

# Northern Rivers

## Dynamic creative industries and tourism hub

**Population:** 283,544

**Area:** 20,895 sq km

### Major towns and centres:

- Ballina
- Grafton
- Lismore
- Tweeds Heads



### Region overview:

The Northern Rivers is one of Australia's key lifestyle and learning regions. The region covers 20,895 km and provides a wide range of lifestyle opportunities in rural, urban, forested and coastal areas. The majority of the region's population is found on the coast with many living in rural and urban villages.

The region's population is increasing at a rate of about 1.2 per cent per annum. Major employment sectors include retail, tourism, health and community services, manufacturing, education, business services and agriculture. Industry sectors such as education, media and creative industries, horticulture, residential development, forestry, meat and dairy, aquaculture and age care are emerging as areas with strong growth prospects.

### Major sectors:

- tourism
- agribusiness and forestry
- health and community services
- building/construction
- manufacturing

- biotechnology
- multimedia and creative industries
- education and research

The Northern Rivers region provides a combination of dynamic manufacturing and horticultural industries, a spectacular natural environment and an unsurpassed quality of life offering an excellent place in which to invest and live.

The region, located in the north east of NSW, contains three major river systems – the Tweed, Richmond and Clarence – and backs onto the Great Dividing Range.

### MAJOR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

- highly skilled workforce
- strong transport links
- high quality lifestyle
- diverse educational facilities
- skills base spanning industries as diverse as education and manufacturing

### INDUSTRIES

#### Agribusiness

The major agricultural commodities produced in the Northern Rivers include dairy, tropical fruits, cattle, poultry, plantation forests, soya bean, sugar cane and aquaculture.

In recent years, many new and niche agricultural operations have emerged in the region. Coffee, bush tucker and hydroponics are all showing great export potential.

The agricultural industry is supported by numerous research stations and facilities which are pursuing innovative new research into the development of alternative crops and their economic potential.

#### Biotechnology

Research conducted at Southern Cross University has especially benefited the burgeoning natural medicine industry. Expertise in phytochemistry, bioprospecting, plant genetics and clinical trials is creating a strong platform for the growth of the biotechnology industry in the Northern Rivers.

### **Manufacturing**

The Northern Rivers is a manufacturing hub. Industries as diverse as food, beverages and timber are represented in the region. There is a high level of value adding based on the strong primary industry base of the region.

### **Tourism**

The Northern Rivers is a key tourism destination, with the second highest level of international tourists in NSW. The region contains stunning national parks such as Mount Warning, as well as long stretches of unspoilt coastlines and significant World Heritage rainforest reserves.

The region encompasses tourist icons such as Byron Bay and Nimbin. The hinterland areas of the Northern Rivers have some significant rainforest reserves which can be accessed through the Rainforest Way. The Rainforest Way comprises a series of loops and trails that tourists can access by road. The region's remnant ancient shield volcano has recently been included as one of Australia's eight iconic national landscapes. Branded as 'Australia's Green Cauldron' the region will feature prominently in Australia's international tourism destination marketing.

The Northern Rivers is home to many artists, an active theatrical community and many popular festivals including the East Coast Blues and Roots Music Festival, The Byron Bay Writers Festival, Splendour in the Grass and International Philosophy, Science & Theology Festival.

### **Creative Industries**

The region has a strong skill base in creative and knowledge based sectors. It boasts more documentary makers than anywhere else in Australia other than Sydney and Melbourne. It also has strong proactive industry associations supporting the development of the creative industries.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Transport**

The Northern Rivers has strong transport and economic links to both NSW and South East Queensland and is well serviced by the Ballina and Gold Coast Airports, the Pacific Motorway and the interstate rail network.

### **Gas**

The Northern Rivers has an emerging gas industry. The region has the largest coal seam methane gas reserve in NSW.

### **Major educational facilities**

Well developed educational facilities with two campuses of Southern Cross University, nine TAFE campuses, the School of Audio Engineering (SAE) at Bryon Bay and nearly thirty other cultural educational institutions with specialist training in the arts, crafts, theatre and film.

## **LABOUR**

The Northern Rivers has a strong mix of trade, tertiary and professional skills, including:

- building/construction
- manufacturing
- agriculture
- multimedia
- service industries, especially hospitality
- research and development.

### **For more information contact:**

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