

Quick facts

- PNG tourism is currently enjoying a steady increase, with more than 164,000 international visitors recorded in 2011 - up 14 per cent or 20,000 arrivals compared with 2010 . These visitors injected an estimated K\$1.6 billion (PNG Kina) into the national economy, which is equivalent to AU\$600 million. Of these visitors, 21 per cent came to PNG for a holiday, which was an increase of nine per cent from 2010.
- Since completing his Certificate III in Tourism at Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) in Samoa in 2008, James Aruru Wakapu has progressed from tour guide to Director of Tourism at Papua New Guinea's (PNG) peak tourism body, the Office of Tourism, Arts and Culture.
- James Aruru Wakapu also has an Advanced Diploma in Tourism Management from Box Hill Institute in Australia, made possible through an Australian Aid scholarship. It was upon his return from Australia that he was promptly appointed Director of

Tourism at the Office of Tourism, Arts and Culture.

- James believes tourism can become as important an industry to PNG as the mining sector.
- James also believes that encouraging local people to promote PNG as a tourist destination is the first step to strengthening the growth of the sector to benefit both the local and national economies.



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

CREATING SKILLS FOR LIFE

IMPACT Case Study

Tourism Stimulates PNG Economy



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Tourism stimulates the PNG economy

Australia-Pacific Technical College graduate Harry Smith's passion for improving workplace safety and productivity has taken him from shining shoes on street corners to holding a senior position at the Fiji Ministry of Education.



James with other participants in Boxhill Institute's Diploma of Management



James in his office at PNG's Office of Tourism, Arts and Culture

James Aruru Wakapu is determined to help the billion-dollar tourism industry in Papua New Guinea (PNG) grow to its full potential to stimulate the economies of local communities.

"Having come from a disadvantaged area with high potential for tourism, I thought it would be good to have a qualification to develop tourism back home," says James.

Since completing his Certificate III in Tourism at the Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) in Samoa in 2008, James has progressed from working at a local tour company to now being Director of Tourism at PNG's peak tourism body, the Office of Tourism, Arts and Culture¹.

James also has an Advanced Diploma in Tourism Management from Box Hill Institute in Australia, a pathway which was facilitated by his APTC studies and subsequent Australian Aid scholarship in 2012. It was upon his return from Australia that he was appointed Director of Tourism.

"I was able to go straight to work and deliver, with no need for further training," James says. "Now I am in this position, there are a number of things I can do, and advise the minister."

"As the Director of Tourism I am looking forward to developing tourism in PNG and applying what I learned," he says. This includes customer experience, financial and business management skills.

James, who is from the remote village of Gia in PNG, established his career, working at PNG's leading inbound tourism company Trans Niugini Tours for 7 years. As part of his long-term plan to improve tourism in PNG, he attended APTC to gain the qualifications necessary to work at the Office of Tourism, Arts and Culture.

James believes there is "high potential" for tourism to help sustain PNG's economy if it is properly cultivated by all the sectors involved. "I myself think tourism can possibly make a bigger impact on the country," says James.

PNG tourism is currently enjoying a steady increase, with more than 164,000 international visitors recorded in 2011 - up 14 per cent or 20,000 arrivals compared to 2010².

These visitors injected an estimated K\$1.6 billion (PNG Kina) into the national economy, which is equivalent to AUD\$600 million. Of these visitors, 21 per cent came to PNG for a holiday, which was an increase of 9 per cent from 2010.

This increase in holiday arrivals marked the seventh consecutive year of growth in this sector - a pattern that James is hoping to improve in his new position and with his new knowledge.

According to APTC Country Manager for PNG, Trevor Birney, "APTC study opened up James' view of the world and what might be possible in PNG".

"James has a vision for what tourism can be for the people and economy of PNG," says Trevor.

In addition to essential tourism and business skills, APTC also provided James with the international certification that enabled him to further his studies at Box Hill Institute.

"In this line of job [it is necessary that] I can submit the budget, and previously I didn't have that business, financial management or book-keeping knowledge," says James. "Now I have management skills like HR, financial management, writing up reports, and other skills."

James is also using his new skills and knowledge to drive a legislative review of the tourism industry in PNG and encourage improvements in areas such as customer service, management and accounting.

Central to reforming PNG tourism is James' drive to link tourism with other government sectors such as employment, transport, food, culture and arts, health, education and finance. "Tourism is not a standalone industry, but a consideration across all government sectors ... so it has to link up with other national goals, and then the entire tourism industry can change and develop," James says. "When everyone speaks the same tourism language then we will have more success."

At the community level, James is focusing on visiting schools, churches and other public forums to educate people and raise awareness about the benefits of promoting tourism.

"My plan to develop tourism in PNG is to establish the foundation with capacity building nationwide," explains James. "To carry out tourism educational awareness and advocacy starting in communities where the bulk of the population lives and a high number of attractions are available."

It was through his own training and capacity building at APTC and Box Hill that he too learned about the critical need for cross-sectoral and advocacy support for the tourism industry.

James believes capacity building "should be an ongoing process that the government should continuously support" to develop tourism.

He also believes that residents have a responsibility to be tourism advocates, promoting PNG to tourists, business associates, family and friends.

APTC's Trevor Birney believes that James is the ideal candidate to lead such progress as the Director of Tourism.

"He will be an inspiration for many younger people from other remote areas to explore the world," says Trevor.

¹ PNG Office of Tourism, Arts and Culture <http://www.otacpng.org/>

² Visitor Arrivals Summary 2011, PNG Tourism Promotion Authority: http://www.tpa.papuanewguinea.travel/Papua-New-Guinea-Tourism-Promotions-Authority/Annual-Visitor-Arrivals-Reports_IDL=42_IDT=328_ID=1806.html

Understanding customer expectations

Improved communication and a better understanding of customer expectations are making a difference to the tourism industry in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

Tourism training at the Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) teaches students many important business and financial management skills, but according to APTC graduate James Aruru Wakapu, it is the customer service skills that are the most powerful.

"Understanding client expectations are paramount for us selling the tourism product," James says. "Sometimes the service provided is different to customer expectations."

To illustrate this disparity between expectations and services, James uses the example of a guesthouse changing the description of its facilities from simply "comfortable" to providing more description and details about all the facilities. This makes the accommodation more attractive to potential tourists.

James says that APTC also taught him about the importance of managing customer expectations to ensure tourists are happy with the service they receive. If they have a good experience, then they are more likely to recommend it to others.

As Director of Tourism at the Office of Tourism, Arts and Culture in PNG, James is committed to sharing what he learnt at APTC with people in the industry and other government sectors.

"In my line of work, I meet with local tour operators and educate them on how to provide tourism services to their clients that better suit their expectations," says James.

Influencing government

Advanced education and vocational training are helping to improve the economy of Papua New Guinea (PNG).

James Aruru Wakapu, who is from the remote village of Gia in PNG, is a good example of how training can also improve employment potential.

James completed the Certificate III in Tourism at Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) and also has an Advanced Diploma in Tourism Management from Box Hill Institute in Australia. These studies helped James achieve his appointment as Director of Tourism at PNG's peak tourism body, the Office of Tourism, Arts and Culture in 2012.

In this position and with his new influence, James is committed to working with government, community and businesses to advance the local tourism industry. James believes that PNG's economy can benefit significantly from tourism growth. "Through my studies I am now in a position where I can influence the government ministers," says James.

He has been able to directly use the knowledge and skills from his studies to help drive change and growth, initiating a legislative review of the tourism industry. It is hoped that the review will result in structural changes that will assist in the development of the tourism industry in PNG.

Promoting tourism at home

Garnering support from people in small and large communities may be the key to growing the billion-dollar tourism industry in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

It is also these people who will benefit financially from growth in the K\$1.6 billion (PNG Kina)- equivalent to AUD\$600 million - tourism sector, according to James Aruru Wakapu, APTC graduate and now Director of Tourism, Office of Tourism, Arts and Culture in PNG.

"We have to start with the local people who own the tourism attractions and those who work with them as well," James says.

James is committed to educating people about the potential of tourism in PNG to have a greater impact on the country, perhaps even more than the mining sector, upon which PNG's economy is currently largely reliant.

"Tourism is a sustainable resource here in PNG that requires development and [can help] sustain the PNG economy," says James.

James believes that to realise the potential of tourism in PNG, the sector needs to gather support from local tourism operators and PNG residents, government and, most importantly, from people across the different governing structures, including district, provincial and national.

"In the last 20 years we have only done marketing and promotions outside of PNG, but we have to do it internally first," he says. "Some of these internal issues we have to address locally and then we can go abroad."

He also believes that encouraging local people to promote PNG as a tourist destination is the first step to strengthening the growth of the sector to benefit both the local and national economies.

To target communities, James is focusing on educational awareness activities at the grass-roots level, such as at schools and churches, so "all levels of people can take ownership and responsibility" for local tourism.