



## **Overpricing the Tourist Dollar**

### **increasing prices reduces tourist numbers**

Most countries welcome tourists. They help boost the economy, both national and local; and, of course, businesses catering for them can continue to prosper, as long as they do the right thing by their clients. Unfortunately, too many providers have tunnel vision, tending to focus on profit margins and how to maintain or increase them. People using their facilities aren't fools; and as soon as tourists in particular realise that they are being ripped off at every turn, they look for somewhere more affordable where they can spend their vacations.

We have been saying this for years and have even sent the message to our politicians. One actually took notice and was in agreement; but if he tried to educate the wider business community, most didn't seem to be listening. Airlines continued in the practice of increasing fares to cover rising costs and make their flights viable. The result was more empty seats. Their simple solution was to crank up the fares of the remaining passengers to compensate. I don't have to tell you how that policy turned out. On the positive side, some of the airlines servicing remoter areas of our vast Western Australian State have bowed to public pressure by cutting exorbitant prices to something amounting to reasonable. There is, however, still a long way to go.

Needless to say, once the tourists get to their destinations there are plenty of facilities and attractions to spend their hard-earned dollars on. Fancy restaurants serve the usual haute cuisine, which generally means small portions on a large plate for prices that will make a huge hole in the pocket. And because these classy venues charge so much, the lesser cafes and eateries in the region crank up their prices in a bid to ride the lucrative gravy train. How about some wine-tasting at one of the renowned vineyards? As well as top-dollar plonk, they too have restaurants serving an impressive range of food from light snacks to main courses which can be washed down with a nice Chardy or Cab Sav - a grand experience for an even grander price!

There are certainly locations that some people visit just to sample the famously-reported and frequently-advertised gourmet delights; other visitors, however, need extra attractions to make their holidays memorable aside from a nicely-printed souvenir menu. Most holiday-makers want to view the magnificence of the wilderness from a helicopter; or maybe "rough it" on a four-day bush safari. Should these pastimes be too expensive, which they often are, a camel ride along the beach in Broome could be cheaper. A night or two at Rottneest Island could sound like a good idea. It is, after all, home of the cute Quokkas who, as a bonus, are happy to pose for a selfie and don't charge a bean. They, at least, know how to please their visitors. Then again, watching the feeding of the dolphins at Money Mia might appeal, or a wander round one of those sea-world-type complexes. There's usually an entrance fee, though; that on top of whatever the car park

costs. It's the same at many beach resorts now – the sea is still free; but to appreciate it without leaving the car in a back street followed by long walk requires coughing up a few more bucks.

I know I'm banging on a lot; but this profit-means-everything syndrome annoys me. Why do people have to be so greedy? As an Australian, I love my country and I want people, especially those from overseas, to be a part of it; to come and see the wonderful sights while having the time of their lives. I am distressed and embarrassed when I see what's happening and how visitors to my country and State are being continually ripped off. I can only imagine what many eventually take away with them and tell their friends about. That ruins any reputation we might have hoped to promote. It isn't fair; not for us; and not for those who have the right to experience a different place, the enjoyable memory of which should stay with them for the rest of their lives without costing an arm and a leg.

So, in closing, I plead for the business owners of Australia to come to the party and stop over-pricing our tourists; and to you, the potential visitors to our country: don't write us off just yet. The greedy brigade may come to their senses one fine day; while we, the genuine Aussies, are all too ready to wish you a cheerful G'day, and really do mean it.

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