



Orana Loop

TOURISM INITIATIVE

A **natural opportunity** like this doesn't come along **every day...**

The Orana Loop Tourism Initiative is a vision for a network of existing and formally unrecognised natural attractions of national and international significance.

The communities that comprise the Orana Loop need an antidote to the ongoing decline of their traditional economic base.

By bringing together local communities to cooperatively promote the entire Orana Loop, instead of focussing on individual attractions, we can maximise the benefits of our Western Woodlands.

The Orana Loop Tourism Initiative is that solution!



The opportunity is here

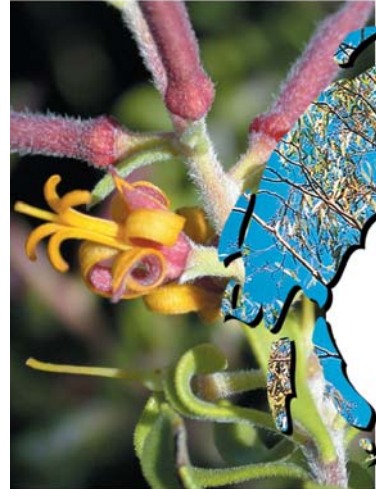
According to the Resource and Conservation Assessment Council, the Orana regional economy lacks diversity beyond primary industry and associated manufacturing. Statistics show that, outside of Dubbo, regional employment and population appear to be declining.

In the decade to 1996 employment in the Coolah Local Government Area fell by more than 360 places while population declined by 550; there were 13 fewer retail outlets in 1997 than there were just five years earlier.

The NSW Government is currently concluding an assessment of the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion. Central to this assessment is the future status of areas such as the Goonoo and Pilliga; natural areas that are not currently within the national park or reserve system despite their enormous ecological and social significance.

Although this assessment is seen mainly as an opportunity to protect some of the state's most under-represented environmental features, it has also emerged as an opportunity to revitalise the regional economy in an area bounded by Dubbo in the south and the Queensland border in the north.

Pilliga Wildflower Walks
Festival of the Stars
Red Earth Festival
Siding Spring Observatory
Travelling Stock Routes
Koala Sightings
Macquarie, Namoi, Castlereagh and Gwydir Rivers



Nature-based tourism works...

The benefits of tourism to regional areas are well known. It encourages local identity and pride; can revitalise a local economy by bringing in money that stays within the town or community; and provides direct and indirect job opportunities in tour operations, park staff, hospitality, small business, transport and infrastructure.

Nature tourism also provides an economic incentive to conserve areas of high environmental value. Associated benefits include the protection of threatened plant and animal species, ecosystem health, the mitigation of environmentally damaging problems such as salinity, and the encouragement of sustainable primary industries such as agroforestry.

Studies by NSW Fisheries show that half of all international visitors to NSW visit either a marine or national park during their stay. The studies also found that visitors to natural areas spend more than other tourists.

...and nature-based tourism will work for the Orana Loop



A recently released study commissioned by the Western Conservation Alliance shows that, if established, **Pilliga National Park** could attract an estimated 50,000 visitors annually. The study found that this and other proposed national parks within the Orana Loop would create more than 330 tourism related jobs in park management, service industries, construction and maintenance.

These estimates are based on the experiences of other parks in the region. The **Warrumbungle National Park** directly injects over \$3.5 million into the local economy annually, including personal income equivalent to 66 full time jobs. Despite its relatively short history, it is estimated that every ten thousand visitors to **Coolah Tops National Park** adds \$240,000 to gross regional output and \$130,000 to gross regional product.



An integrated approach is needed

Familiar destinations like Dubbo's Western Plains Zoo, Warrumbungle National Park, Mt Kaputar National Park, Bird Routes of Barraba and Wellington Caves tend to be marketed locally, failing to capitalise on their proximity and relationship to other spectacular sites.

Other regions have overcome this by taking an integrated approach that has maximised tourist awareness and satisfaction.

The Central West has successfully showcased its natural and historic attractions, as well as its increasingly lucrative winegrowing region, marketing itself as a regional destination.

The Orana Loop can work by incorporating the newly established Pilliga and Goonoo national parks into the list of existing nature tourist destinations and taking an integrated, whole-of-region marketing approach. This will make the Orana Loop one of New South Wales' most significant natural tourist attractions.

A National Parks Association of NSW report indicates that visitors to the Western Plains Zoo are seeking further nature tourism opportunities in the region. If just 1 in 20 visitors to the Zoo extend their stay by one night to visit an easily accessible Goonoo National Park, it would create the equivalent of 24 local fulltime jobs and open up tourism possibilities for small towns such as nearby Mendooran.



Time for a **new** **solution...**

The Brigalow Belt South is in danger of losing some of its most remarkable and vulnerable environmental features, just as many of the communities are finding it hard to remain viable with the ongoing economic decline of their traditional resource base. The Orana Loop Tourism Initiative is a solution that addresses both of these needs.

More work needs to be done to deliver a shared vision of the Orana Loop. It will involve local government, regional development boards, businesses, chambers of commerce, tourism operators, community groups, indigenous communities, farmers, landholders, industry and others.

Coolah
Coonabarabran
Coonamble
Dubbo
Gilgandra
Gunnedah
Merriwa
Moree
Narrabri
Quirindi
Murrurundi
Moree Plains
Bingara

Your support for the Orana Loop Tourism Initiative is essential if this vision is to succeed.

If you are interested in supporting the Orana Loop Tourism Initiative, or if you feel your suggestions could help establish a sustainable regional tourism model, please contact:

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The Orana Loop Tourism Initiative is part of the National Parks Association of NSW Western Woodlands Project:
www.npansw.org.au/westernwoodlands
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ACF
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