

Tourism Champions Case Study

BIG BEND BY NIGHT, SWAN REACH, MURRAY RIVER



ABOUT BIG BEND BY NIGHT

Established by David LeBrun and his daughter, Mardi in 1999, Big Bend By Night is a nature based tourism business run on the family farm in Swan Reach.

The business offers a range of experiences from nocturnal wildlife tours to outback pub tours and shearing shed shows.

Big Bend By Night have helped to grow tourism in their region by consistently bringing people into the area.

BUSINESS GROWTH

Originally started offering nocturnal wildlife tours to Unforgettable Houseboats' customers and averaged 2-3 bookings per month of around 12 people each.

Developed a partnership with Captain Cook Cruises (now Sealink) in 2000 which has seen some of their tours and attractions added to the Murray Princess's itinerary.

Visitor numbers have increased by approx. 20 per cent each year. The business now welcomes approximately 10,000 people per year on their tours.

In addition to providing full-time employment for Mardi and her parents (David and Janet), the business employs one part-time tour guide in Mannum and casual staff.

The business has four chauffeured vehicles to take guests on different tours and also offers meal options such as a bush tucker breakfast and sunset dinner tour.

CHALLENGES

During times of flood the river can pose challenges to picking guests up from the main river to take them to their farming property. Big Bend By Night have contingencies in place and hire boats from other operators to ferry their guests over the flooded wetlands.

THE FUTURE

Continue to grow the business by marketing the Shearing Shed Show to bus groups and the self-drive market.

Double guest numbers to 20,000 per year by 2022.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Big Bend By Night offers casual employment to local shearers for the weekly shearing show and local drivers to take customers on tours. They currently have four casual drivers on the books and also offer educational shearing shows to school groups twice a week through Murray River Educational Nature Tours.

Buys from local suppliers including Male's Meats, Tabe's Auto Centre, IGA and Foodland at Mannum and Swan Reach Tyres and Mechanical and have tours that specifically target taking people to Sedan, Sutherlands and Mt Mary Hotels.

Offers work experience to local high school students and also offers tours to volunteer and disadvantaged groups, such as Canteen, for reduced rates.

"When we first started our business we went to a lot of workshops organised by the South Australian Tourism Commission which were fantastic. They put us on the right track, gave us all the templates we needed and really got us to where we are now."

"People love Big Bend By Night and we love sharing the native wildlife experience with our guests – so a day of work doesn't feel like work, which I think that is the best job you can have."

*Mardi LeBrun, Co-Owner,
Big Bend By Night*

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN TOURISM COMMISSION COLLABORATION

Big Bend By Night have attended a number of SATC run workshops and training sessions with both David and Mardi having served on the regional committee.

Also work closely with the SATC's Destination Development team to promote the region and their offering.



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