

Coorong Visitor Experience Master Plan

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Government of South Australia
Department for Environment
and Water

Visitor Experience Planning – a recap

- Creates a vision for significant, sustainable nature-based tourism attractions in the Coorong region with the visitor at the centre
- Actions identified can be:
 - included in the pipeline of the state government's nature-based tourism investments
 - provide a holistic and coordinated destination investment plan for Australian Government opportunities and;
 - provide opportunities for the private sector.
- Project partners include Ngarrindjeri, First Nations of the South East, Coorong District Council, Alexandrina Council and Kingston District Council and the Department for Environment and Water (NPWS).

Coorong Visitor Experience Plan

Engagement summary

What we are doing

A visitor experience plan is being developed to create a vision for sustainable tourism experiences in the Coorong region.

The plan takes in areas within the Alexandrina, Coorong and Kingston councils. It covers the land within and adjacent to Coorong National Park as well as townships such as Kingston, Salt Creek, Meningie, Goolwa, and Raukkan.

A community engagement process was undertaken between January – April 2022, consulting with stakeholders and community members to help shape the development of the plan.

Listening to community members and stakeholders explain what makes the Coorong unique ensures that closely held values are safeguarded and the future is visioned with those values in mind. This engagement summary outlines what we heard during the consultation.

Why we are developing the plan

The Coorong Visitor Experience Plan (CVEP) is part of the broader Project Coorong initiative, which is taking action to restore the health, vitality, and visitor experience of the Coorong.

Through environmental projects to get the Coorong back on track, Project Coorong will support sustainable tourism in the region and elevate the visitor experiences in the Coorong.

The visitor experience plan will outline desirable new and upgraded experiences and will describe the infrastructure and services required to viably support them.

The environment and people (community and visitors) have been at the centre of planning for visitor experiences in the Coorong. It is in this interaction that positive impacts can be harnessed and accelerated and negative impacts acknowledged and addressed, with the view to creating a better Coorong for everyone.



Who we engaged

Local tourism operators and businesses	Regional tourism organisations	First Nations representatives and organisations	Community groups	Local government	Industry groups	State government	Special interest groups	Regional Development Australia	Volunteers	Visitors
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Over 800 individual contributions from community and stakeholders



18 one-on-one interviews with targeted stakeholders



Community visioning boards installed in Goolwa, Meningie and Kingston



Comments on council's social media channels captured



A dedicated workshop on Country with Ngarrindjeri representatives



169 responses via an online survey



Two face-to-face workshops in region attended by more than 40 tourism operators, businesses and interested community members



35 council staff and elected members engaged face-to-face workshops, briefings, and meetings



60 responses via a face-to-face survey



What we asked

The following guiding questions provided the foundation for discussions across the various engagement methods:

- How would you describe the current Coorong visitor experience?
- What do you like most about the Coorong? What are your favourite places, favourite things to do, hidden gems, untold stories?
- How could the visitor experience be improved? What types of new tourism products, services and experiences would you welcome in the Coorong?
- What are the natural values we need to protect?
- What are the challenges or barriers to better activating the Coorong for tourism?
- Who do we want to attract to the Coorong? What will they learn? What authentic, immersive experiences will they participate in?
- Are there any visitor experiences that you consider incompatible with the Coorong?

What we are doing next

These contributions are helping to shape the development of the Coorong Visitor Experience Plan. The plan will include a vision for the Coorong, guiding principles for the development of sustainable visitor experiences, the identification of standout visitor experiences and insights into current and future visitor profiles.

The plan will be released in spring 2022.



What we heard

Overall, the community and key stakeholders would like to:

- Ensure that the Coorong will remain a wilderness experience.
- Strengthen its appeal of breathtaking, ever-changing, wild and peaceful beauty with an abundance of native wildlife.
- Recognise the significance of Aboriginal people who have cared for this region for thousands of years and ensure visitors are able to connect with Aboriginal culture.
- Ensure visitor experiences and infrastructure are low impact, highlight the region's ancient landscapes, and protect and conserve ecological assets and Aboriginal heritage.
- Support tourism operators and businesses to develop products, collaborate, package and market experiences.
- Focus on the types of customers (target markets) that are aligned with the community's values and appreciate the environmental significance of the Coorong.
- Develop a clear destination brand to attract visitors and communicate the importance of the Coorong.
- See additional opportunities for tours led by National Parks and Wildlife Service rangers or volunteer rangers to increase engagement with visitors.
- See an increased focus on park maintenance.



Three major engagement themes have been identified through the consultation on the visitor experience plan:

1. Nature, Wildlife and Wilderness

Create new or improved tours and offerings that enable visitors to experience the serenity, raw beauty and untouched wilderness of the Coorong including:

- Kayak and canoe hire
- Guided nature walks
- Conservation activities that people can participate in
- Wildlife and birdwatching tours
- Kayak and stand up paddle board tours
- Multi day walking experiences including the Murray Coorong Trail
- Boat tours
- Sunset experiences
- Photography tours
- Stargazing tours
- Catch and cook and hunting experiences
- Guided and tag-along 4WD tours
- Scenic flights

Create a local industry that supports the:

- Protection of the environmental values of the Coorong through its operations, marketing and conservation contributions.
- Restoration of a healthy Coorong

2. Aboriginal Connection

Curate experiences that enable visitors to engage with Aboriginal people and learn about and appreciate their deep, ongoing connection with Country through:

- Welcome to Country activities
- Acknowledgement of Country in visitor experiences (tours, accommodation etc)
- Aboriginal ranger tours
- Bush tucker food tours and campfire evenings
- Aboriginal stargazing tours
- Cultural events and festivals
- Workshops and tours that celebrate culture and the uniqueness of the Coorong e.g. art, fishing, music

Create a local industry that supports the:

- Engagement, contracting and employment of Aboriginal people in tourism
- Appropriate and agreed inclusion of Aboriginal language, knowledge and creation stories in visitor experiences
- Consideration of dual naming of places
- Protection of culturally sensitive areas
- Interpretation that includes pre-settlement, post settlement and truth telling in visitor experiences.

3. Enabling Visitor Infrastructure

Develop high quality visitor facilities and infrastructure that create opportunities for new memories, adventures and connections. This could include:

- Upgraded campgrounds
- Facilities for caravans and RVs
- Viewing platforms, lookouts and bird hides
- Walking trails and boardwalks
- Cycling trails
- Kayak/canoe launching points
- New or upgraded boat ramps
- Picnic areas with shelter
- Contemplation areas
- Additional toilets
- Interpretive and wayfinding signage
- Ecofriendly accommodation
- Jetty facilities at Raukkan
- Public art that helps create a sense of place
- Extension of the Goolwa Barrage lock operating hours during summer
- Allowing some barrage access for walkers and cyclists
- Improved road conditions
- Improved rubbish management

Create a local industry that supports the:

- Provision of more facilities and experiences that are universally accessible
- Increase in the number of food and beverage outlets with quality local produce and consistent service
- Seamless delivery of a Coorong experience regardless of land tenure

Consultant Report Recommendations

In order to deliver the benefits from the visitor economy, the Coorong is deserving of a significant position in the State's place brand.

- Consumers do not know what the Coorong is and how to best experience it.
- Focus on coordinated hard and soft infrastructure investments.
- Focus on target markets

The Coorong can capitalise on trends in nature-based, sustainable and cultural tourism.

- Continuous collaboration between local government, state government, and regional tourism bodies based is required to create a sustainable visitor destination.
- All visitor experiences and infrastructure must be low impact to highlight the region's ancient landscapes and protect and conserve Aboriginal heritage and ecological assets.

Report Recommendations

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Connected and Collaborative Hubs

- Meningie, Goolwa and Kingston

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Easy to understand types of visitor experience nodes

- The places we want to activated places that deliver on the experience promise.

1 Active Adventure nodes

These are places where visitors can participate in physically active experiences like boating, kayaking, walking, 4WDing and fishing.

Active Adventure nodes include:

- Murray Coorong Trail
- Narrung + Lake Albert Scenic Loop
- Barker Knoll and Godfreys Landing
- Goolwa Beach and Beacon 19 boat ramp
- Ocean Beach
- Long Point and Mark Point
- Lake Albert and Alexandrina.

2 Soft Adventure node

These are places where visitors can recreate and relax with family and friends, and dabble in some activities like walking, cycling, nature observation, short walks and interpreted experiences.

Soft Adventure nodes include:

- Parnka Point
- Salt Creek surrounds (including Loop Road Nature Trail)
- The Granites
- Sugars Beach
- 42 Mile Crossing.

3 Cultural Immersion node

These are the places that tell the stories of the place, and weave heritage, culture and truth telling into visitor experience.

Cultural immersion nodes include:

- Raukkan
- Goolwa Wharf
- Cape Jaffa Lighthouse
- The Granites
- Cantara Homestead
- Signal Point, Goolwa
- Coorong Wilderness Lodge
- Camp Coorong
- Point Malcolm Lighthouse.

4 Nature Immersion node

These are the places where people can soak up a Coorong experience in a natural setting.

Nature immersion nodes include:

- Kartoo Road
- Jack Point (bird watching)
- Noonameena and Seven Mile Road.

Minor infrastructure sites

These sites deliver a more traditional model with a focus on basic visitor amenity. Minor infrastructure sites may include campsites, toilets, picnic shelters and trailheads. Through a review process, minor infrastructure spots may be elevated to a node and become activated spaces should the demand arise.

Minor infrastructure sites include:

- Tea Tree Crossing, 28 Mile Crossing, Wreck Crossing campgrounds
- Bonneys Reserve
- Chinamans Well
- Policemans Point.



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