communities and lack of networking opportunities limit sector connectivity and collaboration
- The Otway Harvest Trails membership structure is challenging for passionate foodie businesses located in coastal townships or on the Great Ocean Road.
- Extending bushfire seasons and perceptions of danger dampen market demand during the peak times, leading to a loss of market share to competitor regions
- Limited range and supply of accommodation limits potential for growing multi-night stays and attracting high-yield visits
- Planning processes, regulatory requirements and uncertainty around public and private funding restricts or delays product development
- Poor road quality limits the region's capability to service visitors
- Lack of efficient distribution mechanisms restricts the ability of operators to source local produce and products
- Commercial experiences are limited during off-peak periods
- Limited engagement with First People's organisations

Action Plan Implementation

Roles and responsibilities regarding this plan are summarised below:

Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism (GORRT)

GORRT are the lead regional advocacy and coordination body, supporting regional planning, stakeholder engagement, and marketing, and enable the formation of a Visitor Economy Partnership with State Government for the region. Their responsibilities include:

- Facilitating regional advocacy and strategic alignment, including formal VEP support for tourism funding.
- Providing industry development resources and training.
- Coordinating regional brand marketing strategy and cooperative marketing initiatives across the Great Ocean Road region
- Supporting the annual review and progress reporting of this Plan in consultation with the Reference Group.
- Coordinating and initiating agile and responsive projects and activity to support the visitor economy

Colac Otway Shire Council

Council will serve as the key driver of local implementation, with responsibilities including:

- Leading destination marketing specific to the Otways, including co-operative marketing with GORRT
- Supporting local business development and tourism infrastructure.
- Managing planning, compliance, and civic responsibilities.
- Facilitating partnerships and funding applications for priority projects.

Local Business Community and Tourism Operators

Businesses and operators are essential contributors to the rollout of this Plan. Their role includes:

- Participating in training, networking, and capacity-building initiatives.
- Collaborating on product development, cross-promotion, and visitor servicing.
- Engaging with marketing campaigns and digital platforms.
- Providing feedback and insights to inform ongoing improvements.

Roles continued next page....

Action Plan Implementation

Reference Group

A Reference Group will be established to oversee implementation, monitor progress, and ensure accountability. This group will include representatives from GORRT, Council, local businesses, and other relevant stakeholders.

Implementation Guidelines

Actions are categorised by priority to guide timing:

HIGH – to be initiated within the first 2 years.

MEDIUM – to be addressed within 2–3 years.

LOW – to be considered within 5 years.

Progress will be reviewed annually by GORRT in collaboration with the Reference Group. Updates and revisions may be made based on outcomes, emerging opportunities, and resource availability.

This Plan is a strategic guide and does not impose mandatory commitments. It encourages voluntary collaboration and proactive engagement to achieve shared tourism objectives.

Updated Implementation Note:

This Plan is intended as a dynamic framework. While a formal review will occur annually, action items may be revised as priorities evolve. Additionally, future Destination Action Plans may supersede the current document and reflect updated strategic directions, emerging opportunities, and stakeholder feedback.

Priority 1

Build a strong collaborative approach to support industry development, capability and connectivity

ACTIONS	Responsibility	Priority
<p>1.1 Facilitate Collaboration and participation in industry development and training, providing networking and capacity building opportunities</p> <p>1.11 Encourage businesses to utilise (sell or include) locally produced food and products. eg. local produce hampers in accommodation</p> <p>1.12 Deliver a dedicated series of industry training/learning functions and opportunities to connect with other businesses including; events, digital skills, marketing and utilising brand toolkits, eco-certification information and cultural learning.</p> <p>1.13 Develop opportunities for industry to experience Otways attractions through familiarisation programs, open days and showcase events</p> <p>1.14 Build an online business community to share information about events, activities, trading/opening hours supporting better coordination of visitor servicing</p> <p>1.15 Enhance collaboration across region - Otways, Apollo Bay, Colac</p> <p>1.16 Promote access to existing online learning resources, content and shared libraries already available through a range of sources (GORRT, Tourism Australia, VTIC, Business.gov etc)</p> <p>1.17 Encourage better capability to service visitors with accessibility requirements - utilise resources and training available</p>	<p>Council, GORRT, OHT, business led activities</p>	<p>HIGH</p>
<p>1.2 Support local and regional advocacy to address workforce shortages and key worker housing</p>	<p>All</p>	<p>ongoing</p>
<p>1.3 Foster Collaboration and build relationships with Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation to:</p> <p>1.31 Support their development of new products and experiences</p> <p>1.32 Embed First People's Culture and their perspectives into events, experiences and products where appropriate</p> <p>1.33 Explore commercial partnership opportunities to develop new experiences and products</p> <p>1.34 Cultural awareness and learning opportunities led by Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation</p> <p>1.35 Supporting the implementation of the Geelong and Great Ocean Road Aboriginal Product Development Plan</p> <p>1.36 Ensure incorporation of First People's perspectives and culture at events held or projects on Eastern Maar Country</p>	<p>EMAC + All stakeholders</p>	<p>HIGH</p>

Priority 2

Advocate and support improvements to enabling and public infrastructure to enhance visitor experience

ACTIONS	Responsibility	Priority
<p>2.1 Advocate for and support enhancements to public infrastructure at key natural attractions to enhance the visitor experience</p> <p>2.11 Collaboratively develop an advocacy document for priority improvements at Otways public attractions that will drive demand and improve the visitor experience, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe road access to key attractions, trails and waterfall walks - Improve parking and amenities such as toilet facilities and rubbish bins at hero Otways natural attractions (eg The Redwoods) - Improved interpretive information at key sites explaining wildlife, ecology, history and First People’s culture - Wayfinding and signage to connect Otways villages/hubs and experiences, including information on the Otways in Colac <p>2.12 Investigate opportunities for connecting walks</p> <p>2.13 Support the implementation of the Great Ocean Road Trails Strategy</p>	<p>All to advocate, land managers to coordinate</p>	<p>HIGH</p>
<p>2.2 Participate in planning and advocacy opportunities to influence outcomes and positively impact communities and visitor economy stakeholders</p> <p>2.21 Great Ocean Road Strategic Framework planning reform (DEECA)</p> <p>2.22 Advocate for improvements to amenity at key attractions in the Otways</p>	<p>All stakeholders</p>	<p>HIGH</p>
<p>2.3 Advocate for the enhancement/development of public and active transport options to enhance access to and movement throughout the Otways, for example:</p> <p>2.31 Maintenance and renewal of key inland roads</p> <p>2.32 More frequent public transport services, and new services linking rail services to coast</p> <p>2.33 Privately operated transport options such as an Otways Shuttle service/Hop on-Hop off</p>	<p>All to advocate, PTV + private interest led</p>	<p>MED</p>
<p>2.4 Investment in infrastructure, signage, and amenities to support new product and growth in Lavers Hill</p> <p>2.41 Prioritise investment at this key town, intersecting the Great Ocean Road, inland routes and to Otways major attractions – leveraging the traffic along the road and supporting new hospitality and accommodation product development here.</p>	<p>Council, Lavers Hill Working Group, all to support</p>	<p>MED</p>

Priority 3

Embrace and manage our pristine environment

ACTIONS	Responsibility	Priority
<p>3.1 Obtain Eco-Destination certification of the Otways (for Colac Otway Shire) to demonstrate our commitment to sustainability and nature based tourism .</p> <p>3.11 Encourage more businesses to obtain eco-certification or complete the Strive for Sustainability scorecard through eco-tourism Australia</p> <p>3.12 Encourage more business to obtain eco-certification</p> <p>3.13 Support businesses to reduce environmental impacts</p>	<p>Council, GORRT, all businesses</p>	<p>ongoing</p>
<p>3.2 Work with land managers and marketing organisations to manage visitation at sensitive sites</p> <p>3.21 Promote responsible visitation/conscious travel and ensure all stakeholders have a through understanding to assist in educating visitors on how they should and shouldn't interact with our environment, including wildlife, staying on designated trails, leaving no trace etc,</p> <p>3.22 Encourage visits to busy sites at quieter times to avoid congestion and enhance the experiences (eg go to the Redwoods early in the morning or during the week)</p> <p>3.23 Demarket locations unsuitable or unsafe for visitors</p> <p>3.24 Promote attractions with suitable infrastructure (eg safe road access, toilets and ample car parking)</p>	<p>GORRT and All stakeholders in partnership with land managers (GORCAPA, Partks Victoria, DEECA, Council)</p>	<p>HIGH - ongoing</p>
<p>3.3 Promote emergency safety awareness</p> <p>3.31 Encourage all businesses to have an up to date crisis plan and bushfire plan (utilise templates available through state gov and CFA)</p> <p>3.32 Promote use of the emergency.vic app for all visitors, particularly in fire danger periods or severe weather</p> <p>3.33 Continue to work with agencies and Regional Emergency Management Team to minimise the impact form extreme seasons and emergency event management</p>	<p>All stakeholders</p>	<p>HIGH</p>

Priority 4

Grow the product offering in the Otways, enhancing the visitor experience and supporting a more sustainable visitor economy

ACTIONS	Responsibility	Priority
<p>4.1 Support opportunities for accommodation development to grow the range and scale of the offering and attract new markets, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.11 Unique premium accommodation 4.12 Accommodation of scale 4.13 Year-round eco and glamping options 4.14 Farm-stays 4.15 Explore new accommodation development areas like Colac 4.16 Accessible Accommodation 	<p>Council, GORRT, new + existing businesses</p>	<p>HIGH</p>
<p>4.2 Support the development of new events and the sustainability of existing events, as key economic drivers for the tourism sector, with a particular emphasis on growing the off-peak calendar of activity and night-time events;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.21 Utilisation of the Forrest MTB trail network, Tiger Rail Trail and Old Beechy Trail for participatory sporting events 4.22 Activate existing spaces suitable for all weather events and night-time events throughout Colac Otway Shire 4.23 Improve existing event infrastructure at event precincts and venues both in Otways towns and nearby locations suitable for large events such as at the Colac Showgrounds 4.24 Consider provision of shuttle services for large events to support overnight stays in nearby towns 4.25 Enhance the promotion of market dates and assist coordination between communities by creating a market calendar to create authenticity and connection to community groups, and promote their events and activities to visitors 	<p>Event organisers, community and business groups, council, GORRT, OHT</p>	<p>MED</p>
<p>4.3 Support agri-business to enhance their product offering for visitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.31 Investigate opportunity for a retail/distribution HUB in Colac to support local growers/makers and provide a showcase to visitors of the rich and diverse local product 4.32 Assistance for small producers to develop their farm-gate or physical visitor experiences 	<p>All stakeholders + Otway Harvest Trail</p>	<p>ongoing</p>

Continued next page

Priority 4

Continued....

ACTIONS	Responsibility	Priority
<p>4.4 Support/advocate for the development of experiences and services to support mid week and off peak visitation</p> <p>4.41 Encourage businesses to coordinate opening hours</p> <p>4.42 Build capacity to service overnight guests, especially where dining options are limited</p>	<p>All business, COS, GORRT</p>	<p>HIGH</p>
<p>4.5 Support partnership with, and the development of new products and experiences led by Eastern Maar (refer Priority 1, action 1.3)</p>	<p>All stakeholders in partnership with EMAC</p>	<p>ongoing</p>
<p>4.6 Develop new experiences to grow and diversify the offering for visitors, supporting experimental product and innovation;</p> <p>4.61 Pop-up/seasonal experiences</p> <p>4.62 Wildlife and immersive rainforest tours in the Great Otway National Park</p> <p>4.63 Use technology and local business partnerships to create new and enhance existing experiences</p> <p>4.64 Develop or highlight new products to grow night-time economy</p>	<p>New and existing businesses, supported by Council, GORRT + land managers</p>	<p>MED</p>

Priority 5

Ensure the Otways destination, products and experiences are marketed to grow awareness in existing and new markets

ACTIONS	Responsibility	Priority
<p>5.1 Encourage cross-promotion of Otways products and experiences</p> <p>5.11 Encourage all operators to share destination and regional information on their websites, booking confirmations, emails, in room informations etc</p> <p>5.12 Collaborate with businesses in and around the Otways to promote activities to visitors staying in other locations in the Great Ocean Road region</p> <p>5.13 Provide information to visitors about nearby experiences and consider development of a script to assist businesses and staff with cross-promotion, referrals and recommendations</p> <p>5.14 Review of membership model for Otway Harvest Trail (for “eligible” product, noting the need for a more inclusive membership structure for OHT)</p>	<p>All stakeholders supported by Council and GORRT</p>	<p>HIGH</p>
<p>5.2 Promote engagement with existing online promotional tools, destination marketing channels and campaigns</p> <p>5.21 All businesses should have an up to date Google business listing for promoting their business, open hours and assisting wayfinding</p> <p>5.22 Facilitate and participate in co-operative marketing opportunities to align with the Great Ocean Road region’s brand</p> <p>5.23 Ensure all businesses are utilising the free base partnership with GORRT, and have published website listings on official tourism sites</p> <p>5.24 Ensure events are listed on ATDW</p> <p>5.25 Refresh and promote use of the Otways Brand toolkit, encouraging co-promotion of businesses and key Otways experiences</p>	<p>GORRT, Council, businesses and event organisers</p>	<p>HIGH</p>
<p>5.3 Improve the way we tell key stories of the Otways and it’s unique history and environment, consistently across channels; on destination marketing websites, operator websites and interpretive signage (refer Priority 2, action 2.4). Including;</p> <p>5.31 The region’s prehistoric past</p> <p>5.32 First People’s culture and history</p> <p>5.33 Otway’s industries</p> <p>5.34 Biodiversity of the forests and environment</p>	<p>All stakeholders</p>	<p>ongoing</p>

Continued next page

Priority 5

Continued

ACTIONS	Responsibility	Priority
<p>5.4 Actively engage and service international visitors and markets to increase yeild and support year round sustainability</p> <p>5.41 Encourage more businesses to actively work with inbound trade and travel agents, and participate in international marketing initiatives such as the “Great Southern Touring Route” (GSTR)</p> <p>5.42 Businesses to use road classification scheme in directions</p>	<p>GORRT, Council and GSTR to support businesses</p>	<p>ongoing</p>
<p>5.5 Create online tools to assist visitors planning trips to The Otways to encourage longer stays and ensure awareness of the breadth and depth of things to see and do</p> <p>5.51 Continued improvement of official destination website content, planning information and interactive tools</p> <p>5.52 Ensure all product is listed on GORRT websites - promote the websites and opportunities to the community</p> <p>5.53 Create seasonal specific itineraries, and promote what is open each season to encourage year-round visitation</p>	<p>GORRT, Council, VICs and businesses</p>	<p>HIGH</p>
<p>5.6 Promote appropriate towns as ‘Hubs’ from which visitors can stay and explore The Otways</p> <p>5.61 Promote ‘Hubs’ with appropriate services for visitors to base themselves to explore The Otways, including Colac, Forrest, Birregurra and Lavers Hill - ensuring places to eat are open to service visitors throughout the week/year.</p> <p>5.62 Create Otways itineraries for exploring things to do in The Otways from ‘Hub’ locations</p> <p>5.63 Promote Otways experiences, through increase B2B collaboration with other regional businesses for visitors staying in other nearby destinations</p>	<p>GORRT, Council and businesses</p>	<p>MED</p>

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This plan was published by Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism and developed in collaboration with Colac Otway Shire Council, Otways Visitor economy stakeholders, businesses and the community. This planning process is supported by the Victorian State Government.



GREAT OCEAN ROAD

REGIONAL TOURISM

