

Green-based tour whets experience

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IN the midst of a tourism downturn and a bumper wet season, Undara Experience is enjoying bookings that would make many operators green with envy.

The Outback eco-resort, near Mt Surprise about 275km southwest of Cairns, has credited Mother Nature for helping secure strong numbers over the Christmas and New Year period.

Undara Experience marketing manager Mark Schmitt said the turnout exceeded the company's expectations.

"It is a bit of a surprise," he said.

"Everyone was talking about doom and gloom but we're a bit different from the Cairns market.

"We're not experiencing the slump other operators are experiencing.

"We're experiencing good steady growth."

Undara Experience, which has won a host of tourism awards, bases its activities on the lava tubes and surrounding eco-system.

Mr Schmitt said the monsoonal months were known as the green season because it transferred the Gulf-Savannah country into a lush natural wonderland that astounded visitors.

"This is when nature comes alive," he said.

"It's like driving through England: there are so many shades of green."

Flocks of insectivorous bats also bred in the lava tubes during summer and up to 120,000 emerged at night to feed.



Green season: Tourists walk through Lava tubes (above) and take in the sunset (below).



Mr Schmitt said raptors, brown tree snakes and other reptiles preyed on the tiny creatures, giving guests on the company's Sunset Tour a fascinating insight into the inland eco-system.

He said the road to the Undara Lava Lodge was now sealed and open all wet season.

Undara Experience managing director Bram Collins said the monsoonal months helped nature-based operators.