



ASSESSING TOURISM POTENTIALS IN THE FITZROY VALLEY

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Promoting sustainable Indigenous tourism development in WA's Kimberley region

CONTEXT

Home to 5 distinct language groups (Bunuba, Walmajarri, Wangkatjungka, Nyikina and Gooniyandi), the Fitzroy Valley, located in the West Kimberley region of WA, sustains a rich Aboriginal culture. In a destination in which 80% of the population is Aboriginal, Indigenous tourism development can play a critical role in increasing employment opportunities for residents whilst creating authentic tourism products. The future tourism potentials for the Fitzroy Valley can be assessed under 3 different scenarios: the present situation, if a National Park was to be declared, and if the Kimberley was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Fitzroy Valley's main tourism appeal is associated with its cultural and linguistic diversity. Traditional Owners are open to share their stories and knowledge with interested visitors.
- Tourism is perceived by the community as a means to attain valuable economic output, environmental protection and social improvements, in particular by offering younger generations prospects to stay, attracting infrastructure investment and boosting demand for the service industries.
- Tourism is also perceived as positive factor to encourage intergenerational knowledge-transfer and reconciliation between Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous people.
- The designation of National Parks and UNESCO World Heritage Sites and Geoparks are considered as strategic economic avenues, which could create new job opportunities.
- National Park declarations in the Valley could increase the probability of visitation by 9% on domestic markets (which translates in more than \$13 million tourism spending). A number of supplementary interventions are necessary to achieve this potential.
- Declaring protected areas such as National Parks positively influences the likelihood of domestic tourists to visit. A World Heritage Site declaration generates similar results. But it does not produce an additional effect on top of a National Park declaration on domestic tourism markets. Impacts on international markets would require further investigation.

METHODOLOGY

- Desktop study to contextualise the study area
- Quantitative online survey (experimental) with potential visitors to the region
- Interviews with key tourism stakeholders and community members
- Analysis of 2016 Census data
- Estimation of job creation opportunities

KEY CONCLUSIONS

- Declaring parts of the Fitzroy Valley as a National Park would increase the area's attractiveness as a tourism destination.
- Tourism could generate significant economic opportunities for the region.
- Tourism development could help strengthening the Fitzroy Valley's cultural identity, awareness and understanding.

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