Norfolk Island Tourism

What opportunities for nature-based tourism development?
Part 1 / 3

THE NATURAL AREAS OF NORFOLK ISLAND:

ASSETS AND LIMITS FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

In this project, we have defined “nature-based tourism” as all activities done by a tourist in a natural area (as do many national tourism boards). Basically, this definition relies mainly on the place where it takes place: natural areas. That means the first step to develop new nature-based experiences is to provide an assessment of the potentiality of natural areas to tourism development.

This implies:
- to identify the natural areas among Norfolk Island territory, i.e. their delimitation, geographical situation, their owner and status and the way there are managed
- to present shortly the highlights of the wildlife of special interest from a tourist point of view
- to do a first survey on the level of facility development in the natural areas
- to present a first approach of the carrying capacities of the natural areas
- to present a temporary conclusion about the highlights and limits for tourism development
1. Identification of Norfolk Islands natural areas

1.1 What is a “natural area”?  
At first appearance it seems easy to define what a “natural area” is. It is generally seen as undisturbed by human activities. But the reality is more complicated; there are only few remote areas (like parts of Antarctic or Amazonia) what are undoubtedly unspoilt. For example, only a few part of Norfolk Island area (5%, 191 hectares) is “purely natural”, with original subtropical rainforest (Director of National Park, 2008).

Even Norfolk Island National Park is largely concerned by human impacts:

“Introduced weeds, predators, competitors and pathogens are major threats to Park and Botanic Garden values. Areas of the Park and Botanic Garden are either completely denuded of vegetation or are heavily infested with weeds. Some ecological processes, such as nutrient cycles, have been severely damaged.” (Director of National Park, 2008, p.18)

“The Mount Pitt Section of the Park consists of a small remnant (less than 10 per cent) of the subtropical rainforest which originally covered Norfolk Island. [...] As a result of vegetation destruction by introduced animals there is severe erosion on Phillip Island. Large areas are bare and the very small areas of surviving native vegetation are being added to by rehabilitation” (Director of National Park, 2008, p.18)

Associating “natural area” with zero human impact is not only very restrictive, it’s also sometimes confusing. From this point of view, it’s sometimes difficult to know if a place is really “natural”. In fact, there is a continuum of “grades of naturality” between wilderness and unspoilt areas and urban areas where all the superficies are occupied by human activities.

![Figure 1: The “naturality continuum” between city and wilderness](image)

We proposed for the project to use a more operational definition of “natural areas”, by delimiting all area without residential or productive (agriculture, industry, commerce, transport…) activities.
The advantage of this definition is the reference to the current human activities and not to the original state of the environment (from the pre first settlement period). According to this operational definition, the delimitation of the natural area doesn’t rely on environmental surveys; it doesn’t need to delimit the limits of the undisturbed ecosystem without any human impacts (cf. table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATURAL AREA</th>
<th>Restrictive definition</th>
<th>Operational definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on human impacts</td>
<td>impacts</td>
<td>activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period of reference</td>
<td>pre-settlement</td>
<td>present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification of the area</td>
<td>undisturbed</td>
<td>unused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitation from</td>
<td>environmental surveys</td>
<td>zoning from N. I. Plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: “Restrictive” versus “operational” definition of the natural areas of Norfolk

To resume:

In this project, **definition of natural area = no residential and productive area**

### 1.2 Delimitation of the Norfolk Island natural areas

By using the Zoning Map of the Norfolk Island Plan 2002 (Crombie et al., 2004), it’s easy to delimit the “natural areas” of the island: they are all the land what are not for rural, residential, business, industrial or transport uses (cf. map 1). In this map, the natural areas are the “Open Space” and “Conservation” zones.
It’s interesting to see that almost all the areas not allowed to residential or productive use are for conservation (including Nepean and Phillip Islands, not shown on the Zoning Map). There are only very few “open space” not put into conservation in Norfolk Island. From this, there are three main consequences for the project:

- it’s possible to delimit the “natural areas” of Norfolk Island by using the limits of the island’s “protected areas” (National Park and natural public reserves)
- the development of nature-based activities can not be blocked by private properties issues
- this helps to promote Norfolk natural areas from a tourism point of view. In fact, the public associate protected areas (specially National Parks) with “high quality” natural area. It’s the “paradox of the National Park”: it is created for conservation purpose but its creation attracts more tourists (cf. figure 2).
While almost all terrestrial natural areas are protected, there is no maritime reserve despite the surrounding Pacific Ocean is clearly a natural area. So it’s necessary to add the sea around Norfolk Island (including Kingston lagoon and the Northern Islets) up to the delimitation of Norfolk natural area.

To resume:

N.I. Natural areas = no residential and productive areas
                 = protected areas + maritime area

So the natural areas defined in this project are not necessary with original ecosystem undisturbed by human activities (cf. figure 3).
It’s also important to notice that the urban area is inside the island: there is no residential area along the coast. And it seems there is a political wish to keep the situation like this: the Norfolk Island Strategic Plan doesn’t forecast any urbanization along the coast (see map 2). It’s a quite rare characteristic for a small island and it could help to promote Norfolk Island as a well “preserved” destination, even if the majority of the coastline is rural area and not protected natural area.
1.3 The statute of Norfolk Island natural areas

Following the previous operational delimitation, the Norfolk Island terrestrial natural areas are composed by:
- the Norfolk Island National Park (with two sections: Mount Pitt area (on the main island) and Phillip Island)
- the 12 “natural” Norfolk Island Public Reserves (see map 3)

We exclude the 4 Public Reserves included in the KAVHA (Kingston and Arthurs Vale Historic Area), what protected almost “historical heritage”: for instance, they can’t fit in any IUCN natural area category (see later for more details about IUCN scale).
More than 8/10 of the protected natural areas belong to the National Park.

The protected natural areas cover 8.1 km², i.e. 23 % of the Norfolk Island Territory (the islands of Norfolk, Nepean and Phillip). This rate is much higher than the main South Pacific islands tourism destinations and it is even higher than in the tourists’ provenance countries (see figure 5). The importance of the area allowed to conservation compared with the size of its territory is outstanding in the South Pacific region.
Norfolk Island Natural Areas: assets and limits for tourism

To resume:

¼ of Norfolk Island Territory is protected area, which 80% belong to the National Park.
This is the highest rate of protected areas in the region.

1.4 The geographical repartition of the natural areas among the Norfolk Island Territory

The repartition of the natural areas between the 3 islands is as follow (cf. figure 6):
- 18.6% of the area of the main island of Norfolk is National Park and Public reserves (6.1 km²)
- 100% of the area of Phillip island is National Parc (1.9 km²)
- 100% of the area of Nepean island is a natural Public Reserve (0.1 km²)
Norfolk Island Natural Areas: assets and limits for tourism

Figure 6: The importance of protected areas in each island of the Norfolk Island Territory

It’s important to notice that almost ¼ of the Norfolk Island Territory natural areas is not in the island of Norfolk (cf. figure 7).

Figure 7: The repartition of the natural areas between the 3 islands of the Norfolk Territory

Concerning the topography, the protected areas gather all the area above 150 metres of altitude (see map 4). In fact, the Mount Pitt section of the National Park protects the “highlands” (with the highest “peak”: Mounts Batts, 318 m.) and the highest cliffs of the main island (near Captain Cook Monument, 100 m.), while the highest cliffs of Norfolk Island Territory are on Phillip Island (almost 250 m. on the Jacky Jacky Ridge).

This hilly landscape is from volcanic origin and provides sometimes outstanding geological formations. While Norfolk’s geological landscape and history are rarely emphasized by the local tourism industry, the territory presents interesting attractions, especially basalt vertical columns located in Anson Bay and the Northern Islets (Cathedral Rock). This kind of geological landscape is presented in many destinations as an important attraction; for instance, the “Giant Causeway” (in the United Kingdom) is the most visited natural place in Northern Ireland.
The Northern Islets are particularly interesting because they associate basalt columns with scenic erosion formations (cave, rocking arch, holes, pools of different colours, ...). Furthermore these Islets are situated along the North West coast protected by the National Park, in one of the “wildest” part of the territory, in front of the highest cliff of the main island.

Map 4: Topographic map of Norfolk Island
All expect the two smallest of the natural Public Reserves are below 100 m. alt. and protect different parts of the main island’s coast. 2 of the 4 beaches (Anson Bay and Bumbora) of Norfolk Island are protected by the natural Public Reserve, while the two other (Emily Bay and Cemetery Bay) are situated among the Kahva (Kingston and Arthur’s Vale Historic Area). Note than only Emily Bay is protected by a coral reef and is a safe swimming beach.

While the Pitt Section of the National Park is only one whole area of 4.6 km², the 12 natural Norfolk Island Public Reserves are quite small; the biggest (Cascade Reserve) is 32.45 hectares (0.03 km²) wide, while the average area of these reserves is 12.5 hectares (0.01 km²). Outside the National Park, one of the main characteristic of the Norfolk natural areas is their fragmentation.

To resume:
¼ of Norfolk Island protected area are not in the main island but in Phillip Island. The National Park gathers all “the highlands” above an altitude of 150 m., while the Public Reserves protect fragmented pieces of the main island’s coast.

1.5 The different categories of management of Norfolk Island protected areas

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) created different “referential” categories of protected areas according of the importance of conservation into the management of these areas. The IUCN “scale” proposes six main categories:

I. Strict protection
   a. Strict Nature Reserve
   b. Wilderness Area
II. Ecosystem conservation and recreation (National Park)
III. Conservation of natural features (Natural Monument)
IV. Conservation through active management (Habitat/Species Management Area)
V. Landscape/seascape conservation and recreation (Protected Landscape/seascape)
VI. Sustainable use of natural ecosystems (Managed Resource Protected Area)

The main differences between the different categories rely on the focus of the conservation (to protect either an ecosystem or a landscape) and on the degree of protection (between a strict protection (like a sanctuary, whose entry is forbidden) to active management (with eventually some sustainable exploitation of the resource) (cf. figure 8).
Figure 8: Typology of the IUCN management protected area categories

The National Park Administration and the Norfolk Island Parks and Forestry Service (managing the Public Reserves) have defined the different natural areas according the IUCN categories. So it’s possible to compare the different conservation management of the different natural areas.

Following the IUCN scale, the Norfolk Island National Park is separated into three areas (Director of National Park, 2008):
- without surprise, the majority of the Norfolk Island National Park belongs to the category II (Ecosystem conservation and recreation)
- the Western part of the Mount Pitt section is a Forestry area, a former banana plantations changed into a native trees plantations (see map 5). This Forestry area belong to the category VI (Sustainable use of natural ecosystems)
- the Botanic Garden is assigned to category IV (conservation through active management)
This shows again that all the National Park is not undisturbed ecosystem. It is worth to remind that less than 5% of the main island area is covered by remnant native forest, while the Mount Pitt section of the National Park covers 14% of the main island area.

The majority of the natural Public Reserves are assigned to category V (landscape/seascape conservation and recreation): 83% of the Public Reserves area (into 7 of the 12 reserves) belongs to this category (see figure 9). That is to say that a large majority of the natural Public Reserves were created to preserve natural beauties for recreation proposes and not to conserve ecosystem for conservation propose (Norfolk Island Parks and Forestry Service, 2003a). This implies that the majority of the Public Reserve present outstanding “visual values” but they don’t present the same interest from an ecologist point of view (in relation with special flora and fauna interest).
Nevertheless there are 3 Public Reserves (25 % of natural Public Reserves area) what are assigned to category IV (conservation through active management). Two small Special Management Areas into two other reserves (classified category V) are also included in the category IV. These areas play a role into the conservation of endemic species. They are subject to active intervention to preserve native flora and fauna (for example, replanting, control invading plants and pest animals…). Their special values rely not only to the landscape but also to their ecosystem.

The category III (conservation of natural features) concerns only two specific Natural Monuments:
- an old Banyan tree (into the very small Middleridge reserve, 0.20 ha)
- a rock pool, named Cristal Pool (into a Special Management Area of the Point Ross Reserve).
Note that the majority of the Categories II and IV are on the Western part of the main island (see map 6).

Map 6: Localisation of the Norfolk Island protected areas according to IUCN classification

To resume:
The majority of the National Park area (and therefore of all the Norfolk protected area) are managed for ecosystem conservation and low impact recreation activities, while the majority of the natural Public Reserves were creating in order to protect landscape of special interest and to provide recreational spaces.

2. The wildlife on Norfolk Island

2.1 Overview

The Norfolk Island Natural Resource Management Plan (Parsons Brinckerhoff, 2008) provides a good presentation of the biodiversity of the island (see table 2). As a remote island, Norfolk presents many endemic terrestrial species, but are essentially plants (including the famous and emblematic Norfolk Pine tree), invertebrates and birds. In fact, “birds are relatively abundant of the Island while other fauna groups, such as endemics reptiles and endemic mammals (thought now to be instinct on the Island) are poorly represented” (Parsons Brinckerhoff, 2008, p.30). Furthermore some endemic species are extinct due mainly to human impacts while other are endangered.
There are a higher fauna biodiversity on the sea surrounding Norfolk Island, with much bigger natives animals (turtles, sharks, whales) and more than 200 different species of fish. At the opposite of the terrestrial species, there are only few endemic marine species around Norfolk because “unlike the plants of the Island, the fish are closely related to those connected with the Australian mainland and Lord Howe Island. Similarity of fish species is a result of Norfolk Island standing in the path of the East Australian current and downstream of Lord Howe Island. Of the coastal fish population; 85% also occur in Australian mainland waters, 79 % in Lord Howe Island waters and 31 % in New Zealand waters” (Parsons Brinckerhoff, 2008, p.10). The particularity of Norfolk marine fauna relies principally on its geographical situation, between tropical and temperate water: for instance, the coral reef near Kingstown is the second most southern of the World.

From a tourist point of view, the two highlights of the Norfolk fauna are probably:
- the endemic and migratory birds
- the marine species: diversity of fish species, presence of big species (whales, turtles,…) and the coral reef
Table 2: Number type and conservation significance of species occurring within the Island
(from: Parsons Brinckerhoff, 2008, p.34)
2.2 The birds

There are **116 species of birds on Norfolk Island**, including migrants and vagrants what are not year-round on Norfolk Island. For management purposes the birds can be classified broadly into the following groups (some species may be represented in more than one group) (Parsons Brinckerhoff, 2008)

1. Seabirds which regularly breed there (16 species, 3 of which no longer occur there)
2. Land or Freshwater birds which are resident or regularly breed there (26 species, including 15 endemic species or subspecies, of which 6 are extinct)
3. Migratory Birds
4. Vagrants

The majority of the bird species are **not residents**, so its number can change dramatically along the year. The number of seabirds species is likely higher during the summer, when many species are breeding on Norfolk Island (Christian, 2005). **Nepean, Phillip Islands and the small North Islets are of special importance for seabird breeding.** Among the 13 seabirds migrant breeder species presented in the Norfolk Island Bird Checklist, 9 species have their habitat in the off shore islands (and 2 of them (Providence and Kermadec Petrel) only on Phillip Island). For example, “**during the summer months, breeding Masked Boobys are the most visible fauna of Nepean Island. The number of breeding pairs is usually between 200 and 300**” (Norfolk Island Parks and Forestry Service, 2003i, p.4). A far less important of seabirds species also breed in these off shore islands during the winter or spring (like the Sooty Tern).
The majority of the native landbirds can be found on the remnant native forest (in the Mount Pitt section of the National Park), while the main concentration of seabirds and migratory birds are on the cliffs and the off shore islands (Nepean, Phillip Island, North Islets,...) (see map 7). The waterbirds and migratory waders are mainly on the five wetlands of the main island.

Map 7: Main localisation of the different kind of birds on Norfolk Island

Among the 116 species of Birds on Norfolk Island, 47 are native species (not introduced) and 7 are endemic species (found only on Norfolk).
According to the Norfolk Island National Park Administration, the 7 endemic species or subspecies of the island are all landbirds and they are present all year round:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Local Name</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Habitat</th>
<th>Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red-crowned Parakeet</td>
<td>Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae cookii</td>
<td>Green Parrot</td>
<td>Rare endemic species</td>
<td>Forest</td>
<td>All year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarlet Robin</td>
<td>Petroica multicolor multicolor</td>
<td>Robin Red Breast</td>
<td>Rare endemic subspecies breeder</td>
<td>Forest</td>
<td>All year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Whistler</td>
<td>Pachycephala pectoralis xanthoprocta</td>
<td>Tamey</td>
<td>Uncommon endemic subspecies breeder</td>
<td>Forest and farmland</td>
<td>All year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey Fantail</td>
<td>Rhipidura fuliginosa pelzelni</td>
<td>Fantail</td>
<td>Common endemic subspecies breeder</td>
<td>Widespread</td>
<td>All year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey Gerygone</td>
<td>Gerygone modesta</td>
<td>Tomtit</td>
<td>Common endemic breeder</td>
<td>Widespread</td>
<td>All year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White-breasted Silver-eye</td>
<td>Zosterops albogularis</td>
<td></td>
<td>Endangered endemic species</td>
<td>Native forest</td>
<td>All year (but near extinct, most recently seen in 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-billed White-eye</td>
<td>Zosterops tenuirostris</td>
<td>Yellow-breasted silver-eye</td>
<td>Uncommon endemic species</td>
<td>Native forest</td>
<td>All year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacred Kingfisher</td>
<td>Todiramphus sanctus norfolkensis</td>
<td>Nuffka</td>
<td>Common endemic subspecie</td>
<td>Widespread</td>
<td>All year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: The endemic birds species of Norfolk Island (including the probably extinct White-breasted Silver-eye)

The spatial range of the rarest endemic birds (like the Norfolk Island (N.I.) Green Parrot, the N.I. Scarlet Robin or the N.I. Golden Whistler) confirms the importance of the Mount Pitt section of the National Park for the conservation and observation of the native landbirds (cf. maps 8)
The most famous endemic specie is probably the **Norfolk Island Green Parrot**: it is the emblem of the National Park (cf. figure 12). Until recently there were some Green Parrots in the aviary of the Botanic Garden (under a captive breeding program) and there is an interpretative sign presenting only the Green Parrot on one walking track of the Park. The Green Parrot embodies the endangered endemic species of a small island; an active program of protection of the Green Parrot seems to provide some results: its population increased from around 30 in 1980 to 160 in 2002 (Hill, 2002).
The Boobook Owl (Norfolk Island Morepork), an endangered semi-endemic terrestrial bird specie, is also quite popular. For example, it can be seen in some postal cards. The Boobook is not really endemic because “after locating only one bird during intensive searches, it was decided that the only way to save the genes, if not retain a viable pure population, was to attempt breeding with a closely allied species. Two male New Zealand moreporks were imported and released in to the forest.” (Christian, 2005, p.17). However, although the taxon is extinct, its genes live on in the descendants of the hybrid offspring of the last female bird, which was sighted for the last time in 1996.

While neither being endemic nor endangered, the White Tern is also emblematic of the Norfolk Island seabirds because of its large number. For example, it is presented on the cover page of the Norfolk Island Tourism brochure. Qualified as “gentle, quiet and ethereal favourite on the island” (Christian, 2005, p.70), the White Tern is easily seen along the coast and it can be found breeding in medium to tall tree, like the Norfolk Island Pine tree.

Note that a complete guidebook of the Norfolk Island birds is available for sell in different bookshops on the island (Norfolk Island... the birds, of Margaret Christian, 2005, Green Eyes Publication 106 p.) and that the Norfolk Island National Park provides a free checklist of the birds of the Park.

2.3 Marine wildlife

As we saw before, the interest of the marine wildlife doesn’t depend on the endemic species but of the “unique assemblage of marine species. Most groups have not been comprehensively documented; however, around 230 species of algae, 57 species of corals, 400 species mollusc, 254 species of fish and several mammals have been identified to date” (Parsons Brinckerhoff, 2008, p. 53).

From a tourist point of view, the most interesting features of the marine wildlife rely on the diversity of fish species, the seasonal presence (essentially during the summer) of big species (whales, turtles, sharks, dolphins) and the corral reef.
A. The fish

Among the 254 species of fish, two only are endemic. But there is an **unique mix between tropical, subtropical and temperate species** (cf. figure 13), because of Norfolk geographical localisation.

![Figure 13: The fish of Norfolk Island: a mix of Tropical, Subtropical and Temperate species](image)

The size “fishing industry” on Norfolk is not very big; there is no harbour and the sea is frequently rough (impeaching fishermen one out of three days to go on sea). The number of fishermen is low and their boats are quite small. So there is not a big pressure upon the fishing resources around Norfolk Island. However fishing is important from a tourism point of view: different fishing tour companies exist on Norfolk. And many restaurants propose fresh fish for the tourists.

B. Large migratory species (whales, turtles, sharks,...)

**Whales, turtles and sharks** can be seen around Norfolk Island. 7 species among them are listed under the Australian *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC Act), see table 3.

These species are most likely seen during summer, because “Norfolk Island is affected by the warm currents from Noumea which flow October/November through to April/May each year. These bring the food which is followed by the large migratory species such as whales, whose breeding success is dependent on plentiful supplies of these food species” (Parsons Brinckerhoff, 2008, p.53-54).

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1 The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) is the Australian Government's central piece of environmental legislation. It provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places — defined in the Act as matters of national environmental significance.
The number of whales passing near Norfolk Island seems increasing, according to a research undertaken by Adrian Oosterman. The blog of Bounty Diver (the one and only diving company on Norfolk) said “around 150 whales were observed” in 2008 (the last research campaign) and “Norfolk Islanders in general are very excited about the growing numbers of whales passing Norfolk on the annual migrations” (http://bountydivers.blogspot.com/2008/12/norfolk-island-humback-whales-2008.html, seen the 14 April 2009).

C. The coral

For the same geographical reasons, “the inshore waters of Norfolk, Phillip and Nepean Islands support one of the southern-most coral assemblages in the world. The coral reef ecosystem at Norfolk is one of the few known examples of a transitional algae and coral assemblage (an unusual mix of tropical and temperate marine fauna due to the alternating influence of warm and cool currents at the Islands).” (Parsons Brinckerhoff, 2008, p.54)

The coral is very fragile because “their rates of growth are slow in subtropical waters, therefore they are growing at around the same pace as their erosion and physical destruction” (Parsons Brinckerhoff, 2008, p.54). While coral assemblages are found locally around the islands, there are connected only inside Kingston Lagoon, what occupies only 3% of Norfolk Island coast.

The coral reef is one of the main attractions among the marine wildlife. It is easily accessible but it is small and very fragile. As we will see later, the Kingston lagoon is maybe one of the Norfolk natural areas where overused problems for recreational proposes could arise.
3. The facilities in the natural areas

3.1 Road access

All the protected areas benefit from a road access, except Nepean and Phillip Island (see map 9). Two sealed road (to Mount Pitt and to Captain Cook Monument) go deep inside the Mount Pitt Section of the National Park. So the accessibility to the protected area is very good, despite the roads to some Public Reserves (like Point Ross or Bumboras) are unsealed and could not be used by cars while wet weather.

Map 9: Road network and protected areas on Norfolk Island

3.2 Walking tracks

Basically there are three main areas with walking tracks (see map 10):
- in Hundred Acres Reserves (Rocky Point), around 2 kilometres of walking tracks
- in Phillip Island, around 4 kilometres of walking tracks
- in Mount Pitt Section of the National Park, 8.6 kilometers of walking tracks
There are some isolated tracks also in different Public Reserves but there are very short. There are mainly walking tracks to beaches (to Anson Bay and Bumbora) or to a specific monument (like in Headstone Reserve). Note that there are also informal trails to different rocking pools (Cristal Pool, The Chord) or along the coast (like in Point Hunter or from Cascade jetty to Cockpit waterfalls). These tracks are neither sign-posted nor showed by the touristic maps and are sometimes in poor condition. All these tracks provide just an access to an attraction and are not really used for bushwalking or trekking propose.

By far the most important network of walking tracks has to be found is the Mount Pitt section of the National Park. There are 11 tracks, totalling 8.6 kilometres of walking tracks (see figure 14) and it would take 6 hours and 25 minutes to walk in all of them (according the estimated time given by National Park Administration, using a very low speed).
The grade of difficulty of the National Park walking tracks is quite low. The majority of the tracks network is accessible for people without important physical or technical skills (see map 11):
- there is no difficult track and only two moderately difficult tracks
- it’s possible to reach the highest point of the island (Mt Bates) using an easy to moderate track. And a sealed road go to the second highest point (Mt Pitts).
- there is easy or easy to moderate tracks in every main starting point of the tracks network
- the main coastal track (Bridle Track) is graduated as easy and it links to different gates of the Park
The different walking tracks form a network (see map 11). That means:
- There are all (except the shorter one) interconnected: it’s possible to do different tracks during the same walk
- There is 4 main tracks starting points (with car park), so there is different possibility for local operators to propose one-way walk
- but there is few possibilities to do a “loop” returning in the same car park (because all the ways between two car parks pass by the crest of the highlands; there are no direct tracks)

The walking tracks network is essentially located on the South-East oriented mountainside and on the crest of the highlands (see map12). There are only service tracks on the North-West oriented mountainside, what are not open for recreational activities.
It’s important to notice this unequal repartition because there is a difference of vegetation between the two main mountainsides (South-East and North-West) of the highlands (in relation with a difference of humidity and precipitation, higher on the South East slopes), see figure 15.
The walking trails are very well indicated; there is sign with the name of the track, its length and duration in every crossing with another track. The estimated walking time indicated by the National Park is quite high for itineraries without big difference of altitude (there is 220 m. of altitude difference between the highest (Mt Bates, 318 m.) and the lowest (Captain Cook Monument, 100 m.) start of walking tracks. In fact, it is calculated for an average speed of 1.3 kilometres per hour. The National Park Administration has probably adapted their indication for elderly people, who represents the majority of the tourists on Norfolk (as we will see later).

3.3 Interpretative facilities

Interpretative facilities could be an important component for individual tourists walking without a guide. They give an opportunity to the visitor to discover and understand better the natural environment and by this way, to be more involved in the place there are visiting. Interpretation is one of the key components of ecotourism: “recognition of interpretation and education’s centrality helps to differentiate ecotourism from other forms of nature-based tourism” (Wearing and Nell, 1999, p.57).
The two main kind of interpretative facilities are:
- visitor centres, where the natural environment can be presented in relative comfort and controlled surrounding
- self-guided trails, involving a series of prescribed stops along a route that visitors travel.

The Norfolk Island National Park Administration plays an important role for providing interpretative facilities. Its Visitor Center (closed the week-end) is the best place for the tourists to have a presentation of the Norfolk Island ecosystems. It is conveniently situated closed to the Botanic Garden, at the entry of the Mount Pitt Road. It provides a useful display of the Norfolk Island natural environment, but in quite “old-fashioned” way (without high degree of interactivity or audio-visual techniques). Maybe it could be interesting to develop the same effort of creativity that was used in other island’s attractions showing Norfolk culture and history.

While there are almost no interpretative signs on the natural Public Reserve, there are also many throughout the Mount Pitt Section of the National Park (see map 13). These panels give different information about the local fauna, flora and history. However there are not enough stops to really make a “self-guided trail”. Furthermore the interpretative and information signs are not linked each other; there is not a specific order to follow for seeing them.

Map 13: Localisation of the Interpretative signs among the Mount Pitt Section of the Norfolk Island National Park
3.4 Picnic areas

According to Norfolk Island Tourism, there are 12 main picnic areas in the main island (see map 14). The majority of them includes picnic tables, barbecue and toilets facilities. There are two picnic areas on the National Park, while the other are all on Public Reserves (the 12 natural reserves and the Kahva). **Half of the 12 natural public reserves are equipped with picnic areas, near a car park.** While we saw that they have almost no walking tracks and no interpretative signs, this repartition confirms the importance of “passive recreation” among the management of the majority of the Public Reserves, what are suitable places to have a rest, staying on the same place but not doing more sportive or educational activities.

![Map 14: Localisation of the picnic and barbecue areas on Norfolk Island](image)

3.5 Conclusion about the level of facilities development

To resume, the level of facilities development on the natural area is quite high. The accessibility is globally easy; there is no big natural area far away from the road network. The Mount Pitt section of the National Park provides a dense network of easy-grade walking tracks (despite the absence of tracks on the North Western part of the Park) and different interpretative signs. At the opposite, there are only few walking tracks on the natural Public Reserves (maybe partly because of their small size) but half of them include a picnic area near a car park.

These facilities seem appropriate to the main Norfolk tourist profile, i.e. elderly people. In fact it is possible to drive by car to the main lookouts and picnic areas and to walk in the tracks without prior intense training. For instance, the difference of altitude during the majority of the tracks is low and the steepest parts of many tracks are equipped with handrail
and steps. Walking in the National Park doesn’t require huge physical effort or specific “technical skills”. For the current tourists, the main amelioration to do concerns maybe the visitor centre, what could be gain by being more appealing for visitors who are not all passionate or specialist in natural environment.

But the global high level of facilities development could disturb other market segments. In fact, some tourists are looking for the “wilderness” of the natural area and therefore are in favour only on “light facilities”. More there are facilities, more the area is perceived as “disturbed” and less wild by those tourists. For example, the presence of benches and lawn on Mt Bates summit could be disappointed from this point of view because it shows that even the higher point of Norfolk, on the middle of the National Park, presents facilities similar to those presented in an urban park. Furthermore the majority of the walking tracks are wide enough to permit the “passage” of a 4 wheels car and some of them are former road; despite the fact that any car traffic is forbidden on the Park, some tourists could feel less “inside the wilderness” than in a narrow walking track.

Some ecotourists are looking for going deep inside “the wilderness”, far away from the road network. They seek narrow walking tracks allowed them a pedestrian access to undisturbed access; the physical effort of the walk is rewarded by the pleasure of experiencing uncrowded natural area. The National Park tracks network could fit with this wish and Phillip Island could play a special role as an “adventurous” place (as an inhabited island with difficult access only by boat). But some of them could think that there are not enough walking tracks on Norfolk Island (especially on the natural Public Reserve) and too much road: there are less than 15 kilometres of walking tracks on the main island for 170 kilometres of road.
4. The carrying capacity of Norfolk Island natural areas: a first approach

4.1 The notion of “carrying capacity”

The carrying capacity concept relies on the application for tourist areas of the idea that “environmental factors set limits on the population that an area can sustain. When these limits are exceeded, the quality of the environment suffers and ultimately, its ability to support that population” (Stankey, 1991, p.12). “Carrying capacity is fundamental to environmental protection and sustainable development. It refers to the maximum use of any site without causing negative effects on the resource, reducing visitor satisfaction, or exerting adverse impact upon the society, economy and culture of the area.” (Wearing and Neil, 1999, p.48).

Basically, the carrying capacities is used to reveal “how many tourists is too many tourists?”.

According to different specialists, there are three main elements of tourism carrying capacity:
- **Biophysical** (ecological) – which relates to the natural environment.
- **Socio-cultural** – which relates primarily to the impact on the host population and its culture.
- **Facility** – which relates to the visitors experience.

This concept must not be seen as a very accurate tool. “There are a wide range of differing values and perceptions of what an ‘unacceptable impact’ is. There are no absolute measurements of the resource’s condition that can be defined as constituting ‘crowding’ or ‘resource damage’”(Wearing and Neil, 1999, p.48). However it could be used as a first steep to a broader visitors management. For instance, the carrying capacity concept is used in several Australian National Parks, where the number of visitor permits is limited. The same principle is used in Lord Howe Island: tourists are restricted to 400 at any one time.

To resume:

The estimation of the Carrying capacity includes:
- ecological impacts + well-being of the local community + tourism satisfaction

4.2 The carrying capacity: not a social concern

There is neither any study about the carrying capacity of the Norfolk Island natural areas, nor any survey about tourism impacts on these areas. There are also no figures about the carrying capacity of all the territory. In fact, no survey was made to define the number of maximum tourists that the island can carry without negative impacts on the local environment. That’s why one of the ‘Management Action Target’ of the new Norfolk Island Natural Resource Management Plan is to:
“Undertake a population and tourism study to identify how many people the island can sustain under the current standard of living and how many people could the Island sustain if the standard of living was more sustainable (renewable energy, better agricultural practises, waste and sewage management, more sustainable building materials). The study should outline the recommend annual percentage growth for the Island, the maximum number of residents and tourists at any time”  
(Parsons Brinckerhoff, 2008, pp. 97-98)

Meanwhile this study would maybe be done in the future, it’s yet possible to have some idea of the social perception concerning the carrying capacity of the Island. While the Norfolk Government has imposed a ceiling on the number of public accommodation beds it licences (less than 1500 beds) on its territory, it seems this is not subject to preoccupation from Norfolk administrations and community. In fact, the average bed occupancy is quite low (around 40 %) and Norfolk authorities are at the opposite worried about the stagnation of the number of tourists on the island (see figure 16). Only some local environmental organizations (like Econorf) are in favour of the stagnation of the number of tourists, thinking that “increasing tourist yield rather than tourist numbers is preferable” (Lenzen, 2007, p.3)

![Figure 16: Evolution of the number of visitor arrivals on Norfolk Island (1987-2008) (figures from Norfolk Island Government Information web site http://www.info.gov.nf/)](image)
The main objective of the Norfolk Island Tourism Strategy Plan 2007-2012 is to reach the target of 350,000 commercial visitors nights (while around 200,000 nights now). If the average time of stay of the tourists is one week, the objective of the Strategy Plan is to have an average of 925 visitors on the same time on the island, while in 2008 there were in average 610 tourists on the same time on Norfolk (and the mean number of tourists on the same time was 844 in April, with 3617 arrivals). That means the Strategic Plan targets a 52% growth of the average number of tourists on the same time on Norfolk Island. If this target is reached, the average number of tourists on the island during all the year would be higher than during the current “peak season”.

To resume:
At the question “are they to many tourists on Norfolk Island?” the local authorities and community seems answer: “No. At the opposite, we need more.”
With an average of 610 tourists on the same time on the island, the well-being of the inhabitants are not affected by over-visitig.

4.3 Estimation of the flow of visitors on the natural areas

By this way we may have had a first estimation of the social element of the carrying capacity of the island. But no surveys on the environmental impacts of tourism in natural areas are available. Furthermore the Norfolk Island National Park has no policy concerning a control or a reduction of the visitors number. Neither permit entry nor park entry fees are required to the visitors.

The tour operators working in the Park must apply for a permit, which is quite easy to obtain: there is neither quota on the number of permits nor control about operators’ “environmental friendliness” or accreditation. The “limiting conditions” to obtain the permit are not very restrictive (e.g. not to park big buses in Mount Pitt).

This situation is probably understandable by the quite low number of visitors in the walking tracks of the park. If 94% of the tourists visit the Park (according to the last visitor survey conducted by the National Park), “bushwalking was perceived to be very important by 29.9% of respondents” of this survey (Cottle, 2009, p.16). Furthermore it was showed that the three most visited place of the Park (Captain Cook Monument, Mt Pitt and the Botanic Garden) are all accessible by road (Cottle, 2009). Personal observations confirm that probably only few visitors use the walking tracks: even during sunny days, it’s common to meet nobody while walking in the park.

A recent survey (Prideaux et al., 2009) shows that Nature is not the main reason for visiting Norfolk Island; only 41.2% of the respondents rates “nature” as very important, against 70.5% for a “relaxing destination” (see table 4). And while the majority of the tourists visit the island by group in a tour, there are only few products proposing activities in the National Park (except sightseeing in Mount Pitt and Captain Cook Monument).
Table 4: Destination Attributes that attracted respondents (n = 395)
(From Prideaux et al., 2009, p.15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relaxing destination</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendliness of residents</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting activities</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice climate</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for money</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.06</strong></td>
<td><strong>41.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>33.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>17.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low cost destination</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping opportunities</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this context, the number of visits is probably quite low in all the areas far away from a road access. However there could be some problems in the most popular places (lookouts, picnic areas,...) near the road network (so that could concern the majority of the natural areas). As written previously, the majority of the tourists do their activities in group, by contracting a tour operator. That’s why sometimes more than 100 tourists could be gathered on one natural place. Puppys Point (in the Selwyn Public Reserve) embodies this problem, when sometimes the three components (ecological, socio-cultural and facilities) of carrying capacities are exceeded:

“Puppys Point is favoured by commercial tour operators who provides fish fries to visitors to the Island while they view the sunset. One tour operator caters for more than 140 people [more than 20 % of the average number of tourists ] twice a week and conducts additional fish fries when required. Other tour operators also provide picnic and barbecues. As many as eleven buses and sixty cars may be parked at the Puppys Point picnic area at sunset. Tour operators bring their own cooking facilities, seating and remove their rubbish, however small groups of people who are picnicking or barbecuing in the reserves sometimes find that tour groups have encroached into public barbecue areas and either move or avoid using areas that are favoured by tour operators. [...]
Concentred vehicle traffic has damaged some grassed areas in parts of the Southern section of the reserve. [...] Increasing use of Puppys Point picnic area places considerable strain on the reserve's facilities.”

(Norfolk Island Parks and Forestry Service, 2003k, p.7)

The lagoon of Emily Bay is another place where overcrowding could be a possible issue. In fact, “the majority of coastal recreation activities occur in the Emily Bay/Slaughter Bay and Kingston areas (Kingston Lagoon offers the only sheltered waters on the Island). Swimming, snorkelling, scuba diving, surfing, sailing, windsurfing, jet skiing, paddle crafts and boating are popular activities in these easily accessed areas” (Parsons Brinckerhoff Pty. Ltd., 2008, p.56) For example the Norfolk Island Branding Committee noticed that targeting the family market could lead to an over-visiting of Emily Bay, creating potential negative impacts on this fragile environment and reaction from the community:

‘Beach activities development “would show strong involvement of those with children in swimming and beach activities. This point has particular relevance for Norfolk Island given that it only has one safe swimming beach and attached bay which are particularly fragile ecologically. Attracting families would substantially increase the number of children swimming in Emily and Slaughter Bays. As many of these would be expected to go snorkelling as well, there is high risk of substantial damage to the coral throughout the bays. Given the slow rate of growth of corals, it is possible that coral systems within the bays could be sufficiently damaged within 10 years to render glass bottom boat viewing and snorkelling unviable. [...] There is also an argument that there are social and economic downsides to the family market. Socially, adding significant extra visitors to the car park at Emily Bay could create parking issues that might not be well received by residents.”

(Norfolk Island Branding Committee, 2008, p.18)

To resume:
The flow of tourist in the natural areas is probably quite low (especially in the walking tracks), despite some temporary concentrations in natural attractions near the road network. During these concentrations, the carrying capacity could have been exceeded.

4.4 The context of demographical pressure on Norfolk Island

The tourists are not the only to take into account of the natural areas visits. The Norfolk community enjoys also their own environment. However we don’t have any information or figures about the Norfolk community’s recreational use of the natural areas. So we will just use population statistics to tackle the global issue of inhabitants impacts on the environment. If there is no strict correlation between the number of inhabitants and visits of the natural areas, we could use the population density as an indicator to estimate the potential demographic pressure upon the global environment.
The 27th March, there were 1846 residents (including the General and Temporary Entry Permit owners). So the current population density of Norfolk Island is 53 inhabitants per km$^2$. The population density of Norfolk Island is higher than the bigger islands of the area (like Fiji, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Salomon) but it is lower than the majority of the other small islands or archipelagos of the region (like Tonga, Cook Islands, Samoa).

![Figure 17: Population density in some South Pacific destination](image)

From this point of view, the demographic situation on Norfolk seems not to be critical. It is also under control: after a very important growth (+ 73 %) between 1964 and 1973, the number of inhabitants is more or less the same since three decades (1848 inhabitants in 1981, 1863 in 2006), see figure 18.
Furthermore, **the current population growth is below the objective of Norfolk authorities.** In fact the objective of 2% annual global demographic growth (residents and tourists) has not been reached (see figure 19):

> “Following a comprehensive demographic study in 1974, it was recommended that a 2% annual growth strategy for the population would be most beneficial to the Island and its infrastructure capabilities (Butland, 1974). In 1993, the 2% growth rate was endorsed by the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly and remains the guide for current immigration policy. The current trend in population change indicates a declining population; however the current population remains within the range of the low (1%) and high (2%) growth rates.”

(Parsons Brinckerhoff, 2008, pp.87-88)
If a global survey on the island carrying capacity is needed (according to the Norfolk Island Natural Resource Management Plan), it seems that the territory is not on important demographic pressure. The population growth is below the Government objective and there is not a big social concern about potential over-population. To confirm this, note that the objective of 2.0% of demographic growth is much more important that the current population growth of the majority of the developed countries (for ex.: 0.8% for Australia, 0.97% for New Zealand). It implies a population of more than 4 000 people (residents and tourists) in 2020. Probably this objective would be changed in case of important growth of population but it reflects the current stagnation of the population.

However there is still a discussion among the Norfolk community about the optimal number of residents. The current modification of immigration permits has created a recent debate, what shows the community perception of the potential of demographic growth. In fact, it creates some reactions from the community, as it is possible to read on the vol.44, No.13 of The Norfolk Islander newspaper (in the article “Forum on the Immigration Permit System”):

“Some thought that there should be a large increase in the population to about 2,500. Meanwhile there are some in the community who feel we should be better with less people. There wasn’t a consensus on that. [...] Growth for its own sake is not supported, but targeted growth was supported in a fair number of submissions”

To resume:
The demographic pressure on Norfolk seems not being at a critical level:
- the population density on Norfolk Island is lower than many South Pacific small islands
- the inhabitant number is stagnant since three decades, below the objective of the Norfolk Administration.
4.5 Reflexion on the socio-demographical limits of tourism diversification

It’s important to notice there is an interrelation between the number of inhabitants and the number of tourists, in an island where 90% of the labour force rely on tourism. In fact, tourism development creates more jobs, while the unemployed rate is very low (0.9% in 2006). That means that there is a need to link both population growth and tourism objectives. In fact a dramatic increase of the number of tourists won’t be able without an increase of the population (mainly by immigration) if the goal is to maintain or improve the quality of the tourism products. There is no current reserve of workforce and the tourism industry relies on a wide range of services, which quality is partly dependant on the number of employees per tourist. For example a tour with a small group is generally seen as a better experience that the same tour with a bigger group.

The importance of tourism on Norfolk Island results not only in the absence of unemployment, but also in the high proportion of the number of visitors among the population. According to the last census in the Island (2006), there were 1863 residents for 660 tourists and visitors: there are 2.8 residents for 1 tourist. This ratio is slowly decreasing during the last decades.

![Figure 20: Evolution of the ratio Residents/Tourist on Norfolk Island (1986-2006)](image)

But the number of tourist on the island at any one time per resident is still one of the highest among the small insular territories around the world (see figure 21). In fact, among a sample of 37 small or medium size islands destination around the world, Norfolk Island ranks 2\textsuperscript{nd}, well above the average ratio tourist/inhabitant. This figure confirms the quite high efficiency of the local workforce to welcome and manage a relatively high number of visitors on the main time. But it could create some implication on the tourists’ perception of the destination.
The current tourist satisfaction rate is quite high (in a recent survey, “almost all respondents said that they would recommend Norfolk Island” (Prideaux et al., 2009, p.21)) and there is no tourist complain about the high number of tourists on the island. However the high proportion of tourists among the total number of inhabitant on the island, the omnipresence of tourism on the local economy and a majority of “non-native” residents among the residents (51.8 % was not of Pitcairn descent in 2006) could cause some negative impacts from the point of view of potential new tourists.

For instance, some “alternative” segments of the tourism market (and especially of the nature-based market, like ecotourism or adventure-tourism) rely partly to the motivation of experience authentic environment, far away from “mass tourism”. In this context, the new brand “the World of Norfolk” could dangerously be interpreted by this category of
tourists as a wish to compare the island to a theme park. Note that like many other ones around the world, the main theme parks in Queensland (where ¼ of the tourists come from) define themselves as a “world”: “Sea World”, “Movie World”, “Wet ‘n’ Wild Water World”, “Dreamworld”,… And as Norfolk Island, they provide a high density of attractions in a quite small area (but sometimes bigger than Norfolk). Of course, they are “faked worlds”, at the opposite of Norfolk Island. The comparison with theme parks is only used to emphasize the risk of tourism intensification for the diversification of the clientele. It concerns all the tourism sectors, but can affect particularly the nature-based tourism market, what relies on low population density places (i.e. natural areas).

To resume:

There are two main socio-demographical limits for the evolution of the mean tourist profile:

- the shortage of workforce reserve means the impossibility to increase the quality of tourism services without an increase of immigration for the same number of tourists
- the very high number of tourists among the population could have some negative impacts for attracting new segment market sensible to the authenticity of the destination
Conclusion:
the natural highlights and limits of the destination

To conclude about the Norfolk Island natural areas, it could be worth to wonder what the natural highlights could be. A way to answer is to identify what is unique to the destination: what are the natural attraction impossible to find outside Norfolk Island?

From this point of view, the “seven natural wonders” of Norfolk Island could be:

1. The “highlands” (Mount Pitt section of the National Park) with the remnant native rainforest (endemic ecosystem) and the highest summits of Norfolk (panoramic views).
2. Phillip Island: 25 % of the Norfolk natural area, an inhabited island, an important breeding habitat for many seabirds and the highest cliff of Norfolk Territory.
3. The unspoiled coastal cliffs along the main island, with no urbanization, providing lookouts and watching seabirds.
4. The small Kingston lagoon with the second most southern corral reef, easily accessible (but very fragile).
5. The Northern Islets, a seabirds sanctuary with outstanding geological formations.
6. The 7 endemic landbirds species, present all the year.
7. The importance of the native and famous Norfolk Pine tree in the landscape.

All these attractions share some characteristics:

- **they are all (entirely or partly) protected** among the National Park or the Public Reserves
- **their access is easy**, well connected to the road network and providing easy grade walking tracks (except Phillip Island, the Northern Islets and more generally the Ocean around because of the lack of safe harbor)
- **the number of visitors is quite low, specially far away the road network** (center of Mount Pitt section of the National Park, Phillip Island) but may endure sometimes pressures during some tours (with big groups concentrated on a specific place during a short period)
- last but not least, **all these attractions are very close one from another. And they are very closed to world class historical heritage** (Kavha)
Finally this last characteristic is maybe one of the main highlights of Norfolk Island. In fact, the diversity of the natural attractions (rainforests, cliffs, lagoon,…) in a small territory (34.6 km²) is one of the best asset of Norfolk Island. A tourist can change nature-based activities and “natural atmosphere” very quickly: for example, he can be snorkeling on the lagoon and half an hour later walking in the rainforest or watching seabirds along a cliff or even visiting the historic area of Kingston (candidate to be nominate as an Unesco World Heritage). Furthermore “civilization” and “urban” facilities are very close also; it takes less than 10 minutes driving from Mount Pitt (in the National Park) to “downtown” Burnt Pine. As said an adventure specialist journalist about Norfolk, “you can be involved in challenging activities and five minutes later have a good coffee in town”. However one of the challenges to attract “harder ecotourists” or “adventurous tourists” is maybe to be sure that this proximity could not be felt as a lack of “wilderness” or a difficulty to go far away from social pressure.

The “flipside of the coin” of the global density and diversity of the tourism assets is that the scale of each natural attraction is quite small. For instance, there are only 2 km (3 % of the coast) of coral reef and less than 15 km of walking tracks on the main island. Nowadays there is no huge problem of carrying capacity because the majority of the mainly elderly tourists would prefer go touring and sightseeing than doing more sportive activities like bushwalking or snorkeling. But in case the mean profile of Norfolk tourist became younger and more physically active, we may expect some problem of over-visiting in the natural areas. The current low frequentation of the natural area outside the road network is a sign of the opportunity to target new segments of tourists, but it’s important to keep in mind that the “environmental room” to develop nature-based products is not infinite and must be well supervised and monitored. The high density and diversity of the tourism experiences on Norfolk must not live down the environmental limits and challenges faced by a small size island.
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