

CASE STUDY

PEARLS OF AUSTRALIA:
EXPORT READY DEVELOPMENT

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Business Profile

Pearls of Australia is a tourism business offering authentic experiences on commercial pearl farms. Established in 2018, Pearls of Australia represents Broken Bay Pearl Farm, the only pearl farm in NSW. It's located on the Central Coast and Hawkesbury River just a one-hour drive north of Sydney.

Its one and two-hour pearl farm tours immerse customers in the history of the aquaculture and unique ecosystem in which native pearl oysters grow. These small group tours include a cruise on the Hawkesbury River where guests observe a working pearl farm and pearls being harvested. Once back on land, guests are invited to an interactive 'pearl appreciation' where they witness how pearls are graded and valued. Tastings of Sydney rock oysters and pearl meat are also available.

pearlsofaustralia.com.au

Quick Facts

Product Type: Cruise & Tour

Focus: Luxury & Nature

Location: Mooney Mooney, Hawkesbury River

Destination Network: Destination Sydney Surrounds North



How did you start working with Destination NSW and the NSW First program?

Pearls of Australia met Destination NSW staff at ATEC Meeting Place in 2018. Through introductions, we set up a meeting with the Trade and Industry Development team in the Sydney office and gave them a broad company overview and our plans as a new product for NSW. We registered for the New Product Workshop and NSW First training in 2019.

Which international markets do you target?

After consultation with Destination NSW, we targeted key Eastern and Western markets: China, Korea, Japan, USA, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Germany and Switzerland.

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James Brown – Managing Director, Pearls of Australia

How did you develop into an export-ready business?

We have been welcoming tourists through our Broome pearling business for 10 years. However this region receives only a small percentage of international travellers compared to Sydney. Pearls of Australia, incorporating our WA and NSW pearl farm experiences and products, attended ATEC Meeting Place. This led to us meeting with a broad range of inbound tour operators and online travel agents. Our new NSW products are of keen interest to inbound tourism due to the easy-access location, proximity to Sydney and being the only product of its kind in NSW.

Has your product changed to appeal to inbound visitors?

We have applied a different business model in setting up our NSW experiences: we build our products and services around the needs of the inbound tour operators (ITOs). We have essentially taken two products to the market: Pearl Farm Tours from Woy Woy and Pearl Farm Tours from our 'Shellar Door' at Mooney Mooney. This is already gaining interest from many ITOs due to the location and ease of access. When we met with ITOs at the New Product Workshop it allowed us to develop our new products to meet their needs, e.g. pricing and duration of tours, highlights and inclusions that appeal to different markets. We are getting some of our sales collateral translated into other languages, and we are using an online booking platform so our products are easily bookable from anywhere in the world.



What's one thing you've learnt about your target market from experience?

Our target markets value authentic experiences, delivered with passion by people who know and love what they do. Visitors want to 'meet the makers' and feel a strong connection to the locals and the environment. Many inbound tour operators want you to find a way to offer your product with some kind of exclusive twist. Everyone loves food and refreshments included and they prefer easy parking, good bathrooms and don't mind a spectacular water view!

How did the Destination NSW New Product Workshop assist your business?

At the New Product Workshop we met many inbound tour operators who we are in the process of contracting. We invited the Managing Director of one of the biggest companies to visit our site to advise how best to develop our products to meet the needs of their market. This was invaluable as we have been able to continue to refine our products and develop new ones with the best advice from the market itself. The Trade and Industry Development team at Destination NSW has been a wealth of support by phone, email, in person and with lots of online information. We feel they value who we are, what we are trying to achieve and are as proud of what we do as we are.

What types of trade partners are you working with?

We work with local accommodation properties that sell our special tour packages from their tour desks as well as local transport operators (seaplanes, luxury bus transfers, limousines and classic boats). We are also developing special tour packages with local restaurants, wineries and oyster farmers to assist with catering. We work with the five-star hotel concierge group, regional tourism bodies and local visitor centres to ensure we are getting maximum exposure through their services. Trade partners include travel agents, travel designers, inbound tour operators, online travel agents and direct marketing to regional leisure groups (e.g. Probus).

What are your top tips for businesses looking to become export ready?

- Have your in-house database in place to record contact details and log communication activity.
- Have your assets ready in an easy-to-email format (e.g. Dropbox). This includes your rates, brochure, high-resolution 'hero' images and easy-to-read fact sheets.
- Have some reasons to follow up with the travel trade: news, a great photo, a short video or anything exciting.

What are the benefits of working with inbound tour operators?

Through inbound tour operators, we are able to deal with Australian-based, English-speaking specialists who have invaluable and extensive travel networks in different overseas markets. For us to develop relationships with these networks ourselves, would be difficult, time consuming and expensive.

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What has been the best thing about working in inbound tourism?

Being able to reach a large audience from all over the world and take our product worldwide is the best thing about working in inbound tourism. Learning about the needs of tourists from different countries, and reaching a broad range of people, languages and cultures is exciting. Specifically in terms of Pearls of Australia, taking a new, regional NSW product and getting visitors to consider going beyond Sydney and into the untapped beauty in regional NSW has been very rewarding.

