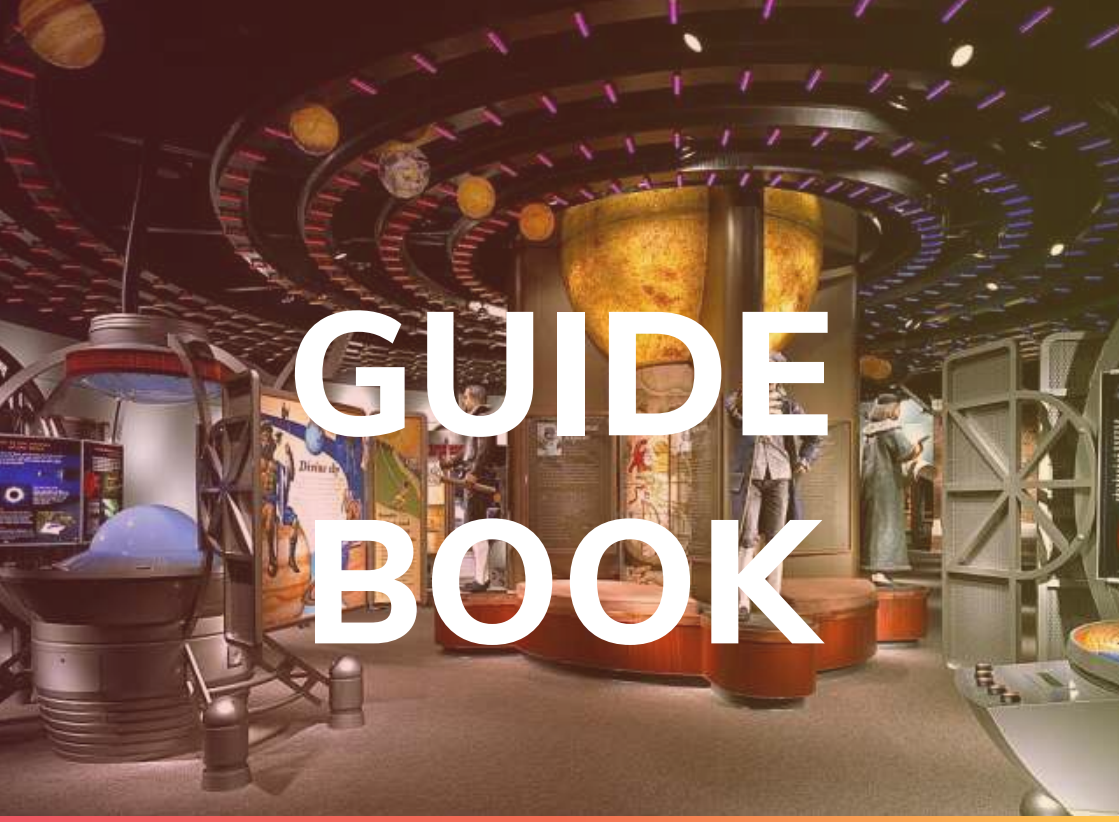


GUIDE BOOK

ATTRACTIONS, DISCOVERY & VISITOR CENTRES

S2 ARCHITECTS

INTRODUCTION

Inside any tourism business brews a story you must share.

The distinctive personality, value and passion that makes your place one of a kind. A place where your brand is so tangible that visitors feel that they could almost be a part of it. Where people understand the value of what you do so completely that purchasing from you is the obvious choice.

Do you want people to spend more money at your place?
Clueless how to get people to remember your brand?
Do you need an edge over your competitors?

Whether you are emerging or established, starting or already running a successful visitor, information or interpretive centre, this guide will help you.

You will discover how to make tourism spaces work effectively.
Visitors will understand, remember and purchase from you.
Staff will work better to engage visitors, impart information and sell product.

We wrote this book because tourism is all about visiting a physical place. You asked us how you can make a visit to your centre different to everyone else - a 'must see' destination, an unmissable experience. You asked how to use your space differently so that visitors buy more, and staff sell more. You asked how to tell a story through buildings. Each page gives you short, no-nonsense tools to get people immersed in your brand through your buildings and grounds, in touch with your product in a physical and emotional way, and enthusiastic to buy.

With your passion, intention, attention and patience, you can achieve a place that is alive with your brand – buildings and grounds that tell stories that bring people back time and time again. You will unlock untapped revenue, gain a following of brand loyalists, create a niche market with you as the only destination, and you'll love the adventure and sense of achievement. Bringing your brand to life through your buildings will surround you and your employees with a sense of what you are working toward and keep you focussed and motivated to be the best you can be.

So turn the page, let your imagination roam, and begin down your path to a new visitor experience now!

A DISCOVERY CENTRE *THAT WORKS FOR YOU*

Discovery centres and attraction visitor centres have always played a key role in linking tourists, visitors and guests with the story of a place. They have been vital as a physical location where travellers can go to make discoveries and gather tools for the journey or souvenirs of their experiences.

Great Discovery Centres engages you with stories you can't hear elsewhere, sampling of the best local culture, place and region has to offer, with opportunities and encouragement to connect, converse and create together. They embody the soul, personality and brand of the place.

Truly successful centres showcase the character of the place through clever delivery of information, and are the bridge between travellers and place, people and activities. They do not only provide information - they generate revenue, actively market the place and region and engage the local community. They strengthen tourism offerings and add unique experiences within their own facilities.

Visitors are looking for experiences that are engaging and tangible, so the style and delivery of information needs to be personal, local, authentic and insightful. Discovery Centres have unique, insightful and place specific knowledge that can be offered in their own style that is colourful and filled with character.

In today's tourism industry, discovery and visitor centres can become a destination in themselves, whether attached to a tourist attraction, a destination or region. The centres have their own style - a unique way of showcasing information that makes them appealing to visit and buy from. While they are usually a support service to the main attraction, they can offer travellers a taste of the region, with a constantly revolving showcase of local suppliers displayed in a branded regionally characteristic way.

MUNICH
MÜNCHEN

1

MAKE THE MOST *OF YOUR SPACE!*

You can use your space to create:

- story telling through style image, text, shape and colour, visitor engagement
- sampling and tasting
- a rotating showcase
- dedicated retail of local offerings
- collection of tourism data
- a feature unique offering or seasonal product.

Space needs can vary, yet there are a few commonalities for all centres.

Retail or product sales can account for a significant proportion of revenue, so make it clear **what is for sale, what the product story is, the value and how to buy.**

Remember that the packages themselves are what people buy, so tasting and samples are not enough. People are more likely to buy if they can touch it, pick it up, so make it easy for people to have contact with the actual packaged product.

Give yourself space to bring complimentary products and education material in digital as well as hard copy together in your retail space, but make sure that the product is matched clearly, has a great story and that matching products adds to the appeal of purchasing.

With the prevalence of technology, consider how you can integrate smart technology naturally into the space.

Universal access throughout your centre is good design, will ensure Australian Standards compliance, and provide access for everyone.

Tip: to accommodate reading tables a height of 710-760mm seated or 900-1100mm standing height, and a min of 600mm width per visitor is recommended for adults. For retail and product shelving max reaching height is 2060mm.

2

IDENTITY
TELL YOUR STORY

What is the story of your place and why is it important to the design of your building?

Discovery Centres are places where you can discover the soul of a place. More than a history board, photographs and brochures, it is a personification of the character of your place (a reflection of the place's marketing and branding). Encompass the essence of what the place is about, what activities take place, what services and products are being made there and why, and what it is like to live and work there.

Visitors to well branded places recognise the uniqueness, making your Centre interesting, memorable and appealing. Evoke the feeling you want your visitors to experience when they visit the place - revealing it through your whole service - marketing, communication and space design.

Great immersive branding can trigger people's sensory reflexes and loyalty instincts, making them more likely to spend more money, more often. Great for your Centre but also the attraction or regional businesses you represent!

Identify the personality of your place and what story you want to tell. Decide what colours, materials, atmosphere and style are right for you, and apply that character to your whole visitor centre experience.

Discover your brand personality with our quiz.
To take our quiz now, click here.

3

LEAD THEM IN

As your visitors transition from the street, the path needs to be obvious. Clearly mark your entry, and ensure it is clear when you are OPEN, and when you are CLOSED with active signs of life, not just a flip sign on the door. Delineate car parks and the front door with shape and paths - don't rely on written signage to get people in the door.

Communicate with obvious direction rather than written text - make the space naturally readable. It helps you service larger groups and a diverse range of cultural needs and language abilities.

Keep your entrance clear. People need to pause and take stock before moving into a space. As people move further into your space, **Many of your visitors** will unconsciously turn right. What they see will have a high-impact impression. Be aware of how you want visitors to engage with your Centre and place, and give a strong message on this "power" wall or space.

Next, create a path along merchandise for them to follow to your greeting point. Greet new visitors then lead them to the area to further browse or to a space purposely shaped to foster connections and conversation between visitors, staff and community.

An efficient and welcoming process will demonstrate your professionalism and care. A well designed space will foster conversation and community engagement, creating a greater level of engagement and trust, which will lead to customer loyalty, a great reputation, and a higher sales rate.

4

SCALE + COMPLEXITY
WHAT'S REALLY YOU?

Your space design is a 3-D branding puzzle.

The size, proportion and organisation of spaces will have a subconscious effect on visitors, community and staff alike. Movement through the buildings and grounds is orchestrated by how you welcome visitors and encourage conversation and product browsing.

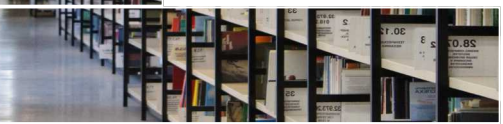
Materials and colour selection of floors, walls and ceilings, and selection of lighting and sound should be consistent with the story you want to tell about your place.

The type, variation and placement of displays will entice and guide visitors through the entire experience of visiting. Haphazard merchandising reflects poorly upon your Centre and will send the message that you don't care about promoting your community and region.

Focus on creating a successful lighting design that will enhance your visitors' experience and adjust to their needs. It will make them feel calm, focussed and confident in welcoming and conversation areas, and encourage browsing, lingering, and purchasing in the retail area.

Provide good light levels locally in communication spaces and work areas.

Well-chosen lighting adheres to building standards and energy codes while assisting businesses to save money with energy efficient systems and lighting



OUR PASTRIES
OUR TEA
WINE
CRAFT BEER & CIDER

5

COMFORT
HOW LONG ARE PEOPLE WELCOME TO STAY?

Create a comfortable atmosphere for visitors, community and staff that promotes connections, conversation and engagement with your story, and encourages visitors to stay for the amount of time you actually want them - not more and not less.

Inviting, brand appropriate seating in the areas planned for communication and lingering, facing merchandise will keep product top of mind.

Ample personal space in display areas will encourage browsing.

Work spaces should be designed for comfort and productivity, and to promote the style of communication you want for your Centre.

Use an energy efficient heating, air conditioning and ventilation (HVAC) system to provide good room air quality at a comfortable temperature Make sure not to locate supply vents directly over work stations and planning areas to avoid unpleasant drafts or damage to your product.

The music you play in your space has a profound yet subtle effect, so select your play list in line with what you are trying to sell. Take care not to create too much reverberation or echo as it can make it unpleasant and difficult to communicate.

6

AVOID THE BOTTLENECK

Where are visitors first welcomed?

Where can people sample product?

Where can people sit to have a conversation or contemplate your place?

Where can visitors have a conversation with a local?

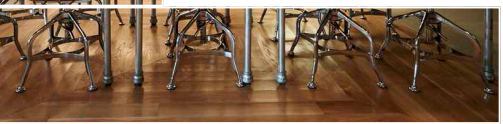
Where is your point of sales cashier?

Where can visitors buy tickets?

If they are all at reception this could cause bottle necking, which will create frustration for visitors, stress for staff, resulting in a lower level of engagement and fewer sales — all of which will result in reduced revenue and a poor reputation.

Consider how you will handle the arrival of visitors, lingering area, point of sale, samples and tastings and retail. Separating the activities creates opportunities for staff to engage more casually with visitors, provides discretion for transactions, and eliminates the bottleneck.

All of which lead to a smooth, engaging and friendly visitor experience - and higher sales.



BEGIN YOUR PROJECT *WITH CONFIDENCE*

Working on your buildings and grounds is a big deal. There is a lot of money and time at stake and it can be difficult to know how to get it right.

> What will add value? What are the priorities? How do you tell a brand story, use brand character to shape your buildings and make them work for you?
>
> Are you confident in your choices and decisions?
>
> Can you make it an unmissable tourism experience?

The S2 Architects pre-design confidence package is structured to help you work out if the project is feasible, what the priorities and characteristics should be, whether council will allow you to do what you want to do, and give you an idea of costs and time frames before you make the big commitment.

THE PRE-DESIGN PACKAGE MAY INCLUDE:

- an on-site meeting
- a professional opinion on the feasibility of your project.
- an outline brief describing functions, uses, spaces, and operational requirements.
- a review of current site conditions.
- tourism brand character and style assessment.
- a preliminary project budget and time line.
- explanation of the process, people and time involved with professional fee indicators.

This is a stand-alone, fixed price & no-obligation package. Bookings confirmed upon receipt of payment.

Investment from $3,000 + GST (conditions apply, price subject to change)

BOOK NOW!

(08) 7231 5470

studio@s2architects.com.au

S2 ARCHITECTS

7

TECHNOLOGY
HIGH, LOW OR NO TECH?

As technology becomes more mainstream, and more of your visitors are already well versed in what you have to offer, the struggle to remain relevant is real. Discovery and visitor centres can embrace this new type of tourist with technology that enhances the visitor experience while offering commercial opportunities to create a more self sufficient centre.

Integrating screens naturally into the interior and exterior are opportunities to create easily changeable, adaptable and interesting focal points to display local character, art, social media snippets, etc. They are also great for creating paid advertising opportunities for other businesses or events.

VR systems are becoming inexpensive to purchase, and visitors are willing to pay for the opportunity. Use the experience to give your visitors a taste of a premium experience, a look at the inner workings that you can't otherwise see, an experience of something that is done seasonally or occasionally.

Enhance the VR space to make it 3 dimensional.

A VR experience is predominantly visual, but the opportunity for immersion in the theme is a great way to turn a visitor centre into a destination experience. Create spaces where visitors can touch and feel elements of the experience, not just see it.

High, low or no tech?

Assess whether your visitors really want or expect to encounter a high tech experience. Sometimes the best experiences are explored in a low tech or no tech environment so visitors can truly connect with the here and now.

8

BONUS TIP:
GATEWAYS & HUBS

How to evolve museum style centres into Discovery Centres?

The way Centres function needs to change to meet today's needs and become sustainable in the future. Consider:

- Location of centres - on the edge or more centrally to the destination?
- How the infrastructure should function to engage visitors.
- How the infrastructure should look to mark the place in your memory.

What if VICs become gateways into, or hubs to service, the local region or destination.

What is a Gateway?

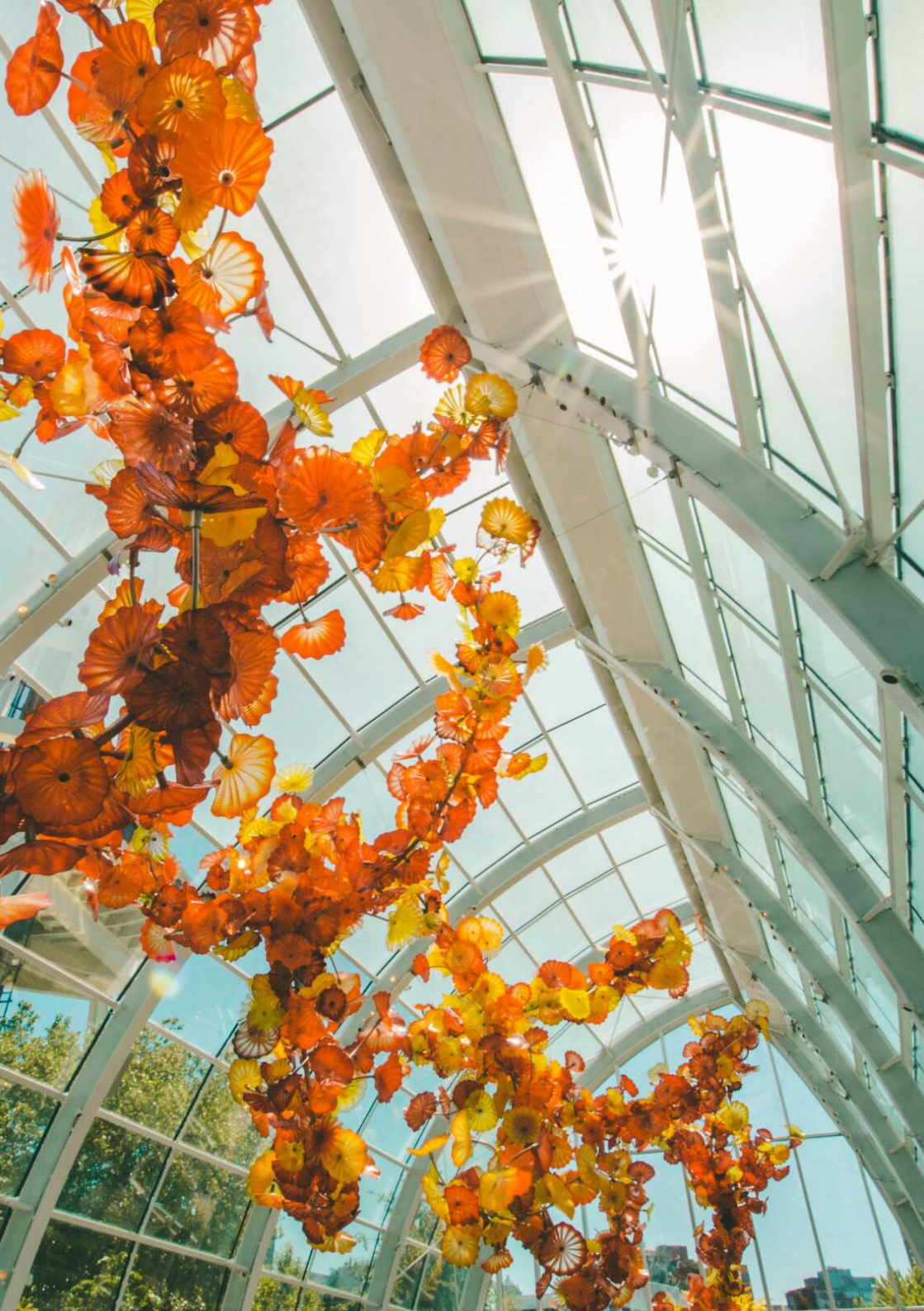
Located on the edge of a region or entrance to a destination, where people are passing through a point before they enter. Works best for destinations or regions dominated by a single entry / exit point. Great example: Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre.

What is a Hub?

A central point within the destination or region, that provides services that would be needed within the local area. Works best for large destinations or regions with multiple entrance points.

What needs to change?

- Refocus on what attracts tourists and what visitor centres are in a unique position to offer
- Strong connections with local industry to build bespoke packages
- Strong connections with tourism bodies to improve community connection and value
- Clever commercialisation to promote the region and provide income opportunities
- Rethinking location of visitor centres and how the infrastructure should function and look to best serve the region, what tourists and locals need and how they move around.



WELCOME TO *OUR PLACE*

How you lead your visitors through your space is critical to creating an environment that will attract more visitors, get them browsing more products, increase sales, draw visitors back to your centre in the future, and encourage them to get out into the region.

It is vital to keep in mind that from the moment someone enters your grounds, smart design decisions make a significant difference in the relationships and connections built between visitors, staff and community, engagement and interest of visitors, sales and the impression your visitors leave with.

TIME TO PUT YOUR NEW TOOLS TO GOOD USE

S2 Architects are not your average design team. We specialise in tourism because we love it - we live and breathe tourism and we have a network of connections as well as insight into the industry because we spend so much time digging around behind the scenes. It is our delight to be able to provide you the latest information about how buildings can attract visitors, meet and exceed demand and drive growth for your business, and connect you with a team of people who can help bring it all together.

Need help to design your space and place?

ACCESS OUR OTHER RESOURCES
s2architects.com.au

TAKE OUR QUIZ! Click here or visit:
s2architects.au/resources/quiz/

NEED HELP?
Let's just start with a coffee

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