6. Visitor management and Park use

Kakadu National Park is a World Heritage place and people from all over the world would like to visit Kakadu for its ancient cultural heritage, wildlife and magnificent landscapes. Bininj are happy and proud to share Kakadu, and would like to be more involved in tourism. However, it is important for Bininj that this doesn’t happen too quickly, and that tourism respects the wishes of Bininj and helps safeguard their culture, lifestyle and privacy. It is important that Kakadu is promoted in ways that are accurate and give people the right expectations about a visit to the Park. New ways will be looked at to help visitors enjoy Kakadu and all its seasons, look at ways that Bininj can benefit more from tourism, and also look at how tourism activities can be better managed and give more certainty to the tourism industry. This will be done by Bininj, Parks Australia and the tourism industry working together.

‘I want visitors to feel something they’ll never forget – and have in their heart and mind forever.’

Bessie Coleman, Wurrkbarbar/Jawoyn clan

‘Our land has a big story. Sometimes we tell a little bit at a time. Come and hear our stories, see our land. A little bit might stay in your hearts. If you want more, you can come back.’

Jacob Nayinggul, Manilagarr clan

6.1 Recreational opportunities and tourism directions

OUR AIM

Kakadu National Park is universally recognised as one of the great World Heritage parks, as a place with:

• a living Aboriginal culture – home to Bininj
• extraordinary natural landscapes and a rich variety of plants and animals
• enriching and memorable experiences for visitors
• a strong and successful partnership between traditional owners, governments and the tourism industry, providing world’s best practice in caring for country and sustainable tourism.

MEASURING HOW WELL WE ARE MEETING OUR AIM

• Level of Bininj satisfaction with the nature, scope and impact of recreational and tourism opportunities in the Park
• Level of visitor and tourism industry satisfaction with recreational and tourism opportunities in the Park
• Extent to which Bininj gain economic benefit from commercial tourism opportunities

BACKGROUND

Bininj are proud to share their country with visitors and welcome tourism opportunities that help visitors to learn about, appreciate and experience Bininj culture and country in Kakadu.

In May 2004, the Director of National Parks, on behalf of the Kakadu Board and the Australian and Northern Territory Governments, commissioned the development of a shared tourism vision for the Park.

The following Shared Vision Principles were developed to enable the tourism industry to understand how the Board and Bininj want tourism to be managed in the Park while providing greater levels of certainty to the tourism industry:

1. Kakadu is first and foremost home to Bininj. They will influence, manage, encourage and participate in the development of tourism from which they gain economic and social benefits.
2. Bininj have leased their land to the Australian Government to be jointly managed as a national park to protect and manage its priceless natural and cultural heritage.
3. All parties recognise and will enhance the protection of Kakadu’s diverse landscapes, internationally important wetlands and spectacular plants and animals.
4. Tourism should not be boss of country. Aboriginal people will determine how and when they will be involved in tourism.
5. The pace and level of tourism development in Kakadu will be determined by the traditional owners.
6. Respect for customary law and traditions will underpin all tourism decisions.
7. All parties will respect the need for Bininj to retain their privacy, to use their land for hunting, fishing and ceremony and to protect and hold private their sacred stories and sites.
8. Aboriginal culture and the land on which it is based will be protected and promoted through well-managed
tourism practices and appropriate interpretation.

9. The travel and tourism industry will have security of tenure, profitable investment and the opportunity to
provide authentic and memorable visitor experiences, whilst respecting culture and country.

10. Kakadu National Park will be globally recognised as one of the world’s most significant natural and cultural
World Heritage areas, offering visitors a range of enriching and memorable experiences.

The Board accepted these principles as a guide to balance the primary importance of Kakadu’s cultural values with
the development of a strategic approach to tourism.

ISSUES
• The management challenge for Kakadu is to strike a balance between providing opportunities for the appropriate
use, appreciation and enjoyment of the Park by a diversity of visitors and protecting the rights and interests of
Bininj and the natural and cultural values of the Park.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO

Policy
6.1.1 Tourism and recreational opportunities in the Park will be managed in accordance with the Shared Vision
Principles and a Tourism Master Plan designed to guide the development and management of all tourism
and recreational opportunities in the Park.

Actions
6.1.2 The Board of Management will, as a high priority, develop a Tourism Master Plan consistent with the Shared
Vision Principles in consultation with the traditional owners, the tourism industry and other stakeholders.

The Tourism Master Plan will detail:
• development of visitor experiences (with an emphasis on memorable visitor experiences that incorporate
local culture and are strongly associated with Kakadu)
• development of new facilities and modification to existing facilities related to experiences
• future access – a key consideration of access will be the visitor experience, for example in the wet
season, and what infrastructure needs to be provided
• commercial opportunities, including the possible development of a new range of minimal impact
accommodation including luxury camps, small lodges and quiet relaxation sites
• how the Park can be protected from adverse tourism impacts
• how tourism can support management of the Park
• how tourism can meet the aspirations of traditional owners.

6.1.3 Consistent with other provisions of this Plan, the Board and the Director may approve actions and activities,
including new visitor infrastructure, that are detailed in the Tourism Master Plan.