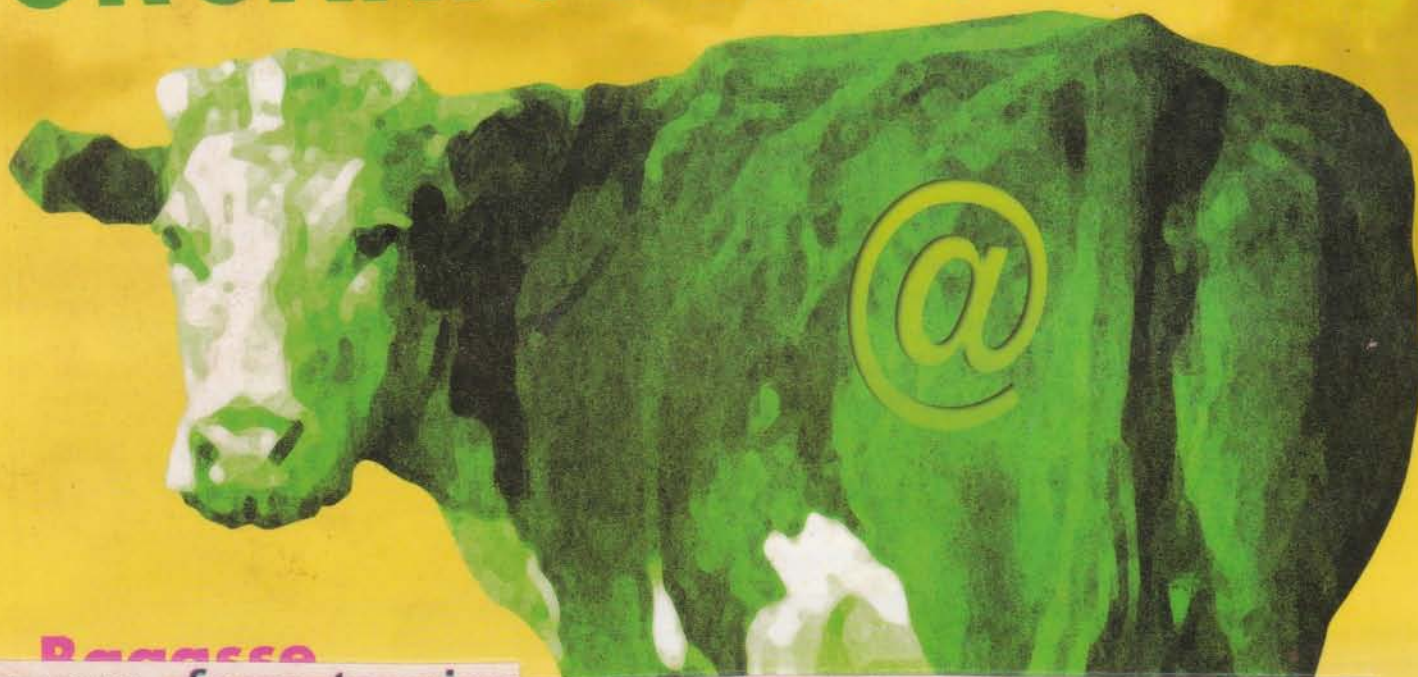


# RURALit

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FEATURE **farm tourism**

## Dream barra tales

Fishing is not just a popular pastime. Whether it is charters, equipment hire or opening barramundi farms to dam fishing, there are money-making options. Two men have made use of the internet to enhance their fishing businesses. **JOELINE BIELEK** reports.

THE tip of Cape York is remote, unique, surrounded by wilderness and water, not to mention a fishing hotspot.

One man has made use of his knowledge of the area, and expertise in fishing, to create a thriving business, reaching people all over the world through a simple brochure format website.

John Charlton is a 44-year-old who spends plenty of time in a boat. Surrounded by water day in day out, he's living the fisherman's dream.

Not only that, but he's making money from it

Since putting John Charlton's Cape York Adventures on the internet two and a half years ago, John has been inundated with business.

"Most of the work has come from the website," he said.

Cape York Adventures is based in Seisia, Bamaga, at the tip of Cape York.

"The tip is a unique place, surrounded by water, it's best accessible by boat," John said. "Up here, the boat is quite practical."

And what better way to make use of that practicality than build a business around it. John has been operating professional fishing charters since 1996, showing people first-hand the variety of fishing available off the Cape.

The website has now enabled him to also attract people wanting to experience the wilderness and the coastline, not just fishing.

"Some people just enjoy being somewhere unpopulated," he said.

After visiting and working on the Cape for many years, he was very aware of "all the nice wilderness country", not to mention its promise as a brilliant

fishing spot. So, in 1996 Mr Charlton began living in Bamaga full-time and started his business with one boat, to which he has added another two over the years.

The idea to create a website was based on the potential to reach the whole world. Although John's wife made the website - a first time experience - he would recommend getting someone to make the website for you.

"The website took lots of effort, there's little things you need to know about computers. It's more than just putting pictures on the screen," he said. "There were no fupds needed since we did it ourselves, but a lot of hours."

The Charltons' website, - [www.capeyorkadventures.com.au](http://www.capeyorkadventures.com.au) - a simple brochure-type format, has worked quite well. To get more information, people have to call or email and John has received quite a bit of response with enquiries from all over the world.

"There's plenty of lookers, whether they book or not is another thing though," he said.

John recalls a person from Italy

# from the Tip

enquired, booked and came over.

After a person gets in contact, there is an emailing of details back and forth.

There are two types of clients - people who drive up in 4WD between May to October, and people who fly in for a fishing holiday. The 4W drivers often camp at Seisia and some will like to fish.

"When you reach the tip there are only a few places to camp and Seisia is one of the most popular," John said.

Seisia is where the road meets the water, where there's a wharf and where the ferry takes off to go to Thursday Island, he said.

People travelling up the Cape will stop to get fuel, buy food and get anything fixed.

John reaches the campers through signs and brochures and also said a walk around the campsite at night is a successful approach.

The people that fly in for a fishing holiday are mostly from Sydney and Melbourne, and usually a group of men who like the outdoor experience. They usually book well in advance, some a year ahead, some a month, some a week.

John offers three types of holidays - fishing, family and adventure. The fishing holidays target an established market - blokes from interstate, major capital cities, who decide to go for a holiday and do a bit of fishing for the week - often through advertising in fishing magazines.

As for the family holidays, John said people don't realise what exists on the Cape, so he tries to encourage families.

"It's not just blokes going fishing - there's enough up here to entertain the average family," he said.

A family holiday may include the family flying in and spending a week, going in the boat fishing, snorkelling, going along the coastline, the wilderness, a

bit of 4W driving and visiting spots of interest. Thursday Island and the Torres Strait are also not far away, so the holiday may include a visit there.

The adventure holidays are similar to the family, though more general outdoor holidays.

"Whether it be older people who just like going somewhere different, don't mind roughing it a bit, seeing the bush, being more outdoorish," John said. "Accommodation's fine if they want to get a good night's sleep."

In tourism terms, it's 'soft adventure', he said. "You're outdoors, you're doing everything outdoors, but at the same time you're not roughing it. You don't put yourself in any sort of danger or put yourself in any particular discomfort," he said.

The adventure holidays could be anything from going for a simple bushwalk to going for a boat trip down the coast, a bit of fishing, exploring, just going somewhere different. The top of Australia is good for driving to destinations as you can drive one way to the east coast and the other way to the west coast, he said.

"We're trying to push the idea that it's not just a fishing holiday, there's enough here to keep anybody and everybody entertained. We're trying to attract a market that is not really established," John said.

The trip length depends on the people. The average tour has people staying for six nights so they can get the opportunity of five days to visit the Cape.

John said large groups could be catered for. In the past he had 20 salesmen from Toyota Australia who had a special conference, spent three or four days with the option of a couple of days fishing or a 4WD trip.

# Big barra bytes

● From p21

"We can handle one person or if there's a big group, four, five, six, seven or 20, we can still cope with it," he said.

This is done by getting other people like himself, other guys up the Cape, to take some of the passengers.

Estuary fish include mangrove jack, grunter, blue-nose salmon, threadfin salmon, fingermark bream and barramundi. Blue water mackerel tuna, northern bluefin tuna, Spanish mackerel, gray mackerel, golden trevally, giant trevally, cobia, spotted trevally, queenfish, barracuda and coral trout.

Another person who has built a business around fishing is Greg Love, the "owner, manager, worker, toilet cleaner, gardener - pretty much everything" of Fish-o-rama.

Fish-o-rama, situated in Tully, is a barramundi farm that has been operating since 1988.

The farm provides barramundi for the restaurant trade, as well as offering fishing, farm tours, farmstay accommodation and merchandise.

There are 12 dams and the fishing has been divided into three sections - novice, intermediate and advanced - to cater for varying fishing abilities. The best conditions for catching a barramundi are hot conditions, Greg said.

There are two farmstay cabins so people can stay overnight to fish if they choose; otherwise there is the option of a quick fish, one hour or so. Equipment is provided through hire.

Greg put Fish-o-rama on the internet four years ago as another form of advertising.

He also advertises through billboards, brochures, magazines and fishing newspapers.

The website - [www.fish-o-rama.com.au](http://www.fish-o-rama.com.au) - was created by NQ Web Design, as Greg knew very little about making a website. Creating the website was not too expensive, he said.

The response gained through the website is hard to judge.

"We have lots of different forms of advertising and that's just one of them, so we do surveys from time to time and it's not too bad," he said.

The most distant enquiry he has received was from Alaska, where the person enquired and came over.

Putting their businesses on the internet, using a simple brochure format website, has worked well for both Greg Love and John Charlton.

Whether the purpose is advertising, reaching the world or reaching markets that are not yet established, the internet can be an effective tool in enhancing business.

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"Often this is because people in rural

Research has also been conducted in Bundaberg to genetically modifying sugarcane so that it can be used in biodegradable plastics.

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