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Report identifies vast Maori cultural potential

MAORI culture is appealing to most international travellers - provided they know about it, according to the Ministry of Tourism's new report *Demand For Maori Tourism*. Travellers who are able to experience Maori cultural products tend to rate them much more favourably than products of other indigenous cultures elsewhere in the world.

Even among domestic travellers, there is a general consensus that Maori cultural offerings are on par with or better than those they have experienced abroad.

Research

Research findings also show that overall, satisfaction with Maori cultural offerings tend to be highest where there is physical and emotional involvement with the activity being experienced - such as being able to talk to Maori performers.

This goes hand-in-hand with understanding the context and significance of the performance or experience itself.

"With these encouraging results overall, there is an obvious

opportunity in terms of raising awareness among travellers, both international and domestic, of the Maori cultural products on offer," the report says. There appears to be reasonable demand for Maori cultural products. "There are many opportunities to not only better service current demand but to also create new demand by increasing awareness of Maori cultural products amongst travellers."

Opportunities

Opportunities highlighted include:

- * Improving Maori cultural performances and in turn increasing overall holiday satisfaction through greater authenticity and better communication. "In addition to showcasing Maori way of life (i.e powhiri, haka, hongi) travellers are interested in meeting and talking to Maori people and having performances explained to increase understanding."

- * Translating these explanations into various languages is an important part of engaging and involving visitors. "It appears that explanation and translation will have a positive effect on visitor satisfaction. Ensuring that performances are not overcrowded

- or simply not perceived to be overcrowded - appears to be a significant area for improvement also.

- * Visiting marae is among the strongest drivers of overall holiday satisfaction among international travellers, yet participation levels are currently low. "Therefore, there is an opportunity to better communicate with these mature travellers. Changes most likely to increase visitor satisfaction on marae include reduced overcrowding, increased service quality, provision of an authentic, moving experience and having these experiences available at a convenient time."

Involvement

- * Increasing participant involvement in Maori cultural performances and visits to marae involving things such as teaching waiata and better explaining protocol and history may enhance the overall experience.

- * Many travellers are unaware that they are able to stay overnight on certain marae. Of those who are aware, some have a perception of discomfort and fear of the unknown.

- * Travellers who have stayed overnight on a marae found the experience a very strong driver of overall holiday satisfaction because of the high degree of authenticity. "While this points to an opportunity, it also suggests the need to position this Maori cultural product in such a way that it maintains the integrity of the experience. (Over)

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TEN years ago in IT...

A call for greater co-operation between NZTB (now TNZ), DoC and the Ministry of Commerce's Tourism Policy Group could see the setting up of a joint consultative committee (JCC). This is, if recommendations by the Select Committee inquiry into the board are accepted.

The committee commends the board for its successes to date and says its objectives are being met.

But more effort should be made to retain staff "in order to assist the long term development of the board." The committee is also calling for the promotion of a quality, high yield product and for NZTB to publish annual visitor targets to encourage the industry.

A \$100 million casino and 120-room five star hotel have been announced for the Wellington waterfront. Lambton Harbour Management says it's hoping to have the complex open in early 1998. The company has granted Casinos Austria International Ltd a development licence. CEO Don Best says the development hinges on Wellington gaining a casino licence. But he's confident one will be granted.

SHOTOVER Jet's bid to obtain a major stake in the Christchurch Gondola has been withdrawn.

The company has also announced that it's considering building a cablecar at the Huka Falls. It will be at ground level under existing bush canopy.

THE Waikato is following the Wairarapa. As Martinborough has gained national recognition for its wine festival so Te Kuiti intends getting on the map with an annual muster. Putaruru is looking to turn its biennial woodturners' exhibition into an annual event. Morrinsville is launching a country and western festival and Tokoroa is considering an enhanced version of its woodchopping event.

PRECONCEIVED ideas that Auckland is merely a stopover destination are beginning to change, says Tourism Auckland CEO Lynn Huhtala.

WE are losing tourists to other markets including Australia - because we don't have enough quality accommodation. That's according to the Building Owners' and Managers' Tourism Committee chairwoman Michelle McKellar.

Report identifies vast Maori cultural potential

(from pg 1) * Intention to experience Maori cultural products is high amongst international travellers, but prebooking is low. "This means travellers must have access to information about Maori cultural products once they are in New Zealand."

* The US market particularly wants to take home pieces of Maori artwork. "Yet potential travellers from the US are more likely than average to be unaware that New Zealand has Maori artists' studios." There is therefore an opportunity to increase communications in this area. Similarly, the qualitative research findings suggested visitors from Asia would also like to take home mementos, but they seemed to be more interested in smaller souvenirs, which would be more practical to carry home.

Time

* Lack of time to participate in Maori cultural products was reported to be a recurrent barrier amongst all travellers. "Related to this is an underlying lack of awareness which links to this sense of insufficient time for Maori cultural activities - people are simply not planning well enough because they do not know what it is possible to see/do in enough detail/breadth. Creating greater awareness of Maori cultural products is therefore likely to create positive change in terms of increased participation and overall satisfaction."

* With Maori cultural products generally being seen in a more favourable light than their ethnic counterparts in other countries, there is clearly opportunity to take advantage of this.

Cuisine

* Not much is known about Maori cuisine as being unique and distinct from New Zealand fare. "The opportunity, therefore, exists to develop this particular area of the Maori cultural products on offer."

* In order that repeat visits and more first-time visits by domestic travellers are made, a concerted effort must be undertaken in order to change perceptions and make Maori cultural products be seen as more relevant and appealing.

Continues the report: "The benefits of this will be three-fold: firstly, the Maori tourism industry will be able to have alternative sources of revenue when the international travellers' market is in low season; secondly, domestic travellers will be a more involved and enthusiastic source of information on what international travellers could see and do in New Zealand; and thirdly, all New Zealanders have a real chance to understand and experience Maori cultural products fully and completely."

RTO signs MOU with DoC

THE signing of a memorandum of understanding between Destination Manawatu and DoC marks a "significant milestone" the RTO says. The agreement sees i-SITE Palmerston North supporting the management of DoC information services.

Industry united, allied members told

INDUSTRY associations are starting to “fly in formation and ...sing from the same songsheet,” according to ITOC VP Warren Harford.

He told allied member at the ITOC forum in Auckland on Thursday that the organisation is part of the “inner circle” of tourism and has a good relationship with the Ministry, Tourism Minister Mark Burton, TIANZ, RTONZ, the Hotel Council and others.

And board member Mark Quickfall said ITOC full members will be able to attend TRENZ next year as buyers. The criteria have been set.

Korean report

Members heard that TNZ has done research on the Korean market in New Zealand “to see where the problems are. And there are some big issues...”

The report identifies the issues and will be taken to various agencies “so we can get some progress...”

The China market is equally unstructured. Some trade practices are not that desirable. But the Chinese are coming, ready or not, and we have to be ready for it and make sure resources and trade practices are in place.

Qantas inbound manager Ruth McIntyre reported that the UK market is going well while the US is flat. The carrier is trying to attract more Chinese into the South Island. (See pg 4 Qantas working for South Island) AirNZ manager inbound and sales development Keith Fong told the forum there’s “negative growth” in the Japan market between December and February. Hong Kong is also down.

But the carrier receives its first Boeing 777s next year “and we would be seriously challenged not to put something into China.”

UK

The UK market could be seen to be too strong for AirNZ as it is unable to put on extra flights.

Next year the 747s will be reconfigured with the removal of first class and the introduction of business class with lie-flat beds, as well as economy and “super economy.” Mr Fong said there will also be new uniforms and on-demand videos.

Auckland-San Francisco services are going well as are Christchurch-LA flights both of which have 80 percent load factors.

Mr Fong and Ms McIntyre agreed it was untrue too many passengers are arriving from the US on tickets obtained by air points.

Asked if AirNZ could give ITOC allied members discounted travel Mr Fong replied that it is already spending the equivalent of \$80 million supporting trade missions and promoting New Zealand generally. It is also cheaper to buy a ticket on the Net than to obtain discounted travel. “We will support people who support us...” he added.

Members were also told by Qantas Regional GM Allan Williams that members will never be able to obtain

information on passengers aboard flights due to the Privacy Act.

One said it is “stupid” that airlines will not acknowledge if a client is on a flight. “Flights are cancelled and they are put on other flight but you can’t find out where they are...a little old man or lady travelling 17 hours gets to New Zealand and there’s no one to meet them. They blame us in the first instance and then New Zealand and their holiday starts off in one hell of a mess.”

Irate

Mr Quickfall said full members are just as irate about the problem - because customers are sometimes stuck at Auckland International Airport for up to three hours.

Mr Williams said that if there is a delay or cancellation and a group are put on another aircraft there is no reason why airlines can’t advise this is what has happened.

“But you will never get a passenger list like in the good old days.”

On potential changes to the distribution channel, thanks to the Net, past president Don Gunn said it’s up to individual operators to work with the internet and repackage products accordingly.

“If they can make it easier for the consumer on the website to take a package and book it then that’s the way they can go. They can also look at specialising into niche areas such as food.”

Survive

TNZ GM Operations Tim Hunter said operators who will survive are those who take up new ways of selling product.

“The distribution channel that will survive is the one that adds value to the consumer...makes it easier for them.”

He added: “We will see, overseas, that knowledge-based travel companies that are able put packages together that appeal to consumers will survive. Those that push volume in traditional sales will be challenged...the issue won’t go away.”

Asked when AirNZ will introduce packaged holidays Mr Fong confirmed that basic packages could be online next year.

When the forum was asked about members’ experiences and TNZ forecasts Martin Lobb of Rotorua’s Polynesian Spa said to laughter: “When I try to reconcile my figures they never seem to match (Tourism Minister) Mark Burton’s re-election figures!”

Staff shortages

On staff shortages Mr Lobb said that when he recently attended a spa conference in the US he found the industry there had the same problem. “You spend a lot of money training people, and they leave. Someone stood up and asked ‘ what say you don’t train them - and they stay?’”

An accommodation provider said people come here to meet New Zealanders. So we should not fill hotels with foreign workers.

On wages, Scenic Coachlines’ John Potter said his industry is “very down in the costings area...” We

struggle to get new plant.” He added: “We get new guys on board but we can’t retain them as they don’t see the job as having a future. It’s young blood we want to bring in.”

Mr Harford wondered if the industry is behind others when it comes to how much we pay workers.

Tony McQuilkin of Real Journeys said his company prefers to train existing employees they already have “When you think about it, it’s cheaper - with a good guy with the right mentality - to pay for those things. It’s cheaper than the costs in trying to recruit people.”

It was suggested that a service charge be introduced and then workers could be paid higher wages. But others said a career structure is often what’s needed as well. TNZ CEO George Hickton said he had the same problem with his staff.

Qantas working for South Island

QANTAS’s Ruth McIntyre later expanded on her comments about trying to attract more Chinese to the South Island.

She told *IT* that she has been working with Qantas’ Chinese sales team to offer the Rotorua/Christchurch flight as a link to the South Island for the Chinese market. “Traditionally the Chinese have arrived in New Zealand, had a three day itinerary that has meant AKL/ROT/AKL and then out. South Island business has been missing out.”

She adds: “With our gateway concept, we have been promoting China/Auckland, coach to Rotorua/fly to Christchurch or Queenstown and then return via Christchurch back to China via Australia or Hong Kong.”

This week a group of 15 CITS clients flew from Rotorua to Queenstown. “Their entire New Zealand stay has been five days. So gradually we are working with our Chinese wholesalers to increase their New Zealand experience.

“The fares we offer in the Chinese market make it very attractive to use this sector and in turn visit the South Island. Numbers are a bit of an unknown but we have pitched the concept to our Chinese wholesalers as something different and slowly we’re starting to see the results.

* Qantas’ new Sydney-Shanghai service is three times a week.

Resentment towards DoC highlighted

THERE is a feeling of resentment towards DoC by some tourism operators that there is no partnership between the department and themselves when it comes to Milford Sound. But there has to be to obtain the best results, Totally Tourism New Zealand MD Mark Quickfall said at the forum.

He said the main concern over the latest draft Fiordland National Park Management Plan is that it is too restrictive on tourism opportunities.

“The main concern is that not enough research has been conducted...on aircraft numbers...they suddenly announced there will be 10 concessions and each with two planes only and with restricted landings. There is no evidence as to whether it is viable, no solid evidence on the type of planes suggesting...it’s a barrier to people looking to invest... who in their right mind would go out and purchase new plant now not knowing if you will be successful in the tender process?”

Sensible

Mr Quickfall said no one is arguing with DoC. “We are not saying we should not be managing the adverse effects on the park but we are saying we should be doing this in a sensible manner. Hopefully, we can continue communicating with the department and get a good outcome. But it doesn’t look very promising. Suddenly everyone is engaging lawyers...”

Mr McQuilkin said DoC credibility is stretched..

Rearrange

Now a DoC landscape designer has decided “he might like to rearrange the jigsaw puzzle at Milford, and \$32 million worth of infrastructure which MDA (Milford Development Agency) has progressively invested in. He wants everything on the other side of the field!”

Real Journeys will contest the proposal. “But when you have processes - and landscape artists come up with things 18 months after submissions have closed and come up with a completely different plan you start to scratch your head.

“The main thing is that what you read in the newspapers is not necessarily what will happen. It’s just an idea someone floated,” he said to laughter.

Department “needs educating”, says Quickfall

AFTER heated discussion on concessions for tour escorts using national parks board member Mark Quickfall said DoC needs to be educated in what tourism is about and the effects the department’s decisions can have on the industry.

He was speaking after Abel Tasman Kayaks’ Darryl Wilson said an escort/guide can take a group to the park but they are not allowed to accompany them on a walk unless they have a concession. If they do, they are in breach of the company’s concession.

Mr Quickfall said ITOC had asked the Bus and Coach Association to try and negotiate a nationwide concession for such situations.

One member said operators objected to being targeted as a specific group.

Mr Quickfall said those who arrive in campervans can go on a walk at no charge but if a company pulls up with a guide and they walk with their people, that operator must have a concession.

“You can’t have one rule for one group and another for a different group” was shouted from the floor. “They are saying that they can,” replied Mr Quickfall.

He said DoC should try to understand what the industry is trying to achieve - and work together.

"No one is arguing that if you are operating a business and you derive income from it you shouldn't pay a concession. But when this is not the pure 'driver' of that activity ... say a coachdriver is going through New Zealand and he pulls over and passengers take a five minute walk down a bush track...where do you draw the line?" TIANZ CEO Fiona Luhrs agreed to discuss the issue with DoC.

High occupancy but low rates - that's us!

AUCKLAND room rates are among the lowest in the developed world - at an average US\$79 a night, Hotel Council CEO Jennie Langley told delegates.

Of 23 cities Auckland is 17th at US\$33 lower than the average Sydney rate and US\$124 lower than the average rate in Paris. Yet when it comes to occupancy Auckland is sixth from the top!

Ms Langley noted that last year 37 percent of interactive travellers booked little or no accommodation before arriving. They have a propensity to pay rackrates. So the implications are that there will be more last minute bookings which will be done after shopping around online. There will be different pricing mechanisms - and differing seasonality patterns.

MOU

Under the recently signed MOU between her council and ITOC, ITOC asked for improved turnaround times for bookings, a simplified rate structure and better inventory management by hotels. In return, NZHC asked for the abolition of the 30 day rate, an increase in room rates and timely payment.

Both organisations want better education, standardisation of terminology and systems and to work towards best practice and shared benefit.

She assured delegates that rates will increase, the MOU and best practice are already in place and if they work together everyone will prosper. There should be no surprises - they should talk through any changes.

Ms Langley said tour groups will continue to arrive but many individual visitors are prepared to pay US\$250 a night. "When increasing numbers of visitors are prepared to pay \$250 why are would we even consider discounting for guests who are prepared to pay for quality accommodation and superb service?"

NZ bucks the trend - Hickton

THERE has been a 50 percent increase in arrivals to more than two million, since TNZ's 100%Pure campaign was launched in 1999. At the same time total international visitor expenditure more than doubled to \$7,400 million.

TNZ CEO George Hickton said these increases buck the international trend with our figures increasing far faster than many of our competitors.

The 100%Pure was our first global brand - and now the campaign is well-recognised by our target market. "We are definitely seeing the rewards of a coordinated marketing campaign for New Zealand."

Mr Hickton said that if the growth continues it won't be many years before we welcome four million visitors a year. He asked if the country is ready. "I don't think so. But what's happening is extraordinary..."

Cohesion

"There's a cohesion now in this country. Not only have we got the product right but visitors go back and talk to others in such a way that others want to come and see us."

He expects 12 percent growth for 2004 and an additional \$700 million in foreign exchange earned by the industry.

Recent research shows that 95 percent of visitors recommend a New Zealand holiday. Of these, 96 percent are either satisfied or highly satisfied.

Mr Hickton said that what really makes a difference is the experience visitors have in our landscape and with the activities available. "Our challenge is to get more interactive travellers to maintain word of mouth. We can make people interested and desirous to come. But they always check with someone else. So if we want to make the best tourism environment in the world, we must keep satisfaction levels way up."

China market will be big - and we can't ignore it, says Hunter

THE China market will be big for New Zealand. We can't ignore it. We have to manage it. And TNZ GM Operations Tim Hunter told the forum that once Chinese travel agents are fully trained he'd like to see government insisting that holidaymakers use only ITOC members to make arrangements. "That is our way of fixing the quality problem." Mr Hunter said we have to decide what level of quality we are comfortable with. We must not be "bled dry" by the market "because they have the money and are paying a reasonable price to reach New Zealand."

Responsibility

TNZ has a responsibility to keep the industry informed about which agents have been trained - and once there are direct flights here from China there will be even more business.

Mr Hunter compared China to the mudguard of a car - shiny on the outside but full of crap underneath.

"When we think about experiences Chinese visitors get in New Zealand maybe we have set our expectations a bit high in what they expect and are used to. It's pretty clear from feedback that Chinese people think New Zealand is fantastic and clean, with superb scenery. It's simple: they love it. But not getting a great experience."

The audience was told that four companies in the ITOC China portfolio group had already left because they found the market too hard to work.

“The reasons behind that are four day itineraries with hardly any inclusions. So, it’s difficult to make money - although there’s huge growth out of China. The holiday market grew 40 percent last year despite SARS.”

He added: “But there’s so much new competition in terms of new inbounders coming in. It’s very tough for pricing...there have been problems with credit, low profits. Some operators say that surely this will get better and we will see high value travellers come to New Zealand, and that’s not quite happened either.”

US\$55 a day!

Mr Hunter said that inbound operators have been asked to quote New Zealand holidays at US\$55 a day!

TNZ analysed 27 New Zealand tour products in China and found that, without airfares, holidays here are selling for about US\$140 a day.

“We expected that, if it was US\$55 ground content per day, then we could top up 40 percent. But in this case it’s 170 percent. So there is a problem. NZ is being sold for a real price.

“We are simply not seeing it at our end because the Chinese industry has us over a barrel, in terms of the way they negotiated with our inbound community and the fact that there are no barriers to inbounders getting into the marketplace.”

ITOC members need to know what their tours are selling for in China and, to help, TNZ will publish three times a year on the Net the prices being charged by the main tour companies up there.

Transparency

“So you can have some transparency, so you can have some fortitude when it comes to negotiating ...we can’t fix the problem but it will help a great deal if you know what tours are being sold for and you know what you are being asked to provide in terms of ground content.”

Mr Hunter said that when New Zealand first obtained ADS in 1999 we could deal with only 26 companies in China. This has now opened to 278 companies in nine provinces.

Government granted \$400,000 a year to help train the agents, together with the Immigration Service.

Course coordinator Vivienne Chen is so effective, he added, that after the two day workshop they sit a written exam and the average pass is 94 percent! The agents are then encouraged to continue their training online.

The first graduates are due here now “because seeing is believing” and when they return Mr Hunter said it is hoped they will develop more ideal programmes with better value.

“If we can get 3,000 at the end of the three years in 250 agencies, which is almost saturation, there should be no reason why we can’t go to government and say we want holiday visitors to New Zealand coming only out of ADS, which means they will only be carried by ITOC operators because that is our way of fixing the quality problem. It’s a bit of a dream.”

He said 20 million Chinese now travel outside their

country and they will soon know what makes good quality. “They will soon be very demanding about what they experience...there are some terrible products and this won’t change until the consumer asks for better New Zealand experiences. That won’t happen until the public is better educated through the media.

Consumers

TNZ will also spend money advertising to consumers. “We also need consumers pummeling at the (agents’) doors asking for specific New Zealand experiences. That’s what will make it a success.”

Mr Hunter said the Tourism Research Council says there could be 165,000 Chinese coming here each year by 2010.

“We think it will be closer to 200,000. We could ignore that but we should not as it will be very big for New Zealand.”

Provincial governments are selling their agencies they currently run and he said that once they are privatised there will be greater interest in quality.

“The other thing is that 90 percent of arrivals come via Australia. We only get four days. But if we can get direct flights from China to Auckland and Christchurch we could get mono destination (status) and start brochuring. That would add considerably to the value of the China market in terms of length of stay and would probably involve some serious marketing.”

Workshops

ITOC VP Warren Harford asked what was being done to educate the industry in New Zealand about the China market. Mr Hunter said TNZ hopes to have full information on its website. Workshops could also be run here by Ms Chen.

Mr Hunter emphasised that ADS agents who are trained are in fact in partnership with ITOC.

But NZIS also issues visas outside ADS and ITOC, which is causing the competitive environment here with visitors often having an average experience.

“Why we are focusing on trying get a better result in the group market is that if we get it wrong then we have a major problem on our hands.”

Lions tour provides opportunities

WE have to ensure that we manage next year’s Lions tour carefully so the 15,000 Brits expected have a great time and return home with glowing reports of what New Zealand is like in the off season, said TNZ CEO George Hickton.

“The opportunities are there. But there are also risks. We have to get it right. They are such an influential group of people with expectations of a wonderful country and all they want to do is experience it. The UK market is too important to mess it up.” An idea is to give the visitors a 100%At Home experience and a 100%Pure Welcome.

Added Mr Hickton: “It will certainly provide us with a boost in the low season. Some 15,000 are coming

ITOC annual forum....ITOC

and only 8,000 tickets...\$50 million could be the return... There will be 200 media...2000 campervans and 180 tour coaches.

Four options being considered

ITOC is considering four options as to where it wants to go once CEO Peter Lowry retires next July. Mr Lowry has been with the council 25 years.

The first is the status quo with the secretariat remaining in Wellington and costs shared with TAANZ. The second is for the CEO to be based in Auckland and the secretariat in Wellington. Option three is for ITOC and TAANZ to have separate CEOs based in Auckland. And the final option is for everyone to be in Auckland.

MOU signed

ITOC and Regional Tourism Organisations of New Zealand (RTONZ) signed a Memorandum of Understanding during the forum.

The council's three lives...

ITOC has had three stages in life, president Stuart Neels told the forum. Firstly there was "The Club" - an informal association of like-minded people, but without a structured organisation due to lack of funds.

This was followed by 12 years as the inbound division of TAANZ. Then, in 1991/1992 ITOC was founded as an independent organisation with its own funding base. TAANZ subsidised the work of ITOC without charge, as ITOC full members were also members of TAANZ.

"Tourism evolved from a small unstructured and disjointed industry into an important growing industry with ITOC taking a key role in this ongoing development. The tourism industry had to continuously lobby government and other industry groups in New Zealand that it was an important 'export' industry."

In the 1990s tourism came of age and ITOC grew in importance as the voice of inbound distribution.

"Then came the major marketplace changes in the late 1990s and in the new century the rapid pace of change, the age of technology and the internet, the expansion of the unstructured market, new emerging markets and importance of Asia and the UK as well as the established markets of Australia, North America and Japan. Tourism became big business in New Zealand.. and gained full recognition."

ITOC entered its new phase as a separate trade association/incorporated society and developed a new constitution and rules, code of ethics and practice and funding base. ITOC is now respected by government and TNZ.

Added Mr Neels: "However this did not happen without pressures and friction in the early 1990s when ITOC was seen as a threat to the newly formed Tourism Industry Association (TIANZ)."

Quality information essential - Minister

TOURISM has come of age, increasingly becoming the focus of professional research, says Tourism Minister Mark Burton.

He tells *IT* this was evident at this week's New Zealand Tourism and Hospitality Research Conference, where researchers from around New Zealand and 15 other countries gathered to explore the relationship between industry decision-making processes and knowledge generating capacity.

"Today, it is widely acknowledged that quality information is essential to effective, long-term decision-making. Just as quality products, services, and infrastructure are key to achieving sustainability, this level of quality must also extend to the research available to the industry."

The Minister says the first step was to establish the Tourism Research Council (TRCNZ), to provide strategic leadership on tourism research.

"Their website (www.trcnz.govt.nz), has become a widely used, one-stop-shop for tourism research data, and they are currently gathering sector feedback to define our future research priorities.

"Our highly accurate forecasting programme is being used as a planning tool industry-wide. Currently, the Ministry of Tourism is using the forecasts to inform tourism's future infrastructure requirements. They are also working in partnership with TIANZ on a project to increase tourism yield."

He adds: "A long-term future for tourism means developing long-term, sustainable, quality jobs. What better way to do that than by supporting quality industry research?"

Mr Burton says we have come a long way, but improving our research base is an ongoing job. "Along with defining our priorities, we are examining the structures and resources needed for appropriate industry research. With the right information, we can make the right decisions to achieve sustainability."

Beyond expectations

TOURISM Waitaki says visitor numbers are "beyond expectations" so far this year.

In the August 2002 year there were 297,153 guest nights in the region. The following year this had increased to 299,995 and in the year to August just gone the figure has risen to 313,552.

*** Oamaru i-SITE has had a record-breaking November! Visitor numbers through the centre have jumped 20 percent on the same time last year.**

CEP good for tourism?

THE New Zealand/Thailand Closer Economic Partnership (CEP) agreement and parallel arrangements on labour and environment has potential benefits for tourism, according to TIANZ. These include the provision of access for qualified Thai chefs to be employed here on contract without labour market testing for up to four years.

DoC delays Milford hearings

DOC has delayed Milford Sound hearings until February - due to concerns by tourism businesses about the short time for making a submission. TIANZ says it believes this is a wise decision.

“While this issue appears to be a local one, many TIANZ members hold DoC concessions in other parts of the country and we believe the prescriptive nature of the draft Fiordland National Park Management Plan and its subsequent proposed amendments could well be replicated in other national park management plans as they come up for renewal.”

TIANZ also believes that the draft plan shows that DoC is trying to control tourism numbers without a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationships between human activity and our natural environment.

“TIANZ will be advocating strongly over the next year for better research, and a more co-operative and consultative approach to the management of our public lands by DoC.”

Complex

DoC'S Martin Rodd says: “Milford Sound and Milford Road are two very complex sections of the draft Fiordland National Park Management Plan and a number of submitters have requested that we delay the hearings to enable them more time to consult the boards of their companies and other affected parties on draft proposals, which the department has sent to all submitters as part of the process.”

He adds: “The draft response proposes a long term opportunity for tourism providers to expand if they choose to, by moving their operations from Fresh Water Basin to Deep Water Basin.

“This is to better manage the flow of visitors at Milford to avoid congestion and allow for considerable growth while ensuring a quality visitor experience consistent with an iconic World Heritage site. The draft response also includes other tools for assisting to manage visitor flows at Milford.” Hearings on the plan have been running for nearly a year.

Last

Adds Mr Rodd: “The Milford hearings are the last of these and we don't want people thinking that we have rushed the process.”

Following hearings DoC says it will revise the draft plan based on these public submissions within the framework of the National Parks Act and General Policy for National Parks.

It will then hand the draft plan to the Southland Conservation Board which will consider the submissions and how the plan has been revised to address concerns raised. When satisfied, it will forward the plan to the New Zealand Conservation Authority for approval. Details: 03-2147550 or mrodd@doc.govt.nz.

PATA predicts 2004 will set record for region

PATA is forecasting more than 300 million international visitor arrivals to Asia Pacific in 2004, about 10 percent more than the previous record of 274.8 million in 2002.

Praise for Rainbow Springs over work with kiwis

TOURISM Minister Mark Burton has congratulated Rainbow Springs, Rotorua, for its contribution towards saving our national icon - the kiwi. As part of Operation Nest Egg, a DoC-run kiwi conservation and recovery programme, Rainbow Springs has opened Kiwi Encounter, a 45-minute guided tour of its kiwi facility. Admission fees are reinvested in the programme.

Mr Burton says the new attraction is an example of tourism's excellent working partnership with conservation. “Rainbow Springs has been with Operation Nest Egg since 1995, already successfully hatching, raising, and releasing 174 kiwi chicks back into the wild.”

Other participants: Auckland Zoo, Whangarei Bird Rescue Centre, Napier's Westshore Nocturnal House, and the Kiwi and Birdlife Park in Queenstown.

Many on the move...

TOURISM Minister Mark Burton's press secretary **Jenny Alexander** leaves today (Friday) to become national media advisor for Child, Youth and Family. Replacing her is **Jennie Darby**.

Ms Pipiana Whiston has been appointed GM of the Millennium Hotel Rotorua. She's been acting GM for the last eight months. The hotel is undergoing a major refurbishment which will ensure the hotel remains at the “top of the ladder” according to Millennium Copthorne Kingsgate Hotels' COO Gordon Wilson.

Accor has appointed **Anne-Maree Ling** as sales manager Leisure - Pacific.

Her role will support the growth of hotel product in New Zealand, Australia, Fiji and New Caledonia and maximise sales efforts for business flows in the leisure market. She will be based in Sydney.

Accor's continued expansion throughout New Zealand includes a 145-room Ibis hotel in Rotorua, a 95-room Novotel in Palmerston North and the first Sofitel in New Zealand, with the five-star luxury brand to open in Queenstown in June 2005 with an 82 all-suite hotel. After more than three years as GM at Rydges Rotorua, **Justin Boydell** is leaving in January to become GM at Rydges Queenstown.

Scott Lynch, currently executive assistant manager at Rydges Southbank Brisbane, is replacing Mr Boydell.

Anya Sheath has been appointed marketing manager for Peppers Hotel du Vin, Firstland Vineyards and Spa du Vin. She previously worked for the Premier Automotive Group - Land Rover and Jaguar. Former group public affairs manager (Australia) for Ansett and AirNZ, **Heather Jeffrey** starts next month with Virgin Blue as GM public affairs.

Dolphins and kayaks

BLACK Cat Group has launched a new two day combo product that includes swimming with dolphins and kayaking adventures. The cost is \$190.

Agrodome takes giant leap back into the past!

THE Agrodome, Rotorua, has taken a giant leap back! The latest development is a recreated but authentic 1950s era shearing shed complete with vintage shaft drive shearing machine which is used for shearing demonstrations on a daily basis. Included is a range of equipment such as grinders, wool presses and other shearing paraphernalia.

The interactive attraction is designed to honour everyone who made New Zealand a famous wool growing nation.

Brothers Bowen

It is dedicated to the Bowen family and in particular to brothers Godfrey and Ivan who, during their decades of involvement, revolutionised the shearing and wool handling industries around the world.

The shed display includes a wide range of memorabilia and articles of interest relevant to the lives of these two former champions and their lifelong devotion to the wool industry.

The exhibition has 21st century technology including a DVD theatre and digital projector which will display movie footage and still images digitally re-mastered from early 16mm film and historical black and white photographs.

Along with the Agrodome farm tour it provides the visitor with the opportunity to view every aspect of wool from production through the harvesting process to the woollen mill, which includes carding, spinning, weaving and knitting. Details: Jason Baker 07-3571050 or jason@agrodome.co.nz.

Accor quashes rumours

MEDIA reports claim Accor plans to build a four-star boutique hotel in Blenheim next to Montana Brancott Winery at Riverlands next year. They claim it is likely to be a Mercure. But Accor says the story is just a rumour. “Now we know how Madonna and Jo Lo feel - always meant to be getting up to something!”

New cat, as Stewart Island starts to develop

STEWART Island Experience - the joint venture company owned by island residents Phil and Sharan Caskey and Real Journeys - launched a new catamaran, The Stewart Islander, on Monday.

The 22-metre vessel will provide an expanded timetable between Bluff and Stewart Island during summer when three return services will operate daily in each direction.

Once at Stewart Island, visitors can enjoy a three-hour cruise of Paterson Inlet. The cruise incorporates a visit to Ulva Island, a wildlife sanctuary where local personality Ulva Amos will conduct one-hour guided walks.

Travellers wanting an insight into the community, its history and the natural environment, can take a Village and Bays Tour.

This week, two new minibuses have been sent to Stewart Island to replace older vehicles.

Other developments include the soon-to-be-opened Stewart Island Activities Centre at Halfmoon Bay. From here visitors will be able to hire rental cars, scooters and mountain bikes as well as fishing, diving and snorkelling gear. In the New Year, the company will introduce a semi-submersible tour giving travellers the opportunity to view the rich marine life around Horseshoe Bay from underwater.

Industry “reluctantly ready for regime” - Robertson

WITH the smoking ban in workplaces and licensed premises coming into effect today (Friday) most operators in the hospitality industry are ready for the new regime, albeit reluctantly. HANZ CEO Bruce Robertson, says the industry has worked hard to get ready for the law change and many have created outside areas for smokers.

Gov't slammed over RMA

GIANT transmission lines, motorways, large dams and coal-burning power stations are likely to be fast-tracked if the Resource Management Act Amendment Bill just introduced to Parliament is passed, the Green Party warns. Co-Leader and Environment Spokesperson Jeanette Fitzsimons says new processes in the Bill give the Minister for the Environment unprecedented powers to bypass public concerns in “the national interest.”

* Government wants to fundamentally change the Act to shut the public out, says Forest and Bird conservation manager Kevin Hackwell

“It will do this by allowing central government to override local decision making and by giving new powers to local authorities to shut out the public.”

He adds: “Local communities need to organise in opposition to the...Bill or face losing important rights. The new powers will force major infrastructure proposals onto unwilling local communities.

“When the review was announced, the government told the public that it was just a ‘tune up’ and that they would protect ‘good environmental outcomes’ and ‘public participation’.

”Instead the government has tabled an amazing Think Big power grab, “ Mr Hackwell says.

Plenty to shout about

WITH about 30 major events taking place throughout the region this summer, Wairarapa has plenty to shout about - and tourism manager Ron Murray says that’s just what they’re going to do. Some 40,000 summer events guides are being distributed throughout the lower North Island. There will also be a 12-week billboard advertising campaign in downtown Wellington. Events to be featured include Whittaker’s Wings Over Wairarapa, Martinborough Country Fairs, the Golden Shears and Genesis Wairarapa International Balloon Fiesta. Details: 06-3700911 or ron@wairarapanz.com.

Global interest in Queenstown Resort College

TOURISM and hospitality professors and consultants internationally recognised as among the best in the world will be in Queenstown next year in a New Zealand education first.

Professional facilitators from the US, France, and the UK will be here from June to November to present courses at the new Queenstown Resort College (QRC).

They will present the 2005 Executive Education Series for leaders and emerging leaders in tourism and hospitality.

QRC CEO and director Jan Fitz-Gerald says: "This is an unprecedented opportunity for industry executives from around Australasia to have learning experiences that meet the highest international standards."

Growth

Ms Fitz-Gerald adds that the launch of QRC coincides with unprecedented growth in tourism numbers, hospitality and tourism worker shortages, and research by the country's leading authorities that warns 120,000 extra workers will be needed in the industry by 2010.

"This represents not only challenges for senior managers, but also immense opportunities for those seeking to obtain the skills necessary to meet the demands of this rapidly growing and exciting sector. QRC participants will graduate with the skills required to meet those challenges."

The facilitators have been selected from the world's most prestigious hospitality providers, including Cornell University, New York University, the Virginia Technical Institute and State University, Hong Kong University and Nottingham Trent University in the UK.

The series will include the Executive Management Programme (EMP), the Management Development Programme (MDP), and the Emerging Managers, Development Programme (EMDP).

Accor launches industry site

ACCOR Asia Pacific has launched its newest web site - www.accortrade.info - designed for the travel trade, including tour operators, conference organisers and strategic distribution partners. It is said to be the first of its type for any regional hotel group.

Tourism one of few options for Great Barrier Island

THERE'S general agreement on Great Barrier Island and amongst government agencies and others that tourism is one of the few options for economic development. Julie Warren, from the Centre for Research, Evaluation and Social Assessment (CRESA) told the research conference in Wellington this week that they also recognise that tourism needs to be carefully planned and managed to ensure that the special qualities of the island and its communities are protected. "The development of a shared vision for the island's future may provide the basis for such planning and management. Those participating in the shared vision include the wide range of stakeholders."

Shotover Jet buys into kayaks

SHOTOVER Jet has bought a major shareholding in Kaiteriteri Kayaks and is running the business as a joint venture with previous owners in conjunction with Shotover's Aqua Taxis based at Marahau, which it bought in April.

\$7M telescope to be tourism attraction

THE unveiling of a new \$7 million telescope at Mount John, Tekapo, is described as a new and exciting project. It has been paid for by the Japanese government.

The telescope has been installed in a purpose-built building funded by local company, Earth and Sky, which will have access to the observatory for its tourism business. Director Graeme Murray says Tekapo's dark skies are an asset to the community and is a reason why Mount John is so successful as an observatory.

He says the observatory will be a centrepiece at the World Expo in Japan next year. Details: murrayfamily84@xtra.co.nz

Mt Hutt gets millions

MOUNT Hutt Marketing Group chairman Vic Allen says he is thrilled at the announcement of a multi million-dollar investment in the Mount Hutt Ski Area.

Board members from Southern Alpine Recreation Ltd and senior management have announced plans to spend millions on new chairlifts and trails for both learner and experienced skiers and boarders.

Gems in the valley

HIDDEN Gems of the Akatarawa Valley! The Akatrack, Wellington, has been launched by valley residents Keith and Liz Budd. Their walking experience, that encompasses a five to six hour self guided walk on the first day, includes transportation of baggage, overnight accommodation at Efil Doog Garden of Art, and an evening meal at Staglands Wildlife Reserve. It is the first stage in a package linking Upper Hutt to Kapiti. The tours operate from now until May 1. The cost is \$197. Details: 04-5264867 or www.akatrack.co.nz.

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

Lodge refusal a win for all New Zealand?

A victory in the fight to stop American billionaire Julian Robertson - "The Wizard of Wall Street" - building a luxury lodge on Cape Kidnappers has been hailed as a "win for all New Zealanders." Objectors say they have won a "David and Goliath" battle to stop him building a lodge near the gannet colony in Hawke's Bay.

Mr Robertson wanted the lodge and 24 guest chalets to complement a golf course he has already built. A sunset room would have also been cut into the cliff face.

After council approved the project, Gannet Beach Adventures owner Rod Heaps, Havelock North lawyer Peter Nee Harland and landowner Charles Gordon took their fight to stop it to the courtroom.

But why inappropriate, Hamilton wonders

ON what grounds can Forest and Bird's Peter Collins say it would have been inappropriate to locate such a major development so close to the gannet breeding colonies (IT526) asks industry doyen Duncan Hamilton. "It's just another example of the RMA and Mr Collins shooting NZ in the foot."

He adds: "It is a pity that the latter day Pontius Pilate, presiding over the Environment Court, could only see that the Hastings Council, which after an exhaustive examination, had approved the project was in fact wrong.

"No matter that Mr Robertson has shown by his actions and with his own money an intense understanding and respect for the environment with a brilliant and unobtrusive development at Kauri Cliffs (which I have visited) and a wonderful golf course at Cape Kidnappers (which I have not) and this pompous Mr Collins talks about things being inappropriate illustrates the real weakness of the RMA which Simon Upton was going to fix and this government has refused to touch in a meaningful way."

Mr Hamilton wonders if Forest and Bird understands the economic loss their "foolish and arrogant action" will cause to the region - not to mention our reputation as a place where you can get things done.

* Mr Hamilton is a Life member of PATA, TAANZ and TIANZ.

Fingertip access to Destination New Zealand

IN a technological first for tourism in New Zealand potential visitors can now 'get inside' the 100%Pure TV commercial.

Innovative new technology is enabling potential visitors to find out more about us through the interactive commercial which is on the website www.newzealand.com.

It is the first time that New Zealanders have fingertip access to the way their country is marketed internationally and is believed to be the first time an NTO has used such technology.

"The beauty of this technology is that we can encourage our target market to look in depth at not only the activities and attractions in the advertisement, but throughout New Zealand," says TNZ CEO George Hickton.

Users can stop and start the commercial to find out more about the scene they are watching, or link to further information.

Outrigger celebrates with three properties

OUTRIGGER Hotels and Resorts has celebrated its official launch into the New Zealand market. The Hawaiian-based company has secured the management rights to Outrigger Terraces Resort, Lake Taupo, Outrigger at Clearwater, Christchurch, and Outrigger at the Beacon, Queenstown. MD for Outrigger Oceania Dave Lawrence says: "We view New Zealand as being of utmost importance to the Outrigger brand as we make further progress, largely due to this country's exceptionally marketable nature, founded on a warm and hospitable population and striking natural beauty."

All go for events centre

THREE organisations are joining with the Rotorua District Council and Rotorua Energy Charitable Trust (RECT) to help fund a \$21 million events centre for the city. The Bay of Plenty Community Trust, Unison Networks Ltd, and the Southern Trust have pledged "significant contributions" on top of \$10m already pledged by RECT and \$4m signalled by the council.

Fight land access?

FISH and Game New Zealand wants anglers and hunters to fight back against what it says is a campaign of misinformation on the land access issue being actioned by Federated Farmers and the ACT party.

Director Bryce Johnson has asked them to write to government, urging it to stay true to its pre-election promise of increased public access to waterways throughout New Zealand.

Museum of distinction

ONE of New Zealand's oldest museums has had one of its most distinguished years since opening to the public 136 years ago.

Otago Museum in Dunedin won the New Zealand Tourism 'mark of quality' award and was judged New Zealand's best culture and heritage attraction in the 2004 New Zealand Tourism Awards.

It also recently won the Otago Chamber of Commerce's 'Supreme Business of the Year' and 'best large tourism business' awards. Today it attracts more than 300,000 visitors annually.

Next year will see the construction of a three level tropical habitat as part of the museum becoming a home for 'live exhibits' to complement its top natural history collection. With almost two million collection items, the museum is similar in scale to Auckland and Canterbury Museums and Te Papa.

Spa opens

SPA du Vin, 45 minutes south of Auckland opened on Monday. Managers are Lucy and David Lloyd-Barker.

Airport - a destination for shoppers

GLOBAL Traveler Magazine has placed Auckland International Airport as one of the top 10 airport shopping destinations in the world.

Airport retail has grown to become its own unique industry, says airport GM retail Nick Forbes. The airport has more than 70 stores in the international terminal .

Power Surge is the thing this summer!

THE likelihood of "throwing up" is high - and there's a definite chance of being disorientated! These are experiences to be "enjoyed" by visitors to Rainbow's End, Manukau, this summer when Power Surge becomes the latest attraction.

We are told this is "an intense experience that takes seated riders up into the air, whirls them around and upside down, spinning in many different directions."

Www.rainbowsend.co.nz adds: "Sometimes you'll feel as if you are falling out. Sometimes you'll feel like you won't make it. Most of the time you won't know where you are!"

Also at Manukau is the Big Swing Golf Range where Jungleworld Adventure Golf has just opened. It's undercover 18 hole micro golf course which has waterfalls, caves, trees and plants and imitation glow worms. A new nine hole par 3 executive course has been developed by professionals to suit the more serious

golfer, with state of the art greens! Details: 09-2744479 or www.bigswing.co.nz.

Backpackers sleep in jail

FORMERLY a quarantine facility, army barracks, lunatic asylum and finally gazetted as a jail in 1862, Napier Prison is the oldest in New Zealand - and is open to the public at 9.30am and 3pm daily. The prison was on Scinde Island, isolated from the town by a sand spit until the 1931 earthquake raised the seabed six metres. The jail housed up to 82 prisoners on hard labour until 1973 when quarry work finished. The building closed in 1993 and was left abandoned until Marion and Toro Waaka took it over. They provide a "comfortable yet eerie tour" - and backpacker accommodation! Details: 06-8359933, 021-1144991 or getnicked@hotmail.com.

Overseas students flock to the Bay

ABOUT 14,500 foreign students, mostly from China and Korea, have been studying in New Zealand secondary schools this year - down 17 percent on last year's all-time high - and schools were bracing themselves for a further slump. But in the Western Bay, foreign students pumped \$25 million into the economy this year. Bucking the national trend, income from students is expected to increase to \$38 million by 2008.

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last for three weeks.
IT529 will be out
on January 14.**

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Tourism & Lifestyle Opportunities

HAMILTON - Centrally located 27 unit motor inn. Long term lease in place. This excellent property only eight years old. Freehold land and buildings \$3 million plus GST (if any) Yield 8% Tom Crawford 027 278 9199 Carolynn Crawford 027 247 8716

ROTORUA - 5 Minutes walk from the CBD. Located in quiet side street, 6 bedrooms and owners quarters. Thermal mineral pool and thermal heating of home. Easy to maintain home and grounds. John Perrett 027 656 5464 or 07 349 5358

THE GREYTOWN HOTEL - Cute country pub offering accommodation, food, beverages. Strong local support and excellent profits available to an owner/operator. Further development potential. Selling FHGC. Tenders Close 2pm, 16 December 2004. John Welch 025 434 800 or 04 499 6044.

ROTORUA OUTSKIRTS - Park on the banks of the Waiteti stream. Can accommodate in excess of 120 people. 6376 square meters of freehold land. Lake is 400 m walk along stream. View online, www.bayleys.co.nz #32010 Mark Slade 0274 988 911.

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