

Experience Somerset

DRAFT Tourism Strategy

2026 - 2032

Acknowledgements

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

Somerset is home to the Aboriginal tribes of Dungibara, Jagera, Jinibara, Kabi Kabi and Yuggera Ugarapul peoples. Their songs and stories live on in the flora, fauna and natural beauty of our region. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Country. Further, we embrace and promote the Somerset region's heritage to incorporate all cultures, their beliefs and aspirations.

1.2 Strategic Partners

This strategy has been informed by research conducted and developed by Tilma Group.

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Strategic Summary

Somerset is located in the heart of South East Queensland, conveniently located within easy driving distance of Brisbane, Toowoomba and the Sunshine Coast. The region embodies an authentic country lifestyle showcasing lakes, rural landscapes, villages and Australia's longest recreational rail trail, the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail.

The Somerset Tourism Strategy 2026-2032 delivers a collective vision for the development of Somerset's visitor economy leading up to the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, with goals and priorities framing the direction for development.

Vision

Somerset is South East Queensland's retreat for authentic country lifestyle and nature-based adventure.

This is aligned with the vision of Council's Corporate Plan: Thriving communities - country lifestyle.

Mission

Foster the development of tourism experiences and attract more visitors and events.

Somerset Regional Council will partner with the local tourism industry, community members, and stakeholders to bring this tourism vision to life. The focus will be on fostering the development of tourism experiences and attracting more visitors and events during off-peak seasons, thereby enhancing business sustainability.

Guiding principles



Country Lifestyle



Guardianship



Prosperity



Collaboration



Visitor-first

Goals

1. Become known by residents of South East Queensland as a destination for country lifestyle, agritourism and nature experiences.
2. Increase off-season visitation and visitor expenditure.
3. Increase average visitor expenditure of day-trippers.
4. Increase the number of experiences and accommodation, including accessible offerings.
5. Increase the number of Somerset tourism operators who achieve Best of Queensland Experience Program status.
6. Attract and support more events (the right fit events) and more visiting event attendees.

7. Connect visitors with Somerset's nature and wildlife, enabling them to have a deeper appreciation for it.

Priorities

1. Product and experience development and attraction
2. Nature-based tourism and agritourism development
3. Event support and attraction
4. Industry capability building
5. Marketing
6. Visitor information servicing.

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1. Introduction

The Somerset region is on the doorstep of multiple South East Queensland markets. Located within 80 minutes of the Brisbane CBD, Toowoomba, and Sunshine Coast and less than 30 minutes from Ipswich, Somerset is close enough to access large markets, whilst still far enough removed to enjoy a sprawling natural environment of lakes, waterways, national parks, state forests, rolling hills and picturesque horizons.

Somerset has a total area of 5,373 km² and includes five major townships: Fernvale and Lowood in the south, Esk and Toogoolawah in the centre, and Kilcoy in the north. The region is home to approximately 26,000 people and is expected to grow to an estimated population of 34,500 by 2031.

1.1 About this strategy

Following on from the successful implementation of Somerset Regional Council's (Council) *Somerset Tourism Strategy 2021-2025: Providing the Foundations for a Vibrant Visitor Economy*, Council engaged tourism development consultancy Tilma Group to develop a tourism strategy that will enable Council to continue to support the sustainable development of tourism in the lead up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Brisbane in mid-2032.

As a region within South East Queensland, and just over one hour's drive from Brisbane, Somerset has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to leverage the opportunity that the Games provides. Over 12 million tickets will be sold to millions of international and domestic visitors who are expected to deliver a \$4.6 billion uplift in tourism and trade for Queensland.¹ Somerset is poised to benefit significantly from the State Government's efforts to disperse these visitors into regional Queensland. Careful preparation is needed to maximise benefits and minimise negative impacts on visitors and host communities.

The *Somerset Tourism Strategy 2026-2032* reflects Council's Corporate Plan 2026-2030 which captures the community's aspiration to live in a prosperous region defined by the quality of its natural environment, the strength of its economy, the wellbeing of its people, and its quality lifestyle.

All pillars of destination development were considered throughout the process of developing this strategy:

- Governance, workforce and industry capability
- Product, experience and event development
- Enabling infrastructure
- Destination identity and marketing
- Visitor information servicing.

The strategy outlines Council's roles and priorities in supporting the development of tourism across the region. The region's strengths and points of distinction from other regional South East Queensland destinations have been considered, along with gaps in existing offerings, and

¹ [Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games Organising Committee](#)

opportunities, constraints and challenges for development. Details of these, and learnings from extensive stakeholder and community consultation undertaken to support the strategy's development are outlined in a Background Research Report.

1.2 Strategic context

The *Somerset Tourism Strategy 2026-2032* sits within a broader context of tourism development by regional, state and national tourism organisations, and economic and community development by Somerset Regional Council. Priorities and actions within other relevant plans, including the following, has informed this strategy.

Somerset Corporate Plan 2026

Vision: Thriving communities – country lifestyle

Ensuring the Somerset economy embraces opportunities and thrives. The natural environment, scenic beauty and country lifestyle are valued and protected. Communities are integrated and welcoming with something for everyone. Infrastructure looks to the future. That Council is well governed, well managed and operate effectively and sustainably.

Somerset Economic Development Strategy 2022: The Next Horizon

The Tourism Strategy is aligned with, and builds on actions within, Council's Economic Development Strategy.

Queensland Country Tourism Destination Management Plan Towards 2032

This plan seeks to balance the economic, cultural, social, and environmental impacts of tourism for Queensland Country's long-term sustainability by leveraging meaningful 'transformational travel' for competitive advantage. Transformational travel experiences transform the lives of visitors and the communities and places they visit for the better to ensure visitors not only return but leave a legacy of positive impacts for host communities, the visitor economy, and the natural environment.

Destination 2045

A major influence over opportunities for Somerset is the Queensland Government's twenty-year tourism strategy *Destination 2045* as it directs Government investment and promotion of the state. In the lead up to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Queensland Government will seek to maximise its tourism benefits for Queensland in the following ways.

- Increase ecotourism attractions by investing in low-impact facilities that enhance the visitor experience without harming ecosystems, including dark sky experiences, agritourism, First Nations experiences, and improved accessibility.
- Link ecotourism with conservation projects so visitors can support local environmental projects and better understand Queensland's natural and cultural values and environments through participating in science activities.
- Invest in, and attract investment into, tourism infrastructure and experiences.
- Empower tourism businesses to modernise and thrive and develop the tourism workforce.

- Increase homegrown, major, and business events.
- Improve connectivity, making it easier for people to fly and cruise to and around Australia.
- Use world-class marketing to cement Queensland’s reputation as the home of the holiday, make Queensland famous for multi-stop road trips, and promote and package Queensland globally.

1.3 Tourism trends

The tourism landscape that influences tourism development in Somerset is continually changing, with shifts in consumer behaviour, advancing technologies, growing competitors, and the emergence of new markets. Trends that will shape the development of Somerset as a destination over the coming years include the following.

Trend	Description
Increasing demand for meaningful experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travelers are seeking enriching experiences that allow for personal growth and learning, reconnection with nature, and active participation that benefits nature or the local community.
Increasing demand for nature-based and wellness tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World class nature and wildlife is the second most important factor to domestic travellers when choosing a holiday destination.² More than half of tourism demand is driven by the desire to explore nature.³ • From 2014 to 2023, nature-based activities among Australians experienced 47% growth. • Wellness tourism is up by a third since 2022.⁴ • Tourism & Events Queensland (TEQ) has identified the need for cluster of ecotourism (low-impact immersive engagement with conservation) products within two hours of Brisbane to meet Olympics and future demand.
Accessible tourism, and accessible tourism information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 in 5 Australians live with disability and 1 in 4 high yield travellers have accessibility needs. Disability is more common in older people, and many visitors to Somerset are older. The disability most reported by domestic overnight travellers are mental health, chemical sensitivity or food allergy, hearing impairment, and non-wheelchair mobility limitation.⁵
Travel growth predicted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International visitation is forecast to rise 24% by 2030, though domestic travellers are substituting overnight trips with daytrips due to cost-of-living pressures.⁶
Increasing demand for off-the-beaten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are exploring lesser-known destinations.

² Tourist visitation to National Parks – Domestic, 2021, Tourism and Events Queensland

³ [World Travel and Tourism Council](#)

⁴ Global Wellness Institute Wellness Tourism Initiative

⁵ Travellers with Accessibility Needs in Australia, Tourism Research Australia, 2024

⁶ Further details in Tourism forecasts for Australia 2025 to 20230, Tourism Research Australia.

track destinations and slow travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is strong growth in slow travel – longer stays in fewer destinations, building deeper connections with the local community, place and culture.⁷
Increasing demand for sustainable tourism products as a baseline standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability is now a baseline standard; 84% of travellers want sustainable options and 69% aim to leave destinations better than they found them. • The Brisbane Olympics is committed to delivering a lasting, positive impact, with sustainability at its heart.⁸
Changes in behaviour and demographics of caravanners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More caravanners are self-sufficient with power, water, toilets and showers. • Older caravanners have disposable income and new expectations, such as larger sites not close to neighbours.⁹
Changing technology and automation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AI search optimisation, online booking and channel management, digital marketing, cyber security, and e-commerce payment platforms are now essential for tourism operators. • While internet access supports travel planning and wayfinding, two thirds of Australian holidaymakers are interested in a digital detox while on holidays.¹⁰
Tourism workforce shortages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce shortages and lack of affordable housing are barriers to tourism growth.

⁷ [Trip.com Group](#)

⁸ [Brisbane 2032 Legacy and Impact](#)

⁹ Learnings from research on caravanners undertaken for City of Karratha by Tilma Group, 2025

¹⁰ [Travel Talk Media](#), 2025

2. Tourism in Somerset

Somerset is a beautiful agricultural region in South East Queensland, centrally located around one hour from the residential and tourism centres of Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast, and Toowoomba. Somerset is home to approximately 26,000 people, which is expected to grow by one-third to around 34,500 residents by 2031, driving demand for housing, services and recreation.

Covering parts of the traditional lands of the Dungibara, Jinibara, Jagera, Yuggera Ugarapul, and Kabi Kabi peoples, Somerset is shaped by expansive forests, mountain ranges, waterways and productive agricultural landscapes. These natural and working landscapes support both local lifestyles and the experience for visitors who come to enjoy Somerset's outdoor recreation, events, and time spent in the country. Mild winter conditions support year-round outdoor recreation, while hot, humid summers tend to discourage visitation. The region's lakes are important community and tourism recreational assets, used for a range of water-based activities from powerboating to paddling.

The towns of Lowood, Fernvale and Coominya are in the more populated southern area near the Warrego Highway, which is the main transport corridor heading west from Brisbane, while Esk and Toogoolawah sit centrally in the region along the north-south Brisbane Valley Highway. Kilcoy anchors the northern part of Somerset, sited on the D'Aguiar Highway which heads west from the southern Sunshine Coast. Together, Somerset's towns and villages contribute to the region's identity, where tourism complements local life, supports businesses, and helps sustain community facilities and events.

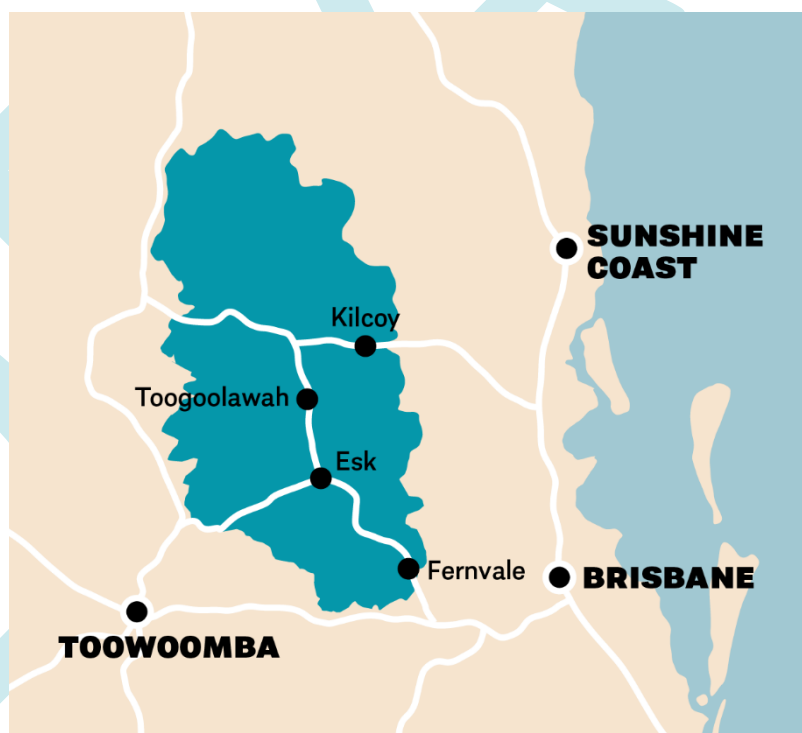


Figure 1: Somerset region in relation to South East Queensland

2.1 Somerset's unique selling points

Somerset provides visitors with the experience of an authentic country lifestyle, a slower pace of life, and connection to nature, all within a short drive from South East Queensland's major population centres.

Somerset has what travellers value:¹¹

- A great place for touring
- A family destination
- A world-class natural setting
- History and heritage

Somerset's brand pillars:

- Authentic: Real experiences offered by real people
- Country charm: Bespoke villages, personalities, and experiences
- Accessible: A rural retreat just a short country drive away
- Grounded: A less rushed lifestyle, fresh air, outdoor experiences

The unique features that differentiate Somerset in the minds of potential visitors compared to neighbouring rural and nature-based destinations in South East Queensland are as follows.

- Australia's longest recreational rail trail linking Somerset's heritage, natural environment, agriculture and charming villages.
- Lakes for water activities and sports.
- Cattle farming, and its associated country lifestyle, for example campdrafts and rodeos.
- Wildlife that cannot be seen elsewhere, including many threatened and endangered wildlife species otherwise locally extinct in South East Queensland.
- 300 species of birds which represents 50% of Queensland birds due to diverse habitats, suitable for beginner and expert birdwatchers.
- The distinctive and memorable Mount Glen Rock.
- Forests and hilly grazing country perfect for scenic drives.
- Brisbane River is navigable year-round for river journeys.
- Accessible from Brisbane via a low-traffic motorway.

2.2 Somerset's strengths, challenges and opportunities

The following outlines Somerset Region's strengths, challenges and opportunities across the destination management pillars of

- Governance, workforce and industry capability
- Product, experience and event development
- Enabling infrastructure
- Destination identity and marketing
- Visitor information servicing.

¹¹ Somerset Visitor Accommodation Review 2024

Strengths	Challenges	Opportunities
Governance, workforce and industry capability		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council pro-actively supports tourism development. • Queensland Government provides a one-stop shop Tourism Support Hub to support business and new experience development. • Innovative small businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of multiple tourism and hospitality workforce challenges.¹² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support an increase in the local tourism workforce and provide training.
Destination identity and marketing		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close to large source markets. • Quality marketing assets. • Regular marketing campaigns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many offerings not listed on ATDW or Google; only half are bookable online. • No commissionable product for trade distribution. • Attracting the 1/5 of Australians with disability is hindered with a lack of information on accessible businesses and places, web content accessibility, and use of imagery of people with disability in marketing. • Many accommodations are not compliant and therefore cannot be promoted in the destination's marketing. • No one-source-of-truth website for Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT) users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align marketing with regional and state priorities. • A one-source-of-truth BVRT website managed by Somerset Regional Council with multi-BVRT-stakeholder ownership. • Support the accessibility and trade readiness of operators. • Engage accommodation providers to become complaint.
Enabling infrastructure		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brisbane Valley Rail Trail. • Council- and state-owned campsites, and facilities for caravanners. • Event venues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high number of operators have gaps in back-end systems such as online booking/inventory management, Customer Relationship Management software, and online rostering. • Digital platforms allow tourism and creative industries to grow, but 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mt Glen Rock hiking trails

¹² BVRT Workforce Plan

Strengths	Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boat ramps and kayak launches. 	<p>patchy internet and low digital confidence limit participation.</p>	
Product, experience and event development		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abundant natural areas and significant wildlife assets. Quaint towns. Country drives. Value for money and free events, experiences, outdoor recreation, and unspoiled nature appeal to current visitors. Events are of suitable size for accommodation capacity. Council provides grants to support events, and a guide on event management. Council provides resources that support new agritourism development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited paid attractions. Limited offerings demonstrating best practice (such as measured by achieving Best of Queensland Experience). Inconsistent tourism product throughout the region that does not meet visitor expectations. Very few tourism offerings are sustainable, accessible or transformational to meet current and future demand. Gap in encouraging visiting event attendees to stay overnight (e.g. packaging, incentives, marketing). Lack of accommodation. Limited tourism opportunities from Seqwater's assets, Lakes Somerset and Wivenhoe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operator and event organiser training.
Visitor information servicing		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three visitor centres. Visitor information signage. Destination website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor centres have a low return on investment in increasing visitor spend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide additional reasons for more visitors to visit visitor centres. Provide a booking service and retail sales at visitor centres. Redefine centres and seek new opportunities

2.3 Somerset's visitors

The following table outlines who visits Somerset, though reliable and accurate data on visitors is a gap.

<p>Who are Somerset's visitors¹³</p>	<p>Somerset's average visitor is male, aged 39, lives in a household of 2-3 people, and has a household income of \$103,600.</p> <p>Primary visitors: Couples aged over 60. Some are higher-spend visitors, others are of moderate means and are caravanning.</p> <p>Secondary visitors: Families and couples aged 20-40 of modest means. 18% of travellers have disability, which is more common in older travellers. The most common disability are mental health, food or chemical allergy, hearing impairment, mobility impairment (non-wheelchair users), learning difficulty, and vision impairment.</p>
<p>Where Somerset's visitors live</p>	<p>Most visitors to Somerset live in South East Queensland: Greater Brisbane, Ipswich, Toowoomba, the Gold and Sunshine Coasts, and the Lockyer Valley. However, one-third come from interstate, with almost half of interstate visitors from NSW.</p>
<p>How Somerset's visitors travel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somerset's visitors travel mostly as a group of friends or family, or as a couple. • Somerset's visitors come for a weekend break or during school holidays. • Visitation is mainly from April to October. • 60% stay overnight and 40% visit for a day trip.
<p>What Somerset's visitors do</p>	<p>Somerset's visitors look for value for money experiences. They enjoy eating out and visiting country pubs, nature, and active outdoor activities and sports such as hiking, cycling and fishing.</p>
<p>Where Somerset's visitors stay</p>	<p>Most of Somerset's visitors stay in private accommodation, such as with friends, or camp or stay in their caravan in non-commercial campsites. Most of those who stay in commercial accommodation stay in a caravan park or campground.</p>
<p>How much Somerset's visitors spend</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors who stay overnight stay two nights on average and spend \$283 per trip to Somerset (\$323 if they are holidaying and \$182 if they are visiting family or friends who live in Somerset). • Visitors who come for a day trip spend \$127 per person per trip.¹⁴

¹³ The following is from Tourism Research Australia, Somerset LGA, 2025 or 2022 - 2023 (2 years average) and the Experience Somerset Marketing Action Plan 2023

¹⁴ Tourism Research Australia, Somerset LGA, 2025.

2.4 Future visitors

Tourism in Queensland Country region in 2032 is expected to attract the following mix of travellers for the following purposes.¹⁵

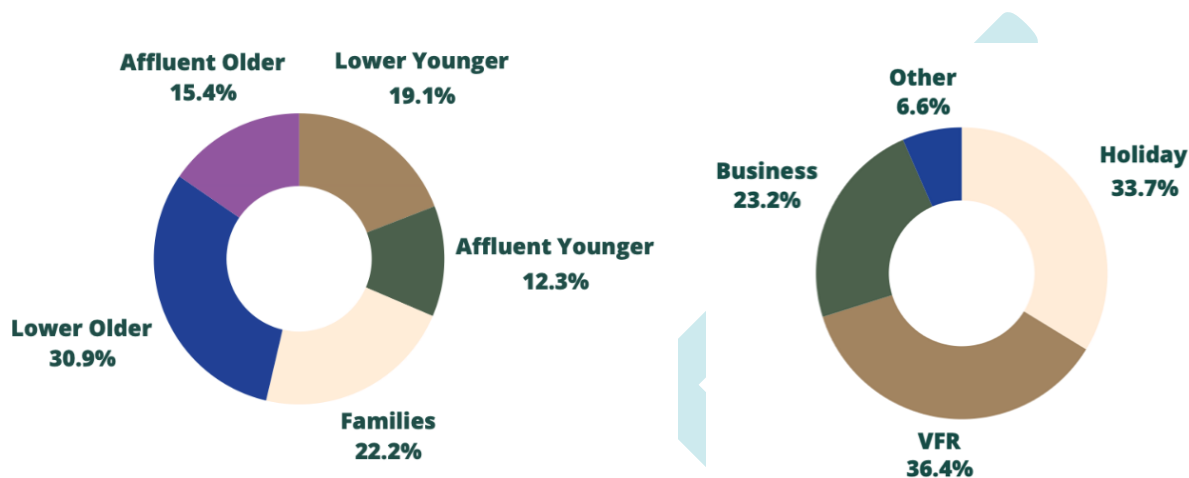


Figure 3: Projected mix of travellers ('lower' refers to lower income) and their purpose for travelling to Queensland Country in 2032.

There is an opportunity to grow the numbers of higher contributing visitors who spend more per person per trip. These visitors may not spend the most per day but may stay longer and spend the most in total, or be willing to buy premium, immersive travel experiences. They tend to value authenticity and connection to local people and local culture. Higher quality accommodation, dining, retail, and paid recreation experiences help to meet their needs.

There is an opportunity to attract increased visitation from the following markets.

Market	Rationale
Nature and wellness visitors and birdwatchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These are high yield travellers who travel outside of peak season, disperse to small towns, and return to a destination.
Drive market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car and motorcycle enthusiasts enjoy Somerset's scenic and winding drive routes, and drive holiday overnight expenditure is forecast to grow by 45% by 2032.¹⁶ TEQ is investing in promoting drive tourism. One in seven domestic overnight trips in Australia is a caravan or camping trip, and there has been a 32% increase in caravan ownership since 2019.¹⁷

¹⁵ Destination Management Plan, 2025, Queensland Country Tourism

¹⁶ Tourism And Events Queensland, Drive Tourism Marketing Strategy 2032

¹⁷ [Caravan and camping data 2025](#), Tourism Research Australia

<p>International visitors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International visitation to Australia is forecast to increase by 24% over the coming 5 years to 2030¹⁸ (which equates to around 340,000 more arrivals per year to Brisbane by 2030). • Almost 18% of international visitors (7 million international passengers) arrive via Brisbane (Australia's third-busiest international airport) or the Gold Coast. Growth of international visitation via Brisbane International Airport is being driven by new routes and capacity increases in preparation for the Olympics. • International visitation to Brisbane is already increasing, up 15% year on year.¹⁹ • In 2032, international visitors are predicted to stay 33 nights on average in Queensland Country region.
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¹⁸ [Tourism forecasts for Australia: 2025 to 2030](#), Tourism Research Australia. China is expected to be the fastest growing market until 2030, followed by Hong Kong, India, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

¹⁹ Tourism Research Australia, year ending June 2025

3. Strategic Framework

3.1 Vision

Somerset is South East Queensland's retreat for authentic country lifestyle and nature-based adventure.

This vision for Somerset's tourism future is aligned with the vision of Council's Corporate Plan: Thriving communities - country lifestyle.

3.2 Mission

Foster the development of tourism experiences and attract more visitors and events.

Somerset Regional Council will partner with the local tourism industry, community members, and stakeholders to bring this tourism vision to life. The focus will be on fostering the development of tourism experiences and attracting more visitors and events during off-peak seasons, thereby enhancing business sustainability.

3.3 Guiding principles

Our guiding principles as we develop tourism are as follows.



Country lifestyle

Tourism adds to the authenticity of our country community and our enviable rural lifestyle and heritage.



Guardianship

Tourism enhances community liveability and our region's natural assets.



Prosperity

Tourism enables business development.



Collaboration

We collaborate with partners.



Visitor-first

We prioritise the needs of our guests.

3.4 Goals

The purpose of this strategy is to increase benefits for the Somerset community from tourism.

Council's goals in supporting the development of tourism are to:

1. Become known by residents of South East Queensland as a destination for country lifestyle, agritourism and nature experiences.

2. Increase off-season (November to February) visitation and visitor expenditure.
3. Increase average visitor expenditure of day-trippers.
4. Increase the number of experiences and accommodation, including accessible offerings.
5. Increase the number of Somerset tourism operators who achieve Best of Queensland Experience Program status.
6. Attract and support more events (the right fit events²⁰) and more visiting event attendees.

3.5 Strategic Priorities

To achieve Council's tourism development goals, Council will focus on the following priorities:

- New product and experience development and attraction
- Nature-based tourism and agritourism development
- Event support, leveraging, and attraction
- Industry capability building
- Marketing
- Visitor information servicing

²⁰ Events that support Somerset's tourism development objectives and are aligned with the destination's brand

4. Our Strategic Priorities

4.1 New product and experience development and attraction

Why is this a priority?

- Increase the range and availability of tourism products for visitors to Somerset – Somerset currently has insufficient accommodation and few paid experiences which limits growth potential, and tourism's benefit to the local economy.
- Meet future growth demand – An 89% increase in accommodation in Queensland Country is required by 2032 (5% more accommodation each year). Queensland is investment attractive as leads the nation in turns of RevPAR (Revenue Per Available Room) and occupancy growth.
- Increase yield from day-trippers – New paid bookable experiences are needed to increase the low average expenditure of daytrip visitors.
- Leverage population growth – As Somerset's population grows by one-third by 2031, new residents could be tempted to establish tourism businesses.

Actions

- 4.1.1 Develop a tourism business opportunity prospectus.
- 4.1.2 Promote and facilitate new short term rental accommodation, camping, and agritourism developments.
- 4.1.3 Deliver an experience development mentoring program.
- 4.1.4 Continue to develop and improve Council-owned tourism infrastructure.
- 4.1.5 Review recreational trail trends to potentially facilitate additional trails and linkages with BVRT.

Measures of success

This priority will support the following desired outcomes:

- Increase the number of experiences and accommodation, including accessible offerings.
- Increase off-season visitation and visitor expenditure.
- Increase average visitor expenditure of day-trippers.
- Connect visitors with Somerset's nature and wildlife, enabling them to have a deeper appreciation for it.
- Become known by residents of South East Queensland as a destination for country lifestyle, agritourism and nature experiences.

4.2 Nature based tourism and agritourism hero experience development

Why is this a priority?

- The Queensland Government has identified nature-based tourism and ecotourism as Queensland's globally-competitive hero experience offering. This includes dark sky tourism as Queensland has some of the darkest skies in the world. The Government will be investing in its development and promotion, want tourism to support nature conservation, and are seeking partnerships with local governments and other landowners to develop ecotourism offerings.²¹
- Leverage Somerset's strength of an abundance of regionally-unique natural assets to meet the 50% increase in demand for nature-based tourism experiences.²²
- Agritourism is an opportunity for Somerset as agriculture is a key local industry with multi-generational and regenerative farms as the region's rural heritage.

Actions

4.2.1 Develop business case for leveraging recreational opportunities utilising Seqwater managed assets (e.g. recreational trails)

4.2.2 Facilitate and support the development of ecotourism and agritourism experiences.

4.2.3 Review interest for First Nations tourism development in Somerset.

4.2.4 Undertake destination certification for Somerset.

Measures of success

This priority will support the following desired outcomes:

- Increase the number of experiences and accommodation, including accessible offerings.
- Increase off-season visitation and visitor expenditure.
- Connect visitors with Somerset's authentic and natural assets, enabling deeper appreciation for the region and encouraging return visitation
- Become known by residents of South East Queensland as a destination for country lifestyle, agritourism and nature experiences.

4.3 Event support and attraction

Why is this a priority?

- Events motivate travel²³ and can attract visitors (and their economic benefit to businesses) during quieter shoulder and off-peak times, extending the tourist season.
- Events can be catalysts for overnight stays. Converting a day-tripper to Somerset to an overnight visitor increases their economic benefit by 123%.²⁴

²¹ [Destination 2045](#), Queensland Government

²² [The rise of nature-based tourism in Australia](#), Tourism Research Australia, 2024

²³ Events: Drivers of Regional Tourism, Tourism Research Australia, 2014: Three-quarters of event attendees would not have gone to a destination if not for an event. An event is the main reason for visiting for 57% of first-time visitors and 69% of repeat visitors to a destination, and most event attendees intend to return to the host destination in the future. Attendees become destination advocates through word-of-mouth promotion: 59% of attendees provide positive word of mouth recommendations of the event to others, and 42% recommend the destination.

²⁴ Tourism Research Australia, Somerset LGA, 2025. Average daytrip spend is \$127 and average overnight spend is \$283.

- Reinforce Somerset’s destination brand and offering – A portfolio of events showcasing country lifestyle and outdoor recreation helps solidify Somerset’s reputation in the minds of potential visitors.
- A transparent structured assessment framework will ensure Council’s sponsorship for visitor-attracting events is directed toward delivering tourism goals and support the attraction of events aligned with Somerset’s event venues.

Actions

4.3.1 Develop an events assessment framework to provide a transparent and fair sponsorship evaluation process.

4.3.2 Promote Somerset as a location for bespoke events that leverage the region’s Unique Selling Points.

4.3.4 Build the capability of event organisers who host events in Somerset.

Measures of success

This priority will support the following desired outcomes:

- Attract more events (the right fit events) and more visiting event attendees.
- Increase events held during shoulder periods.
- Increase off-season visitation and visitor expenditure.
- Increase average visitor expenditure of day-trippers.
- Become known by residents of South East Queensland as a destination for country lifestyle, agritourism and nature experiences.

4.4 Industry capability building

Why is this a priority?

- Elevate quality – The percentage of Somerset’s operators achieving Best of Queensland Experience (quality business standards) significantly trails the state average, and few are accredited or able to leverage trade distributors. This impacts the visitor experience and limits Somerset’s ability to leverage marketing by Tourism and Events Queensland. Additionally, Somerset’s businesses don’t meet the demand for accessible offerings (20% of travellers have access needs²⁵) or for sustainable offerings (80% of travellers want to buy sustainable tourism products²⁶). This is important to prepare for the opportunity of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- Improve discoverability – very few of Somerset’s tourism operators are listed on the ATDW and Google, particularly eateries, significantly limiting their discoverability by potential customers.
- Enable new experience development – one on one mentoring enables business owners to develop new accommodation and experiences, particularly those new to tourism such as farmers.
- Support technology adoption and business resilience – Somerset’s micro tourism businesses need support to improve efficiencies, navigate the rapid shift to AI, cope with disasters, and to deliver quality that meets consumer expectations.

²⁵ Tourism Research Australia, Accessible Tourism

²⁶ Booking.com 2025 Sustainable Travel Report

- Address workforce challenges – The Somerset tourism industry faces labour shortages, and a lack of workforce supports such as affordable housing, local vocational training, and public transport. These hinder business growth and Somerset’s ability to provide quality visitor experiences.

Actions

4.4.1 Provide tourism industry and business development programs

4.4.2 Continue to provide industry capability training for operators and event organisers.

4.4.3 Facilitate an education program to encourage local accommodation businesses to be appropriately certified or permitted.

4.4.4 Work with operators to develop commissionable trade ready product.

Measures of success

This priority will support the following desired outcomes:

- Increase the number of Somerset tourism operators who achieve Best of Queensland Experience Program status.
- Increase the number of experiences and accommodation, including accessible offerings.
- Increase average visitor expenditure of day-trippers.
- Increase off-season visitation and visitor expenditure.

4.5 Marketing Somerset

Why is this a priority?

- Capitalise on proximity from major South East Queensland population centres: Somerset is attractive for short break visitors who want to experience Somerset’s relaxed country lifestyle. Destination marketing by Council will build on Council’s recent successes in developing an appealing destination brand and website, and recent strategic campaigns.
- Improve awareness: almost half of potential visitors who have not previously visited Somerset have low awareness of the region's offerings. Improving awareness is particularly important to leverage the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- Strategic marketing is required to attract higher-spending and seasonality-extending opportunity markets such as birdwatchers and international visitors, and to leverage the state’s promotional activities, such as attracting tour groups and international visitors for nature-based tourism, agritourism, accessible tourism, and events.

Actions

4.5.1 Develop annual marketing plans aligned with the objectives of the tourism strategy.

4.5.2 Invest in a reliable visitor, tourism and economic data platform.

4.5.3 Build collaborative relationships with neighbouring South East Queensland destinations.

4.5.4 Support local businesses to package with and cross promote each other.

4.5.5 Facilitate tour operators and travel wholesalers to include Somerset product in itineraries.

4.5.6 Leverage support from stakeholders to facilitate consolidated and effective marketing and promotions of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail

Measures of success

This priority will support the following desired outcomes:

- Become known by residents of South East Queensland as a destination for country lifestyle, agritourism and nature experiences.
- Increase off-season visitation and visitor expenditure.
- Attract more visiting event attendees.
- Increase average visitor expenditure of day-trippers.

4.6 Visitor information servicing

Why is this a priority?

- Meet changing traveller behaviour – Provide information servicing where visitors are looking for it, destination managers are transitioning to a multi-channel, region-wide approach, using digital information (such as a destination website, review websites, social media, AI chat, live chat, phone and email), and dispersed information (such as digital kiosks, visitor guides, brochure racks, signage, pop-up or mobile temporary visitor servicing at visitor hotspots such as events, and front line staff in tourism businesses as destination ambassadors).
- Measure the visitor information centres' value – The economic value of advice provided by the centres is not currently tracked which impacts decision making.

Actions

4.6.1 Increase tourism benefits from Somerset's visitor information centres.

4.6.2 Improve efficiencies in visitor information servicing.

4.6.3 Extend the visitor servicing model to reach visitors beyond the visitor information centres.

4.6.4 Redevelop the Kilcoy Visitor Information Centre's environmental education program and assets.

4.6.5 Improve visitor, including town entry, signage across Somerset.

4.6.6 Undertake a review of visitor information centre operations and develop a business case to determine an efficient use of Council tourism resources

4.6.7 Measure visitor information servicing outcomes.

Measures of success

This priority will support the following desired outcomes:

- Increase visitor expenditure.
- Increase average visitor expenditure of day-trippers.

DRAFT

5. Appendix

5.1 Acronyms

4WD	Four wheel drive
ATDW	Australian Tourism Data Warehouse, an online warehouse of listings which can be used to populate websites, such as Queensland.com
BVRT	Brisbane Valley Rail Trail
Council	Somerset Regional Council
LGA	Local Government Area
RevPAR	Revenue per available room
Right fit events	Events that support Somerset's tourism development objectives and are aligned with the destination's brand
ROI	Return on investment
RV	Recreational vehicle (motorhome)
TEQ	Tourism and Events Queensland, the state tourism organisation