

Phillip Island Nature Park

Lindsay Goding, Marketing and Promotions Executive

The Product

Phillip Island Nature Parks is an iconic Victoria's tourism attraction, with an annual visitation of more than half a million people. The Park's blend of nature-based attractions (Penguin Parade, Koala Conservation Centre, Churchill Island Heritage Farm and the Nobbies centre) is a major attractor of international tourism.

During recent years, the rapidly emerging Chinese tourism market has become the Park's largest international market, accounting for almost 100,000 visitors each year. Victoria attracts about 200,000 Chinese visitors a year, which is expected to more than double within a few years.

Australia attracts about 5% of the Chinese outbound market. China's outbound visitors are very status-oriented and tend to value intensive group sightseeing trips, in order to chalk-up as many visits as possible. Europe features most prominently in their desirable destinations.

The Challenge

The needs and wants of the Mainland Chinese tourism market are distinctly different to many of Australia's and Victoria's traditional Asian markets.

The importance of China to Phillip Island Nature Park has required staff to gain a deeper understanding of the market, in order to best meet its needs and to maximise patronage. The ability to speak Mandarin can considerably smooth communication and enhance the appeal of the Park to Chinese travel wholesalers.

During recent years the Park has worked closely with Tourism Victoria's Shanghai office and Chinese wholesalers to promote its products and to determine the needs of Chinese travellers. The Park relies heavily on the office for publicity and industry leads.

The Strategy

During 2005 the Phillip Island Nature Park nominated its Marketing and Promotions Executive, Lindsay Goding for the inaugural Lynette Bergin Tourism Fellowship.

The Fellowship honours an industry stalwart, the late Lynette Bergin and is designed to foster and develop young people or to assist a relatively new tourism business to enhance their understanding of the industry. It is administered by Tourism Alliance Victoria, which awards up to \$8,000 each year, either to one recipient or in smaller amounts to two or more recipients. It is a very flexible fund and it considers any worthwhile project that will significantly add to a person's understanding of their sector of the tourism industry.

Lindsay submitted an application to undertake two weeks of intensive language training in China, a work placement in Tourism Victoria's Shanghai office, some wholesale sales calls, followed by a tour of some of China's urban and rural areas to obtain a better understanding of the culture. The application was supported by his employer, and Lindsay also proposed to use annual leave to undertake the extended component of the tour. He was required to submit a proposed program, a budget, to provide three referees and to undertake an interview.

Lindsay was already fluent in Japanese. His desire to work with Tourism Victoria in China and the direct application the new knowledge would have for his employer and the Victorian industry won him the inaugural fellowship. During August-September 2006 he undertook a 40 hour intensive language program with a personal tutor in Shanghai. The morning sessions were held in a classroom and during the afternoons the tutor would provide him with a task to conduct on the streets of Shanghai. She would accompany him to observe his competence.

He worked for two weeks with Tourism Victoria's Shanghai staff, during which time he observed the office at work and attended meetings. The following three weeks were devoted to sales calls and travelling the country to observe and gain a deeper understanding of the everyday lifestyle and culture.

The Results

Lindsay gained amazing insight into both the Chinese travel industry and an understanding of Chinese culture.

His language course provided him with a working knowledge of Mandarin and he continued to study the language study after his return. He now has a deeper understanding and appreciation on how Tourism Victoria works internationally and believes that during his time in the Shanghai office he was also able to improve their staff's appreciation and understanding of the needs of Victorian tourism operators.

His tour of China's regional areas provided him with an appreciation of the potential of the market. Australia currently attracts less than 5% of the Chinese outbound market. It has 666 cities with more than a million people. Lindsay visited a Chinese city he had never heard of, yet it had a population of 5 million. He remembers looking out the window of a small regional airport and seeing fifteen carriers sitting on the tarmac.

Upon his return to the Park he was able to brief his fellow staff on his new-found knowledge and is able to assist a consultant running a Chinese cultural induction course for Park staff. He has also presented reports and made presentations to other young tourism industry staff.

Lindsay enjoys the challenge of dealing with international business cultures and intends to continue to work in the international tourism marketing field, especially Asian markets. He says he will continue to seek new learning opportunities and to expand his industry knowledge.



Note: The 2006 winner of the Lynette Bergin Tourism Fellowship is Chris Porter and the Australian Wine Tour Company, who will use the funding to work in the Japanese market