

Inside Nigel Coventry Tourism

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International expenditure hits record \$6,500 M

INTERNATIONAL visitor expenditure in the year ended June reached a record \$6,500 million, despite the effects of SARS and a rising New Zealand dollar, according to the Ministry of Tourism

It also notes:

- Australian expenditure was up 19.6 percent to \$1,300 million, driven by a 19.3 percent increase in arrivals from that market.
- UK expenditure increased 5.2 percent to \$940 million. Says the Ministry: "Visitor growth has been strong in 2004, and is expected to continue through 2005 when the Lions rugby tour commences."
- Japanese expenditure increased 3.2 percent to \$658 million. Japanese visitor numbers reduced two percent due to SARs, while spend per person rose.
- Korean expenditure increased 61 percent to reach \$616 million. The Ministry adds: "After a sharp decline during the Asian financial crisis, visitor numbers have grown

strongly. However, the impact of SARs and the education market have caused Korean growth to fluctuate in recent periods."

- US spend declined 21 percent during the year to \$574 million. But while total expenditure is down from the June year 2003, it is up from the March 2004 year - perhaps indicating an end of the declining trend.

Movements

"Movements in the New Zealand results closely reflect the equivalent results for USA visitors to Australia. Results for the USA will be closely watched over upcoming quarters," the Ministry points out.

The holiday sector contributes about \$3,000 million or nearly half of all visitor expenditure, it adds.

The average spend during the year was \$3,127 per person. Holiday visitors tend to stay less time (18.5 days) but spend more (\$3,056) than VFR visitors (23.7 days and \$2,353).

For education visitors the average length of stay is 105.1 days and the average expenditure is \$10,546.

- * The Ministry notes an increasing number of international visitors are

planning their own trips and now travel with little or no forward booking.

In the year to June 1998, 34 percent of international visitor spend was made by either package travellers or those travelling as part of a tour group. This declined to 17.3 percent in 2004.

The Ministry adds that in the year to June, FITs contributed 46 percent of total expenditure while semi independent visitors contributed a further 37 percent.

SARs reduced the number of Asian visitors, who provide the bulk of tour groups. Because of this, the number of tour group visitors was especially low in the June year.

Visitor nights almost triple

THE number of visitor nights spent in different regions has almost tripled in some cases between December 1997 and June, according to the IVS.

Northland saw an increase from 989,378 to 1,999,226 with the average stay increasing from 3.6 to 4.2 nights.

Auckland's visitor nights increased from 8,900,633 to 19,044,749. The average number of nights has gone up from 6.9 to 9.3.

Coromandel's increase was from 313,217 to 708,162 and a rise in the average nights from 2.9 to 3.2.

For **Waikato** the rise in visitor nights went from 638,870 to 1,768,853 and an average rise from 4.2 to seven nights. (Over)

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TEN years ago in IT...

THE backpacker sector is growing so fast it's generated more than 250 hostels with a total of 8,000 beds as well as helped boost the number of adventure operators to almost 1,000.

Research by Victoria University student Stephen Doorne also shows the average backpacker spends \$33.48 a day in Wellington but \$47.58 in Waitomo, the two areas where backpackers were surveyed. He reports that whilst the industry is busily packaging product for this market, backpackers traditionally reject package travel options.

SHOTOVER Jet is expected to welcome its millionth passenger early next month. The company has records of all rides since it was launched in 1970.

ABOUT 160 hectares of land above dramatic seacliffs near Wharekauhau Lodge, Wairarapa, has been designated New Zealand's first special tourist zone, according to lodge owner Annette Shaw. She says the South Wairarapa District Council has made the designation under the RMA.

GRASSMERE Homestead. Masterton, is one of 28 properties which have formed the Heritage Inns chain.

DESPITE the narrowness and precipitous nature of Wellington roads, it's easy to travel from one end of the city to the other, admits Telecom Directories' MD Kevin Riley. He says that only an Aucklanders like himself would regret that in the 50 minutes it takes him to travel by motorway across their city, Wellingtonians can be in Kapiti or Wairarapa.

VINCENT Aviation, Wellington, is now operating a refurbished DC3 with 737 seating which is available for scenic flights.

HUKA Lodge is all at sea. Owner Alex van Heeren is using an eight metre motor yacht, Sirdan, to launch upmarket charters around the Bay of Islands.

AUSTRALIAN-based tourism consultant Dain Simpson says that if Wellington gets a casino most of its patrons will be locals. While the Auckland casino will work effectively, a casino in the capital will not likely attract any more overseas visitors.

Visitor nights almost triple

(from pg 1) The **Bay of Plenty** had 374,898 nights in 1997 but by this June this had increased to 1,126,741. The average stay increased from 5.6 to 6.4 nights.

Eastland's increase was from 128,313 to 393,023 for visitor nights and 5.4 percent to 6.5 percent for average nights.

Rotorua's figures increased from 1,063,486 to 1,310,264 with a rise in average stay from two to 2.2 nights.

Taupo had 454,177 visitor nights in 1997 and by June this had risen to 711,609 with an increase in the average number of nights from 2.2 to 2.3.

Ruapehu saw 127,219 visitor nights increase to 299,783 and the average stay remain at 3.4 nights.

Taranaki had 167,271 nights increase to 521,460 and the average stay increase from four to 6.8 nights.

Hawke's Bay's total increased from 553,839 to 1,320,371. The average stay rose from 5.4 to 6.9 nights.

Manawatu/Wanganui had a rise in the total length of stay from 85,445 to 130,480. The average number of nights went up from 6.4 to 10.4.

For the **Wairarapa** the rise was from 81,800 total nights to 121,134 but with a drop in the average length of stay from 9.8 nights to 3.4.

Wellington had a rise from 1,427,459 nights in total to 3,957,123 while the average stay rose from 3.9 to 6.3.

Marlborough's total visitor nights were 332,373 in 1997. They rose to 736,759 in the year to last June. The average stay rose from 2.5 to three nights.

In **Nelson/Tasman** the rise for total nights was from 684,727 to 1,488,351 but with a drop in the average stay from 3.9 to 3.8 nights.

The **West Coast** had an increase in total visitor nights from 594,424 to 1,055,659 and in average nights from 1.4 to 1.5.

The number of nights spent in **Canterbury** in 1999 was 2,932,660 while by June this had jumped to 7,189,809.

The average stay went up from 3.3 to five nights.

For **Mackenzie** the total stay went from 220,928 to 378,847 and length of stay from 1.4 to 1.8 nights.

Central South Island saw a rise from 103,391 total nights in 1997 to 282,981 in 2004, with the average stay rising from three to 3.4 nights.

Central Otago had a rise from 108,584 to 115,494 but the average length of stay dropped from 8.1 to 3.9 nights.

Wanaka's increase for total nights was from 319,276 to 596,233. The average stay decreased from 3.8 to three days.

Queenstown's total visitor nights were 1,432,595 in 1997, rising to 2,170,640 this year. The average length of stay went up from 3.1 to 3.5 nights.

For **Dunedin** the figures for total stay rose from 757,497 to 1,299,051 while the length of stay dropped from 3.4 to 3.3 nights.

Fiordland's average stay remained at 1.9 nights - and it's total visitor nights went up from 526,701 to 611,986.

Southland had probably the largest jump in total nights, from 132,628 to 659,211 with a rise in average stay from three to 5.7 nights.

**By National Party
spokesman on tourism
Lockwood Smith MP***

IT'S a privilege to once again be involved with one of the most important sectors of the New Zealand economy, tourism. The respect for the industry I developed in my brief time as Minister has stayed with me.

Your industry's success, however, didn't just happen. It was the result of vision, commitment and hard work. Sometimes it seems that the government feels the success is just automatic and will continue regardless of the challenges they place in your way.

Needing attention

While not an exhaustive list, I want to identify five areas involving the government that require urgent attention.

They are: infrastructure - road, electricity, etc; employment laws, including holidays legislation; compliance costs and tax rates; availability of skilled staff and training; the Kyoto Protocol and carbon taxes.

The problems are obvious and I won't waste too much time on them. Most tourists have to use our roads to get around and that's becoming harder by the month. Our

Tourism - huge success, but the challenges mount

tourism businesses have to employ staff able to deliver a high quality service, and skill shortages and foolish employment and holiday law amendments make that harder by the month.

Like other businesses, tourism operators have to comply with the government's never ending new laws and regulations. And now, with Russia ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, Labour will be implementing it in New Zealand, and tourism will be hit hard as one of your biggest suppliers of tourists, Air New Zealand, will face a \$12 million carbon tax bill.

Carbon tax

This last one, Labour's carbon tax, will hit our main inbound tourist operator, Air New Zealand, very hard. Most of its revenue is generated domestically and, therefore, Air New Zealand will have to pay the tax on the bulk of its revenue. Most of its competitors internationally won't be paying the tax, or in the case of Qantas, will be paying it only on a tiny part of their revenue. It's almost like the government doesn't want Air New Zealand to bring tourists to New Zealand.

National's made it clear. We would abolish that carbon tax just as we would repeal Labour's holiday legislation and drastically simplify their ever-worsening employment law. Running a small business is hard enough without the government making it harder. A

major initiative would be directed towards reducing compliance costs, not just tinkering around the edges, but taking apart some of the legislative excesses that are so expensive to comply with.

Instead of setting up endless committees across so many fields of endeavour, a National government would redirect resources to getting things done.

For example, Labour's new Tertiary Education Commission is chewing up tens of millions of dollars that could be directed to delivering skills training. The new Land Transport legislation has put in place such bureaucratic processes that roading construction will actually be further slowed.

A National government would repeal that nonsense and get on with building roads.

RMA

Likewise, significant hunks of the Resource Management Act would be amended so that the cost of developing new tourism projects wouldn't be prohibitive, and new electricity generation capacity could once again become possible. Fine words from Ministers about valuing tourism don't mean much when the government's actions make running your tourism business harder and harder. Your vitally important industry deserves better.

*** Dr Smith took over from Murray McCully as Tourism Minister in 1999.**

Taupo VIC gets facelift

A long awaited \$494,000 upgrade to the Taupo Visitor Centre is to start on Monday. Council has also approved \$72,614 for the fit out.

The visitor centre is being moved temporarily inside the adjacent Great Lake Centre. Manager Gail Henderson says the re-furbished centre should re-open in February. Visitor numbers have increased dramatically in the five years that the upgrade has been on the drawing board - with over 250,000 people visiting the centre in the past year alone.

She adds: "The current facility has become too small to meet customer requirements and staff are thrilled that the upgrade is now a reality." The new facility will double the size of the existing centre.

Historic hotel for sale

HOKITIKA'S 140 year old Southland Hotel is for sale. Originally built in 1865 as a single bar, the property was one of 102 pubs on Revell Street. Irish immigrant Edward O'Connor purchased the licence for the hotel almost 120 years ago and it has been in family ownership ever since.

The property contains 23 guest rooms, four bars, a restaurant and 80-seat conference centre.

Marketing agent Peter Harris, of Bayleys Christchurch, says the hotel has been rebuilt since the 1970s. "There is over 1,000 square metres of surplus land that the new owner could use to build extra accommodation," he adds. Details: 03 - 3772579, 027-2276009 or www.bayleys.co.nz.

We need at least 120,000 extra workers by 2010, warns Minister

THE industry will need an extra 120,000 employees by the end of the decade, according to early research by the Ministry of Tourism, TIANZ and ATTTO into future workforce and skill requirements.

Tourism Minister Mark Burton on Friday told the second group to qualify as tourism apprentices that this means 6,000 new colleagues in the attractions, activity, tours, and services sector, and 4,500 new colleagues in transport - each year.

“And that is only if we maintain the market’s current situation. I believe that the New Zealand tourism sector is going to outperform forecasts and meet its almost limitless potential.”

Mr Burton said each modern apprenticeship delivered by ATTTO is a personal success story - a statement of a young person’s commitment to their training, and of their employer’s commitment to them.

As a testament to this the group included the first modern apprentices to gain three National Certificates in Tourism, the first graduate from HAPNZ and the first multiple graduations at one employer: Hell’s Gate WaiOra Spa.

“The modern apprenticeships scheme will bring many more such success stories to the tourism industry. Staff supply and skills are key issues for tourism, as they are for many employers,” Mr Burton said.

New Zealand’s strong economic performance - and the lowest unemployment rates in 17 years - means that the sector must compete with other industries to attract enough quality employees to support industry growth.”

The Minister added that increased participation by Maori will bring a range of benefits, not only through the generation of income and opportunity for Maori, but as a point-of-difference from the rest of the world.

* Graduates who received certificates from the Minister were: Delyse Sinton of Rotorua Top 10 Holiday Park and Michael Hughes, Paul Raynor and Candy and Adam Hughes of Hell’s Gate WaiOra Spa.

Cardrona Hotel for sale for \$7M
THE famous and much-photographed Cardrona Hotel, Wanaka, is on the market at \$7 million.

Chinese still short stayers

WHILE the China market continues to grow, New Zealand holidays are still tagged on the end of trips to Australia, points out TNZ CEO George Hickton.

“This is still predominantly the case. We get three or four days as no airline flies directly from China to New Zealand. We have to get the Chinese to understand New Zealand more and to realise there is more to see and do than they currently think and that they will be a lot more satisfied if they spend more time in this country.”

Mr Hickton says TNZ is training the trade in China and to date about 80 agents have approval to sell travel to New Zealand. To speed up visas, TNZ is working with NZIS to ensure applications are put in correctly.

* Qantas is introducing Sydney-Shanghai services in December.

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Sales Executive - Corporate HOTEL GROUP

If you are self-motivated, have a great personality and proven sales skills, please read on.

An exciting position has become available within our sales and marketing division that requires the services of a high achiever able to work independently from our Wellington base. Key attributes include being a self-starter with high levels of motivation, the ability to achieve excellent results through effective client relationships and a desire to become an active member of our successful sales team.

Excellent time management and organisational skills are a pre-requisite along with sound Microsoft Office experience and a willingness to travel domestically. While some background in hospitality would be an advantage, it is not mandatory.

This position services the corporate and government department markets in the lower North Island and reports to our Auckland based North Island Sales Manager. The successful applicant will receive a competitive package including company vehicle, a fully equipped business office and parking.

If you meet these criteria, please forward your CV, including three referees to:



Mike Hodges, Group Human Resources Manager,
Scenic Circle Hotels,
PO Box 29-369, CHRISTCHURCH
Email: hr@scenic-circle.co.nz
Applications close:
20 October 2004.

Neels agrees: rates should rise

ITOC president Stuart Neels says he agrees with NZHC CEO Jennie Langley regarding a gradual increase in accommodation rates (IT517) - for the long term health and profitability of the industry. He also believes that inventory is just as important as rates. "The proper use of inventory - especially hotel accommodation - is a major issue for the inbound industry." He adds: "With the increasing overseas demand for New Zealand as a destination, it is important that the accommodation sector has the correct systems and procedures in place to ensure that the limited inventory, in peak seasons, is well managed and available."

Mr Neels says better practices from all parties can be beneficial. "Accommodation providers will benefit in terms of yield and occupancy rates and the distribution in terms of access to rooms. ITOC members have a part to play in this process and our portfolio group will work with NZHC representatives to promote the better use of inventory. The recently signed Memorandum of Understanding, between ITOC and NZHC provides the opportunity to communicate more regularly on this and other issues," he adds. * See also pg6

Staff in draw for trip to Malaysia

STAFF of hotels and motels in south Auckland or near the airport who refer clients to the Auckland Explorer Bus service will have their names put in a draw to win two Malaysia Airlines tickets to Kuala Lumpur.

New Kawau Kat service for Waiheke

KAWAU Kat on Friday launched four return sailings a day from Auckland to Waiheke Island and back. The company has been running 12 years and also offers daily services to Kawau Island, as well as five daily services to Rangitoto and three harbour cruises. The company operates the Gulf Harbour ferry, too.

Barker starts at Agrodome

JASON Barker starts on Monday as GM sales and marketing for the Agrodome, Rotorua. Mr Barker has spent 14 years in tourism and hospitality, working for Newmans Tours, THL and the Intercontinental Hotels Group. MD Warren Harford will focus on new product development.

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There are five vacant positions within Tourism New Zealand's marketing department, based in Auckland. Following are brief outlines on each of the roles, for more information including position descriptions please visit www.tourisminfo.govt.nz.

Media Projects Manager: The main objective of this role is to use local and international events and projects to maximise media and PR opportunities to promote NZ as a holiday destination. Applications close at 5pm Friday 15 October 2004.

Events Coordinator: Reporting to the Events Manager you will be responsible for the development of our event marketing programme, the tactical management of events internationally and for leveraging international marketing exposure from New Zealand based events. Applications close at 5pm Wednesday 20 October 2004.

Trade Marketing Coordinator: This is a new position and reports directly to the Manager Channel Marketing and Research. This person is responsible for exposing and promoting a relevant product portfolio to New Zealand's target market through initiatives developed with the Product Marketing Coordinator. Applications close at 5pm Friday 22 October 2004.

Marketing Research Manager: This is also a new position and reports to the Manager Channel Marketing and Research and is the direct report for the Marketing Research Assistant. This person is responsible for providing leadership and advice to the marketing team on marketing research issues, plans and delivery. Applications close at 5pm Friday 22 October 2004.

Marketing Research Assistant: This position reports to the Marketing Research Projects Manager and is responsible for contributing to the development of an annual marketing research plan for TNZ and providing assistance to the marketing team on marketing research issues, plans and delivery. Applications close at 5pm Friday 22 October 2004.

Hoteliers “should be adequately rewarded”

IT’S time for the hospitality industry to be adequately rewarded for the contribution it makes to tourism. That was the message from Hospitality Association (HANZ) president Bill McLean in his keynote address at its annual meeting in Auckland.

He says that for too long too many people had been applauding tourism and the huge dollars generated by visitors, but accommodation rates now have to be raised. “The returns to those providing accommodation are terrible, given the high investment involved, and quite simply, it’s our turn to show a respectable profit.”

He adds: “Government seems set on protecting our customers from themselves and requiring the industry to do the protecting. The question I ask is - when is it going to be our turn?”

“It’s time for the politicians to start listening to the sensible and pragmatic financial suggestions the hospitality industry have been putting to them - both formally and informally.”

Shuttle air service to start up

A new air shuttle service - called air2there - is to launch next month linking Wairarapa, Manawatu, Wellington, Kapiti and Marlborough. It will operate from Paraparaumu Airport using a prop jet C208B Grand Caravan and other aircraft as necessary.

Murray Cole, executive chairman of Integra Investments Ltd Aviation Group, the company behind the service, says it will generally fly a circular route.

“Linking these centres will benefit commuters, and shoppers, trans-Tasman travellers, and Cook Strait connections, plus those getting away for a weekend in the Wairarapa or Marlborough, all at an affordable cost.”

A single section ticket, booked online, will cost from \$46 with other multi-sector commuter and frequent traveller packages also available.

Travelling air2there between Paraparaumu and Wellington or Masterton and Wellington involves one section. Palmerston North to Wellington or Masterton to Blenheim are two sections, while Blenheim to Palmerston North will be three sections.

Adds Mr Cole: “With internet ticketing, people wanting to travel between the five centres will be able to walk onto the aircraft. There is no check-in processing or having to turn up to a terminal building 30 minutes before departure, and for many connections, travellers will arrive at their destination 20 minutes after takeoff.”

Air2there is not setting out to compete with established airlines. It aims to provide a safe, alternative means of point-to-point travel. “Many people who use our service will do so in order to connect to an international flight without having to overnight in either Palmerston North or Wellington.”

Polynesian Spa opens new pools

THREE new mineral bathing pools have opened at Rotorua’s Polynesian Spa. MD Martin Lobb says it’s the culmination of 18 months planning and construction. They replace the Radium and Priest hot springs closed last year.

“Unfortunately, the old Radium and Priest pools, which were first constructed in 1931, were becoming increasingly hard to maintain. The new pools make much better use of the wonderful view across Lake Rotorua.”

Dubbed the ‘Priest Spa’ the new pools are shallow, passive bathing pools for adults. Water is between 39oC and 42oC.

The complex has hosted over eight million visitors since it began in 1972. Contact: 07-3481328 or martin@polynesianspa.co.nz.

Site in four languages

THE Christchurch and Canterbury Marketing website - www.christchurchnz.net - is now available in English, Japanese, German and Spanish.

APT hotel of year

THE Luxmore Hotel, Te Anau, is Australian Pacific Touring’s Hotel of the Year. The property has been part of APT’s 40 hotel circuit for the last seven years. But it is the first time it has received the honour. APT carries about 2,500 holidaymakers around the country each year.

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Trust plans to put Karamea on the map

THE West Coast's community-based Oparara Valley Project Trust has bought the Honeycomb Hill Cave and Kayaking Guiding concession from Karamea-based Adventures Unlimited.

The trust, which opened for business on October 1, will offer several options for guided tours, including transport from Karamea into the basin, with helicopter transport an option.

The trust plans to introduce a range of options, such as an extended tour that will encompass the arches as well as the caves, twilight tours to sample the night life and trips to other areas. Once the blue duck breeding season is over, it will launch a kayak trip upriver to the Honeycomb Hill Arch.

The area combines weird and wonderful limestone formations complete with glowworms, and the largest and most varied collection of subfossil bird bones ever found in New Zealand.

No exit

Because there is no exit to the road north of Westport, visitors largely bypass Westport and towns north. While the Punakaiki Visitor Centre has 450,000 visitors/year, the Westport Visitor Centre receives only 50,000 - and Karamea Visitor Centre just 12,000.

But the trust plans: a quality easy access loop track for casual or impaired visitors; a four or five hour trek; a one day trek to old goldfields.

It is also working on a reconstructed logging winch bank adjacent to a historic sawmill site, building a covered picnic area and toilet facilities, putting up interpretative panels and publishing a guide book.

* A 28km mountain bike track along a disused logging road - nicknamed K Road - was opened by PM Helen Clark last year. Bookings 03-7826652 or info@karameainfo.co.nz.

* West Coast tourism is expected to increase every year to 2010. Overnight visits are expected to jump 29.4 percent to 1.1 million and total day visits will increase by 12.3 percent to 640,000.

In 2003 the region attracted 877,000 overnight and 569,000 day visitors, with a spending power of \$321 million.

Manawatu RTO success sees chairman stay on

DESTINATION Manawatu's success in positioning itself as one of the country's leading RTOs has encouraged board chairman David Jewell to continue his role for a sixth year.

In his annual report, Mr Jewell says the board's strategic efforts to strengthen its business partnerships with key industry stakeholders has been well rewarded, providing the organisation with a solid foundation for future growth.

Horizons Regional Council has awarded DM a one-year contract to lead Palmerston North City, Manawatu District, Rangitikei, Tararua, Horowhenua and Wanganui in their marketing efforts.

Working direct

He says while supportive of the Destination River Region board's efforts, DM decided a year ago to work directly with TNZ to maximise opportunities for the region. DM's funding levels, coupled with its national and international tourism strategies, shows that it is operating at a level comparable to that of the country's 10 top RTOs.

Mr Jewell says that Destination Manawatu is determined to increase its regional profile through TNZ.

The desire to add value has seen the RTO pick up a further contract from the Palmerston North City Council to manage the CBD's marketing and promotional strategy to June 2008.

While disappointed that Destination Manawatu hasn't yet been successful in winning a five-year contract to host the AVESCO V8 Supercars at Manfeild from 2006, Mr Jewell believes the information collected and the support networks identified will provide a valuable blueprint for Manawatu's next major bid.

AirNZ's \$350M investment in Air Nelson

AIRNZ on Monday signed an agreement with Bombardier Aerospace to acquire 17 new Dash 8 Q300 turbo-prop aircraft which will be operated by Link carrier Air Nelson, replacing its current fleet of Saab 340A aircraft. The deal is worth \$350 million.

Tops for confabs

WE top the list as "international conference destination of choice" in Mice.net magazine's Australian survey, conducted by AC Nielson. The survey also shows that respondents mainly select their venue on location, and not price.

Two more Hagglands

CHRISTCHURCH'S International Antarctic Centre has two more all-terrain Haggland vehicles, taking its fleet to four. The adventure ride is the only one of its type in the world that's set amidst a working Antarctic campus.

Southern success

THE Southern Lakes and Otago regions collected four category prizes, plus the supreme overall winner award, in HANZ's 2004 annual Awards for Excellence. The New Orleans Hotel, Arrowtown, carried off the biggest prize, as well as winning the Best Country Hotel Award. Edgewater Resort, Wanaka, won the Excellence in Customer Service and Best Marketed Accommodation Hotel, and The Pub, Cromwell, won the Excellence in Gaming category. Insurance brokers Crombie Lockwood sponsor the Best Country Hotel Award, and judges described New Orleans Hotel as "an unpretentious, friendly, well-run establishment that preserves both the architectural heritage and the old fashioned hospitality traditions of the region. It caters equally well for locals and the tourist trade." HANZ CEO Bruce Robertson says interest in the awards has been growing steadily since they were begun in 1998, with 128 entries received this year.

Good season for ski industry

THE ski industry this season is expected to earn turnover higher than last year's \$60 million which saw 1.2 million visit the 14 commercial ski areas, says Ski Industry Federation CEO Miles Davidson.

* The second school holidays were strong for Ruapehu Alpine Lifts (RAL) says marketing manager Mike Smith. Whakapapa and Turoa ski areas were ahead of budget. The company looks like posting its best financial result in a decade.

Mr Smith says: "Whakapapa is already ahead of any other year since 1994 and Turoa looks like it will post a record skier count as well." Whakapapa will close on October 31 and Turoa on November 21. Given current snow cover it is likely Whakapapa will also be able to offer summer skiing when it reopens for its summer season on December 11," Mr Smith tells *IT*.

* Queenstown's best ski season in a decade has been confirmed by figures released by StatisticsNZ. The resort's guest nights for August increased 8.9 percent to 267,609. The most significant increase has come from the Australian market where guest nights have increased 22 percent.

* Rainbow skifield closed five days before expected. It had been open for three out of the previous eight days. Unsettled weather prompted the call to pack up for the season.

Japanese keen on Rotorua jet service - and duck tours

TOURISM Rotorua international marketing manager Mike Gibbons and GM Don Gunn say that when they attended KiwiLink Asia and KiwiLink Japan both markets were interested in the fact that Rotorua now has direct jet services to Christchurch available through Qantas and AirNZ.

"Japanese agents were also particularly taken with the idea of Rotorua Duck Tours - lake/city tours in an amphibious WWII 6-wheel, all terrain landing vehicle," adds Mr Gunn.

Five Rotorua operators plus Tourism Rotorua were present at KiwiLink Japan while 10 operators plus Tourism Rotorua were present in KiwiLink Asia - the strongest representation from any region.

Southland delights its visitors

VISITORS to Southland are expressing a high level of satisfaction with their experience when it comes to products and services, according to a survey by SGL Consulting for Venture Southland.

Four out of five respondents indicated that all their expectations had been met. The beauty of the natural environment was high on the list when visitors were asked to name the most enjoyable aspects of their visit, and the friendliness and helpfulness of locals came next.

When asked for suggestions for improving the region as a destination most either offered no comment or said it should be left as it is - because that's its attraction.

Some 52 percent of respondents were from overseas and a further 30 percent from the North Island.

* Most were 'high end' with high disposable income, individuals or couples in the 25-34 age group. There were few family groups. The main reasons given for visiting were for a holiday or VFR.

A surprisingly large proportion did not pre-book accommodation, transport or activities, which Venture Southland says reflects the 'footloose-and-fancy-free' characteristics of the FIT. The predominant mode of transport used to get around was car. More visitors made use of motels, backpacker hostels and motor camps than other forms of accommodation.

Where did people go? In April, almost all visitors included Invercargill on their itinerary. The surrounding area, including Bluff and Stewart Island, was popular at all times.

Te Anau, Milford and Manapouri featured high on the list of places to visit, while the east coast and Catlins area were popular in January.

TNZ in line for three TUANZ awards

THREE of TNZ's website developments are up for Telecommunications Users Association of New Zealand e-vision awards.

The haka module on newzealand.com is entered in the marketing and integrated marketing award. The interactive map is up for the information reference award and the site's training tools are in the interactive training tools award.

TIANZ congratulations

TIANZ says it congratulates all successful local body candidates and reiterates that strong local government is critical to the success of tourism. "TIANZ works closely with local authorities with the goal of developing tourism in a way that recognises local aspirations."

First to gain full GG status

KAIKOURA is the first town anywhere to gain full Green Globe status, although the Bali Tourist Corporation - a group of hotels and a village - has already achieved it. Some 1.4 million people visited Kaikoura last year. Yet the town has only 3,483 residents.

Kaikoura District Council CEO Stuart Grant says: "Green Globe has provided a marketing advantage as it tells tourists that people of Kaikoura are not only concerned about their environment but they are also taking steps to improve it. "We have the potential to not only become the eco-tourism capital of New Zealand but also (have) a truly sustainable future... that will benefit everyone."

Green Globe benefits are economic. They are in reducing costs and improve efficiencies by using less energy. The steps Kaikoura has taken include adopting zero waste, looking at its CO2 emissions and encouraging businesses to be more efficient.

The town is to host the 2005 international zero waste conference in April.

Official site to help Lions supporters find a bed

WELLINGTON'S official tourism website is coming to the rescue of British Lions supporters who may find themselves without a bed during next year's rugby tour.

WellingtonNZ.com is hosting a special webpage for Wellingtonians who want to let their house out to supporters.

Positively Wellington Tourism's Online and IT Manager Kate Clode says the home hosting page is designed to ensure no visitors to Wellington during the tour are left scrambling for a place to stay.

"Already the city's commercial accommodation is looking very full, so this is an excellent way to make sure no visitors to Wellington are disappointed because they can't find anywhere to stay.

"It's all about guaranteeing every single Lions supporter who comes to Wellington has a fantastic experience which they can then tell their friends and family back home about."

Wellington i-SITE's Paul McLaughlin expects the page will be well used.

"It's going to be an excellent resource for us because we'll never have to say to visitors 'no room at the inn'. There will always be other options they can explore, and we can help them out with that."

Before directing visitors to the home hosting page, however, the city's commercial accommodation must be full.

Fly with AirNZ - and park free

AIRNZ is offering free airport parking to customers on its nonstop flights between San Francisco and Auckland, in an effort to promote the new service.

Under an agreement with SkyPark customers receive seven days' free parking and a reduced rate for each additional day.

*** Qantas has launched the Aussie Air Pass for US customers. It's been likened by Australian tourism officials to a "Eurail Pass in the air."**

Tourism helps CIAL achieve record revenues

GROWTH in air services and the development of tourism demand have enabled Christchurch International Airport Limited (CIAL) to achieve record revenues, resulting in an after tax surplus of \$14.8 million for the year ended June. This is a 14 percent increase on last year's result.

With international passenger growth in the first three months of the new financial year up 41 percent on the previous year, CIAL is focused on expansion needs and has forecast the need for significant capital expenditure.

The company has started consultation with customers on development options for its domestic terminal, anticipating completion of a business case in the third quarter of 2005.

"We have to be aware of the rapidly changing aviation market as well as developments by other airports such as Auckland, Dunedin and Queenstown, and potentially Whenuapai," says chairman Syd Bradley.

With a strong balance sheet and an increase in the company's Standard & Poor's international credit rating to A+, CIAL is well positioned to meet future capital requirements and in a strong position to respond to the needs of a rapidly changing aviation industry.

The company is aggressively marketing the region and route opportunities. In the past year CIAL was the only New Zealand airport to attract new services from Qantas, AirNZ, Freedom Air, Pacific Blue and Emirates.

Gov't gearing for more tourists - Barker

"THE message is clear, this government is not only getting on the front foot in the new security climate, but has its boots on and is gearing up to receive more tourists whilst stamping on drug traffickers," says Customs Minister Rick Barker in his annual report. He was commenting on the \$16 million increase in funding last year.

New bylaw proposed for Milford road

TRANSIT NZ regional manager Mike O'Cain has told a Bus and Coach Association (BCA) meeting in Queenstown that a bylaw may be written allowing the Te-Anau to Milford Road to be opened conditionally in marginal conditions - but only for accredited coach drivers.

The LTSA's Graeme Rice said his organisation is also working on a programme called Operator Safety Rating.

Essentially "good" and "bad" transport service operators are identified based on various safety criteria. The "good" are to be rewarded with benefits yet to be identified, while the "bad" are targeted for enforcement action.

Accepting Codes of Practice such as the one already drawn up will become an important part of the OSH regime.

Should a driver be involved in an accident, OSH will look at industry best practice to see if the employer could have taken steps to avoid the hazard. Clearly ensuring the driver is properly trained to deal with the hazards of the road will be part of that investigation, he warned.

To date, 47 drivers have passed their Milford Road accreditation, with a further 13 working on it. The BCA estimates that at least 600 drivers make the trip regularly to Milford.

THL Rentals' facelift

THL Rentals' Christchurch branch is to undergo a similar facelift to the \$500,000 one given to the company's Auckland branch, just opened by Manukau mayor Sir Barry Curtis.

Boutique hotel for sale

AYLSTONE, a five room boutique hotel with development potential set amongst the vineyards of Martinborough, is for sale.

Clientele includes overseas visitors, weekend visitors from Wellington, seminars and small-scale weddings. The property could be turned into a health spa. Tenders close next Wednesday. Details: John Welch 025-434800 or www.aylstone.co.nz.

ACCC decision “comes too late”

THE cavalry has finally arrived. But it is too late to save the Qantas-AirNZ alliance, points out Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation MD Peter Harbison.

Qantas’ appeal against the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission’s rejection of the proposed alliance was, surprisingly for many, allowed by the Competition Tribunal (ACT).

“Although the result is now probably academic, the ACT robustly rejected the ACCC’s strong opposition to the proposal. In doing so, the court approved proposals for Qantas to acquire a 22.5 percent shareholding in Air New Zealand, to codeshare and to coordinate routes and pricing.”

Mr Harbison adds: “However, last month’s rejection of the same proposal by the New Zealand High Court makes all but limited cooperation out of the question. Perhaps more importantly, the Qantas response to that judgment - ‘it is now time to move on’ - reflects the fact that times have changed.

“Also, perhaps with the exception of AirNZ CEO, Ralph Norris, the strong impression from within Air New Zealand is that we are now in a new era. For Air New Zealand is today a very different airline from the recently-renationalised weakling which first entered into negotiations with Qantas in what was near to a takeover by the Australian carrier.” He says competition laws are an inappropriate and inadequate tool for formulating international aviation policy.

Children’s book is invitation

AUCKLAND’S latest attraction - Butterfly Creek’s Tropical Butterfly House - opens next Thursday. And to encourage invited guests to attend organisers are posting out copies of the popular children’s book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.

Chef tastes success

QUEENSTOWN Blanket Bay sous chef Mark Sycamore has come third in one of Europe’s top chef competitions. The 25-year-old admits he’s disappointed he didn’t take first place in the line up of 10 finalists in the coveted Gordon Ramsay Scholar Award for young chefs.

Moran moves to Taranaki

DR Dominic Moran has been appointed Venture Taranaki’s new “tourism leader.” He previously managed tourism and economic development for Banks Peninsula.

Dr Moran, a research fellow at Lincoln University, completed New Zealand’s first PhD in adventure and backpacker tourism. He holds a BA and honours degree from the University of Canterbury, and a doctorate in tourism from Lincoln. He has been involved in the industry for 10 years, and helped develop tourism on the West Coast.

He says: “Taranaki has great natural and people resources, and I look forward to encouraging the development of a broad product base in the local tourism industry.” He will be responsible for the strategy developed by consultant Geoff Burns. Venture Taranaki CEO Stuart Trundle says: “Dominic’s recent experience within local government will allow him to cross the boundaries required to assist the strategic development of this key economic sector.”

* Replacing Dr Moran in Banks Peninsula is Jo Naish who has just returned from four years overseas, including more than two years as marketing manager for the Melbourne International Film Festival. She has also worked for Montana Wines.

Ms Naish has lived in France and has a passion for things French. Her family are from Akaroa.

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HARBOUR VIEW LODGE - Tairua. Purpose built B&B, 3 guest rooms with ensuite, a guest lounge, owner’s accommodation, tastefully decorated. Pacific Coast Highway location, stunning views and pool, impressive returns. Enjoy Coromandel lifestyle and beautiful beaches. Garry Paterson 021 341 447

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