Darwin cruises through bumper tourist week

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Darwin is wrapping up a bumper Cruise Week with visitors pumping an estimated $2.5 million into the economy and booking 3000 tours.

“Cruise Week has been an amazing boost to the Territory tourism industry with six ships over five days carrying thousands of passengers, all eager to see what the Top End has to offer. Today has been the biggest day yet, with two ships in town,” Chief Minister Adam Giles said.

“Over the week, approximately 3000 passengers organised tours through their ships – about 1000 of these did city tours, 600 visited the Jumping Crocs, 400 went to Litchfield and 265 did harbour cruises.”

Many more organised their own tours once they reached shore. World War II themed tours to the Darwin Military Museum, Kakadu scenic flights and the Territory Wildlife Park proved especially popular. The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory has also been packed all week.

“Our tourism industry is still getting back on its feet after a tough decade. Encouragingly, domestic and international visitor numbers are turning the corner and events like Cruise Week are critical to sustaining this recovery in the long term,” Mr Giles said.

Minister for Business Peter Styles said Cruise Week feedback from both passengers and local businesses has been fantastic.

“Each of these passengers spends in excess of $200 and I want to thank the Port staff, business people and tourism operators for the role they’ve played in showcasing the city to our cruise visitors,” Mr Styles said.

“The buzz around town has been palpable and it’s thanks, in no small part, to the music and local wildlife on show in the mall, the pop-up markets at the Waterfront and the welcoming attitude of Darwin residents.”
The Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Top End have welcomed the multi-million dollar passenger spend at what is traditionally a quiet time of the year.

“The feedback from members has been very positive. Excellent numbers on Monday and Tuesday resulted in strong retail sales for CBD traders and there has been a good flow of visitors to tourist attractions in the Darwin area,” Chamber of Commerce CEO Greg Bicknell said.

“Cruise week has been a great success. It is important to highlight the benefit of visiting cruise ships to Darwin, in particular, during our shoulder season months. It has been a great week, our meet and greet ambassadors have volunteered their time to welcome the cruise ship passengers to Darwin, providing local information, maps and a souvenir fan,” Trevor Cox from Tourism Top End said.

The Lord Mayor Katrina Fong Lim was a huge hit in the mall, with passengers getting a kick out of meeting her in her robes.

“It’s always special to welcome visitors to our vibrant city and it was great to see so many new faces in the CBD, discovering Darwin for the first time. There were some great festivities throughout the CBD and Waterfront, with live music and pop up markets really bringing the city to life,” Ms Fong Lim said.

One of the exciting elements of Cruise Week was the inclusion of a stop-over in Yirrkala for the French ship L’Austral.

“This ship delivered 200 passengers to the region who got a taste of aboriginal culture and spent up big at the local art centre. It’s something I’m keen to see more of as East Arnhem moves its economy in a new direction,” Mr Giles said.

The visitors were warmly embraced by the local community in Yirrkala.

“These visits work well because they occur during the quieter wet season months. They bring customers directly to the Aboriginal art centres which, in turn, supports a large number of local artists,” Matt Grooby, Manager, Lirrwi Yolngu Tourism Aboriginal Corporation said.

“This also provides short term employment opportunities for local Yolngu people through Lirrwi Tourism to provide a range of cultural experiences for the visitors. An increase in such visits to the region would be most welcome.”

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