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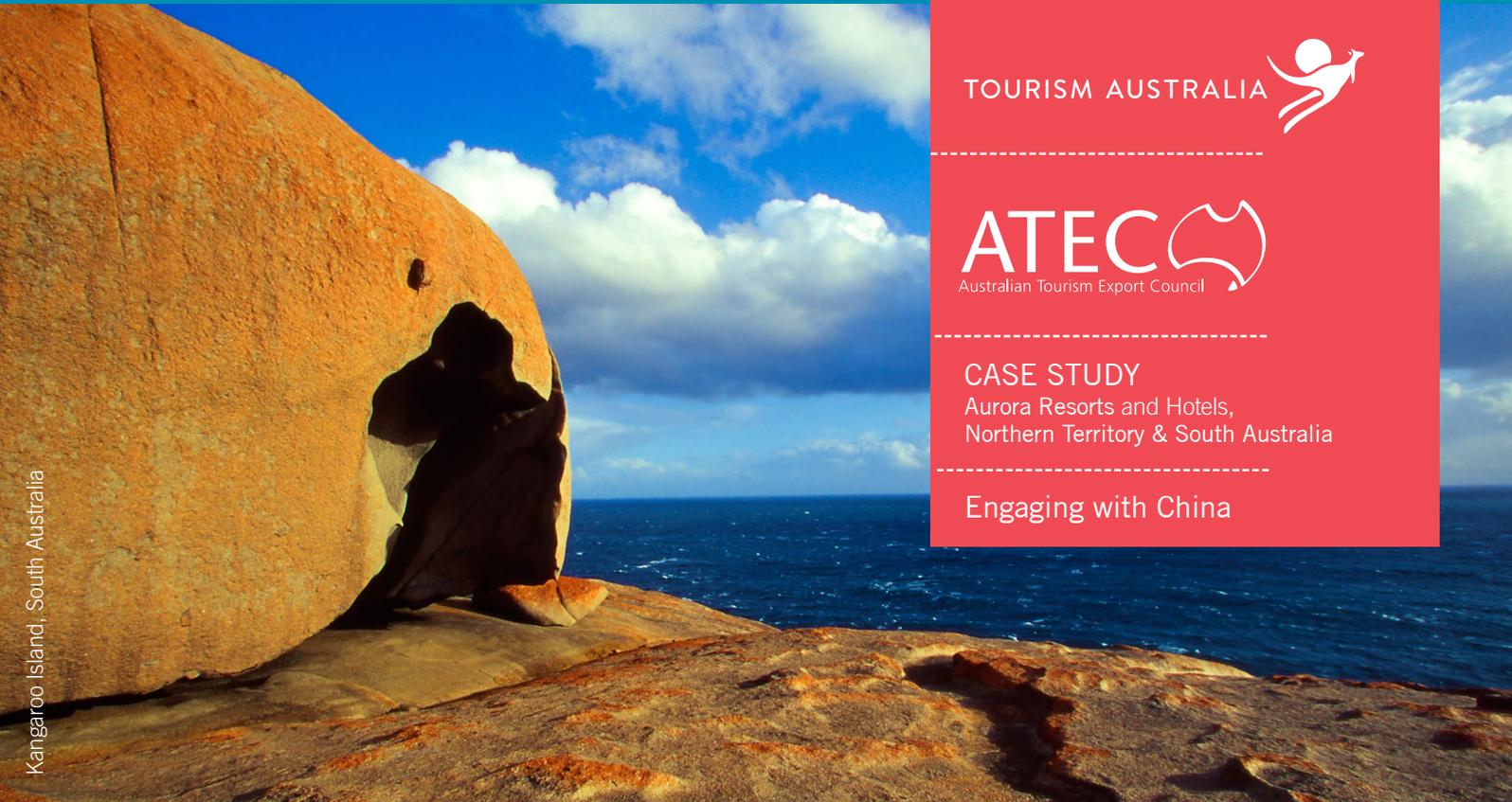
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CASE STUDY

Aurora Resorts and Hotels,
Northern Territory & South Australia

Engaging with China

Kangaroo Island, South Australia



Aurora Resorts and Hotels operate a variety of tourism and hospitality properties throughout the Northern Territory (NT) and South Australia (SA). They operate at the gateways to magnificent natural locations such as Kakadu, the Red Centre and Kangaroo Island with properties including Aurora Alice Springs Hotel, Heavitree Gap Outback Lodge, Aurora Kakadu and Aurora Ozone Hotel.

Aurora Resorts has recognised that Australia is experiencing faster international arrival and expenditure growth from China than from any other market and that they need only capture a small part of this growth to make an investment in the China market worthwhile. The unique locations in which Aurora operates can be an advantage but also poses challenges in attracting this Chinese market.

‘Being based outside of the key capital cities means the issues around access, particularly time and cost, for our Chinese visitors are vital for us to consider and keep working with our state and territory governments to improve’ says Ian Drummond, Executive Chairman.

This is demonstrated by the fact that there is an excellent awareness of Kangaroo Island among Chinese agents selling Australia. However, there is evidence that the costs associated with getting to and touring on Kangaroo Island means that many Chinese agents list it as an optional tour or find it too expensive to add to their itineraries.

‘These are real issues to consider when you decide to step into the China market and they are not always easy to address. But while we are working to try to remove these barriers’, says Drummond.

‘We also work with the South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC) in continuing to promote Kangaroo Island to the discerning and less price sensitive Chinese travellers.’

Gideon Baker, Director of Sales and Marketing, has been very active in engaging with the Chinese market having joined Tourism Australia, NT and SATC sales missions to China over the last three years.

‘We now have international level 4 star rooms, Chinese speaking staff, free wifi and Chinese breakfast options and both agents and media who have experienced our properties.’



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Aurora Resorts is constantly reviewing how it can better service its growing Chinese market. They realised current accommodation options on Kangaroo Island were too limited so have put strategies in place to extend their offering.

‘The abundance of wildlife in its natural setting is highly appealing to the Chinese but we were having trouble providing the accommodation needs of group bookings.’

In response, Ian confirmed Aurora has committed to major room upgrades so they will be better placed to service the group market.

Another important area for regional businesses to consider is working collaboratively with industry and government partners to raise the destination profile with both trade and consumers. Travel is a very competitive market and there are many choices available to the Chinese consumer.

‘While we are lucky that Kangaroo Island has high recognition, Chinese visitors to the NT tend to focus on Uluru. Encouraging them to stay in Alice Springs and Kakadu requires more education and itinerary development. While we are starting to see the numbers to our properties in the NT increase, we also know it is a long term strategy but one we certainly believe will pay off’ says Ian Drummond.

To help promote Kakadu, Aurora Resorts is considering how to better utilise past important Chinese visitors. Xi Jinping, the current General Secretary of the Communist party of China, added Kakadu to his Australian visit in 2010. Based on this, small numbers of independent Chinese are now choosing and booking their own self-drive holidays to Kakadu.

Ian's top tips

- Continually review your position – talk to Chinese visitors and not just the ones who visit your property but also those that don't. Find out how they made their travel decisions and why
- Work with your industry and state and territory governments to promote your destination
- Be realistic about the issues you face, particularly if you are in regional Australia, then work to remove them or find ways around them