

Inside Nigel Coventry Tourism

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We remain a 'hot' destination

THE demand for travel to New Zealand remains at unprecedented levels with the country expected to exceed 2.4 million international arrivals this year in contrast to 500,000 in 1983.

THL chairman Keith Smith said in his annual report on Tuesday: "There are no indications that we can see which suggests New Zealand's bubble as a 'hot' tourist destination is going to burst!"

The Tourism Research Council has investigated three major international tourist profiles over the past five years.

Mr Smith added: "In the pre-sold or series tour market there has been no growth over the past five years.

"In the semi-independent traveller sector, which reflects tourists that want a degree of pre-booked and organised travel, there has been a spectacular growth of 15.5 percent per annum.

"With the FIT...market - normally associated with the backpacker sector (18-35 years) - booking on arrival there has been a growth of 8.5 percent a year."

investment

He adds: "THL's investment focus is oriented to the SIT/FIT markets which are enjoying this substantial growth with only Johnston's Coachlines and our packaging operation of Discover New Zealand operating in the pre-sold series touring market."

Mr Smith said THL's net profit after tax jumped 29 percent to \$11.2 million. The trading tax paid profit increased 43 percent to \$10.3 million.

"This much improved financial performance reflects the improved tourism environment which hasn't been affected by any world events that seriously impacted the two previous financial years.

"Our NZ Rentals business performed extremely well with profit up 30 percent on a revenue increase of 13 percent."

The higher group profit of \$11.2 million and continual focus on "Cash is King" programmes generated operating cash flows of \$40 million.

Bullish THL buys Fullers Bay of Islands

THL is buying Fullers Bay of Islands from Marine Tourism Holdings (MTH), owned by entrepreneurs Chris Jacobs, Roger Dold and Peter Murphy. Takeover is December 1.

The business operates Fullers Bay of Islands and Awesome Adventures. It has four cruising products including the Cape Brett Hole in the Rock and Cream Trip cruises, Dolphin Adventures and the Excitor Fast Boat.

Ferry

Other businesses include the Russell / Paihia passenger ferry and vehicle ferries at Opuia. Fullers also operates coach tours to Cape Reinga via Ninety Mile Beach.

Fullers Bay of Islands won the Supreme Award in the New Zealand Tourism Awards in 2000.

THL MD Dennis Pickup says:

"Fullers is a great fit with THL's existing operations and the two companies have the benefit of a long standing and rewarding business association.

"THL's coaching operation of Johnston's, Great Sights and Kiwi Experience together with our NZ Maui and Britz motorhome and car rental businesses all feed into Fullers' products."

THL is paying \$18 million on settlement and \$4 million on or about May 31 next year.

Funding is from THL's bank facilities.

THL expects this acquisition to increase reported EBITA by \$3.3 million for the remaining (over)

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Pages Past...

TEN years ago in IT...

SHOTOVER Jet has made a surprise bid to take over the Mount Cavendish Gondola Co, Christchurch. The offer is one Shotover ordinary share for every three Mount Cavendish shares.

In a statement to the Stock Exchange Shotover said Mount Cavendish has had a chequered financial track record. Last week it announced a loss of \$214,000 for the year. By contrast Shotover has a history of strong profit performance according to MD James Boulton.

* The gondola has been renamed the Christchurch Gondola.

WE could be losing more than \$16 million a year because the Homer Tunnel is too small for state-of-the-art coaches to carry overseas visitors to Milford Sound. But Transit NZ has agreed to investigate digging passing bays and installing sensor devices to help drivers negotiate the tunnel.

TOURISM Auckland is to receive \$700,000 this financial year - up from \$254,000, thanks to extra funding from Auckland City promotions committee. This is on condition that the RTO board is restructured to include more experienced industry members - and that council approves a draft marketing plan.

IF we start charging overseas visitors a "green" tax to run our national parks and reserves it could be looked upon positively believes Opposition Associate Tourism spokesman Damien O'Connor. He says DoC needs more money and he's sure visitors would be prepared to contribute. "If we presented it as a tax to keep our environment clean and green it could be marketed as a positive thing."

BANNING coaches from central Queenstown is now off the Queenstown Lakes District Council agenda. For now!

IT was the first to reveal last week that the council is considering restricting coach movements within the CBD. But Bus and Coach Association executive director John Collens was quick to weigh in - with marked success. Mr Collens is delighted council is reconsidering.

NZ Rail has joined with West Coast operator Wild West Adventure Co to introduce a new series of one and two day adventure packages.

Bullish THL buys Fullers Bay of Islands

(from pg 1) seven months of this financial year. All existing Fullers Bay of Islands staff will be retained under CEO Kit Nixon, who will report to Mr Pickup.

No new plans - Murray

GROUP GM Sean Murray says THL has no new major plans for Fullers. "There will be no wild changes or reconstruction. What the acquisition does is perhaps put THL in the position where we will look a lot more closely and more actively in trying to increase visitor numbers to Northland and the Bay of Islands in particular, through the likes of Kiwi Experience, Great Sights, Britz and Maui motorhomes and cars. We will be asking ourselves what we can do to encourage more of our customers to get up to the Bay. This will be a major focus for us in the coming year."

Mr Murray says THL believes the Fullers business has a lot of extra capacity. "We are hopeful there will be a lot of new accommodation going into the Bay of Islands to cope with visitor growth and we want to help generate that extra business."

Forward bookings for rentals are strong

THL's rental business has had a good start to the year during which the company acquired the forward bookings and fleet of Cruise NZ. Rentals forward bookings for the high season are therefore strong.

Says chairman Keith Smith: "Our rentals fleet of 4,300 vehicles are not directly exposed to fuel costs as they are met by the hirers. However, with our coaching and vessel fleets fuel is a significant cost. We have applied where possible a fuel surcharge to recover as much of the recent fuel cost increases as we can."

Loyalty scheme to benefit nature

THL and BP will bring in a loyalty scheme early next year. THL chairman Keith Smith says: "The hirers of our 2,800 Rentals fleet of motorhomes and cars in New Zealand travel up to 100 million kilometres a year. BP will reward and rebate to an environmental trust formed by THL and BP based on the fuel consumed by the hirers..."

The trust has identified major environmental initiatives. The first to be established is in the Ruakuri Reserve at Waitomo. This area is directly associated with THL's cave attractions and Black Water Rafting business. The project will install within the reserve a fenced off area to protect kiwis from predators.

A marine project identified with Kelly Tarlton's and a Fiordland National Park species initiative aligned to THL's investments in Milford Sound are also being considered. With THL's acquisition of Fullers Bay of Islands a project will be developed in Northland, too.

* After 18 years on the THL board, Don Spary has retired. Mr Spary was one of the five original directors of The Helicopter Line (later to become Tourism Holdings Ltd or THL)

Leap forward for Maori tourism

MAORI tourism has taken a leap forward with the establishment of the New Zealand Maori Tourism Society.

The body marks an important chapter in the implementation of the New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2010 which envisages that the development of Maori tourism requires strong Maori RTOs supported by a national Maori organisation.

Associate Tourism Minister Dover Samuels says: "The establishment of the new National Maori Tourism Organisation will provide a strong platform for Maori operators to work collectively to improve industry standards and identify opportunities.

He says Maori tourism is still underdeveloped and the new National Maori Tourism Organisation will benefit Maori, the industry and the economy.

"The government recognises the Maori tourism sector is growing quickly and it is important we assist this industry to develop in a positive and sustainable way," adds Mr Samuels. The society has a membership base of 13 Maori RTOs.

The network was responsible for enabling TNZ, Rough Guides UK, AirNZ and other international partners to produce the travel guide publication *Rough Guide To Maori New Zealand*.

The society is governed by the New Zealand Maori Tourism Council, chaired by Peter Kitchen of Kaitaia. CEO is Johnny Edmonds. Contact: 021-402419.

Dot travel due next year?

AN internet domain name for the travel industry is expected to become available next year....dot travel.

Million leak out...

ALMOST a million New Zealanders visited Australia in the year to September, a rise of 23 percent says the Australian Tourism Export Council. Tourism is worth A\$17,000 million in Australia.

* More than 395,000 overseas visitors arrived in Australia during September, making a record for that month.

We ain't so clean, after all!

LANDCARE researcher Garry McDonald and Massey University associate professor Murray Patterson say tourism is responsible for up to 25 percent of all energy used in New Zealand. It is also a big carbon dioxide polluter - and the industry has a long way to go before it can claim to be "clean and green."

Most of the pollution is from fuel powering international air travel.

Coach parking debated

QUEENSTOWN Lakes District Council is considering turning the One Mile Carpark into an overnight coach park.

Bus companies are concerned that they have lost eight parks in Duke Street to make way for major streetscape redevelopment associated with the new Sofitel Hotel.

Cr Rick Pettit says coach companies do not contribute rates. So they should pay for parking.

Bus and Coach Association executive director John Collins says there are a million passenger journeys into Queenstown every year. More parking is "eminently long overdue."

(See also pg 2 *Pages Past*)

ADVERT

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DFS Galleria is a specialist in merchandising to the travelling public, and has developed a world wide reputation as an industry leader in high quality destination specific merchandise presented in innovative airport and downtown luxury shopping environments.

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To apply for this exciting role, please send a cover letter and your CV to Patria Reid, Director of Human Resources, DFS New Zealand Ltd, P O Box 73018, Auckland International Airport or email it to careersnz@dfs.com.

London awards season good way to promote excellence and marketing

TAILOR Made Travel was named New Zealand Travel Specialist of the Year at the 2004 New Zealand Travel and Tourism Awards held in London last week. Sponsored by TNZ and AirNZ the awards are in their fifth year and recognise the marketing and sales work undertaken by the UK industry to promote New Zealand.

The supreme winner received a New Zealand holiday worth £20,000, including business class flights, luxury lodge accommodation and car hire. Some 22 operators and specialist retailers entered the awards. Tailor Made Travel also claimed the prize for Best Dedicated New Zealand Brochure of the Year.

Last year's supreme winner, The Turquoise Holiday Company, won Best Integrated New Zealand Direct Marketing or Promotional Campaign, Best New Zealand Integrated Marketing Campaign, Best New Zealand New Concept (joint win with All Ways Pacific Travel) and Best New Zealand Product Section Within a Brochure.

Quest Travel collected two key awards, the sales prize for Best Direct Sell Operator to New Zealand and a product award for Best New Zealand On-Line Product, while Expedia was awarded Best E-agent for online sales to New Zealand.

Lodges host

New Zealand Lodge Association (NZLA)'s Garrick Emms says the awards are a good way to promote excellence in the marketing and presentation of the New Zealand tourism product.

"It also gives our members a chance to host and entertain high profile UK agents at our lodges and in our regions. Tailor Made Travel are long term supporters of our lodges and New Zealand in general. Both NZLA and AirNZ have already been involved in a number of joint ventures with the company over the years. Their win will be a popular choice with NZLA members."

* NZLA in association with ATS Pacific, AirNZ and TNZ last week organised and hosted an industry dinner at NZ House, London, for major UK and European agents and media. Russian, Dutch and Irish agents were also there. A major coup was to have Conde Nast Traveller editor Sarah Miller in attendance.

ATS MD Stuart Neels launched the news ATS product called "*Special Places*" which is a series of lodge based options and itineraries with activities such as wine trails, golf and eco tours.

* In the *Sunday Times* Travel Magazine Awards, also last week, Blanket Bay was the editor's choice for The Ultimate Escape. Mr Emms accepted the award on behalf of the lodge.

Police focus on thieves who steal from tourists

POLICE are to focus on the increasing prevalence of car break-ins and thefts in the Mount Eden area of Auckland. Senior Sergeant Richard Chambers says tourists' vehicles are often targeted at Mount Eden - probably because visitors to the country tend to carry valuables.

"Tourists that are guests in the country are getting dealt to," he adds.

Mental patients and homeless billeted in hostels

BUDGET Backpackers Hostel Association director Mark Dumble is horrified that mental health patients and the homeless are being referred to tourist hostels and backpackers in Whangarei - due to claims there is nowhere else for them to go. "We are not social workers, we are not half-way houses. Our market is tourists."

He adds: "However sympathetic we are to the plight of these people it is completely unacceptable and inappropriate that they are placed in close proximity to tourists. Commonsense tells you it's a good recipe for disaster."

Kiwi Haka: real pro show

SKYLINE Queenstown's newest attraction, the Kiwi Haka show, is wowing visitors from around the world. Skyline manager Simon Cartwright says: "There's a difference between a performer just going through the motions and one that really loves what he or she's doing. These guys put on a number of shows a night and they're every bit as enthusiastic each time they come out on stage."

He adds: "It's easy for our staff to sell tickets as that enthusiasm is infectious, so everybody goes away happy. It's a great new attraction for the Skyline package."

Districts unite

GISBORNE, Wairoa and Opotiki districts have agreed to a uniformed regional branding for Eastland. Each now features its own name as part of this.

Kapiti plans for QEII Park

KAPITI residents are proposing a regional visitor centre at Queen Elizabeth Park, Paekakariki, which could include backpackers' and luxury accommodation, a restaurant, a museum and virtual tours of the Tararuas and Kapiti Island. Kite flying lessons, diving trips, guided walks and biking tours are also being suggested.

Tomb a drawcard?

THE new Tomb of the Unknown Warrior will add significant weight to Wellington's appeal as a nationhood and heritage tourism destination, says Positively Wellington Tourism.

CEO Tim Cossar says: "This has the potential to become a strong visitor attraction, primarily for the domestic market, because it represents such an important part of New Zealand's history."

He compares it to Canberra's Australian War Memorial, which attracts nearly one million visitors a year. "We expect many New Zealanders will travel to Wellington to see the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior. It's a symbol of pride and national identity and we're privileged to have it in Wellington."

Tourism Workforce and Skill Projections Report

Not the first?

THE Tourism Workforce and Skills Projections Report is not “the first comprehensive project on workforce needs in the industry,” says former TIANZ CEO Tony Staniford.

“I am not sure what ‘comprehensive’ means,” he tells IT, “but it certainly wasn’t the first.

“That was probably the 1969 National Development exercise or perhaps the 1979 one. Certainly the late Professor Ron Moore’s assessment of work place needs of 1984 or 85 was ‘comprehensive’ and was followed by a major conference to discuss the findings.”

Mr Staniford says he was also amused to read that HANZ CEO Bruce Robertson says that his association has been working on this issue “for the last four years.” “He has either forgotten, or doesn’t know of HANZ’s involvement in the previous mentioned exercises. But some things do not change. The industry will take as much notice of this latest report as it did of the previous ones.”

Sector summaries and highlights - II

Transport

NEARLY 41,000 people are employed in the transport sector and this is broken down into three main areas: air transport, surface transport, and services to transport and storage. While the services to transport sector makes up 45 percent of the total group there is a high degree of integration between the three.

The largest of the five core occupations is travel consultants (4,692), who predominantly work full time in the **services to transport** sector.

Operators in the **air transport** sector have indicated they experience difficulty attracting pilots, flight attendants, and engineering staff. Among the key reasons identified for high turnover are: a loss of glamour associated with the industry; a wider choice of tourism-related occupations; and greater opportunities overseas due to the relatively small size of the market in New Zealand.

Feedback

Feedback from consultations in the **surface transport** sector indicates the level of people seeking casual employment has decreased following the introduction of the student loan scheme. It appears to be increasingly difficult to source new drivers for tour coaches as the provision of live commentaries during bus tours has increased the skill requirements. The sector also experiences a relatively high staff turnover due to hours of work, nature of work (eg regular travel impacts on time available with families), and relatively low remuneration levels. The other group of staff it is becoming difficult to retain is those in call centres. Many are choosing part-time work and consultations show full-time positions in regional centres are increasingly difficult to fill during peak times.

The 2010 projections for total employment for the core occupation groups in surface transport show that passenger and coach drivers with an increase of 126 workers per annum followed by travel consultants with an increase of 107 workers are the largest two occupation groups that can prepare for a needed increase. **(More next issue)**

Ogle now Mr Mountain

DOC has announced that Taranaki backpackers’ guru and tourism award winner Gary B. Ogle will take over leases for the Camphouse, Egmont National Park, the historic Rahiri Cottage gatehouse on Egmont Road and the restaurant at the North Egmont VIC on December 1. Mr Ogle has three existing backpacker lodges, a farmstay and a holiday park in Taranaki.

They are “Wheatly Downs Farmstay” on his cattle farm, Ararata, just out of Hawera, “Palm House” at Mokau and “Egmont Eco Lodge YHA” and “Egmont Eco Leisure Park” both in New Plymouth.

Says Mr Ogle: “This is an opportunity in conjunction with DoC with potential beyond belief. Mount Egmont is the icon of Taranaki and having been in tourism and

working with international travellers for over 25 years, I know that North Egmont has never been marketed to its full potential. We have been far too busy providing new product within the region while turning our backs on our major iconic attraction. This is set to change!”

* About 360,000 visitors make the trip into the park, with 80,000 visitors going through the centre each year.

Runway extension for Inver’gill

A \$4 million, 500m extension to Invercargill’s runway will take it to 2,210m and thus reportedly make it the longest in the country after Auckland and Christchurch. It’ll be long enough to enable fully laden planes to operate between Invercargill and Australia.

ADVERT

Visiting Stewart Island?

There’s plenty of accommodation at Beach House and Kereru House. Bookings: Brenda and Roger Hicks on phone/fax 03-2191348

**By Venture Taranaki
tourism leader Dr Dominic
Moran**

AS we are all aware, the tourism industry is complex and constantly changing. It cuts across wider industry and local communities in a number of different ways. For example, if one was to ask a service station or supermarket owner, "Are you a tourism business?" They would likely reply: "No."

Location

However, depending on location, these types of businesses might potentially draw a considerable share of their total revenue from travellers and out-of-town visitors (i.e. tourists).

We are now told that the industry is our largest export earner and is predicted to maintain high rates of growth over the next decade. It is unique in that, unlike the meat, wool or timber etc. that we send off-shore, the product (the tourists) come to us.

This presents a whole range of challenges as the number of tourists increase. We must ensure that we can efficiently transport, feed and accommodate them. We

The changing face of regional tourism

must provide them with good quality roads, places to park, toilets that flush and environments that are safe.

Tourists constantly seek quality experiences in our national parks, museums, galleries, heritage sites, shopping malls and restaurants. It is crucial that local communities, as hosts, provide positive and friendly interactions for their guests. However, when there are either too many tourists or their impacts place pressure on communities, locals and tourists can quickly become very cynical toward each other. We have all heard the cry, "Quality over quantity!" with regard to sustainable tourism development.

Evolve

This leads me to the need to evolve our marketing strategies and reassess the appropriate roles for RTOs.

New Zealand is quickly reaching the point - if it hasn't already - where we have to focus more closely on the types of tourists we attract to our local regions.

It is not just about the domestic/international mix or what country we wish to target. It is also about matching the motives of visitors and the experiences they seek with what we can provide at a regional level.

TNZ has led the way at the national level by focusing upon "the interactive traveller." However, I sense that at the regional level there remains a heavy focus on marketing for "more, more and more" visitors. We must be more sophisticated!

Key

RTOs must realise that marketing and promotion are key components in a wider strategy rather than being ends in themselves.

We must also focus more attention on destination management in conjunction with local councils, best practice and capacity building for our local operators and improving stakeholder relationships at regional, national and international levels.

While I see some movement in these areas through initiatives such as the "Tourism Toolkits" by Local Govt NZ, I encourage all regions to consider these issues in more detail over the coming months and years.

The industry cannot be taken for granted and we must be more strategic in our planning for a sustainable economic yield.

This is certainly the approach we will be taking in Taranaki!

Hill of Terror opens!

VISITORS to Christchurch's International Antarctic Centre can now ride a Haggglund all-terrain vehicle as it takes on the new seven metre 33.7 degree Hill of Terror. The recently completed \$60,000 hill is higher than a two-story building.

This latest addition to the Antarctic Haggglund Adventure Course has been designed to push the vehicle to its limit.

Three extra Haggglunds, worth \$750,000 each, have also just arrived from England.

Centre director Richard Benton says: "We have had a staggering 288,000 Haggglund passengers to date, and demand for rides continues to exceed supply.

"The Hill of Terror adds another dimension of excitement to the already challenging course for our visitors, many of whom come back regularly."

Hoteliers fuming at inaction

CHRISTCHURCH hoteliers are upset their city council has dropped a plan to ban cars from Cathedral Square at night.

Figures reflect winter trend

GUEST nights in the Queenstown-Lakes/Central Otago area increased 11.6 percent to 243,268 in the year to September. Overall international visitor guest nights increased 15.3 percent to 156,840 while domestic visitor guest nights grew 5.5 percent.

Destination Queenstown CEO David Kennedy says the figures reflect the trends of the winter season.

"Locally, the tourism industry enjoyed a strong winter that continued into spring supported by excellent snow conditions and a superb events calendar. Australian guest nights figures were up 33 percent to 86,050."

Society warns visitors to beware of the sun

IF overseas visitors are not careful, they'll take home more than just memories, warns the Cancer Society. We have an atmosphere that presents a high risk of sunburn in summer. Whilst many of us realise this, not all international tourists are conscious of the dangers...

"Our clear skies, closeness to the sun, and relatively low ozone amounts mean that the ultraviolet radiation that reaches New Zealand is particularly strong," says society SunSmart spokeswoman, Wendy Billingsley. "It's something that often catches out visitors from the northern hemisphere." Details: 04-4947270 or 021-1767563.

Duo set up Marketing Solutions

IN response to growth in the tourism and convention industries, sales and marketing specialists Sarah Hillman and Tania Adolphe (nee Sesto) have formed Tourism Marketing Solutions Ltd. The duo have more than 40 combined years of experience within the hotel and tourism industry in Australasia. Details: 09-4805861 or sales @tmsolutions.co.nz.

New airfield for skydiving

MATT Adams of Blenheim plans a new airfield on private farmland at Waihaha near Taupo. The CAA is considering the effects the proposal could have. Mr Adams wants to start a skydiving business.

Collective may be NZ first

TWO major tourism attractions have formed a marketing collective which they believe is a New Zealand industry first.

The New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute and Skyline Skyrides have appointed a joint Japanese marketing manager, Jun Takemoto, to increase Japanese visitors into Rotorua. Mr Takemoto has had 13 years' experience in the industry.

Institute CEO Andrew Te Whaiti says: "We see it as a positive move, not only for our two businesses, but for Rotorua as a whole. This is a long term commitment."

Skyline Skyrides GM Neville Nicholson says the potential is enormous.

"This is a huge step forward in the way New Zealand and Rotorua are marketed to the rest of the world. This kind of teamwork will result in increased Japanese visitor arrivals into Rotorua and benefit local businesses across all sectors."

* Of the 170,000 Japanese to New Zealand each year, 60,000 visit Rotorua.

Manawatu launches website for Lions fans

DESTINATION Manawatu, in partnership with the Manawatu Rugby Union, has launched a dedicated website to capture the interest of British Lions supporters during the tour next year.

The British and Irish Lions play Manawatu on June 28, as the mid week game between the first and second tests. It is expected that there will be 15,000 supporters in the country at that time. Details:

www.britishlionsvmanawatu.co.nz

Brochure highlights intriguing road

A memorial for a horse, a rock that looks like a lizard, a bush called "Blowhard" and a place called "Erewhon" - all these and more await a traveller on the Hastings-Taihape Road.

To help, Hastings and Rangitikei district councils have revised their 32-page brochure which lists 27 features on the 144km road, 110km of which is unsealed. Details: Deborah Turner 06-8398877 or delta@clear.net.nz.

Kaikoura is first GG21 town

KAIKOURA has been certified as the world's first Green Globe 21 community. Kaikoura District Council environmental development officer Ian Challenger says: "The Green Globe auditor was happy that we had fixed the issues we had previously so was comfortable with recommending our certification." The certificate will be awarded on Tuesday.

Quarry popular

INTERNATIONAL visitors to the Bay of Plenty are discovering the spectacular views from the top of Te Puna Quarry Park, itself an enchanting haven of plants and pathways.

From lookout points, visitors can see the Coromandel, Waihi, Bowtown Heads, Mayor and Matakana Islands and down the coast to Maketu and White Island.

Park committee president Jo Dawkins says visitor numbers have doubled from three years ago. "They pop in for 10 minutes and stay much longer."

Lock 'em - or lose 'em

A spate of thefts from cars left at beauty spots in the Bay of Islands has led police to appeal to visitors to ensure their vehicles are locked and that property is not left in them.

No tax on Airpoints

BUSINESSES will not be subject to paying Income Tax or Fringe Benefit tax on AirNZ Airpoints Dollars. The IRD has ruled that it will not tax companies when their staff accrue the points while travelling for work, confirms AirNZ loyalty manager John Whittaker.

Southland changes

VENTURE Southland Tourism's tourism and events manager Julie Paterson leaves on December 3. She is taking maternity leave and will be replaced by Kate Watkinson for the six months she is away.

Joining as marketing manager on Monday is Kathryn MacDonnell.

Taranaki's long awaited plan is for six years

TARANAKI'S long-awaited tourism strategy for the next six years is out - and full steam ahead is promised by Venture Taranaki's tourism leader Dominic Moran.

The strategy has been written by Auckland-based tourism specialist Geoff Burns since Venture Taranaki took over from Destination Taranaki four months ago.

The plan outlines the region's key objectives, priorities and distinctive themes, along with 72 recommendations scheduled for inclusion in the 2005-2007 business plan.

Top of the list includes: achieving 769,000 international visitor nights - up 49 percent on 2003 - by 2010; upping domestic visitor nights by 7.9 percent to 1.539 million by 2010; increasing total tourism expenditure to \$399 million, a 60 percent increase; obtaining help in story development/branding to select key themes.

Touring routes

It suggests setting up an advisory group to assist with communicating opportunities and co-ordinating tourism projects, and the completion of key strategies for the development and ongoing operation of touring routes such as Surf Highway 45 through Oakura and the Forgotten World Highway in East Taranaki.

Other recommendations include developing Maori tourism, establishing a dedicated convention bureau to manage the influx in conferences and events, identifying the right products for the right market, and ensuring a profile of Taranaki's main tourist groups is developed.

Dr Moran says the strategy makes clear the fact that Taranaki is seen as a region of choice by visitors wanting to have genuine New Zealand experiences that provide a distinctive perspective of our past and present. "An 'outside-in' view is required in developing Taranaki as a destination," Dr Moran says. "The strategy clearly singles out international marketing, particularly in the UK, Europe, the US and potentially Japan - given that the Australian market is being increasingly seen as an extension of the domestic market.

Sustainable

"The region must also develop sustainable practices and relationships with the local community - which means working together as one region - improve business scale and profitability, and ensure pro-active leadership, communications and planning."

Branding is a major issue, Dr Moran adds, and the existing region logo needs to be re-developed for use in sectors other than tourism. Themes for use in marketing and tourism could include geological forces and energy, Maori and European history, evolving land use - such as different types of vegetation and farming - and cultural expression/innovation, including the arts, crafts, design and self-sufficiency.

"Our tourism sector mission must be to encourage visitors into the area, who will be greeted by proud and friendly hosts who are guardians of their environment, culture and heritage," Dr Moran says. "We also need tourism operations to be sustainable."

West Coasters getting arty - and crafty

THE Junction Art and Craft Café has just opened in Kumara, West Coast, at what was called the Tank and Tummy. Julie and Neville Johnson have restored the building with a new theme. Contact: 03-7369333 or junctionartcafe@xtra.co.nz

Also popular with visitors is the Torea Gallery and Studio in the old Granity Post Office 30 minutes' drive north of Westport. This is a co-operative with 45 members who offer an extensive range of locally made crafts from jewellery to pottery, flax weaving, homespun items, candles, wrought iron and arts works and paintings. Contact: Judy Wilson 03-7828023.

Airline privatisation may continue

THE region's aviation markets have strengthened significantly in 2004 creating a conducive market for airline privatisation, says the Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation (CAPA). Barring unforeseen external events and despite high fuel costs, CAPA believes a wave of airline privatisations is likely as governments across Asia Pacific reassess their strategic position on aviation and airline ownership. MD Peter Harbison says: "This could benefit airports and the rest of the tourism industry. Many governments will seek to take advantage of good market conditions to reduce their holdings in airlines, concentrating instead on supporting hub and secondary airports and on feeding tourism infrastructure."

CAPA says smart money may begin to leave the sector as deregulation continues. "As airline entry barriers are lowered, private airline entrepreneurs - including several start-up low cost airlines - will look to quickly realise investment gains during the expected boom conditions over the next 18-24 months."

Now Morrison joins Tourism Australia

TOURISM Australia's new MD is Scott Morrison, who set up the New Zealand Office of Tourism and Sport. Acting MD Ken Boundy is leaving "to pursue opportunities to add value to the tourism industry in the private sector."

Mr Morrison is the second former New Zealand tourism executive to join Tourism Australia. TNZ GM marketing Ian Macfarlane - famous for the 100%Pure campaign - is also with the NTO.

Operatic oval?

PLANS for an international-class cricket oval that could also be used for events like Opera in the Park have been included in the designs for the \$7 million development of Saxton Field, Nelson.

First professional guides graduate!

NZ Educational Tours, Whakatane, has celebrated the graduation of its inaugural Professional Tour Guide School students. The school offers a 16-week intensive study period of relevant topics to help students learn about the practical elements of working in the industry.

The school has been set up to train tour guides/escorts/managers/directors for the group touring market.

For those under 25, training is orientated towards front-line and attraction guiding. For students over 25, the training is for group tour hosting.

A highlight is a five-week familiarisation tour of New Zealand.

Principal tutor Lynda Keene says this provides a direct insight for students to what being 'on-the-road' is all about and also provides an opportunity for students to put themselves in the 'shoes' of customers.

"The time on the road, like a real tour, was fascinating. In some instances our group experienced very 'real' situations that any tour manager encounters when on-the-road.

Behaviour

"One of the key areas we were keen to highlight with students with extended touring was how behaviours change with sleep deprivation, keeping to schedules, working with drivers and operators, working under pressure and the effects touring can have on group dynamics, health and general wellbeing."

Director Lesley Immink says: "Our first course was an opportunity to see how well the programme would work with the strong practical component. We're pleased with the results to the extent we'll continue to include the five-week famil in future programmes. Industry operators were a fantastic support and were delighted to see more intense and practical training for prospective employees.

"A huge point of difference from the operators' point of view was the fact that students were able to receive their P Class licenses during the course programme."

Students graduate with national certificates in tourist guiding and tour leadership as well as the NZET Certificate in Professional Tour Guiding

* The next course starts on February 1. Details: 07-3080611 or school@nzet.co.nz.

Queenstown area's population fast growing

QUEENSTOWN Lakes district gained 1,210 residents in the past year, according to the latest population estimates released by Statistics New Zealand. The district is now home to 22,200 people, up from 17,850 in 2001. Latest population projections estimate the area will grow to between 23,700 and 34,000 by 2021.

An 'explosion' of penguins in Fiordland!

REAL Journeys reports that Milford and Doubtful Sounds are now teeming with wildlife. Sightings have included humpback whales, New Zealand fur seals, dolphins, Fiordland crested penguins and even a leopard seal.

Real Journeys' head nature guide John Cushen says: "In particular, there has been an 'explosion' of Fiordland crested penguins in Milford and Doubtful Sounds. It is wonderful to see them in such generous numbers in the fiords and also to be able to share the experience with our guests. The increased number of penguins in Milford Sound maybe due in part to the stoat trapping programme carried out by the Department of Conservation and the local community."

Humpback whales have been sighted in Milford Sound since the middle of October. Real Journeys' senior launch master Kim Cormack says that in his 11 years working at Milford he had never seen humpbacks in the fiord - until now. The whales have been travelling in groups of two to four and have been seen as far into the fiord as Stirling Falls. Skippers have also observed humpback whales off the coast at the entrance to Doubtful Sound.

HAPNZ not against freedom camping

THE Holiday Accommodation Parks Association (HAPNZ) is not anti freedom camping, says CEO Fergus Brown.

"In fact many of our members enjoy freedom camping in New Zealand.

What we are against is freedom camping in inappropriate places such as lake front car parks and shopping centre car parks."

He adds: "Of course we have a vested interest in encouraging people, both Kiwis and overseas visitors, to stay in holiday parks.

This does not mean we do not want people to enjoy the many remote areas that are well suited as freedom camping destinations."

Mr Brown says the association's concerns include protection of the environment, health and safety of visitors and the financial effect on commercial operations.

HAPNZ supports the TIANZ policy on freedom camping which says that local communities must carefully manage it so they derive the maximum benefit from the activity.

Adds Mr Brown: "We congratulate TIANZ on their work in producing this useful policy document. Our member parks look forward to working with their local communities to address the many issues that should be considered when addressing freedom camping in their areas."

\$1 warship to become capital attraction

RONGOTAI MP Annette King says she is delighted Defence - and Tourism - Minister Mark Burton has advised that government has agreed to sell HMNZS Wellington to the Sink F69 Trust Project Wellington. The trust aims to sink the hulk off Island Bay to make it a tourist attraction.

"The government has agreed to sell the hulk to the trust for a nominal sum of \$1...Cabinet has also agreed that the Navy will prepare the vessel for sale and meet the costs of towing. All other costs... will be the trust's responsibility."

MANZ delivers minimum standards

MANZ has taken a step to define quality standards in the industry by launching its Minimum Standard for Motel Operations.

Outgoing CEO Theo Simeonidis says the Minimum Standard sits alongside the association's Code of Ethics in aiming to ensure that its members deliver the MANZ promise of striving for quality, service, value and accountability. It is also backed by changes to the organisation's constitution, which give the MANZ board "teeth" to maintain and enforce quality standards.

"A minimum standard is unquestionably appropriate for a prominent, national association of nearly 1,000 motel member properties throughout New Zealand.

"The increasing importance and recognition of the MANZ brand by consumers means the integrity of the brand must be firmly protected and enhanced."

He adds: "Such a minimum standard should be comfortably met by properties right across the age and quality spectrum, whether clean budget accommodation or a modern five star property."

Mr Simeonidis says members overwhelmingly accept the importance of having a defined minimum standard that all should be expected to comply with.

The minimum standard was finalised after three-months of consultation with branches and individuals.

Comments received were overwhelmingly in favour of the standard.

"Those motels that do not initially meet the minimum standard will be given the opportunity to rectify the matter. If they do not intend to do so, their continued membership of the association will be placed at risk, as MANZ cannot expose its brand to being undermined in the global marketplace by sub-standard member properties."

Still all go for Tamaki group

TAMAKI Group still plans a themed Maori village at Ferrymead, Christchurch. Director Mike Tamaki says: "We are working through some small issues still. But it is very much on our radar and we are still excited about it. It's still Ferrymead - the same product."

The group is also working on new branding for the jetboating/accommodation/transport business it bought at Glenorchy, Queenstown. Together with Tamaki Maori Village, Rotorua, Glenorchy will be part of the Tamaki Heritage brand.

ZambARTa opens

A new art business has opened in Otaki that's ideal for passing visitors. It's the ZambARTa Studio in Aotaki Street.

The centre is a working place with six artists on site and with other artists providing stock.

Displays cover everything from stone and wood carving to paintings. Contact 06-3640656.

Two win conservation book

PADDY Gillooly of Farewell Spit Tours, Collingwood, and TIANZ sector manager Megan Williams are winners of David Young's new book *Our Islands, Our Selves, a History of Conservation in New Zealand*, as promoted in *IT* in recent weeks.

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