

Inside Nigel Coventry Tourism

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If Burton goes, industry choice for Minister is O'Connor

WEST Coast MP Damien O'Connor is the industry's hot favourite to replace Mark Burton as Minister of Tourism should Mr Burton be made Speaker of the House, as expected.

An IT straw poll also shows that Associate Tourism Minister Dover Samuels and MP John Tamihere are equal second choice followed by Conservation Minister Chris Carter. Regional Development Minister Jim Anderton is fifth followed equally by Foreign Affairs Minister Phil Goff, MP Lianne Dalziel and Fisheries Minister David Benson-Pope. PM Helen Clark comes in at sixth choice.

Common sense

Many said Mr O'Connor was the only one with common sense, "who has the experience and is not too PC."

A one-time Opposition tourism spokesman he knows industry problems, being a former operator. He is presentable, articulate, a good advocate and the most qualified. Mr Samuels understands the special values Maori can bring to the industry - and he is still an operator. Mr Tamihere is business oriented,

pragmatic and "speaks common sense" according to other readers. Those who responded generally agreed Mr Carter is a clear speaker who equally understands the importance of tourism and conservation.

Competent

Mr Anderton is seen as competent and as having experience of running businesses. He would "put the tax back into the productive sector rather than into a gravy train." Also understanding the importance of tourism is Mr Goff - who was Tourism Minister in a previous government. Ms Dalziel is chosen because "in spite of being temporarily in disgrace at least showed business nous...she is one of the few Labour Ministers to understand business." Mr Benson-Pope also "appears to get things done."

Why the PM? "Because of the industry's ranking, its importance to the economy and a dire need to increase the TNZ budget." Former Tourism Waikato CEO Lynda Keene summed up industry feelings for Mr Burton when she wrote: "I...believe current Minister Mark Burton, has been the most

effective and knowledgeable Minister of Tourism the industry has had in the past 20 years. It would be a shame to lose such a strong advocate and supporter of the industry."

Good turnout expected

MORE than 110 ITOC members have already registered for the forum to be held at the Sheraton Auckland Hotel and Towers next Thursday. And CEO Peter Lowry is hoping a similar number to last year - 190 - will turn up. Details: joanne@itoc.org.nz.

PATA identifies seven dominant forces...

PATA MD-Strategic Intelligence Centre John Koldowski has identified seven dominant forces (7DF) affecting Asia Pacific travel and tourism over the next few years. They are: China (PRC), Hong Kong SAR, India, Japan and Macau SAR; increasing liberalisation in travel, banking and aviation; Hong Kong Disneyland and the 2008 Olympics; advances in avionics, low-cost carriers and mergers and acquisitions; the political environment; changing demographics; improving levels of disposable income.

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Pages Past...

TEN years ago in IT...

INTERNATIONAL airlines have drastically under estimated passenger demands for seats into New Zealand, particularly during January. Consultants Travel Management and Education International describe the situation as "a horrendous breakdown in airline capability to cater for traffic demand."

It says there's evidence that many airlines are cancelling anticipated passengers' waitlisted flights without offering alternatives. This is unacceptable in terms of customer relations alone, the company says.

ANSETT NZ is investing "hundreds of thousands of dollars" in a new corporate image and aircraft livery and interior refurbishment as well as redesigning its Golden Wing lounges, making changes to valet parking - and replacing a 200 series "whisper jet" with a bigger 300 series. CEO Craig Wallace says the moves show management and staff are confident of the future.

TOURISM Minister John Banks is this week full of praise for Ansett NZ. He notes that: many staff who joined when the carrier was launched seven years ago are still there; he never hears complaints about them; it's an innovative and leader in the domestic market which shows commitment and vision.

"While many companies would have folded their tent years ago and left Ansett NZ shows it is here to stay."

THE TranzAlpine Express is "embarrassingly successful" and in constant demand. Associate Opposition spokesman on tourism Damien O'Connor says it's time NZ Rail became even more innovative.

"Isn't it time they considered a second service every day? If they could do this there would be more options for west Coast operators to work in with them."

WHO owns our hotels? We do. At least, Tourism Waikato estimates New Zealanders own 37 percent of all rooms, followed by Singaporeans at 20 percent, Japanese 10 percent, Naurians and others eight percent, Americans seven percent and Indonesians and Hong Kong residents five percent each.

PIONAIR "1994's best transport operator" was this week due to launch Classic Queenstown, a journey of nostalgia.

Hubbers to walk across the South Island

TERRY and Richard Hubber of Kirra Tours, Adelaide, their son Thomas and friend Anthony Sykala, on Monday begin an 11 day trek across the Southern Alps from Taramakau, West Coast, to Amberley, Canterbury.

Says Mr Hubber: "We were looking for a challenge, some time out from business, to mark the end of the school year, so this seemed perfect with the coast to coast on foot as our goal."

The group will carry all their equipment and food. Overnight campsites will be up to 30 kilometres apart. The route will take them east along SH73 to Aickens, across the Harper Pass, through the Lake Sumner Park and east to Hawarden and Waikari. "We are definitely stopping at Jackson's. After having driven past the pub for 30 years this is the opportunity to enjoy the local hospitality before heading into the mountains."

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As close to nature as you can get - Osborne

LIKE a lost world. As unspoilt as you can get. So describes Tourism Auckland CEO Graeme Osborne of Great Barrier Island, 100km east of SkyCity - and on the edge of Hauraki Gulf.

"It's a genuine opportunity to get away from it all...it's an island as close to nature as you can possibly get." He says 70 percent of Great Barrier is administered by DoC.

"We think tourism is ideal for the island and it fits neatly with where we are going as Destination Auckland."

Cluster

Mr Osborne says Tourism Auckland has been working to set up a maritime tourism cluster group and to make more of the gulf as a separate branded entity or a "sub set" of Destination Auckland. "We are looking at doing much more around and on the water. We can influence the product, I believe." Where there are gaps in product available Tourism Auckland is prepared to do all it can to develop such opportunities.

An obvious development opportunity is for extended packages where visitors can overnight on different islands. At present the emphasis by ferry operators Fullers and Subritzky is on day excursions.

"There are some beautiful opportunities," Mr Osborne adds. "The Gulf is very much underplayed as an asset of Destination Auckland."

* The RTO has facilitated a new guided walk, Tamaki Hikoi, which will see visitors taken to Mount Eden for the three/four hour three kilometre walk to Britomart during which time they will hear Maori stories about places along the way.

There are problems in Paradise, says Bouzaid

GREAT Barrier Island has huge tourism potential. But it faces major problems: although it's 100 km east of the CBD it's part of Auckland City and finds it hard to develop its own identity; although the city is its closest and biggest market - it's not far enough away to be popular!

Yachting legend Tony Bouzaid, who runs Glenfern Sanctuary at Port Fitzroy, says: "We are trying to establish ourselves as a distinct identity. But we are relying entirely on Auckland City for funding and Tourism Auckland as our agency. All our operators are small scale and families, and can't afford to advertise..." They are grateful to Tourism Auckland for producing a brochure, however.

"We rely on Tourism Auckland. But they market

largely as Auckland City. We still don't have an identity of our own and yet we have bush, birds and tramping and a whole range of what people like." Mr Bouzaid says the island is unable to apply for funding under government's Major Regional Initiative (MRI) - because Auckland City is not considered to be under funded!

He agrees they could consider asking to be assessed as a special case. But this would have to be initiated by Auckland City as the island does not even have a tourism organisation.

Why don't more Aucklanders visit Great Barrier? "To Aucklanders we are 'just over there' and while they will travel to Nelson or Stewart Island it's hard to get them to come here as we are seen to be so close. The domestic market is very limited even though we really are so close to the largest city in New Zealand."

Yet with only one economic farm left on the island its future IS in tourism. "Eco tourism is it!

The island is 70 percent run by DoC. So it will be preserved and if we can get them to eradicate the pests we will have one of the largest islands in the world that's free of them. And it can be done."

Forest

Mr Bouzaid has spent more than eight years developing his native forest on a steep hillside overlooking the small port.

He is unable to advertise other than through a two yearly newsletter. But the walks he offers are the first to be highlighted in the book *Hidden Trails*, which details walks on private land. That, and word-of-mouth, brings in the business...

Glenfern Sanctuary is the base of a series of walks from the one hour stroll from Mr Bouzaid's forest to spot rare birds - including the black petrel - to a four day tramp-sail package based on his home at historic Fitzroy House.

He also offers yacht charters to nearby Little Barrier Island. But opportunity is limited as the weather has to be calm for a landing - and permits are required which can take three months to process if those who want to visit are from overseas. "They send the names to Interpol as they are concerned about poachers of eggs and birds."

Petrel

Mr Bouzaid says business also comes from Earthsong Lodge which attracts an international clientele keen to see kaka, wood pigeons, kingfishers and the elusive black petrel which has a nest at Glenfern.

"We are currently waiting for the petrel to return from South America," he adds. While such petrels were common on the mainland before Maori arrived they are today only found on Great Barrier and Little Barrier. They are usually at 500m. But the

Focus on Great Barrier Island...Focus on Great Barrier Island...

Glenfern one is at 140m. They fly in from South America and have been clocked at covering 650 miles (1,000km) in two days!

Mr Bouzaid is hopeful that neighbouring Kaikoura Island will become a scenic reserve and sanctuary and that an outdoor centre will be built, ideally named after the late Sir Peter Blake.

At present DoC "owns" the land as it's been bought by government, local authorities and \$2 million has been given by the ASB. "We are trying to get the trust finalised so we can go ahead and start raising money to start the operation."

The associated marine reserve will be the largest outside the Kermadecs, if it is approved.

He believes it will get the go-ahead, although islanders are 50-50 in their opposition.

Future

Mr Bouzaid says the future of Great Barrier is - and has to be - in eco tourism. "It's primarily birdlife here but you don't very often get the chance to see the endangered chevron skink, the largest in New Zealand, that only lives on Great Barrier.

"We are also introducing the North Island robin in April which will be the first here in 140 years..."

* Rates for the walk through the Glenfern forest are \$75 per person for two people reducing for up to 10 at a time. The longer stay is \$375 pp for two or \$295pp for more which includes accommodation and transport. To charter Mr Bouzaid's 40ft yacht costs \$700 a day for up to six passengers. Details: 09-4290091 or tony@fitzroyhouse.co.nz.

A special place, agrees DoC

DOC recognises that Great Barrier Island is a special place with native bush and rare native wildlife not seen in the rest of New Zealand, says ranger Jim Flack.

"There are birds such as kakas, brown teal, black petrels and banded rails which are all but extinct on the mainland.

"So, we have this fantastic resource of bush that belongs to the people of New Zealand which we have criss-crossed with tracks so people can actually get in and see it and enjoy it."

Lizards

The island has more species of lizard than anywhere else in the country, many of them almost extinct elsewhere. The reason? The island has no possums, stoats, weasels, ferrets, hedgehogs or Norwegian rats.

Mr Flack says DoC has 18,000 ha and up to 100km of track which take from 40-minutes to eight hours to walk. They cover a full range of environments. "There is a network of campgrounds with four on the east coast and three on the west. Most are handy

to the tracks so visitors can walk from one to the other. There are some beautiful white sandy beaches and they provide a great opportunity for summer at only \$7 a night."

While there are only about 800 residents on Great Barrier some tracks are walked by 15,000 people a year!

Mr Flack says the tracks are used by Germans, British, Australians and Americans, some of whom are unprepared for the mountainous terrain and fickle weather. "You can get stuck overnight and if you only have jandals, a singlet and no water you will have an uncomfortable time in the bush!"

Concessionaires

DoC has relatively few concessionaires on the island because, Mr Flack adds, there are operators on private land such as Glenfern.

Mr Flack points out there is a transport "industry" which drops and collects trampers from the different tracks.

At present there is one DoC hut on the island. But approval has just been given for two more over the next 10 years: one just below the summit of Mount Hiraakimata and the other 90 minutes' walk from the remains of kauri dams.

* The difference between wildlife on Great Barrier and other sanctuaries such as Kapiti Island is that they are not used to tourists. Whereas on Kapiti and Mount Bruce the birds know all about being fed by humans, Mr Flack says that, on Great Barrier, if you throw a piece of apple at a kaka it will either ignore you or fly away. "There's too much tucker in the bush for it to go for a piece of apple!"

Earthsong is at one with nature

IT must surely be the only five star lodge in New Zealand accessible only by 4WD - or helicopter. Earthsong Lodge, Great Barrier Island, overlooks Tryphena Harbour from a near vertical grassed hillside.

It's at the end of a demanding one kilometre rugged stone driveway which at times is so steep you must change into bottom gear to negotiate - while the verdant bush scrapes the sides of your vehicle. But the bone shaking journey is worth it.

Carol and Trevor Randle have built a luxury environment at peace with its surroundings. They, too, believe that sustainable tourism is the only future worth contemplating for the island.

Sustainable

"Earthsong has been built to have minimal impact on the land and environment. It enables clients to come and experience nature, close-up, and interact with it in ways which are truly unique," explains Mr Randle.

Focus on Great Barrier

“Sustainable tourism is the only way to go in a place like this.”

The Randles decided in the 1980s to set up a lodge. “We wanted 10 acres, a beach, a forest, a stream and to be within two hours of a major population centre. Also somewhere warm...and we wanted it for nothing! So we set off around the country with that wishlist,” Mr Randle says.

Eventually they visited Great Barrier Island and found the site they wanted.

“We thought it would be a nice place for a gin and tonic!” The name is a reflection of the feeling of energy that comes from the earth and the sea and the prolific birdlife.

Chef

Mr Randle was with AirNZ 26 years, ending up as inflight service director. Today, he is an accomplished chef who delights in discussing his philosophy on the Slow Food Movement - and how he uses only vegetables grown in the lodge’s garden. “Nothing is brought in in packets. Nothing is frozen...nothing is pre prepared. It’s all fresh and organic.”

The Randles believe Great Barrier has a great future as such gems of nature are increasingly sought - and Earthsong is very much part of it.

Secret

“The secret is in enticing the right number of tourists spending the right amount of money who are able to enjoy the facilities without causing too much of an impact on the land. This will never be a place that cruise boats with 200 seats travel around.” Rates are \$844 double per night rising to \$896 from April 1. A fly-and-stay package is available ex-Auckland for \$1,232 per night double occupancy which includes four course fine dining evening meal and breakfast, plus transfers. Details: 09-4290030, info@earthsong.co.nz or www.earthsong.co.nz.

Rentals available

ON Great Barrier vehicles can be rented from \$50 a day for cars, \$75 a day for 4WDs and \$80 for Mini Mokes. Many roads are narrow, winding and steep. The average speed is 30-35 kph due to this.

Access is relatively easy...

ACCESS is not a problem for visitors to Great Barrier with Mountain Air and Great Barrier Airways offering scheduled flights several times a day from Auckland International Airport, North Shore, Whangarei and Whitianga, depending on season. Details: 09-2567025 or 0800-222123 or www.mountainair.co.nz.

Subritzky’s Eco Islander ferry also runs four hour sailings to the island almost daily. Details: 09-4290033 or www.subritzky.co.nz.

BIZtips

How to profit from your banking relationship

*By Christmas Gouwland business advisor
Leicester Gouwland*

TO profit from your banking relationship it helps to understand the nature of banking and how a bank works and relates to its customers.

The basic function of a bank is to earn a fair return for its shareholders through the acceptance of deposits and the granting of loans. How does a bank do this? It assesses the level of risk on loans, implements lending covenants (such as a minimum proportion of equity and assets) to measure the risk and manages that risk.

Understanding

Banks are keen to know as much about your business as possible - the more they understand about the industry, its business cycle, needs, and financial position, the better it is able to manage and assess which products are best suited to you and your business. In the absence of information bankers may assume the worst, and price uncertainty accordingly. So, effective communication with your bank is vital (both when things are going well and not so well). Often it is the relationship established through frequent communication that works to a customer’s advantage during a period of downturn or when trying to negotiate a better interest rate.

Questions

What questions are bankers asking themselves when assessing and managing your loan? They look at the financials and ask: ‘what is this telling me?’ Are there any surprises on the horizon? What explanation is there for any difference between the forecast figures and actual figures for the business? Is there a proactive plan in place to manage the business? Are the business’s advisors adding value?

Remember, when dealing with a bank, the bank will often have more capital at risk than the business owner, so they will be continually looking at your financial information and assessing any deterioration in credit quality.

Q. What are the signals that warn a bank that your credit quality is deteriorating?

A. Slowness in providing financial information; negative surprises in financial information (such as an unexpected drop in profit); incomplete financial information; lifestyle changes of owners of the business; staff turnover or a new financial controller; frequent facility excesses; the grapevine.

Don’t forget that banks have a great deal of experience - so don’t be scared to use your bank for advice and guidance, they are sometimes not as bad as you think.

Sector summaries and highlights...III

Activities, Attractions, Tours and Services

JUST over 30,000 are employed in this sector of which the “sculptors, painters, related artists and other performers” make up 1,113 people - the largest occupation group. There is a lot of cross-over between this and other sectors due to the integrated nature of the industry. In this sector people on working holidays provide a beneficial impact on the supply of casual labour and the supply of a diversified skill set.

As with the “service to transport” sector, employers in this area are experiencing particular difficulty hiring call centre staff, sales staff, and key activity staff such as tour guides, raft supervisors, riding instructors and spa therapists.

Key reasons for high staff turnover appear to be low remuneration levels, changing values with regard to spending time with families, and increasing numbers of people wanting part-time employment in the sector.

Future employment projections show that “writers, artists, entertainment and sports professionals” will experience the largest increase in employee numbers to 2010 with around 784 joining the sector each year.

Consultation with this sector reveals

that a significant number of employees - particularly with respect to cultural tourism - have a history of family involvement in the tourism industry and often have the skills and the interpersonal qualities required to deliver an “authentic” tourism experience. However the recruitment of senior level staff is more problematic.

InterCity: \$10 one way!
INTERCITY is offering a limited number of seats on its Starlighter services between Wellington and Auckland for only \$10 one way until March 31.

GM sales and service Malcolm Johns says that with the withdrawal of other overnight services InterCity is committed to providing an option between the two cities. “We will always match capacity with demand!” The overnight service has reclining seats, onboard videos and individual seat lights for reading.

Glass wall for town hall
PLANS for a glass-walled, three-level extension have been unveiled as part of an \$18.5 million redevelopment of Dunedin’s Town Hall and Conference Centre. Dunedin City Council strategy and development GM Peter Brown says the extension will be built across Harrop Street to provide foyer, function and conference space.

Objections increase
INCREASING numbers of campers and caravanners in Southland and Otago are objecting to plans by Queenstown Lakes District Council to cut services at its camp grounds. At meetings in Frankton and Arrowtown council officials were caught off guard by the degree of anger from campers. Hundreds of submissions are expected to be made by the January 31 close.

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Chinese may scrap Golden Week

THE Chinese government is said to be considering abolishing the mandatory week-long holidays. But a China National Tourism Administration official quoted by Singapore-daily *The Straits Times* says: "If there's any major announcement to be made, we'll be the one to do it, not a newspaper."

IT understands there have been calls to scrap the Golden Week holidays since China introduced the policy in 1999. Though successful in creating enormous movement of tourists and tourism receipts, it has strained the country's transport system and attractions. Surveys also show that people prefer to travel at their own time of choosing.

St Helen's to offer new BTM programme

AIS St Helens, Auckland, is to deliver a new Bachelor of Tourism Management (BTM) programme, with the first intake on January 24. The NZQA-approved programme is tailored to suit the demand and requirements of this high growth and dynamic industry in the Asia Pacific region.

The degree is designed to meet the needs of international students who tend to choose courses with an international focus.

Dean and coordinator of travel and tourism programmes Semisi Taumoepeau: "International students are likely to be attracted to this qualification because it offers significant flexibility while retaining a strong vocational focus in a growing international market.

"It is also designed with New Zealand domestic students in mind to help prepare those who aspire to work in more senior roles in a nationally vital industry or in offshore locations."

Operator and shopkeeper work to mutual advantage

DESTINATION Manawatu says 27-year-old Daniel Elms' recently launched guided bush walks through Ruahine Forest Park is a good example of the ongoing effort to harness the region's burgeoning tourism potential.

BackTracks is a one-man business which works closely with Palmerston North store Mountain Equipment.

Owner Dave Grant agreed to an alliance where Mr Elms uses the shop as a pick-up and drop-off point. He has offered sponsorship and a booking service in return for naming rights on the BackTracks brochure, walking gear and website.

Destination Manawatu leisure tourism manager Julia Sanson says:

"BackTracks is just the type of operation Manawatu needs. In recent years there's been a big push to encourage visitors and locals to get out and enjoy Manawatu's bush tracks but for the uninitiated it can seem daunting. Daniel offers a compelling mix of enthusiasm, knowledge about the bush and terrain, a strong focus on safety and a genuine desire to make it possible and practical for tourists and visitors to experience the Ruahine Forest Park."

A half-day walk costs \$85 per adult and \$45 for a child aged between five and 15. The adult cost for a standard day walk is \$135 and \$70 for a child. Details: 0508-222587, admin@BackTracksNZ.com.

Scenic Circle hotel's architecture recognised

DUNEDIN'S first major hotel development for 25 years has been applauded by the New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA), winning two categories in the local architecture awards this month.

The Scenic Circle Dunedin City Hotel has won the NZIA local architecture award for the Hospitality and Tourism category, as well as the Resene Colour Award.

The hotel opened in March with 80 rooms. Development continued on the lower levels, with the final rooms on the first floor being completed in August, bringing the total to 110.

Council to ban choppers

WESTLAND District Council is banning helicopters from using a landing pad at Franz Josef because of noise concerns. But only from 2008.

All tourist helicopters use the council-owned pad for regular flights up the glacier valley. But hearings commissioner Bryce Thomson says noise has become intrusive to the point of distraction. He also notes that the area is too constrained, and this could stifle growth.

Council has agreed to let current leases lapse after they expire in November 2008, giving the industry time to find an alternative site away from the village.

Miller joins CAPA

FORMER AirNZ COO Andrew Miller is joining the Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation as "Director, Consulting" to head an expanded airline consulting activity.

Centre MD Peter Harbison says: "Mr Miller's experience, as a key architect of the turnaround of Air New Zealand into a viable, low cost operation, has been one of the more significant developments in international aviation in recent years. His hands-on airline experience, together with his extensive retailing background, ensure that he has the capability to deliver the highest quality advice to our clients, including airlines and airports, as well as suppliers."

Gin leaves Qualmark

QUALMARK sales and marketing manager Selina Gin has resigned and leaves on December 10. She has been there since 2002.

New office for Monarch

MONARCH Wildlife Cruises has opened a new ticket office at Weller's Rock Wharf on the Otago Peninsula. This is the base for the company's one hour wildlife cruises around Taiaroa Head.

Owner/ manager John Milburn says the cruises operate five times a day and provides chances to see ocean birds and marine mammals.

Get smart and attend free research session!

“SMART information, smart decisions - applying research in tourism” is the title of a free afternoon session for tourism operators to be held as part of the New Zealand Tourism and Hospitality Research Conference, Victoria University, Wellington, on December 8.

Participants will hear how tourism research can benefit their business and it will also give you an opportunity to network with tourism and research professionals. Details: Sophia.lum@vuw.ac.nz by November 30.

From Shanghai to Golden Bay

THEY fly in from as far away as Shanghai to strut their stuff at Golden Bay! Paddy Gillooly of Farewell Spit Eco Tours says there have been some surprising finds in recent weeks.

The Ornithological Society have just completed a wader survey on the spit and found to their surprise several bar-tailed godwits and red knots - flagged in Victoria. “But the real biggy was a godwit marked in Shanghai!” he tells us.

In recent months the sand dunes have become the final resting place for a giant squid, a sun fish, and a beaked and a minke whale.

Zooming in on the location...

WOTIF.COM has partnered with Multimap to launch an interactive map which pinpoints individual hotels on zoom-able detailed maps.

This enables travellers to select accommodation based on locale. “For example, close to head office or close to the beach. Now that’s when location is important,” the company says.

New Zealand manager Tania Witheford adds: “New Zealand travellers are sophisticated buyers. Wotif.com now not only saves travellers time and money, it also enables them to take into account location when selecting their accommodation.”

Museum gets active!

ROTORUA Stories, Rotorua Museum’s active cinema experience, has just received a major facelift.

The computer generated imagery, which brings the city’s fascinating and dramatic past to life, has been enhanced by one of New Zealand’s top CGI companies, Wellington-based Oktobor.

Known for its work on some of the most memorable scenes in the *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy, Oktobor paid special attention to the Pink and White Terraces and Mount Tarawera eruption scenes of Rotorua Stories - creating a more realistic and exciting experience for visitors.

The 18-minute experience is available in seven languages and takes viewers on an educational adventure, discovering scientific and mythological answers to Rotorua’s volatile landscape and experiencing an ‘active’ portrayal of the 1886 eruption of Tarawera. Details: Catherine Donovan 07-3494350, catherine.donovan@rdc.govt.nz or www.rotoruumuseum.co.nz.

100,000 read Jason’s Explore!

JASONS Travel Media has just added its 100,000th subscriber to its email newsletter *Jasons Explore!*

Founder and CEO John Sandford says: “There has also been a significant growth in demand for our print publications alongside the development of Jasons Travel Channel.

“Doomsayers originally thought that the web would kill ink on paper information solutions but we are finding this has not happened. Each has its own unique attributes and each can grow the demand and usage of the other with both print and web used as an information resource.”

The company started the E-newsletter *Jasons Explore!* 18 months ago to complement Jasons Travel Channel.

WorldMark for Rotorua

TRENDWEST South Pacific, said to be the leading holiday ownership company in the South Pacific, is expanding into New Zealand with the purchase of apartments within Marama Resort, Rotorua. The apartments will be known as WorldMark Rotorua.

Underwater stars on TV FIVE Aucklanders more accustomed to swimming with sharks, feeding stingrays and caring for penguins became stars in a new reality series on TV 2 on Sunday.

The 13-part series is *Ocean Zoo* and the “stars” are marine biologists, animal husbandry experts and marine educators at Kelly Tarlton’s Antarctic Encounter and Underwater World.

Kelly Tarlton’s celebrates its 20th anniversary next year and is undergoing a \$12 million redevelopment that includes a Stingray Bay exhibit. This opens on December 23.

Wellingtonians polite?

IN Wellington people are so polite no one uses cellphones in cafes, no one begs for money, the women look like Rachel Hunter, the men like young Sir Edmund Hillary and Maori couples smooch “with unusual gusto”, according to a new travel article in *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

Properties for sale

KIWI Park Motels and Holiday Park, Murchison, and Mapledurham b and b, Richmond, are for sale. Contact: Michael “tourism is my business” Miles on 027-2238875 or www.bayleynelson.co.nz.

Tops in Wanaka?

AFTER a major renovation and building programme Oakridge Pool and Spa Resort is set to become possibly Wanaka’s premier hotel when it opens in January. The 77 room resort will incorporate stylish apartments, a heated rock pool and spa complex. Contact: 03-4437707.

Waikato draws Aucklanders

TOURISM Waikato launched an Auckland radio campaign to lure city-dwellers over the Bombay Hills. And within two hours the number of unique visitors to the organisation's website increased by 70 percent. CEO John Rasmussen says the campaign, which is running on six stations, is aimed at increasing the number of Auckland visitors by 10 percent. "Currently the Auckland market accounts for 33 percent of all domestic tourists visiting the Waikato and we want to grow that to around 40 percent over the next few years.

"The radio campaign is aimed at kindling interest in the Waikato region as a holiday/short stay option and asks radio listeners to check out our website for short stay holiday ideas."

Tourism Waikato revamped its website and increased the number of listed tourism attractions to around 100, giving visitors many options to choose from. Tourism is worth \$799 million to the region and is forecast to rise to well over \$1,000 million by 2010.

AirNZ website wins top award

AIRNZ'S website (www.airnz.co.nz) won Best Travel and Tourism Website at the NetGuide Web Awards 2004. Other finalists: aatravel.co.nz, houseoftravel.co.nz, newzealand.com, travel.co.nz, travelonline.co.nz, wotif.com. Comments on the airline's site: "easy access to flight and holiday information, great interactivity and love the competitions. An easy-to-use site with highly relevant searches so we don't waste time. Good online pricing."

Manuels to become Millennium

COPTHORNE Manuels will become a Millennium on January 1! The 55-room, six suite property has recently had \$2 million spent on it.

Millennium Hotels and Resorts New Zealand COO Gordon Wilson says Manuels is a well established hotel that has an unrivalled reputation in New Zealand and international circles.

"This can be attributed to Mr Ron Lyne, a dedicated owner, who understands the value of reinvestment in his operation. Manuels Taupo sits well within the Millennium Hotel's traditional theme - that of timeless elegance, sophistication and excellent service."

Threat to block access to Samuels' motel

ASSOCIATE Tourism Minister Dover Samuels' stand on the Foreshore and Seabed Bill has made him a target by some of his own people who have threatened to barricade the road to Matauri Bay beach, camping ground and the Minister's own Oceans Motel and Restaurant.

Bagnall eyes inbound growth

GULLIVERS Travel plans to focus on inbound tourism for the first time! The company has five divisions including Holiday Shoppe, United Travel, and Atlantic Pacific. It claims 23 per cent of the wholesale, retail leisure and corporate travel market.

The company says the number of New Zealanders travelling overseas will increase 4.5 percent a year to 2010 - but inbound tourism is expected to grow at seven percent a year. CEO Andrew Bagnall says: "We don't see any of that and we're going out to get some!"

InterCity into training

THE InterCity Group has joined with the Electro Technology Industry Training Organisation (ETITO) to train the group's customer service representatives to NZQA standard.

InterCity Group aims to upskill staff while at the same time recognise their existing skills through their course qualifications.

Tsunami display at National Aquarium

A tsunami display and learning centre has opened at the National Aquarium, Napier.

The exhibition is designed as a warning to coastal residents of the dangers huge 600kmh waves can pose.

Tsunamis have caused death and damage in New Zealand. Napier and Gisborne were damaged by tsunamis in 1947 and 1960. The waves can be up to 30 metres high and can travel at 600kmh.

The centre includes interactive computer displays and records of actual tsunamis. One display shows the path of a tsunami set off by a big earthquake at Mahia Peninsula a few hundred years ago.

Top of South alluring

IF visitors choose only one area of New Zealand to visit they should make sure it is the top of the South Island, according to the latest edition of the *Rough Guide*. It gives the Nelson-Marlborough region the big thumbs up.

"The South Island kicks off spectacularly" and in fact "the whole northern section is supremely alluring." Even Nelson's nightlife gets a mention.

Tropical paradise in Gisborne

BERMUDA Palms, Wainui Beach, Gisborne, is for garden enthusiasts and travellers alike, who wish to be transported to a tropical paradise of exotic plants including environmentally friendly bananas, set in a micro climate.

Rodger and Janet Bodle were introduced to banana growing by a retired plantation owner from Fiji in the 1960s. They have a wealth of knowledge and experience to offer visitors.

"Some would suggest the New Zealand environment doesn't lend itself to such an exciting project. However, the proof is in the viewing," says Mr Bodle. Details: 06-8677095 or 021-1650890.

Cheap fares and *LOTR* credited with surge in international arrivals to Hawke's Bay

CHEAP airfares and the *Lord of the Rings* are two reasons for a 25 per cent surge in overseas visitors to Hawke's Bay in the past year, according to Hawke's Bay Tourism's latest annual report.

About 190,000 of the 1.06 million visitors to the region were international tourists. Visitors from within New Zealand, however, increased by only one percent, giving an overall increase of 3.9 percent.

There was a five percent increase in total visitor spend, to \$359 million.

Communications executive Claire Benson says: "It's partly the work Tourism New Zealand has done, especially in the UK and the US. Then there's the publicity from the Chelsea Flower Show and the *Lord of the Rings* films.

"Hawke's Bay is especially attractive to the FIT interactive traveller. We have a diversity of product here, especially wine and food, and Hawke's Bay wine is becoming known around the world."

The Bay is also part of the Pacific Coast and Thermal Explorer Highways, and the Classic NZ Wine Trail.

The small growth in domestic tourism is partly the result of cheaper airfares outbound to Australia and the Pacific Islands.

"But at the same time, cheaper fares are bringing more Australians here - and overseas visitors spend more."

Napier was the most successful area, increasing total visitor numbers by 5.5 percent to 522,000. Hastings rose 3.4 percent to 403,000, with Wairoa and Central Hawke's Bay combined down half a percent to 136,000.

Wellington gets first four star hotel in decade

WORK has started on the first major four star hotel to be built in Wellington in more than 10 years. It's the \$65 million 17-storey, 238-room Holiday Inn on the corner of Featherston and Whitmore Streets.

New market development guide

A new market development guide is designed to give any operator looking to target the North American market a head start.

The updated *North American Market Development Guide 2005*, has been put together by TNZ's Los Angeles office, and contains contact information and business profiles for all New Zealand sellers in North America, along with market outlook and business practice information.

The guide is designed to help New Zealand operators make first contacts.

Details: www.tourisminfo.govt.nz.

76pc of museum's FIT visitors from overseas

OF the 43,159 FITs who visited the New Zealand National Maritime Museum, Auckland, in 2003/4 some 76 percent were from overseas and 12 percent were from outside the Auckland region. The museum attracted 91,287 visitors during the year, down from 111,694 the previous year, which included America's cup visitors.

CCM embraces latest DVD technology

DVD technology developed in Christchurch has become a vital tool in promoting the region's tourism growth.

Christchurch and Canterbury Marketing was one of the first to embrace new media convergence technology, called Orly IDVD, developed locally by Orly Productions. It allows them to customise professional, interactive presentations for each of their overseas and domestic markets.

GM marketing Jason Hill says the Orly IDVD had given the RTO considerable edge over competitors in the national and international tourism marketplace.

Finest first five graded Exclusive

QUALMARK has just announced that five of New Zealand's finest accommodation properties are now licence holders in the new Exclusive accommodation category.

The first to carry the Exclusive accommodation status are: Blanket Bay, Glenorchy; Huka Lodge, Taupo; Treetops Lodge and Estates and Okareka Lake House, both near Rotorua; Wharekauhau Country Estate, Wairarapa.

The category recognises accommodation experiences that are the best that New Zealand has to offer, says Qualmark CEO Geoff Penrose. "Each property is evaluated across 14 areas during an unannounced overnight visit. Our assessor is looking to identify aspects of the experience that distinguish the accommodation as truly outstanding."

Maintaining anonymity throughout the overnight stay is an integral requirement of the assessment.

Parkin chairman

CHRIS Parkin, owner of the Museum Hotel and former Wellington city councillor, has been elected chairman of the Wellington division of the New Zealand Hotel Council (NZHC).

Queenstown running short of workers!

AT least 200 workers are urgently needed in Queenstown as businesses struggle in the run-up to a predicted record boom in overseas tourists this summer.

Queenstown Chamber of Commerce CEO Nick Lambert says: "We're already seeing businesses out there screaming for employees. I just hope it's not like last year when, at times, there were signs on windows saying 'sorry we're closed (at night) - can't get staff'."

At least 30,000 more international visitors are expected to pour into the resort this summer and TNZ CEO George Hickton has warned operators to "be prepared" with appropriate staffing and service levels to cope.

AIAL predicts continued strong growth

AUCKLAND International Airport Limited (AIAL) shareholders were told at the company's annual meeting this week that strong growth has continued for the first four months of the current financial year.

Passengers for the four months to October 31 were up an average 9.4 percent on the previous year - an increase of 11.2 percent in international travellers and seven percent for domestic travellers. The company also announced that, on a 12-month rolling average, it has broken the 11 million total passenger mark.

Revenue up

Revenue for the four months was up 10 percent, totalling \$91.4 million.

AIAL's surplus after tax increased by 23 percent to \$34.7 million.

Chairman Wayne Boyd said: "The airlines have indicated, through their northern winter schedule, that there will be no reduction in services out of Auckland this summer and, in fact, there are some additional flights to Adelaide, San Francisco and Asia.

"Given that international seat capacity increased 30 per cent last summer, and passenger numbers were up 14 per cent, there remains significant capacity for further increases in passenger numbers."

CEO Don Huse said that the outlook for the coming years continues to be positive, with Tourism Research Council forecasts showing a growth in international visitor arrivals of 5.8 percent on average per annum until at least 2010.

"It is the company's strong balance sheet and the expectation of further increased international and domestic passenger movements that give us the confidence and the fiscal capacity to undertake a three-year, \$375 million investment programme."

Best of Fly Fishing is top operator

US-based Best of New Zealand Fly Fishing received the Premium Tourism Operator Award at the American Chamber of Commerce-UPS Business Awards in Auckland, attended by PM Helen Clark and US Ambassador Charles Swindells.

Owner Michael D. McClelland attended the dinner and tells us he was thrilled to be the first US based company to receive this annual award. "We are in our 15th year of specialising in just New Zealand fly fishing and travel and the recognition is appreciated."

More holidaymakers can work here now

GOVERNMENT has announced that the number of overseas holidaymakers allowed to work here will increase from July next year to at least 40,000.

There is a current limit of 31,000 people from 22 countries, aged between 18 and 30 and childless, who are able to work in New Zealand for up to a year.

Immigration Minister Paul Swain says that getting New Zealanders into work is the government's top priority. But holidaymakers create more jobs than they take.

With just 3.8 per cent unemployment, they are a good source of temporary labour. They also inject more than \$300 million into the economy each year.

Follow Kaikoura, says GG chairman

OTHER New Zealand towns and cities should follow Kaikoura down the sustainable tourism path, says Green Globe Asia Pacific chairman Sir Frank Moore. Kaikoura is the first town anywhere to gain Green Globe status.

It earned its environmental certificate by strongly managing environmental matters, while helping residents and tourists.

Sir Frank says: "I would like to ask other towns and cities to join us in endeavouring to provide sustainable tourism and help protect the environment we live in."

Fresh view on old site

ROTORUA Mayor Kevin Winters will next Saturday open a boardwalk at the Buried Village which will allow visitors to obtain views of Tarawera, obscured since the eruption of 1886. The wooden path has been three years in the making and enables people to walk along 30m of cliff above Te Wairoa Falls. Buried Village MD Pam McGrath says the track is a continuation of the existing two kilometre pathway around excavated sites.

I-SITE staff lauded

THE Oamaru i-SITE is the best tourist information provider M and P Wraight of Scotland have ever used. They wrote to the local newspaper to say they found staff "immensely knowledgeable and friendly and between them had a wealth of personal experience." Staff were a mine of information on every aspect of travel throughout New Zealand.

Latest arrivals figures

INTERNATIONAL visitor arrivals reached 2,314,455 in the year to October, reports Statistics NZ. There were 833,869 Australians (up 23 percent), 218,225 Americans (up 4.7 percent), 165,098 Japanese (up 7.4 percent), 115,995 Koreans (up four percent), 27,249 Taiwanese (up 3.6 percent), 55,630 Germans (up 6.6 percent), 297,979 from UK/Ireland (up 10.2 percent) and 81,131 Chinese (up 24.9 percent). The holiday market increased 11.4 percent to 1,187,803 and the VFR 17.2 percent to 644,775.

Gauging the way...

RUAPEHU Marketing Group says it's inviting Ruapehu Tourism and Services Ltd, National Park Business Association and Ohakune 2000 to a meeting "to gauge the way forward."

Representative Scott Lee is reported as saying that everyone wants one organisation for the region. "It is hoped to achieve this by Christmas so the campaign can get off to a good start in 2005."

Fishing museum to open

THE Gore Fishing Museum opens in the Hokonui Heritage Centre on Sunday.

The yet-to-be-officially named project is centred around more than 300 items of antique fishing memorabilia, gathered by one Southland collector over 40 years.

The development is seen as not only a complement to Gore's branding as a centre for brown trout fishing but as a worthy addition to the existing museum infrastructure which includes the Hokonui Moonshine Museum and John Money Wing.

Items relate to fresh water fly fishing, salmon and thread-line fishing and include rods, reels, creels, gaffs, nets, mountains of tackle and mounted fish. Details: Jim Geddes 03-2089907 or jgeddes@goredc.govt.nz.

Queenstown icon for sale

ONE of Queenstown's 1980s business icon sites is set to go under the hammer, clearing the way for a tourism opportunity. The former Cattledrome base at Arthur's Point, currently housing Southern Lakes English College, is set for auction on December 10. High interest is expected thanks to the size and location of the property.

Covering 1.18 ha and overlooking the Shotover River, the land carries a rural visitor zoning, one of only five in the district.

Southern Lakes Real Estate commercial manager Fred Bramwell says the combination should attract investors with an eye to develop a site boasting views, the tranquillity of the countryside plus Coronet Peak, only minutes along the road. "Landholdings like this are few and far between. The outlook is spectacular, there's plenty of space for a great accommodation facility and the zoning is in place to allow that to happen."

Growth from Oz likely to continue

GROWTH from Australia has been extraordinary this past year and there's potential for even more. But TNZ CEO George Hickton believes that rather than the 25 percent annual increase in arrivals we have had, it is more likely to be back to six to eight percent growth in 2005.

"The growth we have been experiencing is expected to hold or not go down to any degree. The 25 percent was a one-off and we can expect to get back to normal growth figures very shortly."

Mr Hickton says the growth has been fuelled by the increase in capacity on the Tasman and lower air fares.

"Airlines are considering their fuel charges but any increase on top of these fares will probably not have much of an impact on people's decisions to travel."

Even when taxes and other charges pushes fares to \$550 return they are still cheap compared to the cost of travelling up and down New Zealand.

Exercise - and you'll perform better

EXERCISE is the most effective means to increase performance. Travellers who exercise during their trip perform 61 percent better than non-exercisers on reaction and alertness tests, according to the latest Hilton research findings.

The report highlights that although the value of exercise is not new to hotels, there are opportunities to make it easier for travellers to start or maintain a fitness regime during their stay.

The study shows that two thirds of participants use exercise as a strategy to boost their alertness levels and energy, making it worthwhile for hoteliers to invest in quality facilities and equipment. Details:

www.hiltontravelstudy.com

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