

Environmental Protection on the Gold Coast of Queensland, Australia

Sections

1. What is the appeal of the Gold Coast to tourists?
2. How are Gold Coast visitor trends changing?
3. How can the impacts of tourism be managed?
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TAB 1

QUESTION - What is the appeal of the Gold Coast to tourists?

IMAGES –





INFORMATION –

The Gold Coast is one of the most important tourism destinations in Australia. The area is situated on the east coast of Australia, in the State of Queensland, just south of the city of Brisbane. The most important resort within the Gold Coast is Surfers Paradise, famous for its fabulous beaches and surfing. The area has 300 days of sunshine a year and averages about 25 degrees Centigrade, so has a fabulous climate.

This means that the Gold Coast has an invaluable 'tourist resource' of beautiful beaches and excellent climate which is appreciated by domestic tourists as well as visitors to Australia. Behind the high rise apartment blocks seen in the image below, are a number of theme parks which cater for family visitors. It could be said that the Gold Coast is to Australia what Florida and California are to the USA.

The authorities along the Gold Coast have recognised the importance of the natural environment and understand the need to sustain and manage the area to ensure that it is not damaged by overuse.

Australians appreciate the high quality of the coastal scenery which surrounds much of the country and understand the importance of looking after it. Good facilities, such as car parks, toilets and showers are found near all popular beaches. Public barbeque facilities are also provided.



Showers are provided at beach access points.

Information about the 'beach culture' of the Gold Coast can be found at the link below:

http://www.griffith.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/322883/Gold-Coasts-Beach-Culture.pdf

People who use the coast are also fully aware of the dangers which exist. Sharks and poisonous jellyfish are amongst the hazards which lurk off the beaches of many parts of Australia. Experienced surfers understand how fast conditions can change as a result of tides, winds and currents. Throughout the year on popular beaches such as those along the Gold Coast, a Life Guard service provides support for surfers and bathers using the coast.



One way of being safe when surfing is to watch weather forecasts and a new way of doing this is through web cams.

http://www.coastalwatch.com/camera/cameras_large.aspx?cam=1300

The link above will provide a brief look at the surfing conditions in Surfers Paradise as well as other weather information in Australia. Remember, the time difference will mean that during the daytime in the UK it will be dark in Australia and when it is winter in the UK it is summer in Australia.

TAB 2

QUESTION - How are Gold Coast visitor trends changing?

Detailed information relating to tourism on the Gold Coast and to Australia in general is collected and produced by *Tourism Queensland*. This information is available at the link below:

<http://www.tq.com.au/research/index.cfm>

Like all tourism destinations, visitor numbers to the Gold Coast change from one year to the next, although over a longer period of time the area has seen a steady increase in visitors and future projections are for visitor numbers to continue to grow. Many of these visitors will be domestic visitors.

TAB 3 –

QUESTION - How can the impacts of tourism be managed?

IMAGE –



INFORMATION –

A number of agencies are involved in protecting the coastal zone along the Gold Coast, including the **Gold Coast City Council**.

The extract below summarises the council's position and explains why action is required to protect the coast.

'Protecting Coasts

What's the Gold Coast without its coast? Although there's much more to our city than its beaches, our stunning coastline gives our city its identity. We live and work along the coast, we play on the coast, our coastline protects us, and it supports a rich variety of coastal and marine wildlife.

The city's coastline extends from Point Danger in the south to Jumpinpin at the northern end of South Stradbroke Island. History has shown that this iconic coastline is also a dynamic one. The sandy littoral zone - the area from shoreline to just beyond the wave breaker zone - is the city's frontline against powerful wave action that is intensified during extreme weather events. Such wave action determines the shape and state of our beaches and coast. The significant economic, social and environmental benefits and services provided by our coastal areas means that coastal management is a serious and important issue for the Council and the community.

Modifications to the coastal zone over time, including the construction of public and private infrastructure very close to the coastline, has exposed the city to significant risk from a dynamic and high energy ocean. These risks are compounded by the predicted impacts of climate change on the Gold Coast, where the coast's vulnerability has been observed during intense weather events through the 1960s to 1970s. An urbanised coastline also results in continual risk of pollution from hard rubbish and stormwater, both of which can have significant effects on water quality and wildlife.

Gold Coast City Council has been a leader in coastal management for more than 50 years, driven by the need to protect the city and its shoreline from the impacts of storms. Active management including beach nourishment, seawall construction, improving access to

beaches, beach cleaning, dune restoration and sand bypassing all contribute to protecting the coastal environment’.

The dynamic coastal environment is shaped by interactions between ecology, physical processes, storm events and our human activities.

The Gold Coast Council, in partnership with Griffith University's Centre for Coastal Management, actively seeks to better understand the ecological and physical processes that shape the coastal environment, so that it can be managed sustainably.

The coastal environment of the Gold Coast is teeming with life. From the great sandy dunes of South Stradbroke Island to the rocky shore at Burleigh Headland, to the coastal wetlands of Coombabah lies an abundance of plant and animal life, of all shapes and sizes.



The movement of sand plays a fundamental role in creating and shaping our coastal environment. Although the East Coast of Australia is affected by the Eastern Australian Current, its greatest determinant is the process of longshore drift.

Natural disasters have played a huge role in the history of the Gold Coast. Cyclones, tsunamis and storm surges affect not just the coastal development and recreational amenity, but also the ecosystems of the coast.

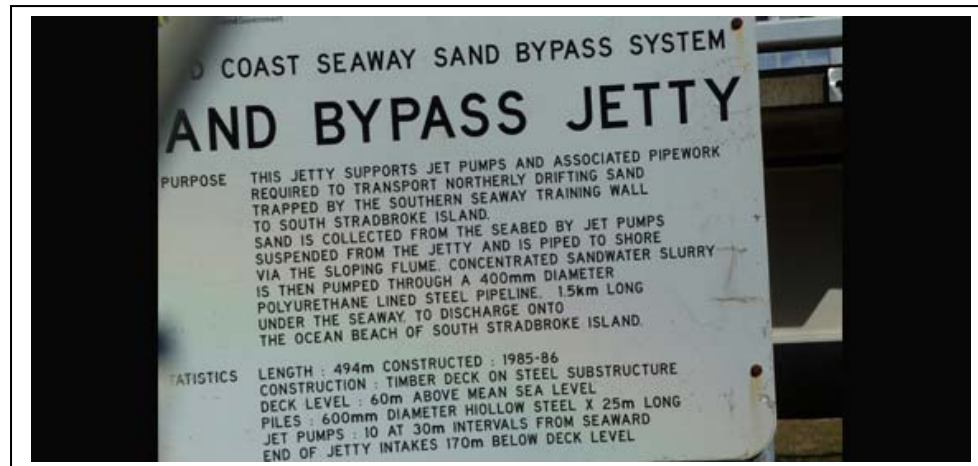
Sparkling beaches and waterways are synonymous with the Gold Coast and so the Gold Coast City Council invests into a range of cleaning and management services to ensure our beaches and foreshores retain their sparkle.

Thirty six kilometres of ocean beaches on the mainland are swept between midnight and sunrise on every day of the year. This involves raking the beach using tractors to remove all of the rubbish and litter.

The Gold Coast City Council has six crews which patrol the 860 kilometres of tidal waterways within the City and remove over 1000 tonnes per year of floating debris'.



Not only are the beaches on the Gold Coast cleaned, but the sand is cleaned as well! The *Gold Coast Seaway* scheme has been designed to keep drifting sand clear of the main seaway that links the harbour to the open sea. At the same time the sand is cleaned and returned to the beach further along the coast. More information can be found at the link below:



The Gold Coast Seaway jetty does not look very attractive and has a negative impact on the visual environment. However, the sand-cleaning processes and the system for keeping the seaway open, is vital in the management of the Gold Coast beaches.



TAB 4

QUESTION - What else is the Gold Coast doing to promote sustainable tourism?

IMAGE -



INFORMATION -

One way of encouraging sustainability in all tourism destinations is through education. A better informed tourist is likely to be a more responsible tourist. There are many ways of informing visitors about the need to protect and sustain the environment of the area they are visiting. One way is through information boards such as the ones in the image above

Much of the sandy coastline of the Gold Coast and other areas of Australia are protected partly by ensuring that a zone of natural vegetation is left between the beach and the built-up area behind to act as a natural buffer. This natural zone protects the habitats of species native to the area and it also protects the coastal zone from erosion, as shown in the image below. Education relating to sustainable practices can be provided at different levels. There may be programmes aimed at young children to introduce the idea of protecting the area and at the other end of the scale university research facilities can be used to help develop further understanding about natural processes and environment. The more the environment is understood, the better it can be managed.

A number of education programmes are in place along the Gold Coast. Those aimed at children and the local community include the BeachCare and CoastEd programmes. Information about these programmes is found at the link below.

[http://www.goldcoast.qld.gov.au/documents/Brochures%20and%20Fact sheets/fs-beachcare-coasted.pdf](http://www.goldcoast.qld.gov.au/documents/Brochures%20and%20Fact%20sheets/fs-beachcare-coasted.pdf)

INFORMATION -

Research into coastal management is undertaken by the local university in partnership with the Gold Coast City Council. Further information about the Griffith University Coastal Management Centre is found at the link below.

'The Centre for Coastal Management is a research centre based in the Science, Environment, Engineering and Technology Group. In partnership with Gold Coast City Council, our goal is to become a Centre of Excellence by developing and promoting, at a national and international level, targeted research that contributes to all aspects of sustainable management of coastal regions'.

<http://www.griffith.edu.au/environment-planning-architecture/griffith-centre-coastal-management>

A wide range of resource sheets have been developed to provide information on a number of aspects of beach management and coastal protection.

<http://www.griffith.edu.au/environment-planning-architecture/griffith-centre-coastal-management/community-projects/coasted/our-coast-discovering-our-coast-and-caring-for-our-coast>