



*South Gippsland
Shire Council*

Visitor Economy Strategy

Annual
Implementation
Update July 2023

Visitor Economy Strategy Actions 2022/23

THEME 1 - Increasing marketing and promotion

Strengthen South Gippsland's appeal as a visitor destination through increased brand awareness, whilst highlighting the regional brand characteristics.

Raise the profile of South Gippsland's visitor offering by facilitating and undertaking a range of destination marketing activities to increase visitation.

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	UPDATES	
1.1 Develop and promote the South Gippsland tourism brand.	1.1.1	Develop the South Gippsland brand identity.	Completed – Finalised in October 2022.	
	1.1.2	Undertake research to identify market segments.	Completed – Incorporated in the SG Brand Identity project.	
	1.1.3	Develop and implement localised South Gippsland branding consistent with the Gippsland brand developed by Destination Gippsland (DGL).	Commenced – ongoing implementation subject to future budget allocations.	
	1.1.4	Increase South Gippsland's digital promotional assets (photography, video, drone footage).	Commenced – videography developed aligned to new brand. Ongoing subject to future budget allocations.	
1.2 Develop and strengthen South Gippsland's appeal as a visitor destination through a range of coordinated marketing initiatives.	1.2.1	Develop a promotional website to attract visitors to South Gippsland.	Completed – Website live January 2022. Website continuously monitored and updated.	
	1.2.2	Encourage visitors to use the new website via an online and print advertising campaign.	Completed – Ongoing project. visitsouthgippsland.com.au included in all South Gippsland promotional material.	
	1.2.3	Develop an annual marketing campaign for the South Gippsland region drawing on support from government partners where needed.	2022/23 activities centred around the development of new brand. Promotional material developed for regional publications. Regional promotion through South Gippsland Festival Series and social media accounts of the events.	

	1.2.4	Review existing marketing publications on an annual basis to determine if they are still required and if reprints are necessary.	Commenced – however is subject to annual budget allocations. 2023 New South Gippsland Official Touring Map developed.	
1.3 Encourage new residents to South Gippsland via promotion of its people and places.	1.3.1	Implement a series of podcasts featuring local residents to promote the value of living in South Gippsland.	Completed 2021/22– Six podcasts produced and launch via Council's social media platform.	
1.4 Raise the awareness of the region, to encourage visitation and increase length of stay.	1.4.1	Partner and collaborate with Gippsland councils to develop cross-regional marketing ideas.	Completed – Grand Ridge Road and Gippsland Drives project. Supported development of Eat.Drink Gippsland and Gippsland Caravan and Camping Guide.	
	1.4.2	Develop marketing initiatives to promote Gippsland drives.	Completed – Worked in partnership with DG and Gippsland Councils to develop a Gippsland Drives Campaign.	
	1.4.3	Develop a Grand Ridge Road map and promote it as a key Gippsland touring route.	Completed – Brochure developed and disseminated through Gippsland Visitor Information Centres.	
1.5 Increase awareness of and visitation to the Great Southern Rail Trail.	1.5.1	Develop and deliver a strategic and marketing plan for the Great Southern Rail Trail.	Completed – Plan adopted by Council June 2022. Ongoing—Official opening of GSRT Nyora to Leongatha. Commenced development of interpretative signage for current and new sections of GSRT. Continued promotion through GSRT Facebook page and South Gippsland promotional material.	
1.6 Increase awareness of and visitation to South Gippsland's villages and eateries.	1.6.1	Coordinate a marketing campaign with a focus on villages and local eateries.	Ongoing-Commenced as part of Shop Local campaigns and will feature in GSRT Marketing and Place branding promotion	
1.7 Support local business growth through a range of marketing initiatives		Develop Shop South Gippsland campaign to encourage support for local retail business	Completed – Developed campaign including Shop Local collateral. Marketed through Council platforms and local newspaper	

Theme 2 - Supporting visitor economy infrastructure

Advocate for and support development of South Gippsland infrastructure that encourages new and existing visitors.

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	UPDATES	
2.1 Support the development of key tourism assets and infrastructure.	2.1.1	Advocate to Federal and State Government for key tourism projects supported by Council.	Completed – Provided letters of support for external applications to various State Government funding programs. This has included numerous private developments. Ongoing support for the Great Southern Rail Trail and Nanjet development in Yanakie.	
	2.1.2	Partner with Destination Gippsland to undertake a strategic product review aimed at delivering improvements to products and experiences.	Not yet commenced. Long term action.	
2.2 Identify and support the development of complementary products and experiences to capitalise on and enhance the Great Southern Rail Trail (GSRT).	2.2.1	Develop public art along the Great Southern Rail Trail	ArtCubes, program commenced with Loch the first town to host. Sought external funding for public art mural project, which was unsuccessful. A public art project to commence in 2023/24.	
	2.2.2	Identify additional supporting rail trail infrastructure requirements (such as additional trail connections, horse mounting yards, repair stations, shelters, toilets, car parks, interpretive signage, seat and bike racks etc). Support implementation if required.	Commenced – Identified as a priority in the GSRT Visitor Experience and Marketing Plan. The Great Southern Rail Trail Management Plan is under review by Infrastructure Planning department for investigation of renewal costings and infrastructure requests.	
	2.2.3	Investigate the viability of improvement works on the rail trail that would enhance the visitor experience (e.g. removal of dangerous road crossings or unsightly cattle crossings).	Commenced as part of GSRT Management and Marketing Plans. Further work required.	
	2.2.4	Install wayfinding signage for the GSRT from key locations off the South Gippsland Highway and main arterial roads.	Commenced – Locations identified and forms final stages of the extension project which is currently being undertaken.	

2.3 Investigate sustainable infrastructure for South Gippsland to enhance the visitor experience.	2.3.1	Identify and then seek funding opportunities to implement actions from the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Study.	Completed – Funding approved for 6 locations across the Shire.	
2.4 Support upgrades to existing tourism infrastructure to enhance the visitor experience.	2.4.1	Complete a tourism infrastructure audit to identify redundant signage and opportunities for potential infrastructure upgrades (lookouts, tourism signage etc).	Not yet commenced – Planned in future years and will be subject to budget allocations.	

Theme 3 - Diversifying and expanding products and experiences

Further develop South Gippsland's visitor products and experiences to encourage new and existing markets to visit, stay and spend.

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	UPDATES	
3.1 Attract and grow investment to the Shire through the implementation of a targeted Investment Attraction Program	3.1.1	Include tourism investment attraction as a key component of the South Gippsland Investment Attraction Strategy.	Commenced – Collaborated with Economic Development team to develop Investment Attraction Strategy to be completed in 2023/24.	
3.2 Identify opportunities to support events in South Gippsland	3.2.1	Determine a policy position on events and develop an event framework.	Not yet commenced – Events Policy to be developed in 2023/24	
	3.2.2	Leverage from DGL's Gippsland Regional Events Strategy and Events Gippsland.	Completed – Member of the Gippsland Events Network. Supported six events through the Gippsland Events Acquisition Fund, promoted through the South Gippsland Festival Series. Commenced discussions with Bicycle Network for the 2023 Great Victorian Bike Ride, an overnight stay to be hosted in South Gippsland. Liaising with stakeholders to attract the Village Feast (Melbourne International Food and Wine Event) to South Gippsland.	
3.3 Leverage South Gippsland's cultural assets for tourism purposes	3.3.1	Develop a South Gippsland Cultural Tourism Plan.	Completed – Forms part of the Arts, Culture and Creative Industry Strategy (AC&CI) adopted by Council in July 2022. (Refer to AC&CI strategic report)	

	3.3.2	Position Coal Creek as a key Cultural Tourism asset for South Gippsland.	Not yet commenced – Identified as an action in the AC&CI Strategy. The development of the Coal Creek business plan is a proposed Council budget initiative for 2023/24.	
3.4 Identify South Gippsland's accessible tourism products and experiences	3.4.1	Undertake a stock take of accessible tourism assets in South Gippsland.	Not yet commenced.	
3.5 Identify opportunities to support cycling in South Gippsland	3.5.1	Support the Bicycle Network 'Riding for Recovery Hub and Spoke' weekend event.	Completed - Due to limited ticket sales unfortunately Bicycle Network had to withdraw the event.	
	3.5.2	Investigate opportunities for safe cycling paths and routes.	Not yet commenced.	
3.6 Continue to support Art, Culture and Creative Industries in South Gippsland	3.6.1	Update the South Gippsland Art, Culture and Creative Industry Strategy.	Completed – Adopted by Council July 2022.	
3.7 Develop niche products aligned to brand	3.7.1	Develop touring routes that promote the visitor experiences.	Ongoing - Great Southern Drive developed in 2022/23.	

Theme 4 - Enhancing visitor servicing

Enhance the visitor experience by providing high quality engagement assets, which create a positive image of our region. Invest in research to understand the market and identify the gaps.

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	UPDATES	
4.1 Improve the visitor experience	4.1.1	Broaden the tourism knowledge of local businesses and create tourism ambassadors via an online training program.	Completed – Platform developed, engaged business, community and volunteers in 2022/23.	
	4.1.2	Investigate the feasibility and cost of digital technology in key locations.	Not yet commenced – Long term plan, and will be subject to future budget allocations.	
	4.1.3	Investigate programs that help better understand the travel patterns of visitors.	Not yet commenced – Long term plan, and will be subject to future budget allocations.	
	4.1.4	Continue the operation of the Visitor Information Centre in Foster.	Completed – Operates 7 days a week except Christmas Day.	

	4.1.5	Develop plans to transition the Visitor Information Centres to an experience centre.	Not yet commenced—Long term action and subject to future budget allocations.	
	4.1.6	Undertake updated visitor research to better understand customer needs and expectations.	Commenced as part of GSRT Marketing Plan and Brand Identity project.	

Theme 5 - Building partnerships

To develop partnerships with stakeholders to support the development of the visitor economy in South Gippsland.

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	UPDATES	
5.1 Maintain collaborative partnerships with stakeholders to further progress the visitor economy in South Gippsland	5.1.1	Maintain and nurture partnerships with key agencies at Shire, regional and state level.	Completed – Ongoing collaboration with agencies including Destination Gippsland, Parks Victoria, Regional Development Victoria, One Gippsland and Gippsland LGAs.	
	5.1.2	Actively participate in industry specific groups, forums and expos as appropriate.	Completed – Participation in Gippsland Tourism Managers meetings, Gippsland Tourism Forum, Regional Development Victoria and Parks Victoria meetings. South Gippsland region hosted the Destination Gippsland February Forum, where Council Officers presented to delegates. The Visitor Information Centre team hosted the South East Region Visitor Centre network meeting.	
	5.1.3	Work collaboratively with Destination Gippsland under the terms of the partnership contract to ensure the best outcomes for South Gippsland.	Completed – Continued support and partnership with Destination Gippsland. Destination Gippsland were part of the project working group in the development of the South Gippsland place brand.	

	5.1.4	Work with local business and community groups to promote opportunities for local operators.	Completed – Information disseminated through Business/Tourism associations, monthly newsletter, Councils content management system and Visitor Information Centre updates.	
	5.1.5	Engage with local artists via Council's Arts Development Officer.	Completed – Weekly Arts newsletter	
	5.1.6	Collaborate with Parks Victoria on South Gippsland projects and marketing where opportunities exist or a need is identified.	Completed – Ongoing collaboration and meeting with Parks Victoria team.	
	5.1.7	Support the Visitor Economy Strategy Advisory Group to be a key adviser to Council on Visitor Economy issues.	Completed – Collaboration with VESAG to implement year one Action Plan.	
	5.1.8	Support the development of the State Government's Local Tourism Action Plans.	Commenced – planned for 2023/24.	
	5.1.9	Provide community groups interested in establishing free or low-cost camping with information and advice.	Completed – Information provided to interested community groups.	
	5.1.10	Support local communities to work with relevant authorities to establish dump points if appropriate.	Completed – Information provided to interested community groups.	

Theme 6 - Providing business development and support

Support the continued growth and development of the tourism sector that delivers high quality visitor experiences.
Building the skills, training and knowledge of the business community.

STRATEGY	#	ACTION	UPDATES	
6.1 Facilitate the establishment of new tourism businesses in South Gippsland	6.1.1	Continue the Better Business Approvals process to assist small/medium businesses to establish in South Gippsland.	Completed 2022/23 – Ongoing project – To the 1 st May, 227 business enquiries received through the Better Approvals Program.	
	6.1.2	Provide strategic input into the review of Council's Municipal Statement to ensure the Visitor Economy and its importance to South Gippsland is recognised.	Not yet commenced – To be included in development of MSS from 2022/23 onwards.	
	6.1.3	Continue to provide the Business Concierge service within Council.	Ongoing	

6.2 Provide opportunities for local businesses to increase their knowledge and skills	6.2.1	Promote targeted training and skills programs to local businesses.	Completed – Ongoing project with Small Business Victoria, SBMS, education providers and independent trainers.	
	6.2.2	Deliver tourism information to local businesses via communication tools such as the Business e-newsletter and associated business web pages.	Completed – Ongoing project – 12 business newsletters circulated. Council Business website pages being reviewed for update in 2023/24.	
	6.2.3	Support Destination Gippsland Ltd to deliver the Gippsland Digital Maze Program to South Gippsland businesses.	Completed – 20 South Gippsland Businesses participated in the program.	
	6.2.4	Establish a business auditing program with a focus on customer service.	Not yet commenced – Long term plan and subject to future budget allocations.	
6.3 Encourage local businesses to invest and implement sustainable activities and technologies	6.3.1	Provide information to local business on sustainable technologies (for example electric vehicle charging).	Not yet commenced – Long term plan and subject to future budget allocations.	
6.4 Developing Business Resilience and Recovery	6.4.1	Continue and enhance Council's Business Resilience and Recovery Programs.	Completed – For 2022/23. Ongoing. Coordinator Economic Development and Coordinator Community Strengthening completed Municipal Recovery Manager training. Staff member funded by Bushfire Recovery Victoria with the Economic Development Team to support resilience and recovery, completed her role during the year. Participated in the development of the new Drought Resilience Plan for Gippsland which was completed during the year.	
6.5 Enabling/supporting industry to access a skilled and job ready workforces.	6.5.1	Work with educational and training institutions to increase opportunities for locals to be job ready and assist retention of young people.	Conducted Jobs Expo in Leongatha March 2023. 36 businesses participated and about 200 attendees. Considered the most successful such event held in Gippsland. Supported Careers Expo in Korumburra in June 2023.	
	6.5.2	Work with businesses to understand skills requirements and plan appropriately.	Commenced – Discussions held with businesses as part of scheduled business visits.	

