

Visiting Journalist Program (VJP)

What is the Visiting Journalists Program?

The Visiting Journalists Program (VJP) is a busy and pro-active initiative of Destination Gippsland's PR unit. Through the VJP, domestic and international journalists and photographers working in markets identified as important for Gippsland are targeted and sponsored to visit and experience selected tourism product first-hand.

In return, the media outlets supplied by the journalists produce quality travel features and articles in magazines, newspapers and on television, creating exposure for Gippsland that would be completely cost-prohibitive to purchase as paid advertising.

With some international journalists, Destination Gippsland can partner with Tourism Australia and other state and territory tourism offices to fund and manage the program of sponsored visits.

The key objective of the VJP is to provide media representatives with a Gippsland experience that surpasses their expectations and leads to high editorial exposure in key national and international media.

Media familiarisations

Destination Gippsland's program of media famils relies on the support of Gippsland's tourism industry operators, who offer free or discounted services and products for media representatives, enabling them to write or broadcast from their personal experience of the island.

Famils may be designed to target a particular tourism product such as accommodation or a specific attraction; or to highlight a more general theme such as food & wine, adventure activities or a region.

As a Gippsland tourism operator, you benefit from supporting VJP media famils through direct and measurable publicity for your business. Destination Gippsland monitors the placement of editorial material following media famils and calculates its value based on the equivalent rates of paid advertising. For example, an article in a national newspaper generates valuable publicity that

would, if purchased as advertising, cost thousands of dollars; while television coverage can be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars in promotional value.

Promoting your business with the media

In addition to being involved with Destination Gippsland's VJP, you can make direct contact with the media to promote your operation.

The practical advice that follows will assist you to present a clear, professional and effective communication and maximise the chance of a successful result.

Pick your media target

Different products suit different media – consider which style of media will showcase your product to best advantage.

Television producers need visually-appealing storylines – newspaper editors like stories that are full of interesting facts – while magazines rely heavily on images. All media look for stories that are fresh and distinctive or reveal a new aspect (or angle) of a tourism experience.

Preparing a media release

Submitting a media release is usually the first step in contacting the media to alert them to your storyline.

Start with a strong and interesting headline then aim to tell the story on one side of an A4 page. Use the proven formula:

Who – what – when – where – how – why.

Get the main point across in the first concise, tightly-written few lines, then expand on the theme in following paragraphs. Conclude with clear contact details for further information.

Building a media kit

This is a collection of promotional collateral that may include brochures, leaflets, information sheets, a CD or USB of images along with one or more press releases.

If you include digital images, make sure they are copyright-free and of reasonable resolution – most publications need photos of at least 300 dpi.

Keep the kit up-to-date and don't overload it – travelling journalists won't load up their luggage with bulky files.

Working with the media

Try and build a working relationship with journalists and editors. Invite them to your property and support Destination Gippsland's VJP. Maintain regular contact after the visit. Be a reliable, accurate and consistent source. Get to know your local media representatives. Remember that editors have newspapers to fill and programs to make; and journalists have stories to write. If you help them with good storylines and leads they can turn into features, you're doing them a favour.

When a journalist gets it wrong

Recognise that journalists are entitled to their opinions. If they have a really bad experience on a sponsored visit, they may opt not to cover the story at all. But all travel has its good and not-so-good experiences – it isn't realistic to expect 100% glowing reports. If an important fact is wrong, send an email politely pointing out the error and requesting a correction, if you think it is really necessary. But don't create an enemy – consider the coverage you have received and remember that you may want to invite them back again.

Let's work together

Destination Gippsland is constantly seeking new quality material to promote and be included in our program of VJP famils and we welcome regular updates on your latest product and developments.

If your product/service is media-ready and you would like to participate in the VJP, contact Phoebe Honey, Industry Development & Public Relations
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