Not over the hill. Just enjoying the view.

(summary report)

A close-up look at the seniors market for tourism in Australia
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This report will help every domestic operator better attract the fastest growing market segment in Australia. It summarises the most extensive seniors market research ever conducted in Australia. The findings are presented as practical strategies and ideas to help you motivate and attract senior travellers.

Every page of this report contains ideas that will help you make sure a grey future is a bright future for domestic tourism in Australia.
If Australia's seniors are not over the hill, where are they? And what are they doing? Chances are, seniors are on holiday or they are planning one.

Despite their propensity to travel, seniors remain a relatively untapped and untargeted market segment. With slowing population growth in younger age groups, and the downturn in inbound tourism, the time is ripe for domestic operators to tap in and target the rapidly expanding senior market.

**Seniors are a fast growing, travel oriented market segment.**

* Australia's 2.97 million seniors spend $895 million on domestic travel annually. This figure is expected to grow to $2.3 billion by 2051.
* 75% of seniors travelled last year, 80% want to travel now or in the near future.
* The seniors market will swell from 3 million to 4 million people in the next 10 years. The 15 to 44 age group is not expected to grow in the next 50 years.

**Seniors have the time, recreational budget and inclination to travel.**

* Seniors have more leisure time than younger people and choose to spend more of this time travelling. They can, and do, take longer holidays.
* Seniors have high levels of discretionary income, and choose to spend a greater percentage of this on travel than younger people.
* More seniors travel for pleasure than to visit family and friends.
Seniors have different travelling habits to those of younger people.

* Travel changes with age, it does not stop. Seniors adapt their travel habits to fit their lifestyle.
* Seniors spend more time planning their holidays, and are large consumers of information.
* Seniors are more likely to travel in off-peak seasons.

Seniors have some special needs that if not addressed can become barriers to travel.

* Financially, seniors must plan ahead and always seek value for money. Value for money is more about quality of experience for the cost, not how cheap the holiday is.
* 64% of seniors feel their health is good to excellent, but health does become more of a concern with increasing age. Seniors seek reassuring information on available medical facilities, opportunities for personal assistance, and health insurance when travelling.
* For some seniors, home responsibilities can affect timing and duration of travel. They often seek travel that offers a relaxing 'break' from such responsibilities.
* 73% of seniors will experience no, or only mild, disability. \(^6\) People with a disability actively seek information on travel experiences suited to their needs.

**The reasons seniors travel are just as diverse as the market itself.**

* Travel can be for nostalgia, social interaction, learning, escaping, mental or physical stimulation.\(^7\)
* New friends and memories are important 'rewards' of travel.
* Travel can replace working life as a means of social contact and mental stimulation.
* 76% of seniors feel travel is important to maintaining general health and wellbeing.\(^1\)
* Travel offers adventure - the chance to see new places and try new things.
* Word of mouth recommendations have a major impact on purchasing decisions made.\(^9\)

The Australian tourism industry enjoys some important selling points for senior travellers.\(^8\)

* Reduced concerns of getting ill while travelling, a major issue if travelling overseas.
* A pleasure holiday in Australia can be combined with a visit to friends or relatives.
* Security-conscious seniors perceive Australia as a 'safe' destination.
* There are no language barriers.
* Senior Australians have a desire to see the 'real Australia' and experience first-hand historical and natural landmarks.
The following pages contain practical ideas to help tourism operators attract the seniors market. These ideas are drawn from analysis of survey findings and focus groups discussing what seniors expect from the tourism industry. The findings that form the basis for these strategies can be found in the Not over the hill. Just enjoying the view full report.
Australian seniors offer greater market potential than the accommodation industry currently perceives.

More seniors travelled for pleasure than to visit friends and relatives last year.

Most VFR travellers didn’t see this trip as a holiday. Seniors say the prospect of spending time with friends and relatives appeals, but the idea of staying with them does not.

For the accommodation industry, opportunity knocks.

**Strategies for success**

* Capitalise on the great potential to market accommodation that offers a chance to escape and enjoy new experiences.
* Inform seniors about access, facilities and assistance available to reassure the market about choosing an establishment.
* Have rigorous maintenance and cleaning programs in place to ensure the appropriate standard of presentation to attract the seniors market.
* Have on hand information about local medical facilities.
* Add personal touches, such as a welcome drink, to enhance the quality of experience and in turn value for money.
* Offer luggage assistance and transfers when necessary.
* Ensure staff are able to answer questions about local attractions and historical events.
* Promote the availability of rooms with ensuite.
* Reduce noise wherever possible to ensure the highest levels of comfort.
* Create opportunities for seniors to meet and mingle with other guests.
* Promote any special safety and security features to help provide peace of mind.
* Provide sufficient lighting, preferably directional, to permit reading.
Seniors crave information on transport options. Unfortunately a lack of information on transport and a lack of well-promoted, nationwide discounts is making overseas travel more attractive to Australian seniors.

Seniors express a desire to travel more within Australia. They need information and incentives to do so.

**Strategies for success**

**Rail transport**

* Stress the comfort and security offered by rail travel.
* Capitalise on seniors’ feelings of nostalgia when promoting rail travel.
* Point out places of interest that will be passed on even a standard rail service.
* Make porters or luggage trolleys available at platforms.
* Review and where necessary upgrade lighting and access standards at platforms.
* Promote available discounts or special offers for senior travellers.
* Review food costs. Consider offering smaller portions or seniors meals at a reduced rate.
* Offer discounted package rates when both food and travel are prepaid.
* Develop products that incorporate already available seniors discounts into a comprehensive travel package.

**Coach transport**

* Stress that coach travel is cost competitive.
* Review the locations and frequency of rest stops.
* Inform travellers about places of interest they will pass during their journey.
* Look for ways to make the coach journey a part of the travel experience, not just a means to get to a destination. Let the holiday start when a senior traveller gets on the coach, not when they get off.
* Educate drivers to dispel common myths they may hold about seniors.
* Foster a driver culture that makes them a part of the hospitality industry, not the transport industry.
* Consider installing aids such as hydraulic steps, non-slip surfaces and a hand rail in the on board toilet to promote a sense of physical comfort and security.
Air transport

* Promote comfort and security.
* Make information on seniors discounts more readily available.
* Many seniors plan holidays involving air travel at least six months ahead. Allow bookings for discounted seats to be made this far in advance.
* Consider offering a lay-by arrangement where seniors can pay off a pre-booked discount flight in installments during the months before they travel.
* Make discounted tickets available to seniors on flights at a wider variety of time slots.
* Provide information on pre- and post-flight transfers.

Public transport

* Offer travel-oriented tickets allowing travel all-day, everyday.
* Offer travel-oriented tickets that allow travellers to get on and off services at will.
* Provide a guide to the stops from which places of interest can be accessed.
* Offer and promote discounts to senior travellers from interstate.
* To aid seniors in planning ahead and encourage them to make public transport a part of their trip, make information on tourist-oriented services available interstate.
* Place information on services and discounts available in tourist and visitor information centres.
* Consider offering information sessions or familiarisations to staff working in tourist information centres.
Self-drive travellers are among the most frequent senior travellers. Reduced costs and the ability to just 'get up and go' without booking ahead are main contributing factors to this regular travel.

Seniors who can take self-drive holidays prefer this travel option as it provides the most independence and flexibility.

**Strategies for success**

* Organise and promote coordinated convoys of private cars to out-of-the-way destinations, such as the outback and national parks, to help senior drivers feel safe and supported. Facilitate social opportunities to bring convoy drivers together.

* Facilitate self-drive holidays for single and non-driving seniors, possibly in the form of chauffeured or convoy-style trips, for the many seniors who have the desire but not the ability to enjoy a motoring holiday.

* Design road and touring maps with seniors needs in mind. Mark locations of medical facilities and accommodation with access for people with a disability. Use larger type to enhance readability.
What's new? That is what seniors want to know about leisure tourism. They want to try new experiences, see new places, learn new things and meet new people. If you've got something different to offer, you can capture a fast-growing market.

**Strategies for success**

* Ensure adequate daytime, and particularly morning, leisure activities are offered.
* Let seniors work through activities at their own pace.
* Promote the social and educational aspects of leisure activities.
* Offer more rest spots or rest opportunities.
* Offer opportunities for personal interaction, such as a guide to show seniors around a theme park or museum.
* Educate staff so they may share their knowledge with seniors.
* Keep attractions open and consider making facilities available seven days a week.
A desire to explore Australia is the most basic motivation for touring. For seniors, touring is about discovery, stimulation, active involvement, freedom, and the excitement of doing something different.

Australia's seniors are ready to jump on board. What are you offering?

**Strategies for success**

* Create and promote tours that offer learning opportunities.
* Design itineraries with fewer leisure stops, allowing more time to enjoy each spot.
* Allow for more frequent rest stops.
* Get groups together based on shared interests, not just age.
* Promote safe, soft adventure tours to younger seniors.
* Target seniors who can no longer enjoy self-drive holidays with tours that use cars or smaller coaches to recreate the more personal, intimate feel of a motoring holiday.
* Include unusual places in tour itineraries, not just the standard tourist spots.
* Educate tour guides to dispel common myths they may hold about seniors.
* Ensure tour guides can answer the questions seniors will ask about a location.
* Encourage tour guides to facilitate social interaction between travellers.
Senior travellers appreciate travel agencies that provide personal service, advising them on areas such as price, travel details and accommodation.

**Strategies for success**

* Have on hand or offer to source information seniors are likely to ask for, such as accessibility at accommodation, the availability of medical facilities at a destination, and the availability of seniors discounts.

* Agents who have helpful information or who offer to source it will show they understand the needs of seniors and value them as customers.

* Build rapport with senior customers. Friendly agents will find seniors are very loyal customers who will recommend their agent to their friends.

* Be able to recommend a senior-friendly travel insurer.
Seniors place a lot of stock in word of mouth recommendations. A 'good rap' about a travel experience from another senior traveller is highly valued information.

Seniors have a desire to travel within Australia. Making information available helps seniors to determine their priority travel experiences - to rank order their 'wish list'.

**Strategies for success**

* Provide as much detail as possible to satisfy the desire of many seniors to collect all available information and carefully plan their trip.
* Ensure information is available well in advance of when holidays are likely to be taken to aid the long planning phase undertaken by many seniors.
* Always show value for money; seniors do not want or expect 'something for nothing'.
* Incorporate testimonials into paid advertising or promotions whenever possible.
* Offer and promote a seniors discount to show acknowledgment of travelling seniors and to make them feel welcomed and valued.
* Use images of healthy seniors actively enjoying travel experiences in order to match the perceptions seniors have of themselves.
* Provide an opportunity for seniors to have face-to-face contact with a representative as personal communication is highly valued.
* Consider making personalised sales presentations to seniors clubs such as bowls groups.
The National Seniors Card Tourism Scheme worked under the auspices of the National Healthy Ageing Task Force to develop this report.

The Tourism Scheme identified there is a lack of Australian-based data on senior travel. Five major AC Nielsen studies and two intensive university research projects were commissioned to remedy this. These represent the most exhaustive national studies into seniors tourism ever conducted in Australia.

Not over the hill. Just enjoying the view also draws on focus groups, existing tourism data, operator discussions and research into overseas senior travel activities.

The full report presents detailed findings and analysis of this research, together with practical advice and case studies.

To order the full report

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References


You've read the report, now start your climb to success.

Enjoy the view with Australia's seniors.