

Inside Nigel Coventry **Tourism**

PO Box 100, Taumarunui, New Zealand.

Tel/Fax 64-7-8957-737.

nigel@insidetourism.com

www.insidetourism.com

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Maintaining standards while hosting more visitors is challenge

THE industry's challenge in 2005 is to maintain quality standards and being prepared for higher volumes of tourists with increased and better-trained staff, mainly in the accommodation sector, says TNZ CEO George Hickton. "Staffing up, training up and maintaining the quality of the experience will be the real challenge." Part of the problem will surface in February and March when much accommodation in the main centres will be close to full.

Auckland tops

AUCKLAND is the number one travel spot for New Zealanders, according to last-minute accommodation website Wotif.com. Next are Wellington, Christchurch, Queenstown, Rotorua, Hamilton, Taupo and Dunedin. New to the list: Palmerston North and New Plymouth. Strongest growth is in the Bay of Islands, Lake Taupo, Rotorua and the Bay of Plenty.

QF to make history: blue skies ahead

QANTAS says it will make aviation history with its first Airbus A380 aircraft by operating the longest 500-passenger service in the world, flying between Melbourne and Los Angeles. CEO Geoff Dixon, says: "No aircraft in the history of commercial aviation has been able to carry as many passengers over such a distance on regular scheduled services.

* IATA predicts the global airline industry could be profitable in 2005 if oil prices fall by US\$15, to an average of US\$35 a barrel.

Rising global passenger demand - of around five to six percent - will help airlines return "small profits" in 2005

* The rebound in traffic volumes and profitability following SARS and the Iraq conflict should continue, albeit at a more subdued rate, in the next 12 months, believes the Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation.

Dream to Extreme

HAAKA Le Sueur always dreamed of combining his passion and understanding of the ocean with his love of boats and adventure - and six years later his dream has

become reality. He is now co-owner of Extreme Adventures which provides hair-raising rides on a purpose-built speed boat off the Bay of Plenty.

Why Rotorua has bright future...

ROTORUA has a bright future in tourism because Rotorua District Council and local operators work together - and because people in general are in favour of the visitor industry, believes deputy mayor and cultural director Trevor Maxwell. maintain our status as the heart of Maoridom. There are other places springing up

Eyeing Australia, Auckland and C and I

AUSTRALIA, Auckland and conventions and incentives (C and I) are markets Destination Rotorua Tourism Marketing will focus on this year, according to CEO Don Gunn. He says they will aim for business and leisure travellers in Australia - and TNZ's interactive traveller in general.

Magical Mokoia now accessible

MOKOIA Island, - 10 minutes by boat from the lakefront - is an uncut diamond in the middle of Lake Rotorua, says Jonz Corporation Director John Marsh. "It is a magical place. But when I first saw it the island looked unpolished and unloved." So he took a lease on it and spent the equivalent of \$1.3 million cleaning up what was reportedly an earliest settlement area for Rotorua where at times up to 3,000 Maori and Pakeha lived side by side.

"Now we welcome people from all over the world. Many arriving from heavily populated places love Mokoia for its wonderful walks, abundance of wildlife including rare and endangered birds, its tranquillity - and the romantic stories associated with it."

Gibbons has big plans for former Lakeland Queen...

FORMER Tourism Rotorua international marketing manager Mike Gibbons has joined local businessman James Summers to buy the Lakeland Queen paddlewheeler, and Scatcat. They have spent over \$1.2 million on the purchases and obtaining a long term landing rights licence to Mokoia Island.

Continued investment required - Lobb

POLYNESIAN Spa MD Martin Lobb says it's vital that Rotorua's city fathers continue to vigorously support the promotion of the district. "There would not be a city in the world that doesn't support its tourism. It's a huge employer."

He adds: "If it wasn't for tourism Rotorua would be nice lakes but that's all. The city fathers need to be continually reminded promotional money is not expenditure - it is investment!"

Rainbow Springs has the only kiwi hatchery open to public

SINCE becoming wholly owned by Ngai Tahu two years ago, Rotorua's Rainbow Springs has undergone a major revitalisation and now have the only kiwi hatchery in the country open to the public.

Skyline braces for expansion

SKYLINE Skyrides \$10 million investment in a new gondola system means that when it is finished in July up to 2,000 visitors an hour will be carried to the restaurant, luge and other attractions on Mount Ngongotaha. This is three times faster than the current system!

Agrodome now totally absorbing

THE only place in New Zealand where you can "zorb" – roll downhill inside a transparent giant beachball-like sphere - is at the Agrodome, Rotorua.

The Agrodome is also the only place where visitors can take a 43m cantilever bungee jump, a 40m "swoop" in a hang glider harness. Or the ultimate: "body flying" in what is described as the only freefall skydive simulator in the southern hemisphere.

Freefall Xtreme is powered by a DC3 aircraft propeller which lifts clients up to three metres in the air on a 180kph column of wind.

There's also a jetboat which can career around a water course, rising from 0-100kph in four seconds and cornering at 4-5 Gs.

Why adventure products based on a farming experience? Agrodome MD Warren Harford saw a need for the Agrodome to diversify in 1998.

"A lot more new products were opening in the adventure field and we felt that we really had to make changes to grow our market. So we went for adventure products with a difference," he tells us.

Popular MACI due to rebrand

MACI is launching a major rebranding project next month, including a new name, new look and major redevelopment plans.

What the wealthy are really looking for...

PEACE, pleasure and privacy are what the very wealthy look for most in luxury hotels, according to a new survey of travel agents across Europe.

Prominent market trends currently amongst luxury

travellers include adding a leisure break on their business trips and a desire to save on class of travel in order to boost their spending on accommodation.

Outback Bungy launched

AJ Hackett Bungy New Zealand's newest product, Skippers Outback Bungy, takes guests on a half day journey into the Skipper's Canyon, Queenstown.

The cost of NOT training staff is high!

TRAINING is expensive and once you train staff they leave for the competition. Right? Wrong, says the Maori Economic Development Agency in Otaki, which facilitates the Kapiti-Horowhenua Maori Tourism Group "If you have this attitude then it's costing you more than you think!"

Marineland celebrates its 40th

NAPIER'S Marineland celebrates its 40th anniversary on January 30 and staff are inviting visitors that day to inspect what is New Zealand's only marine zoo.

Aussie boast - but we did it first!

TOURISM Australia boasts it has a Student Volunteer Programme whereby students studying an undergraduate degree in tourism, advertising or marketing are given the opportunity to undertake practical work experience in the NTO's Sydney office.

But TNZ says it already does it - and it pays!

New PATA logo

PATA has unveiled a new corporate identity as part of an on-going brand repositioning. This is only the third change to the PATA logo in the association's 54-year history.

Tourism not to blame for island prices

TOURISM - whether eco or otherwise - has always been an important part of the Stewart Island economy.

But it is not the cause of steep property prices on the island, says Ruggedy Range Wilderness Co owner/operator Furhana Ahmad.

Ralph Lauren checks into new lodge

A top international VIP checking in as your first guest is the dream of most luxury lodge owners.

Queenstown's Azur Lodge opened on December 19 with leading international designer Ralph Lauren from New York as the first guest.

Queenstown not hit by downturn

THE decline in domestic tourism hasn't affected Queenstown, says DQ CEO David Kennedy.

"We have a very strong international market here so it hasn't affected us too much."