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Maori tourism - cause for concern?

RESULTS of government research into Maori tourism bring good and bad news, according to New Zealand Maori Tourism Council CEO Johnny Edmonds. The council has commended the government's initiative in commissioning the research project "Measurement of Maori in Tourism (IT527)."

The research is seen as further evidence that Maori are making a significant contribution to the development of the industry. It indicates that between 1991 and 2001 the number of Maori employed in the industry doubled. But the findings have to be viewed with concern, Mr Edmonds adds. They indicate that such participation and growth does not mean Maori are receiving equitable benefit from their involvement.

The council is to seek government and industry policy and programmes, which support Maori who are committed to achieving at a higher and more profitable level. It believes a significant decrease in the resolve of Maori to help build the industry, could significantly affect this country's point of difference with global markets and affect the future sustainability of the industry.

Things to do in 2005...

THE industry is in good shape and is set for a record summer season. But we must continue to manage our yield - and next year we must involve the smaller businesses in decision making, says TIANZ chairman Geoff Burns.

Industry leaders were in Wellington recently attending a range of meetings including the Tourism Research Council, the new TIANZ board and the 2010 Strategy Group. Some also attended the tourism research conference at Victoria University.

Encouraging

Mr Burns tells *IT* that the CEO and chairman of Trade and Enterprise and the CEO of DoC were at the 2010 meeting, which was encouraging as it shows how seriously government is taking tourism. "Among bigger picture issues discussed were the acceleration of global competition and the need to continue to invest in marketing and product development."

He adds: "Key influencers across

the tourism sector are following the same roadmap and it's clear we can start thinking and acting more purposefully about the bigger risk issues - and that's why Doc and T and E were there."

DoC is interested because it is concerned with the interface between the industry and the environment.

SMEs

"What concerns T and E is the sustainability and performances of a lot of small to medium enterprises which makes the bulk of tourism operators."

He says we need to benchmark the industry against other sectors here and overseas.

"Unfortunately, we are not like the farmers. We can't levy to do that. So we have to provide compelling reasons why people should want to work for the greater good as much as their own personal good."

Commitment

Mr Burns says it's happening at government level - and government is definitely committed and putting funds in. "But we at TIANZ need to represent private sector on doing that. We have good engagement from larger members. We just need smaller members more involved." Issues TIANZ will tackle next year include an analysis of industry yield - and whether we are making enough money out of our growth. "In other words, how well are we really doing? We are in good shape with definition of good customer experience but consistency of delivery is less certain. (Over)

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TEN years ago in IT...

BACKPACKERS have been largely dismissed by tourism organisations, according to researcher Stephen Doorne.

Yet his latest work shows that while the average international visitor spends \$2,000 each per visit, the backpacker parts with an average \$3,200.

He writes: "They are looked on as low spending 'bums' who use little more than the sewerage system in the communities they visit. Indeed, the reverse is true..."

IT published an open letter to NZTB (now TNZ) CEO Ian Kean suggesting greater co-operation between it and the board. It suggested holding regular briefings - and supplying media with copies of publications as they come out.

GOVERNMENT needs to stand behind tourism as it's one of our largest forex earners, Richard Ellis Agency wrote in its submission to the Select Committee investigating NZTB activities. There were 101 written submissions.

Budget Backpacker Hotels noted that despite increased visitor arrivals the balance of payment figures for one period had actually fallen compared to the same period the previous year.

It suggested NZTB board membership should be broadened to include non-industry interests, such as conservationists.

And Prof Doug Pearce wrote in his submission that consensus needs to be reached between inter-related organisations to ensure no gaps or overlaps occur and that all functions are performed effectively.

RAINBOW Springs CEO Max Martin says his attraction now entices 450,000 visitors a year.

Tourism operators are happy to pay concession fees to use DoC land, points out editor/publisher Mary Gerber.

She writes that contrary to what Conservation Minister Denis Marshall is claiming she had yet to meet an operator who considers the conservation estate "to be a free good - land freely available for them to make a dollar."

Ms Gerber also takes issue with government for spending money promoting our clean and green image while cutting the DoC budget. "That is not really ethical," she adds.

Things to do in 2005...

(from pg 1) That's why benchmarking is very important. Are we as good as we think?"

Mr Burns says regions must continue to become more involved in tourism.

"It is critical we have stronger community engagement. ..we are starting to get a few pressure points..."

On DoC, Mr Burns says it will be interesting to see how the department develops a greater understanding of tourism issues.

"There have been some pressure points like Milford, and we'd like to see some transparency in concessions regimes. Effective dialogue has been mixed but despite hiccups show signs of improving. The common will is there."

Research

The industry also needs more practical, relevant and timely research. "One of the challenges, to date, has been the private sector's lack of interest in research, but as more applied research comes out the industry will start to see results that are more relevant."

Mr Burns says the industry would like to see Mark Burton remain Minister. "We are all interested in leadership from government and we hope it will continue in 2005. We have had a healthy robust relationship with the current Minister. Without compromising Mr Burton's career prospects we'd like him to stay if we had a choice."

On the coming season, Mr Burns believes there will be strong demand. "We need to try and persuade people to lift their heads a little rather than always being heads down and bums up. We want them to start working on long-term issues - so we want longer term players to participate in some of the thinking at regional, community and national level. It's their industry so they have to take responsibility for their own future."

This places the emphasis on national industry associations to become more relevant and encourage greater participation.

Staff shortages major issue

SHORTAGE of skilled staff is a major issue being addressed by ITOC, TAAZ, TIANZ and the ATTTO. The recent TIANZ/ATTTO Workforce and Skills Projection Report must be taken seriously by all sectors, says ITOC CEO Peter Lowry.

"Staff training, retention and recruitment are now of vital importance to us all and we must work together to promote our industry as an attractive career path." He adds that quality depends on an ethic of excellence. "We cannot talk about quality without making the quality performance a reality.

"Unless our staff perform well and meet visitor expectations then the good work of the TNZ global marketing strategy could be put at risk. I see this as the number one issue for the year ahead."

Chinese website

A website in Chinese which gives tourism information is 101box.com.

Respect is key to Milford's future

A future for Milford must be found that respects the environment, the wishes of the community, and the aspirations of the tourism industry, writes DoC's Southland conservator **Kevin O'Connor**.

LAST year around 450,000 people visited Milford Sound. At peak times on a fine day, people wanting a clear view from the shore of Mitre Peak and the fiord are instead greeted by buses, people, state highway traffic, and the constant hum of aeroplanes.

On a busy day, which can be any fine day in summer, there can be up to 200 aircraft movements in and out of the airstrip at Milford. That's a take-off or landing every five minutes. Over the last four years, on average, there have been 18,000 aircraft movements a year, carrying up to 60,000 passengers. These numbers are increasing by six per cent a year.

Double

To add to the need for change, visitor numbers are expected to more than double in the next 10 years.

Something has to be done at Milford to improve the visitor experience while maintaining a healthy and vigorous tourism industry, now and in the future.

That's why DoC has gone to extra lengths to consult the public in reviewing the Fiordland National Park Management Plan. On February 17 and 18 next year submitters to a draft plan circulated in November 2002 may comment on a revised draft, a process not provided for in the National Parks Act 1980.

Criticisms have been made that the draft plan has been greatly changed after submissions closed in

February last year. Well, one would hope so. What this means is that DoC has listened to submitters.

The wider community has told DoC that its wants a quality national park and a quality visitor experience. The industry wants growth and a quality product for tourism. We can make all of that happen, and my planners have come up with several suggestions which are now on the table for further discussion.

Problem

The basic problem with Milford is that the area was developed back to front.

The marina at Freshwater Basin, the main car park and the state highway block the view - which attracts people from all over the world - from the visitor area at the foreshore.

One solution would be to move these three activities to other areas where they would not be blocking the view.

The car park could be moved to the Deepwater Basin side, the road could be re-routed behind the visitor services area and a shuttle could take people from the car park to the Freshwater Basin marina.

If the operators of this marina wish to expand their operations, there is the possibility, long-term, of developing the marina at Deepwater Basin to accommodate all boat traffic in Milford Sound.

There has been a lot of interest in the future of Milford airstrip, in light of growing visitor numbers and the noise problem. The revised draft plan proposes an upper limit to the number of operators and number of take-offs and landings a day, and encourages the use of bigger, quieter planes.

Submissions

In making its proposal, the department's planners have looked at submissions made to the management plan; studied what other countries do to manage aircraft in natural areas; looked at research done on Milford, studied other airports around New Zealand,

taken advice from experts; and talked at length with the operators themselves.

At present, aircraft land and take off at Milford airstrip as they see fit, subject to air traffic control requirements. By managing this activity via concessions - an option under the existing management plan - the numbers of operators and aircraft can be reduced and conditions introduced to reduce the noise and improve the visitor experience.

The department estimates that 100,000 to 190,000 visitors could be flown into Milford every year in bigger planes, much more quietly than today. That's more than three times the current turn-over.

Obviously, the views of the operators need to be taken into account. They have told DoC that to invest in bigger aircraft would require certainty in the market, a considerable lead-in time and that they would want long-term concessions. To my mind, that is a constructive start to nutting out what the eventual arrangements will be.

Expert

An independent expert will peer review the final draft proposal with operators commenting on technical aspects to ensure that a workable solution is reached.

The operators know that whatever the final shape of the management plan, competition within the industry will be inevitable. Competition is a reality in any business.

Anyone who has concerns about the draft Fiordland National Park Management Plan should contact our Conservancy Office in Invercargill.

**Visiting Stewart Island?
There's plenty of
accommodation at Beach
House and Kereru House.
Bookings: Brenda and
Roger Hicks on phone/fax
03-2191348**

ADVERT

ACC backs down on 800 % levy jump

GOOD news for horse trek operators! Their ACC levies - which in some cases had previously jumped 800 percent to \$8.01 per \$100 of payroll excluding GST - will drop from April 1 next year. The new levy will be \$3.10 per \$100.

TIANZ CEO Fiona Luhrs tells *IT*: "This is a much appreciated early Christmas present for the operators who were previously on the receiving end of some big backdated increases with no advance notice from ACC."

TIANZ is suggesting that all tourism operators should check their Employers Classification Grouping and rate for 2005/6 by visiting: www.acc.co.nz/productslevies/news/1-employer-rates-2005-06.pdf

Rates will be reviewed in August and September next year when ACC will advertise the levies proposed for 2006/7 and ask for submissions.

ITOC members stunned

ITOC members were stunned at their annual forum to hear that Pakiri Beach Horse Rides' owner Sharley Haddon's ACC levy had jumped from \$1,600 a year to \$14,304.

VP Warren Harford said Ms Haddon's business attracted 6,000 visitors a year of whom 46 percent are from overseas.

Albert Lovell of Northland's Kauri Museum said most overseas visitors carried insurance - but it's not needed under ACC.

"Is there a case to be taken to say 'should tourism be taken out of ACC for the traveller?' And we simply recommend that they get travel insurance?"

Another member said that if ACC was taken out of tourism, the visitors would be able to sue "and if we went down that road I can see this affecting our insurance premiums."

We should not be subsidising overseas visitors with

ACC as when New Zealanders travel to the US they have to take out insurance.

Lesley Immink of NZ Educational Tours said all operators should place their safety practices and similar details on their websites. She had contacted 40 operators and only six responded with such information. Only Shotover Jet provided full details on its site.

"Should be refund"

Ms Haddon later told us: "We apparently still have to pay that 800 percent for 2004/2005. It really should be refunded."

She says that if eight staff are employed for the busy season the amount she will have to pay ACC represents one extra salary a week.

"We all considered we were under the guiding service operation outdoor pursuits levy at \$1.98 and without consultation we were hit with the \$8.01 levy. After we squealed ACC invented a new category to justify their actions. Initially we were lumped in with rodeo buck jumpers and jumps jockeys (steeplechasers) and Olympic showjumpers...we felt there was a bit of a difference!"

Asked how she felt when she first heard of the 800 percent increase, Ms Haddon added: "There was really a huge sinking feeling in my gut...I had to increase my mortgage to cover it! (It) came with terminal and provisional tax and all the other big ones and really threw me into flux...outraged I guess is the word at the idiocy and unthinkingness of a department to levy us the same rate as rodeos and steeple chasers and without consultation of any sort."

Pakiri Beach Horse Rides, Wellsford, has about 6,000 riders a year using 70 horses. There are three fulltime all-year guides and up to four extra in the high season. The company has been in business 20 years.

First impressions count - ITOC

FIRST impressions are the ones that count. And all arrivals to Auckland International Airport (AIAL) must receive an efficient, friendly welcome with no long delays or congestion.

ITOC CEO Peter Lowry says: "We have impressed upon the airport company management, Customs and the NZIS that our reputation as a country is at stake. We cannot allow long delays and we are committed to fighting the battle to see that this does not happen."

He advises members wishing to complain about delays to provide full information. "We can only investigate complaints that are fully documented. We have received assurances from Customs, NZIS and the airport company that they will fully investigate all complaints and report back to us."

Adds Mr Lowry: "We must win this battle and protect the good name of New Zealand tourism and have the right welcome to New Zealand for our overseas visitor customers."

ITOC has yet to reach agreement with AIAL on its recommendations concerning the welcoming area at the airport. "The semi-sterile area is being done away with and this area will be now included in the extended Customs/MAF area. Improvements made with facilitation, to be paid for by the government, are underway and hopefully all will be well over the busy season ahead," Mr Lowry adds.

All may have to be Qualmarked

ITOC full members may eventually be required to use only products and services which have been Qualmarked. And allied members may also have to be assessed to show that they are also delivering to the national standard.

ITOC and Qualmark agree that these moves would provide a marketing advantage as they give the inbound operator and the visitors confidence and peace of mind, and facilitate improved management by the industry of its liabilities under international consumer legislation.

Maori rapidly becoming involved in industry

MAORI are rapidly becoming involved in tourism, according to a Ministry of Tourism report. *Measurement of Maori in Tourism* shows that Maori employed in the industry increased 72 percent between 1991 and 2001 to 11,094 direct and 6,274 indirect. Maori now represent 11 percent of the total industry workforce.

It also shows that 37 percent of Maori workers are employed part time, compared with 23 percent across all industries. Some 77 percent have no qualifications compared to 69 percent for the whole industry.

Of Maori in tourism only nine percent are employers compared with 17 percent across the whole industry. The average wage in the industry in 2001 was \$21,200 but for Maori it was \$18,200.

The report notes that 46 percent of coach tour passengers, 40 percent of package travellers, 18 percent of semi independent travellers and 13 percent of FIT experience Maori cultural activities.

Visitors from Taiwan and South Korea have the greatest propensity to experience Maori cultural activities (42 percent and 41 percent respectively), followed by China (37 percent), Canada (29 percent), Germany (28 percent), Japan (27 percent), UK (25 percent) and the US (23 percent). Only half of one percent of domestic travellers take a Maori experience compared to 19.6 percent of all international arrivals.

More career opportunities, notes Samuels

THE visitor industry is offering more career opportunities for young Maori, especially in places like Northland and the East Coast where tourism is starting to take off, says Associate Tourism Minister Dover Samuels

“New Zealand is coming to realise the value of our diversity and uniqueness. Our Maori culture is what makes us who we are, and interactive travellers-our ideal overseas guests-value it and want to experience it first-hand.”

Mr Samuels says that cultural tourism, by its very nature, allows guests to interact with our natural and man-made environments, while encouraging the care and protection of those environments. “It strikes the right balance between the economic benefits of tourism and the guardianship of our people, cultures, and landscapes. It is a key component of building a truly sustainable tourism market.”

Real potential yet to be achieved...

IN spite of strong demand for Maori culture, New Zealand Maori Tourism Council CEO Johnny Edmonds says the real potential has yet to be achieved. The realisation of that potential is dependent upon the capacity of Maori tourism and other parts of the industry to work together.

Council supports Tourism Minister Mark Burton’s statement that more needs to be done to turn this strong interest into actual participation.

Mr Burton was commenting on the outcome of research by the Ministry of Tourism on visitor demands for Maori tourism product (*IT527*).

Mr Edmonds says industry needs to take a more proactive approach to building the awareness of global markets of the full nature and extent of the Maori tourism product and the nature of Maori communities and their geo-cultural icons.

There needs to be a much better realisation that Maori is a complete culture and while cultural performances and marae stays are integral part of Maori life, there is much more to being Maori. “There are increasingly more opportunities for visitors to make contact with whanau tourism businesses who operate on traditional land holdings and also in traditional coastal areas.”

Mr Edmonds says the message that Maori can take from this research is that Maori tourism needs to build on its competitive advantage which is its culture, values “and just being themselves.”

Growth not always beautiful - Lowry

GROWTH, like size, is not always beautiful. It must be managed to produce quality and all Chinese visitors must have a quality added value experience, says ITOC CEO Peter Lowry.

“Shopping tours, low quality coach experiences with little sightseeing and poor service are no longer acceptable and we must all make a stand.”

ITOC has spent many hours with the Immigration Service lobbying on appropriate standards. “We are making progress. But it is slow,” he adds. “The answer is that all holiday groups must come through the approved ADS system based on our agreed government to government Memorandum of Understanding.

“Visas given to non ADS groups who do not measure up to approved industry standards are no longer acceptable. The ITOC China market portfolio group dealing with Chinese agents who successfully undertake the TNZ training programme is the future direction and we are working on this goal.”

Big plans for mining centre

BIG developments are planned for the Goldfields Mining Centre, Cromwell. It will become world class when planned development takes place.

The centre is to be leased to the Goldfields Museum Charitable Trust - which intends to raise \$1.5 million. It already has \$1 million given by Central Lakes Trust, which was set up by a power company.

Centre marketing manager Richard Lewis says Goldfields Ltd will continue to run the complex, providing facilities, food and beverages. The trust’s revenue will be received from admission fees.

“The trust consists of two trustees from the Cromwell Community Board, two from the Otago Museum and a local accountant. So, it will be totally separate to Goldfields itself.” Just what the developments are Mr Lewis is not yet saying. “But it will be substantial - it will be world class!” **Details: 09-5245039 or 021-766358.**

Operators need to be shown value of research, says Moriarty

INDUSTRY operators need to be shown the value of research to their businesses if they are to request it and even help pay for it. Consultant and former TIANZ CEO John Moriarty in a paper to the Tourism and Hospitality Research Conference, says the research sector has to realise industry's attention-span is short for most of the year. "If research is also destined to be funded equitably from both public and private sectors there needs to be a perceived business advantage to attract participants." He adds: "The quality of the research should benefit from synergy between the needs of industry and the additional resources they offer to researchers. "Additionally, any increased volume of relevant research opportunities should also establish greater overall human capital and capacity within the tourism research community and industries themselves."

Exclusive

Tourism research will generally be made public on its completion and industry funding partners who also participate in work in progress must have the option to develop their people and processes as learning emerges. "Since publicly funded research has a regular reporting programme any 'exclusive' advantage accruing from such participation will be limited by the period preceding a reporting milestone. Even so, the potential to transfer knowledge - throughout the process - to participating businesses is significant and consistent with the recommendations arising from the recently completed Tourism Workforce and Skills Projections." Mr Moriarty provides seven recommendations for improving the transfer of research to industry.

Industry should recognise and accept that contributions from publicly-funded tourism researchers are pertinent and professional and who have delivered against their objectives on time and within budget. "The research community offers services that are not normally found within NZ's tourism trading enterprises and researchers need to be engaged so as to retain capacity to address the industry's knowledge needs."

Recognise

It should also recognise that envisioning research or articulating problems is not solely their forte. "Inclusion of research scenarios into the business planning processes should be practised by public or listed companies together with all other large private enterprises that are re-investing for growth. It is recommended that leading sector businesses include the research community in these processes."

Research needs to be balanced between pure and applied as each genre addresses different problems within the industry. "An industry preference for only applied research exposes the industry to potentially diminishing competitive advantage over the longer term."

Participation

Industry participation in research must be associated with identifiable business advantage. "Participation in the formation of the research objectives and subsequent work in progress at a tactical level (or at least at an advisory level) is one way of developing business advantage through knowledge transfer."

Researchers should embody 'knowledge transfer products' as part of their proposal for business support. These should be properly managed and surrounded with a support philosophy akin to that offered by industry to visitors. "The contrary expectations of researchers and enterprises as to what constitutes a suitable timeframe for research deliverables demonstrates a need for some compromise or process change that works for both parties." Adds Mr Moriarty: "Staged research programmes, closer inclusion of funding partners in milestone reporting processes and broader advisory or governance representation by enterprises on projects could assuage some of the stated concerns. As greater trust develops, the issue of shorter versus longer time-frames should subside."

PATA says 2004 may be better than expected...

THIS year has shown that the future of "this fragile industry" depends not only on factors such as airlines, the growth of Internet bookings, clever marketing campaigns or sustainable destination development, but also on our ability to react to wider 'external shocks' supposedly beyond the industry's control.

PATA says 2003 was one of the worst years ever for travel and tourism, largely due to the conflict in Iraq, SARS, terrorism and global economic doldrums. "In the absence of any such debacles this year, it was almost natural that people would take to the road again and that 2004 would prove to be a bounce-back year."

But the current year may prove to be much better than simply a bounce-back year, according to PATA's Strategic Intelligence Centre with a 10 percent increase in arrivals to and across the region in 2004 to 300 million.

Jafacabs are fun

JAFACABS are here! Just Another Friendly Auckland Cab is a three-wheeled bike with a rider at the front and up to two passengers at the back. It's pedal-powered with a battery motor to assist on hills and take off. It offers a fun, free and environmentally friendly mode of transport.

This week five jafacabs hit the streets. They will operate until March every day, pedalling the streets from midday to the early evening Sunday - Thursday, and until midnight on Fridays and Saturdays.

Rent-a-Harley

INTERNATIONAL Antarctic Centre director Richard Benton has just set up a new business: Motorcycles New Zealand next to Christchurch International Airport. It is a motorcycle rentals and tours business with 15 new BMW and Suzukis available - together with a Harley! Details: www.motorcyclesnewzealand.com

2 to 1 in favour of Gt Barrier marine reserve

OF 3,513 submissions received by DoC on the proposed marine reserve for Great Barrier Island, 1,261 object to the proposal, while 2,219 support it. A further 31 submissions express qualified support or opposition. There are also two petitions - one in support and one in opposition.

DoC Auckland Conservator Rob McCallum says: "People have raised a range of concerns about being adversely affected by the marine reserve. The department now needs to respond to these in a report to the Minister of Conservation."

The Minister will decide on the proposal after considering objections and the merits of the application.

The proposed reserve covers an area from The Needles to just south of Whakatautuna Point on the Great Barrier north-eastern coast and out to the 12-mile limit. The area is considered outstanding for its quality marine habitats and diverse sea life.

100 hole golf marathon a first?

REPUTEDLY the first ever 100 hole golf marathon to be played in New Zealand takes place in February and is limited to 36 players.

The LBF Golf Marrowthon is golf the way it was meant to be played - no waiting! The golfers will play from dawn to dusk, tackling 100 holes in a single day. Details: Linnie Osborne on 021-663552 or lommarketing@xtra.co.nz.

Origin pays up - thanks to support for underdog

ORIGIN Pacific has paid its second five cents in the dollar repayment to creditors, meaning the remaining 30 cents will be paid in 2008.

Earlier this year a majority of creditors agreed to write off 60 percent of the airline's debt in order to keep the carrier flying. Of the 40c in the dollar settlement, the first five cents was paid in June.

Director Mike Pero says: "The airline has been through some tough times but the board are pleased with the recovery process. As we go into the industry's high season we can certainly feel more positive. Our stakeholders, suppliers and staff have stood by us and we are all working toward a sustainable future for the airline. The support for the underdog has been immense. Kiwis across the country have spurred our team on and we have excellent support from the travel industry, which doesn't want to see a monopoly on air services that could lead to higher airfares."

Win an X-Trail with Qantas

QANTAS Holidays has launched a consumer competition to win a Nissan X-Trail car. Customers are automatically entered in the draw when they book and complete a minimum two days' Hertz car hire through Qantas Holidays before March 31. Details: www.qantas.com/holidays.

Top Marlborough Sounds lodge for sale

FURNEAUX Lodge, on Marlborough's Queen Charlotte Walkway, is for sale after a \$1.2 million refurbishment programme. It is only accessible by boat or helicopter and is one of the best known resorts in New Zealand, having been a popular stopover for boaties and trampers for years, says Carolynn Crawford, of marketing agent Bayleys Real Estate.

The lodge is at the foot of 882 m Mount Furneaux and has its own wharf on its 20 metre foreshore. It has a lawn tennis court, kayaking, the near-by antimony mines, a waterfall walk, glow worms, fishing and a variety of games from petanque to volleyball. But its main attraction is the walkway. Owners Mark and Jacky McManus have added 10 studios during their two years and there is potential to further increase the amount of accommodation because only 11 per cent of the 1.125 hectare site is developed. Details: Carolynn or Tom Crawford on 027-2478716.

Oldest person to bungy?

BALCLUTHA pensioner Joe Ashmore, 94, became what is believed to be the oldest person to record a bungy jump when he dived off the AJ Hackett Bungy Bridge in the Kawarau Gorge on Saturday. It was his fourth bungy - and he has also been tandem paragliding.

Nothing like goat's balls and wildflower tea

GOAT'S balls in one hand, wildflower tea in the other. There's nothing quite like wildflower tea to wash goat's testicles down your gullet, wildfood gourmets say. Yes, the Hokitika Wildfoods Festival is on again - for the 16th time - during the weekend of March 12 with 20 new foods to add to its wild and wacky line-up.

Numbers are limited to 19,000 to prevent overcrowding in Hokitika's guest houses and camp sites. Some 90 stalls will offer a variety of food including: deer biltong, pickled lamb's testicles, elderflower champagne, thar pies, pig pizzelle sausage - and West Coast frogs' legs. Details: 03-7558321 or wildfoods@westlanddc.govt.nz.

Dallimore joins Ticketek

EVENT Venues Rotorua GM Nick Dallimore is moving to Auckland to take up a new position as country manager for Ticketek NZ Ltd. Mr Dallimore has been in the venue management industry for 15 years, with the last five spent in Rotorua heading the Rotorua District Council's venues and events division.

Work permit fast track

VISITORS to Queenstown can now have their visitors' permits turned into work permits within 48 hours to help fill labour shortages during peak periods, according to Acting Immigration Minister Damien O'Connor and Otago MP David Parker.

The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) has declared a seasonal labour shortage in the Queenstown area, meaning NZIS can fast track work permits.

One of last regions to develop may become one of biggest in tourism

RUAPEHU is an emerging giant in tourism, believes new deputy mayor Craig Woolliams.

“We are strategically placed to attract a large percentage of the interactive tourist (market). We have the scenery and adventure, and rich history and culture, both Maori and European, that the modern international tourist is looking for.

“All we need now is further product investment and support in professional development of those already doing business.”

Mr Woolliams adds: “There are some fantastic major initiatives presently coming to fruition in our region, and I support these 100 percent.

“Ruapehu has an added advantage in that we will do it right first time. We are one of the last large regions to begin seriously developing our tourism opportunities, and we will take the lessons learnt by other regions as our guide. Our culture, history and environment is an intrinsic part of our massive tourism opportunities and we need to protect those things with vigour.”

Mr Woolliams has had 35 years in tourism. His parents ran Hell’s Gate Tikitere, Rotorua. By 12 he was guiding visitors through the park. His parents also owned Fairy Springs, which became Rainbow and Fairy Springs. Father Ray was mayor of Rotorua for a time.

“After school I joined The Tourist Hotel Corporation as a management trainee and had tenures at The Chateau Ruapehu, Tokannu Hotel, The Hermitage Mount Cook, Franz Josef Glacier Hotel and Milford Sound Hotel.”

Mr Woolliams attended a professional development semester at Cornell University and continued on to England, where he was in hospitality management for more than two years. He later became GM Quality Hotel Willis Street, Wellington.

Mr Woolliams and his wife bought the capital’s Hotel Willis Lodge in 1991 and ran this until March. They have since bought Ice Café, Waiouru, a cosmopolitan café aimed at the international traveller on SH1.

The family also owns the award winning Waimangu Volcanic Valley, Rotorua.

It’ll be a leading light, says Minister

THE Taumarunui VIC is the area’s “front door to tourism,” Tourism Minister and local MP Mark Burton said on Saturday at the opening of the new-look VIC.

“It needs to be of a high quality,” said Mr Burton. “I’m convinced Ruapehu will be a leading light (of tourism) in the 21st century.”

A doorway carved by the Hinengakau Trust carving school tells the story of Maori and the Whanganui River, and tuku tuku panels telling more of the Maori connections with the area are due to be installed later.

Mayor Sue Morris says her council is committed to the ongoing development of tourism.

Wellington Events Centre make over starts

THE first stage of a major refurbishment of Wellington’s Events Centre is due to start. City council has allocated \$3.3 million for the work which is to be finished by May. Total redevelopment is worth \$6.9 million.

Wellington Convention Centre Manager Neville Brown says upholstered bucket seats will be put in with all flat floor seating replaced.

“Overall, stage one will increase the maximum seating capacity by more than 500 seats, depending on the configuration.”

Positioned as Wellington’s premium venue, The Events Centre Wellington will efficiently cater to the demands of all promoters, conference organisers, exhibitors and sports bodies alike, Mr Brown says. Details: 027-4855058.

Whenuapai decision “practical outcome”

AUCKLAND International Airport Limited (AIAL) CEO Don Huse says Cabinet’s decision on the future use of Whenuapai air base affirms the company’s view that there is no merit in a commercial airport there.

A Ministry of Economic Development report has concluded that there are no national or strategic considerations to justify central government’s active involvement in a commercial airport.

“We’re pleased the government has come out with a decision. We’d like the opportunity to review the full report when it is available, but on the surface it seems that this is a practical outcome to a complex issue.”

Fewer ships, more pax FEWER cruise ships but more American passengers are expected to visit Dunedin this summer.

Tourism Dunedin GM marketing Ryan Craig says passenger numbers are expected to rise from about 35,000 last season to about 38,000. Direct spending is expected to be about \$7.1 million, similar to last season.

Nine ships are expected to make a total of 18 visits to the harbour this season.

Two take over KiwiHost

SIMON Nikoloff and Steve Smith have taken over the franchise for the business training provider KiwiHost. KiwiHost is New Zealand’s premier service training network, and is growing as it brings in new services and franchisees around the country. It provides a range of courses to help boost businesses by increasing staff knowledge and training.

Mr Nikoloff has been with KiwiHost for three years while Mr Smith is currently based in Brisbane, working in the aviation industry. Details: 03-3435007 or www.kiwihost.co.nz.

Increase in South Island guest nights above national average

CANTERBURY guest nights grew twice as fast as the rest of New Zealand in the year to October, reflecting the success of strong offshore marketing efforts.

Statistics New Zealand's CAM shows the region enjoyed a 9.4 percent increase compared to the national increase of 4.7 percent.

Canterbury has had a run of extraordinary growth since February, as it draws steadily increasing numbers of international visitors.

Mackenzie district's visitor numbers are well up on the national average.

And a record number of international arrivals can be expected this summer, according to the Tourism Research Council (TRC).

The CAM reports that, for the year ending September, guest nights were up 8.9 percent - nearly double the national average.

Mackenzie Tourism GM Karen Mullaly says: "Our region is starting to reap the rewards of significant local investment in tourism.

"Mount Cook and Lake Tekapo have always been major attractions...and our infrastructure has now been developed to the extent that we are able to accommodate larger numbers of visitors and offer them a wide range of activities and attractions."

* While 10.4 percent of the national workforce is involved in tourism, in the Mackenzie it is 53.9 percent. The major tourism employers in the region are the accommodation and parks sectors. And although the Mackenzie has less than a 10th of one percent of the country's population it supplies four percent of New Zealand's tourism workforce.

Guest nights in the **Queenstown-Lakes/Central Otago** area increased 5.7 percent to 193,921 in the year to October. International visitor guest nights increased 5.5 percent to 124,830 while domestic visitor guest nights grew six percent to 69,090.

Minister notes "sea change" during Ibis opening

THE new Kiwi Encounter tour at Rainbow Springs, Rotorua, in association with DoC, is a sign of the "sea change" that has occurred in tourism over the past five years, according to Tourism Minister Mark Burton.

Speaking at the opening of the city's Hotel Ibis, Mr Burton added that the industry is about partnership, both cross-sector and with the government. Rotorua now has more than 1,700 rooms and while in 2003, the region attracted 3.2 million visitors - generating four million visitor nights - international visitor nights are forecast to jump nearly 50 per cent by 2010. By then they are expected to reach two million. Domestic visitor nights are also looking strong, with a forecast increase of 6.5 percent to almost three million in that same period.

"It certainly looks like a good time to open this new 145-room facility," Mr Burton added.

He said the success of the Ibis chain's hospitality concept depends on selecting staff with the right skills, and dedicated to providing the best customer service. "I know the 35 new staff employed by this hotel will live up to those high expectations..."

Inaugural South Pacific investment conference planned

THE Inaugural South Pacific Hotel and Tourism Investment Conference is planned for Fiji February from February 1-4.

Horwath Asia Pacific director Terry Ngan says the conference has been organised by the European Union to promote tourism investment partnerships. Mr Ngan is positive about the potential for New Zealand companies investing in tourism in the South Pacific Islands, through being involved in the planning, development, construction, lending and operation of new hotel and tourism businesses in the region. Up to 300 are expected at the conference from Europe, Australia, New Zealand and US. Details: www.profitpacific.com.

Northland gains through initiative

NORTHLAND says it has gained a significant advantage over the rest of the country by becoming the first region to align its visitor information website with TNZ's site.

The new website, northlandnz.com, was officially launched yesterday (Thursday) and draws information directly from the TNZ site, newzealand.com (which also uses the address purenz.com).

This means the Northland site will receive more visitors by leveraging off TNZ's international marketing campaigns. The newzealand.com site is our main online presence for international visitors.

As well as benefiting from additional traffic, a wide range of tourism products and services are featured on the Northland site encouraging regional spread and increasing the probability that visitors will stay longer and spend more while they are here.

Enterprise Northland project manager Kiri Goulter says: "We're aware that other regions are looking at ways to match what we have achieved, but Northland has a huge head start."

F and B protests loss of 13 jobs at DoC

DOC scientists and recovery programme experts are losing their jobs in a cost cutting and restructuring exercise. And it's at a time when the department's annual report shows it lacks the core capacity to properly protect the majority of threatened native species, points out Forest and Bird.

"It's unacceptable for the Department of Conservation to be getting rid of staff who are vital for our species recovery work at a time when the government is running record budget surpluses," says conservation manager Kevin Hackwell. "These are the people whose heroic efforts to save our endangered animals make New Zealand proud. We can't afford to lose these people and their skills," he adds. Some 13 jobs are to go.

Should we introduce service charges and tipping?

SERVICE charges may be worth considering for the hotel industry, reckons Oli Newbegin of Grasmere Lodge. He says this should be considered for holidays where employers are paying two and a half times the usual wages. In the US and Europe hotels impose a service charge which goes to lowly-paid backroom staff such as chambermaids and kitchen hands. You are also expected to tip up to 20 percent when having a meal which, again, helps towards wages, he points out.

But the Hotel Council does not endorse mandatory tipping or service charges, says CEO Jennie Langley. "Tipping is a voluntary contribution for the reward of great service or exceptional assistance and is totally up to the individual concerned."

NZHC is aware that many visitors to New Zealand find it refreshing that they are not automatically expected to engage in the practice.

"Hoteliers, like the majority of other employers in New Zealand at this time, are having to cope with significant staff shortages in some geographic and skills areas. But they aren't prepared to compromise the positive experience of international visitors or domestic Kiwi travellers," she adds.

Students and industry demanded Certificate in Cultural Tourism, says college

CRITICAL job shortages and a growing demand for staff in the industry have prompted a wave of new qualification-gaining courses designed to fill the gap.

The largest private education provider, Sir George Seymour National College of Travel and Tourism, has just introduced a Certificate in Cultural Tourism - due to demand from students and industry.

The 34-week full time course is designed for those looking for a career in cultural tourism, covering topics such as customs and practice, the use of Maori language expression and place names, and the significance of natural attractions.

GM Lyndon Leabourn says that as the number of visitors continues to boom, so too does the demand for skilled and knowledgeable tourism practitioners.

"The majority of visitors...are interested in this country's history and culture, creating a greater demand for those who not only have an interest in it, but have the skills and background to cater to that aspect of tourism.

"It is also a very important part of New Zealand's appeal and tourism providers should be doing all they can to capitalise on and nurture that."

Mr Leabourn adds that since the Maori cultural renaissance in the 1970s, the culture has become a more integral part of the way New Zealand thinks about itself and presents itself to the world.

"A good example of this is how widely known things like the haka and mokos are around the world," he says.

"It is not only a precious part of the essence of New Zealand but a significant drawcard for many tourists, and one we should be working hard to protect." The course is due to start in March.

National Clock museum reopens

CLAPHAM'S Clocks - The National Clock Museum - and the new information centre at Quayside Town Basin, Whangarei, are open again. The facility has been closed for repairs and refurbishment for some months.

In the process of redevelopment, each clock in the collection of nearly 1,400 has been photographed, its provenance and history recorded and a communication strategy completed in terms of how it fits into the overall collection.

Kaikoura to step out in style in 2005

KAIKOURA is stepping into 2005 as the recognised capital of sustainable tourism and environmental issues. The tiny town hosted the international Green Globe sustainable tourism conference early this year. And in April it will stage the international Zero Waste conference.

Kaikoura was chosen because it is leading the country in dealing with all waste. Top overseas and New Zealand experts will seek solutions to ending the days of rubbish at the April 6 - 8 conference.

About 1.4 million people visited Kaikoura this year. Yet the town has only 3,483 residents.

Big plans for Braemar

BRAEMAR Lodge, Hanmer Springs, has been sold in a million-dollar-plus deal with a major redevelopment project already in the planning. New owners Ross Thomson and Neil Dougan have big plans for the property. They are targeting the top end of the luxury market.

Three lodges in Gold List

CONDE Nast Traveller's January issue lists three New Zealand properties in their "best hotels in the world" Gold List.

Kauri Cliffs received a 90.03 percent rating for being 14th in a list of 18 providing the South West Pacific's best facilities,

Blanket Bay had 91.11 percent and was 11th out of 18 when it comes to providing the best food.

And Huka Lodge scored 96.32 percent, to be sixth out of 18 for ambience and design.

PATA to gain new look

PATA is soon to unveil a new corporate identity, only the third such change in the association's 54-year history. The new logo will be launched on January 14.

It is part of an on-going brand repositioning of PATA as "a dynamic, knowledge-based, advocacy-embedding organisation."

Still unfinished business over Kyoto - TIANZ

THERE'S significant unfinished business with the Kyoto Protocol and government's domestic policies, says TIANZ in the latest *On Schedule*. They include a lack of understanding of the micro effects of its climate change policies, including how businesses will behave in response to higher energy costs. "For example, will taxes be absorbed by businesses, or will these be passed on to customers? Will policies create adequate incentives for the procurement of new, more energy-efficient capital equipment? Are there equipment alternatives, and would it make economic sense for businesses to purchase them, to replace current equipment?"

The association also wonders what would be the effect of carbon taxes on the profitability of tourism businesses.

Risks

"What are the risks of Kyoto being extended to international travel after the first commitment period? If this occurred, the impact on New Zealand could be very high given that the average tourism travel distance to New Zealand, one way, is 12,900km."

TIANZ says it will continue to lobby for the industry on these issues and will work to ensure we receive answers to the questions.

* The average total distance travelled by international visitors using rental cars and campervans in 2003/4 was 3,258km, with a daily average of 195km, according to research by Landcare Research's Susanne Becken and Lincoln University's Jude Wilson. Overall, they found that satisfaction with the self-driving experience was high thanks to the scenery, cleanliness, friendly people, availability of good information and excellent management of natural areas by DoC.

Also in the latest newsletter Qantas Regional GM Allan Williams assures us that regardless of fuel surcharges, air travel to, from and within New Zealand is more affordable now than it has ever been.

Qualmark provides useful independent assesment

IT'S time for the talk to stop - and operators to jump on board Qualmark. TIANZ board member Geoff Gabites says that no matter how good an operator may feel his/her company may be there are few ways other than an independent assessment to prove it.

Writing in *Out There*, Mr Gabites, who represents the adventure and outdoor sector, adds that an independent audit has a benefit in tightening the company processes and ensuring nothing can fall through any gaps. "The auditors themselves provide a great resource for your process improvement."

ROI

Mr Gabites also notes that 96 percent of tourism businesses have a return on investment (ROI) of less than four percent.

"This is a difficult industry in which to make a profit and doubtless many of us have hung on longer than we should," he adds.

He's also concerned at the lack of benchmarking. "How does my cost of sales or labour as a percentage of turnover compare to others in the industry? How much does the industry on average spend on marketing, R and M etc? There are a growing number of successful companies being taken over or bought in to joint ventures."

If an operator plans to sell "or are in the industry for more than lifestyle" then matters like ROI must become standard tools of trade.

Clothing optional - now only sometimes

NELSON'S Mapua Leisure Park is to remain clothing optional - but only during February and March. In the past campers have had a choice whether to wear clothes or not.

But Florida-based owner Gary Martin says the move is a result of families saying they do not feel comfortable having their children at a clothes optional park. It ends a 25-year tradition.

YHA becomes 5 star

YHA Wellington City has joined four partner hostels in New Zealand tourism's five star ranks.

The Hostel's Qualmark rating followed a rigorous, independent assessment, with five stars indicating facilities that are "exceptional" and "among the best available in New Zealand."

"The five star grade is the highest grade that any Qualmark accommodation property can achieve," says assessor Chris Boyle. "YHA Wellington should be congratulated for the hard work they have put into improvements, since their initial assessment, four years ago."

The 320-bed YHA Wellington is in the final stages of refurbishment this summer. Yet the qualities that earned five star recognition go beyond ensuite facilities and double glazing.

Tramway, gondola deals CHRISTCHURCH Tramway and the Christchurch Gondola have special offers, aimed at VFR and local residents.

The gondola is offering a one-for-one deal where local residents can travel free when accompanied by an out-of-town full fare visitor.

In addition, residents will pay only \$12.50 for a Christchurch Tramway 'locals pass' valid for a year, with accompanied children under 16 travelling free.

KiwiLink - apply now!

KIWILINK USA, Canada and Latin America - TNZ's longest running KiwiLink event - will be back again next year. Applications are now open, with 52 places available for New Zealand-based operators. TNZ says this event gives New Zealand operators the chance to train 180 wholesale and 100 retail staff over five days. It is TNZ's main North American training initiative. The event is ideally suited to macro groupings, operators who have been to TRENZ, or those with established market relationships in North America. Details: Henare Johnson henarej@tnz.govt.nz or www.tourisminfo.govt.nz.

Living Rivers coalition to fight further water degradation

THE "Living Rivers" coalition was launched in Hamilton on Wednesday.

A statement said that according to NIWA, 95 percent of our lowland waterways are polluted to a point where they are unsafe to swim in or drink from.

"Our precious, finite rivers are under huge pressure from hydro power and irrigation scheme proposals." Four outdoor recreational and conservation organisations have come together to raise public awareness about plight of our rivers, and joint campaigns so future New Zealanders have a heritage of "living rivers flowing from the mountains to the sea." They are Federated Mountain Clubs, Fish and Game, Forest and Bird and New Zealand Recreational Canoeists' Association. Contact: Geoff Keey on 04-8012210.

Andrew Harper praises Mollies

MOLLIES of St Mary's Bay, Auckland, has been named the best new small hotel in the latest Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report .

TIANZ helping employers find staff

TIANZ is working in conjunction with IEP (International Exchange Programmes) to give employers direct access to people aged 18-35 who are in New Zealand for working holidays.

IEP helps travellers coming here to work and travel under the Work New Zealand programme.

The programme is designed around the international working holiday agreement and helps participants with their initial settling in New Zealand, bank accounts, IRD

numbers as well as providing employment opportunities. Participants most likely have a university education and experience in their field. TIANZ says they come from a range of countries including the US, Canada, UK, Ireland, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Belgium, France, and Italy. Details: www.tianz.org.nz.

Cruise ships worth \$5M to Bay?

AN extra \$5 million could be pumped into the Bay of Plenty economy this cruise ship season with the number of passengers on the rise and New Zealand viewed by overseas tourists as a hot destination.

The biggest and newest cruise ship ever to sail into New Zealand, *Sapphire Princess*, is due to dock at Mount Maunganui tomorrow (Saturday) and again on January 4.

The mega-cruise liner is 116,000 tonne and is the big sister to *Star Princess*, which drew huge crowds across New Zealand when she visited last summer.

Tourism Bay of Plenty CEO Jim Little says expenditure this season is expected to increase, bringing it back to where it was two years ago.

This is the last IT for 2004! We wish you a restful/busy holiday period (depending on whether you are holidaying or working). We will be back on the week of January 14. Meanwhile, please keep those stories coming. The office is still open!

ADVERT

Tourism & Lifestyle Opportunities

MOTUEKA - Set in 35 acres bordering the Motueka River, this lodge accommodates just ten guests in five stylish suites. Own private vineyard producing chardonnay and great brown trout fishing. Carolyn Crawford 0272478716 Tom Crawford 0272789199 Jan Long 021337267

5 STAR MOTOR INN - Impressive Tuscan design with conference facilities, 28 luxurious spa units in booming tourist city. Sharéne Temple 027 2246 045.

PAIHIA WATERFRONT APARTMENTS - One bedroom apartment has just become available. Don't miss out on this rare opportunity to own a fully managed apartment in the heart of the Bay of Islands. Lloyd Budd 027 232 3439 or 09 309 6020

MARLBOROUGH - Lease. Well known Irish bar, ideal location adjacent to large car park. Steady turnover with regular clientele. Excellent business opportunity. Take advantage of Marlborough's growing tourism market. \$595,000. Stuart Parker 027 492 4926 or (03) 578 7700.

0800 BAYLEYS

www.bayleys.co.nz/tourism

