

Lions tour may not be a roaring success after all

DUNEDIN is expecting fewer than half the 6,000 Lions supporters predicted by Barmy Army co-ordinator Freddie Parker. Tourism Dunedin marketing GM Ryan Craig says the estimates are simply wrong. "We have the accommodation and the camping space, but the supporters just aren't there.

"We would love for there to be 5,000 or 6,000 Lions supporters in town. We could handle that - but the indications are they just won't be there."

Mr Parker is quoted as saying that Dunedin is unprepared for the thousands of fans he expects in the city for the side's game against Otago.

The British and Irish Lions arrive on May 27 to prepare for their 11-match tour and 15,000 fans are said to be flying into New Zealand. They are forecast to pour \$50 million into the economy. And according to media reports the tour will be one of the biggest events in the history of the New Zealand tourism and hospitality industry.

But Mr Craig tells *IT* it has been confirmed by inbound tour operators, TNZ and the New Zealand Rugby Union that there are only 980 official ticket holders heading to Dunedin. "Plus 500 to 1,000 Barmy Army. So, we are expecting less than half...I've spoken to all the RTOs in the country, TNZ and the rugby union and no one knows where Freddie Parker is getting his figures. One imagines he is pulling them out of thin air!"

RTONZ chairman Peul Yeo says it's hard to find out what's likely to happen because of the FIT component.

"From a Marlborough perspective...our top end accommodation is chocker but our mid/bottom end have ample space. Reason? The group/packages have filled the former. But the FIT/Barmy Army are keeping their powder dry and going with the flow. The only question is: how big is the flow?"

* TNZ CEO George Hickton says 15,000 fans are likely to follow the Lions team to New Zealand "which, combined with good forward

bookings for the ski season, will help spread the tourism benefits though the year, and throughout the country."

TNZ says main operator Williment Travel has confirmed that fewer than 10 percent of tour packages are still to sell. All official agents are confident they will sell out - particularly since the announcement of Jonny Wilkinson in the Lions squad.

Ruapehu - a secret no longer?

RUAPEHU no longer wants to be New Zealand's best kept secret, says Mayor Sue Morris.

She told a large group of operators on Tuesday night that a strategy being proposed by her council will take the district "into the future, nationally and internationally."

"It's time that Ruapehu became an identity.

"It's time to wave our flag and say 'we are as good as the Queenstowns and the Rotoruas'...people have to know about us...we don't want to be the best kept secret any more. We want to be out there with everyone else..."

Ms Morris said she wants to see the name Ruapehu "dotted all around the world."

The plan, proposed by Sydney company Go Man Go, will complement the council's major regional initiative: a touring route which will see people driving from Auckland to

(Over)

TEN years ago in IT...

THE Asian downturn has started. ITOC president Greig Ritchie, commenting on last week's *IT* highlighting a possible weakening in the market, says the strength of the New Zealand dollar and cheap North American holidays are switching many Asians away from New Zealand.

MORE than 300 buyers and sellers attended TRENZ this week. The only downside was the number of buyers who failed to appear for appointments. There has been a call for those who "let the side down" to be blacklisted next year.

NZTIA (now TIANZ) and NZTB (now TNZ) have been asked to help the industry overcome problems with the Korean market. Five Star Attractions Rotorua director Warren Harford says operators have had difficulties for several years. But problems have come to a head since December when four Korean operators went broke.

NZTIA CEO Paul Winter agrees with Bus and Coach executive director John Collyns that it should be cash upfront on any business involving new, unproven partners.

The industry is considering ways in which the traditional north-south flow of visitors can be balanced by an equal number of tourists travelling in the opposite direction.

NZTIA land transport division chairman Brian Batie says the one-way flow is costing the industry \$7 million a year in relocating cars, vans and coaches.

ASSOCIATE Tourism Minister Murray McCully says New Zealand tourism has grown 40 percent in the last five years. TRENZ is the industry's crucible.

NZTB is the training ground for the industry, board CEO Ian Kean told a Parliamentary Select Committee. Questioned about a staff turnover of 22 percent in the last financial year, Mr Kean said NZTB is able to provide staff with international marketing experience. These are then poached by industry when they return home.

Ruapehu - a secret no longer?

(from pg1) Wellington via Taumarunui, National Park and Ohakune.

Council CEO Chris Ryan explained why Ruapehu has been out of the tourism picture for some years - and why the meeting was a significant milestone for the industry.

"In 1999 council changed the way it addressed its role in regional tourism and decided to withdraw from the delivery. It did that deliberately. It was a policy decision to encourage the stakeholders involved in the delivery to set up their own marketing and drive their own interests...that was difficult as it was not something the industry valued..."

Council reassessed the situation in 2001 - and stuck to its guns. This prompted the Ruapehu Marketing Group to establish itself. "That led to some interesting discussions in the stakeholder community and last year it led to the establishment of Ruapehu Tourism Services Ltd. Neither were entirely successful..." Mr Ryan added. Earlier this year the two organisations and council met and council was asked to reassess its role.

"Council...grabbed hold of that opportunity and said 'we will crank up our role and enter into active promotion and marketing and active coordination because it could see there was a real need for it'..."

This week's meeting was called to share council's vision for tourism. Mr Ryan said council realises significant investment will be needed over time if it's going to make a difference.

Economic development officer Lisa Knight outlined plans for a winter marketing campaign that will be based on www.ruapehunz.com. Operators were asked to buy into it.

Go Man Go suggested a slogan, Ruapehu Magic, while retaining Where Adventures Begin.

Ms Knight said people are aware of Mount Ruapehu but few realise the region contains two more mountains, a World Heritage Site, two national parks, two rivers...

Crystal Mountain shines in awards

CRYSTAL Mountain, a purpose-built attraction and theme park in the foothills of the Waitakere Ranges, has won the tourism/hospitality/leisure award given during the 10th Waitakere City Business Awards.

Established in February 2000, the attraction now hosts 200,000 visitors a year. It is home to the largest range of crystals and minerals in New Zealand.

A feature of the architecturally-designed building is the Crystal Mine Museum, which contains rare and exquisite crystals, minerals, meteorites and fossils sourced from mines around the world - and beyond.

Awards director Yola Macken says the judges were impressed by the company's success in the tourism sector: "Crystal Mountain provides a unique shopping experience, with an educational and entertaining environment that families, groups and individuals of all ages and abilities enjoy visiting on a regular basis. "Crystal Mountain knows how to provide the best levels of service to stay one step ahead in the tourism market."

**By Bancorp New Zealand
MD Craig Brownie.**

THE country still has significant untapped potential in its tourism industry.

Last year saw New Zealand reap the rewards of many years of investment by its tourism industry with record numbers of international visitors arriving, including 300,000 in December alone.

Without doubt, tourism has also been boosted by significant government expenditure in marketing New Zealand internationally through campaigns like 100%Pure, combined with our commitment to uncompromising customer service standards.

Investing

Inbound tourism is well worth investing in with earnings - for the year ending September 2004 - which now rank it ahead, or on par with, our traditionally strong sectors such as agriculture.

However, the latest Ministry of Tourism survey (released 27 April 2005) shows a 1.3 percent fall in the amount spent by tourists despite greater volumes travelling here, which is due in part to the higher Kiwi dollar.

A salutary reminder that we cannot take our lucrative tourist market for granted and the need to invest in tourism experiences that visitors are prepared to pay for.

Pull

New Zealand's position as a "clean/green" and safe destination with a multitude of diverse experiences will continue to be a strong pull for international arrivals.

External benchmarks also attest to the success of our tourism, such as the Irish Travel Trade Awards 2004, which voted New Zealand the best adventure destination in

Banking on New Zealand's tourism advantage

the world, and *Lonely Planet's* ranking as the fourth most popular destination that independent travellers would most like to visit. However, the big question is: how does New Zealand maintain its tourism advantage?

We know from bitter experience such as the loss of the Rugby World Cup that complacency and a lack of investment are sure bets towards losing our competitive advantage. Maintaining growth in New Zealand's tourism is about investing in a wide scope of industries that support the sector, and also about identifying opportunities to create efficiencies.

Small

Although New Zealand is a small market and lacks the scale to provide the infrastructure that some visitors expect, examples like SkyCity's new conference centre and hotel are the sort of private sector investment that can benefit tourism by providing facilities that might otherwise not have been realised.

Similarly, the development of the Auckland City Arena should ensure that a large, dedicated concert venue will attract many international acts and events that might otherwise not have played in the country.

The major tourism event of 2005 will be the British and Irish Lions' tour.

Estimates of the tourism spend over the two weeks of the tour are about \$150 million, which doesn't take into account the repeat visits from rugby enthusiasts, or the huge marketing impetus from having 20,000 visitors each recommending friends and family to visit New Zealand.

The tour will be the biggest challenge of New Zealand's ability to host a world-wide sports series. But if every tourist leaves with praise for our country then this will be a major achievement to be proud of.

Nevertheless, the industry will need to look to raising more funds if it wants sustained future growth. Part and parcel of capitalising on the greater visitor numbers that have been forecast will be more takeovers, mergers and acquisitions in the tourism sector to support this growth and to create the scale needed for some tourism ventures. Providing new infrastructure for the tourism industry such as hotels, entertainment venues, transport and airports will also happen more quickly with private sector involvement.

The Gulliver's and Southern Travel Holdings IPOs in 2004 were successful examples of businesses that decided on public listings in order to fund expansion of their tourism operations.

Both opportunities were well received by shareholders who saw the value of investing in established tourism operators in lucrative business sectors.

The public now has confidence to invest in the tourism sector, given it has produced consistently high returns and is set for even more.

Work

Bancorp, as a leading investment bank with expertise in the tourism sector, sees a greater role in working alongside operators like Gullivers and Southern Travel Holdings to realise their opportunities for growth.

Initial public offerings of shares, corporate restructuring, acquisitions and divestments can help realise latent potential as well as create efficiencies of scale in competitive, small markets like New Zealand.

It will take considerable business acumen to prepare for, and take advantage of increased tourist numbers.

Maintaining a sustainable share of the market will be about embracing change as online bookings, strategic alliances and discounted airfares continue to make the sector a very competitive industry.



Communications Manager

Are you a communications professional who loves Wellington?

One of New Zealand's top performing tourism marketing agencies is looking for a rising star to join its dynamic team. Positively Wellington Tourism takes a lead role in positioning Wellington as the most exciting urban destination in New Zealand.

The Communications Manager works closely with the Chief Executive and the marketing team to manage Positively Wellington Tourism's media relationships, stakeholder communications, leverage its marketing activity and the Positively Wellington Tourism brands.

The successful applicant will maintain and develop positive relationships with media at both a local and a national level and proactively identify new ways of extending its marketing campaigns. Above all, they will be an excellent communicator who writes with flair.

Other key attributes sought are:

- * 2 to 3 years experience in journalism, communications or similar
- * Very good media contacts
- * Excellent writing skills
- * Superior interpersonal skills
- * Ability to manage multiple projects efficiently and with humour
- * Experience operating in a political context

Most importantly, they will have a passion for developing Wellington as a visitor destination

Applications are due in writing or email by 5.00pm May 20, 2005.

Please address all applications to:

Carol Assendelft, General Manager Commercial
P O Box 10 017
The Terrace, Wellington

Visit Wellington's official tourism website, WellingtonNZ.com, to view the job description or contact Carol.Assendelft@WellingtonNZ.com for more information.

First a plane, then a carriage and now a hobbit hole, or two...

BILLY Black's Woodlyn Park, Waitomo, is already listed as having one of the world's unique motel rooms with units in a former Bristol Freighter and a train carriage. Now he has two hobbit rooms!

Complete with round lead-light windows and a round entrance door, the units have been dug out of a hillside on the property and have sheep grazing on their grass roofs. "The hobbit hole units have already drawn overseas interest with email booking requests from avid *Lord Of The Rings* fans," says their creator Mr Black, who is also described as an entertainer and media personality.

"With our listings in *Unique Motels of the World*, we are one of the few accommodation providers in the world with three completely different motel units to stay in," he adds.

"We aim to be one of the most unique collections of motel units to stay in the world - and I have my next unique motel already on the drawing board and it will be yet another world first."

He initially created Woodlyn Park by building the

world's only u-drive jetboat course, then adding a Restaurant/Bar and stage arena for the now infamous Billy Black's Kiwi Culture Show.

"This complex is now drawing people from all corners of the world to view or participate in a truly unique New Zealand experience," says Mr Black, who regularly performs on stage at Woodlyn Park with his dancing pig, Don Rash. Each hobbit room has specially designed furniture and décor to fit with the theme. Details: 07-8786666, or www.woodlynpark.co.nz.

Quote, unquote

"THIS is a great publication. Thanks for your efforts." - Queenstown Resort College CEO Jan Fitz-gerald on IT.

Of Woofies and blamestorming...

WOOFIES are Well Off Older Folk. Blamestorming is sitting around in a group, discussing why a deadline was missed, or a project failed and who was responsible. And a mouse potato? The online wired generation's answer to a couch potato. All these "essential new words" from the Bus and Coach Association!

ADVERT



Tourism New Zealand Public Relations Manager – Sydney

Reporting to the Regional Manager Australia, the Public Relations Manager is responsible for the development and implementation of local PR activity and contributes to the development of global PR planning and activity for Tourism New Zealand.

The primary purpose of this position is to contribute to a demonstrated increase in motivation to travel to New Zealand by:

- * Developing and implementing specific local PR activity to maximise opportunities for raising awareness of New Zealand
- * Contributing to the development of global activity and planning
- * Tailoring global PR activity to be effective in the market place, reflecting global branding

The successful candidate will have proven international marketing and/or PR experience, ideally within the tourism industry and a relevant tertiary qualification. A job description can be downloaded from www.tourismnewzealand.com

To apply, please forward a covering letter and CV to Rebecca Donoghue before 5pm on Friday 20 May 2005. email rebeccad@tnz.govt.nz, fax +64 4 9175443 or post P.O. Box 95, Wellington, New Zealand.

On the move...

TWO TNZ staff are returning to New Zealand to take on senior management roles. Annie Dundas has been appointed channel marketing manager, based in Auckland. She was previously marketing manager UK/ Europe, and has spent 10 years with the board in marketing and PR roles in Wellington and Los Angeles. She will now be responsible for helping develop trade and product marketing strategies.

Tracy Johnston is the new industry communications manager in head office. She has worked for TNZ in Auckland and Singapore, with her most recent role as PR manager Australia, based in Sydney. In her new job she will be "leading TNZ's stakeholder communications with the tourism industry and sector-specific groups."

JOANNE Warren has now been appointed executive assistant to ITOC and TAANZ, replacing Tricia Moir who has retired after 12 years with the associations.

JOHN Farrell has been appointed director of sales and marketing, New Zealand and the South Pacific, for Accor.

Mr Farrell has been CEO for Travelodge Australia for the last four years. Previously he was director of sales and marketing for the Southern Pacific Hotels Corporation. He replaces Mandy Pahl who is now director of sales and marketing for Sofitel Queenstown, which is due to open in August.

Working on the bed a priority for 'electronic' Generation X

THE bed. That's the main focus for global chain Marriott International Inc when it comes to redesigning room layouts to attract more Generation Xers to JW Marriott Hotels and Resorts, just one of its 18 brands.

VP Asia Pacific for global sales Bernadette Dennis tells *IT* the room night production they get from Baby Boomers is flat while the Generation X production is increasing. So, the company has conducted surveys and held focus groups to determine what Generation Xers prefer.

Ms Dennis says mock bedrooms were even set up and different consumer segments were asked what they liked and why.

Generation Xers prefer to stretch out on the bed - because that's what they are used to doing.

"They prefer this to a desk which they find too structured," she adds. "They are used to watching TV in bed. They don't like TV in a cabinet. They do not like the fuss of moving a TV around and they prefer a plasma screen. They do not like bedside lamps, or clutter on the bedside tables - and they like data ports near the bed for easy accessibility."

TV

So, the bed and the comfort of the bed is a feature with the group. "The TV is now positioned so that the customer can watch TV from the bed. The TV is a 32in plasma screen and the desk has a moveable table so it can be moved easily. The sitting area is designed for easy relaxation. The bathroom is also being changed to reflect the need for more space and more places to put things as customers are carrying more toiletries these days," she tells us. The company also plans to make more food and beverage changes to attract Generation Xers

Generation Xers are the strongest growing market segment in travel and their disposable income is high. "Their views are very different to the 'boomers' and we see them as perhaps more sophisticated than many 'boomers', with greater expectations. They are more 'electronic', more innovative and stylish, plus they are more emotionally involved in purchase decisions.

Adds Ms Dennis: "In general, for this segment, comfort is defined as 'clean lines, soothing colours, natural materials, mix of textures and access to the outdoors'.

Generation X will become a dominant force in a few years - when all the 'boomers' have retired!"

BusBytes ensure passengers know what to do

THE second edition of InterCity Coachlines' travel guide, *BusBytes*, is now available to passengers when they board.

CEO Malcolm Johns says it puts New Zealand's tourism experiences and attractions in front of the visitor - before they get there!

"It helps our passengers decide what to see and do, where to break their journey, and plan their activities when they reach their destination!" he says. "The guide describes the experiences as the visitor will find them

en route, and for easy booking we give the phone numbers, websites and prices as well as the travelling times between attractions and the major centres."

The 12-page A4 quarterly features more than 20 tourism experiences, attractions, services. There is no charge to be featured in the 12-page A4 quarterly and no advertising is accepted.

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

Are we going far enough?

By marketing strategist Richard P. Gee

IS New Zealand inbound tourism going far enough? When you've finished explaining about the fabulous scenery, the open spaces, and the large distances, what else do you talk about?

When you create a plan for a trip, you make a list of things you'd like to do. If you've never been to the destination, how do you know what to do? These questions should stimulate our minds into new thinking. A lot of our inbound tourism and domestic tourism is based on the visual experience that you will receive at the location, and less on the things to do at the location and the people they will meet.

Menu

Consider adding into your descriptive packages for places to visit, a menu of choices of things to do, and the description of the experience that they will enjoy when they are rock climbing, white water rafting, browsing the city streets. Sell me the sizzle of things that I can do to occupy my time, after I have walked the boulders, strolled on the beaches, enjoyed the bush, and perhaps admired the beautiful, clean, greenness, and the clear blue sky.

It is easy to say: "I can't list all the things people can do because there's so many." But that is seeing the problem, not the solution. Think of your target market, and talk to people about what they enjoy doing. Make a list of them, and put that list, and perhaps even some testimonials from people about how they enjoyed going bowling, perhaps experiencing the bungee jump, or whatever comes out of your research forum.

List

By including a list of things to do with options perhaps even organising them through you, or even just giving them websites to go and investigate, it means that our inbound tourist or domestic traveller can see how their time is going to be occupied. Therefore they are more likely to spend more time at a destination, because there seems to be so many things that they can do that each take approximately one hour, or two hours, or three hours, or 40 minutes to do, and the activities list becomes fuller. Therefore they want to spend more time and more money at the destination.

Don't forget to change the list of activities that can be done.

Evolving

They need to be evolving with the seasons, they need to evolve with public perception of safety, health, and enjoyment, and obviously they need to evolve with the target market segment that you're aiming at - be it young families, 40 plus, seniors or the singles market.

The definition of selling is 'Helping people make informed buying decisions'. This strategy, when applied to the marketing of your destination, means that you will help people make informed decisions about the many activities they can do in your locality and your destination. Enjoy creating those lists! Contact: Richard@geewiz.co.nz.

Great Downunder Wine Challenge on again

THE Great Downunder Wine Challenge will be at Craig's Hotel, Ballarat, Victoria, on July 23. This is the third round in the series with venues varying between Australia and New Zealand.

The format is a six-course degustation menu, complemented by a wine from each country for each course. Nothing about the wines is disclosed at the time and it is up to the diners to judge which wine best suits the individual course. The challenge is a battle between Victoria's Great Southern Touring Route and the Great New Zealand Touring Route as to which have the best wine and food.

Interpretation 24/7 just a phone call away

JAPANESE travellers can now get help in their own language through 1TouchConnect, an innovative cellphone service from TeleplusGroup that offers live interpretation, concierge assistance and emergency services with one touch of a keypad.

1TouchConnect is the first international telecommunications provider to combine convenient local and international calling with the assistance that international travellers need most.

The international rollout begins about now with cellphone distribution in the US and Japan, and round-the-clock live-operator translation, concierge and non-health-related emergency services in the US in Japanese, English, Spanish, French and 116 other languages. Distribution and service in Europe is scheduled to begin in July.

Japan demand weakens...

CONSUMER demand for New Zealand and Australia is weak in Japan, according to TNZ, quoting "industry players." This is because longhaul destinations like Hawaii, the US and Europe are recovering from negative publicity - and competitive airfares are stimulating demand.

...but interest grows in China

THERE may be increased interest in New Zealand and Australian holidays by Chinese nationals, as European countries tighten entry visa requirements.

TNZ adds that the New Zealand Immigration Service is piloting a new scheme to target high-spending independent travellers in the People's Republic. It is doing this by forming relationships with key travel agents. "This ties in well with TNZ's work."

Wairoa filmfest

THE Wairoa Maori Film Festival is from June 1-6. Details: www.manawairoa.com.

Top industry trainers from around the globe to lecture at Queenstown Resort College

QUEENSTOWN Resort College, with its edu-tourism role, will allow industry people to enhance their professional experience and improve their educational qualifications, in a great location.

That's the view of leading American industry trainer, **Dr Hannah Messerli** from New York University, who will be part of a high powered group of presenters facilitating the college's executive education series to be launched in July.

"Edu-tourism is really a great concept that is moving forward very quickly globally as more and more people are looking to combine their tourism and leisure experiences with improving their education credentials," she says. "Queenstown Resort College really will provide the type of experience, both in terms of the educational environment and the terrific location, to help managers develop their professional skills and capabilities."

Dr Messerli has extensive industry experience including pre-opening training for major five star hotels and resorts, corporate market analysis for Holiday Inns and other leisure industry consultancies.

Her areas of focus are tourism planning and tourism development particularly looking at international models for long term competitive advantage. She believes the college is leading the way in New Zealand as an edu-tourism facility, which will take tourism and hospitality education to a new level.

The Executive Education Series provides three main courses - the Executive Management Programme, the Management Development Programme and the Emerging Managers' Development Programme.

Each is pitched at a specific management level and Dr Messerli says the range of presenters is outstanding.

They include **Prof Conrad Lashley** of Nottingham Trent University, UK, **Prof Michael Olsen** of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, US, Associate **Prof Sandro Formica** of Temple University, US, and **Dr Jeremy Huyton** of the University of Canberra

Associate Prof Elizabeth Roberts of the School of Hotel and Restaurant Studies at Auckland University of Technology, who has been actively involved in the hospitality industry as a consultant and trainer, is the college's executive education co-ordinator. She has been a teacher at Cornell University.

Dr Messerli says there is a growing sense of professionalism in the tourism and hospitality industries worldwide. "The use of new technologies enables us to deliver a better customer experience and allow managers to be more professional in the long term."

She says the challenge for New Zealand is to prepare for the estimated 120,000 hospitality and tourism workers who will be required to effectively run the industries by 2010. "To meet those numbers it is all about attracting people into the industry and keeping them. The courses at Queenstown Resort College will help people get to the cutting edge of the industry and continually raise the benchmark to a more professional level," she adds.

Different Light campaign best in US, says Morrison

AUSTRALIA'S "A Different Light" marketing campaign is the most successful ever conducted in the US, says Tourism Australia MD Scott Morrison.

"The \$3.5 million campaign has generated more consumer inquiries and outperformed all previous efforts in terms of media efficiency, even eclipsing the peak of the Paul Hogan campaign back in 1985."

He says the success proves the power of fully integrated marketing and promotions. Tourism Australia used strong brand communications to lay the foundation for a powerful partner campaign with Qantas, followed up with savvy use of technology on Australia.com.

Southland popular with Aussies

AUSTRALIANS have been good to Southland in the past year. Tourism Research Council statistics show that the number of Australian guest nights in Southland increased by 12.1 percent. They also spend the most according to the Southland Visitor Survey.

Says manager Kate Watkinson:

"Australia is a great market for Southland and it's relatively easy to reach. Australians tend to visit New Zealand more than once so there is an increased likelihood that they will come to Southland, if not on their first visit then on a later visit."

Ms Watkinson and Destination Fiordland's Lisa Sadler are visiting wholesalers in Australia this month. More than 16 wholesalers will be trained in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

Discussions will also be held with key industry players in relation to the airport development and trans-Tasman flights.

Venture Southland has also entered into a venture with ANZCRO - the largest Australian wholesaler - to feature Southland in a special brochure that will be distributed to 300,000 agents.

MTB riders warned off Heaphy

MOUNTAIN Bike New Zealand (MTBNZ) has joined DoC in reminding cyclists not to ride on the Heaphy Track.

DoC's Golden Bay area manager John Mason says mountain biking is not allowed on the Heaphy and other Kahurangi National Park tracks. It will be some time before it is determined what access there might be.

MTBNZ is urging mountain bikers to be responsible and stay off the Heaphy while legitimate access is sought. The New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) recently approved its revised General Policy for National Parks, now allows for mountain biking in national parks, subject to provisions for it in national park management plans.

Locals support DoC by digging into history

HISTORIC tramway rails were exposed when the local community joined with DoC and explored the Waiorongomai Valley near Te Aroha.

DoC had asked locals to take part in a historic restoration day that it hopes will be the start of great community projects and partnerships for the valley, which is in the Kaimai Mamaku Forest Park.

Waiorongomai is a major access point into the park and is a vital link for the DoC-proposed Northern Kaimai Heritage Trail.

The department has an extensive restoration plan for the Waiorongomai Valley to ensure the preservation of this historic site. Many projects within the restoration plan can be undertaken as community partnerships and leading the charge is the Te Aroha Primary School with its interest in becoming involved with restoration of the Fern Spur and lower level area. Ranger Warren Geraghty says: "It is not only the Te Aroha Primary School, but other members of the community are also showing interest in different projects like rebuilding old ore wagons; excavating, preserving and relaying original tramway rails at different sites; researching the rich history of Waiorongomai, the tramway, the mining days and the people and stories; restoration of the Bendigo Battery; researching and locating other historic sites; and helping with the maintenance of the lower level track network and entrance to Waiorongomai Valley. There are projects ranging from physical work to purely research work.

Air Milford pays \$1M for state-of-the-art Caravan

AIR Milford's \$1 million Cessna Caravan meets unparalleled environmental standards and takes scenic flying in the Queenstown and Milford region to new heights. Owner Hank Sproull says the aircraft, imported from China, represents a new era in tourist flying.

"The key features of the turbo prop aircraft are its safety and reliability. But above all it reduces noise to an acceptable level making it extremely environmentally friendly."

Tourist planes flying in and out of Milford are constantly in the spotlight over noise and congestion. The Caravan overcomes these issues. "We can carry 13 people in one plane load in our Caravan. That's the equivalent of three smaller planes flying into Milford so naturally it has to be good environmentally," Mr Sproull adds.

Popping the question in fantasy land

LOVE is in the air again in Wanaka - the centre of Middle Earth - home to Wanaka Sightseeing and Minaret Lodge.

Both have come together to offer a complete *Lord Of The Rings* package which combines two romantic nights in possibly New Zealand's only hobbit hole style room, good old hobbit food - including first and second breakfast - and a comprehensive *Lord Of The Rings* tour.

The package has been on offer since April last year and has attracted many people in all seasons.

Minaret Lodge owner Gary Tate says: "Since launching our *Lord Of The Rings* themed room, Barlimans, a year ago, we have been overwhelmed with the response. The room has been incredibly popular as a venue to pop the question with a number of marriage proposals occurring at the lodge. "Guests really love our hobbit breakfasts, especially the lembas and home made breads."

The lodge has its own party tree. "The romance comes with sharing the experience of being in your own fantasy," say Wanaka Sightseeing owner Melissa Heath. "One gentleman popped the question by getting down on bended knee in half a metre of snow, he was so inspired by the scenery!"

The company's tour takes clients to more than 20 locations and allows them to handle \$15,000 of movie replicas as well as the chance to meet guidebook author Ian Brodie. Contact: Gary Tate on 03-4431856.

Qualification reviews

THE National Certificate in Tourism (Visitor Information) level 4 has been revised and version 5 is now on the NZQA framework.

Version 5 was issued to take account of the review of unit standards 18229 (legislation) and 61 (retail and wholesale).

As a result, unit standard 18229 has been substituted with unit standards 20489 and 20490 and unit standard 61 has been removed from the elective section. Unit standard 18225 has been added to the elective section.

This qualification builds on the National Certificate in Tourism and Travel (Core Skills level 3) and is designed for assessment in on-job situations.

ATTTO says the National Certificate in Tourism (Visitor Information) recognises the skills required to work in the visitor information services sector of the industry.

* ATTTO has completed a review of the Canoeing - Kayaking unit standards that were registered in October 1993.

As a result, ATTTO is now the standard setting body for the sea kayaking unit standards. These are now registered in the Adventure Tourism domain in the Tourism subfield.

They now better reflect actual industry practices, requirements, and legislation that affect the outdoors. There have been changes to titles and credits.

While there is not a specific sea kayaking qualification, learners can work towards the National Certificate in Adventure Tourism Level 4 by completing the National Certificate in Tourism and Travel (Core Skills Level 3) or by choosing sea kayaking units under elective two of the National Certificate in Adventure Tourism Level 4.

31,000 appointments!

MORE than 27,693 appointments were made between TRENZ buyers and sellers even before the online diary started last week. The total is now more than 31,000.

Mount Cook Ski Planes to celebrate 50 years of snow landings

THIS September sees the 50th anniversary of snow landings by Mount Cook Ski Planes.

Founder Sir Harry Wigley saw the need for a retractable ski in 1953 while flying tourists around Mount Cook.

Until then fixed skis could be used for snow takeoffs and landings - but were not practical at Mount Cook Airfield, which only has snow on the ground for a limited time.

After hundreds of hours of development, Sir Harry piloted the first ski plane landing using a retractable ski on September 22, 1955. One of the passengers was Sir Edmund Hillary, who is also going to be involved in the 50th celebrations, which will be on October 1 and 2.

Today, Mount Cook Ski Planes operates year round with the help of its founder's pioneering vision.

The company - which uses Cessna 185 and Pilatus Porter PC6 aircraft - is the only one currently offering snow landings who also switch off engines once on the neve. Details: 03-4308034 or www.mtcookskiplanes.com.

Germans becoming late bookers

GERMAN travel patterns are following a late booking trend, according to TNZ, with a further move to pure FIT travel. There appears to be a decline in group travel.

Wilks to talk in Wairoa

TOURISM Eastland is hosting a regional meeting in Wairoa next Wednesday at the Takitimu Marae from 2pm. Guest speaker is TNZ GM tourism development David Wilks. A Pacific Coast touring map will be launched. The meeting will also discuss opportunities for Maori cultural tourism.

International calls are free at this hotel!

ALL landline telephone calls to any number in Britain and 34 countries - including New Zealand - are FREE when staying at the Royal Harbour Hotel, Ramsgate, UK.

Proprietor James Thomas says there are hotels, especially in the US, that offer free local calls and some concessions on long distance.

"I believe we are the first hotel in the world to go the whole hog and offer all our resident guests a free service. And that's nothing, rien, nichts, niets, niente! There is no catch. Guests can speak as long as they like, as often as they like, when staying with us." Details: james@royalharbourhotel.co.uk.

Thai to fly into Auckland

THAI Airways is to inaugurate its first non-stop Bangkok-Auckland service in July with three services a week until November when they will be daily.

Mapua Leisure Park being marketed around the world

THE Mapua Leisure Park near Nelson is on the market. It is expected to sell for more than \$12 million, sparking concerns that the coastal property may be developed into a luxury resort or subdivided into an exclusive residential area. The 12.3ha park was sold to American owners Gary and Erika Martin for about \$4 million in 2002 and is one of three campgrounds in the region for sale.

Bayleys agent Rob Wallace says Mapua is being marketed internationally to resort companies.

Ministerial duo to open Nelson centre

NELSON'S \$3.8 million Millers Acre Centre is to be opened by the Ministers of Tourism and Conservation, Messrs Mark Burton and Chris Carter, on July 19.

The building was due to be blessed by iwi on May 12 with Latitude Nelson operating from it on May 23.

The centre will be home to Nelson VIC and Latitude Nelson and contain a cafe/restaurant, two shops, the DoC regional centre and four business support/export organisations as well as the Nelson office of NZTE, Nelson REDA, the Arts Marketing Network and the Nelson Tasman Business Trust.

Kaikoura Island gets trust CONSERVATION Minister Chris Carter has appointed the Motu Kaikoura Trust to control and manage the reserve on Kaikoura Island.

The announcement follows the \$10.5 million purchase of the island by the government, the ASB Community Trust, the Auckland Regional Council and Auckland local authorities. The 564ha island is on the western side of Great Barrier Island

F and B pleased

FOREST and Bird has applauded the government for announcing Project Hauraki, an initiative that will invest in conservation projects on seven Hauraki Gulf islands as part of a wider \$2 million investment to be provided for in this year's Budget and announced by PM Helen Clark.

It includes new initiatives for pest eradication, track development, signage, and interpretation on Kaikoura, Waiheke, Motuihe, Motutapu, Rangitoto, Rakitu, and Great Barrier Islands.

Responsible tourism CREATING Responsible Tourists is the theme of a Victoria University seminar at Rutherford House, Wellington, on Wednesday.

Hobbs to outlaw pollution!

ENVIRONMENT Minister Marian Hobbs is poised to effectively outlaw pollution, despite fears the move will stymie economic growth in Christchurch, Timaru, Nelson and Auckland and push smog elsewhere. Under the proposed rules, businesses in Christchurch, Timaru, Nelson and Alexandra will be unable to get new resource consents for heating or industry, unless householders drastically reduce pollution from fires and woodburners. Auckland - where vehicles cause heavy pollution - will also be affected.

Ms Hobbs says she wanted a gradual reduction of smog levels, which are proposed to come into effect on October 1. Polluted regions must reduce smog incrementally every year until 2013.

Aussies may boycott Bali in favour of NZ

AUSSIE holiday-makers and travel agents have threatened to snub Bali if accused drug smuggler Schapelle Corby is found guilty by the Indonesian courts. Instead, they will encourage tourists to visit alternative destinations such as New Zealand.

Northland gets first conference and meeting planner

NORTHLAND'S first conference and meeting planner is now available. It was launched to 120 Auckland corporate and professional conference organisers at a function at the Hilton Auckland. Sixty-five Northland tourism operators showcased their products and services to an impressed group of attendees, including representatives of the accounting, banking, IT and government sectors.

The planner is an initiative of the Northland Conference Marketing Collective, which was formed in January. Seven thousand copies have been produced with the help of Destination Northland. Details: conferences@northlandnz.com.

Ski bookings on par with 2004

TNZ'S latest *Regional Rap* says ski bookings for June-September are at 2004 levels, thanks to the high value of the New Zealand dollar.

\$12M plan for ferry terminal

A new \$12 million plan is in the works for Auckland's Half Moon Bay ferry terminal. Auckland Regional Transport Network Ltd, which unveiled its new long-term concept plan for the site, says current facilities are inadequate, especially for passenger ferry users. They have to wait on an exposed pontoon and can be drenched by waves or rain.

Construction could start in July next year but an appeal to the Environment Court could mean delays of up to 15 months.

Environment code "nothing new"

ERIC Foley of Budget Backpackers points out that Jasons Travel Media Environment Care Code (IT544) is nothing new. It is almost identical to one BBH has been putting into its accommodation guides - for the last 15 years. Some 200,000 copies of the guide are published each year.

"As New Zealand becomes an increasingly more popular destination for tourists and travellers alike, so the potential for damage to our environment also increases." Hence the need for BBH's own code.

Consulate apartments open

CONSULATE Apartments have recently opened in Nelson. They are a short stroll from the CBD. Details: www.consulateapartments.co.nz.

Warning on winter bookings

FLIGHT Centre is warning customers they might miss out on accommodation in Queenstown and Wanaka this winter.

Area leader Allison Clifford says Central Otago is experiencing problems like Fiji and the Gold Coast when it comes to accommodation selling out months in advance. The increase in Australian tourists means New Zealanders will face more competition.

100%Best

IT'S official. New Zealand has the best tourism website in the world. TNZ's www.newzealand.com site has been awarded the internet world's version of an Oscar - a 'Webby'.

From blue to poo

The Blue Lake of St Bathans, Otago, is turning into Poo Lake. Pollution and eutrophication have degraded the landmark so much it has been removed from Central Otago tourism promotional material. Septic tank leakage is believed to be the cause. The population? Just six.

Year round trips

KAITERITERI Kayaks are now offering trips into the Abel Tasman National Park year round. Details: www.seakayak.co.nz

AIS launches degree

AIS St Helens, Auckland, has announced the launch of its Bachelor of Tourism Management in 2005.

The degree is one of a kind in the region and has an Asia-Pacific focus.

Dean Semisi Taumoepeau says he wants to offer industry colleagues and members of TIANZ, TAANZ, ITOC, SPTO and PATA, a 15 percent discount on tuition fees. There are intakes on Monday and on September 5. Details: www.ais.ac.nz.

Collingwood not turning a blind eye to this event, either

NELSON may be commemorating the bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar in October. But Collingwood (pop 250), at the far end of Golden Bay, isn't to be beaten. There the good folk have also decided to mark the battle. After all, the small town is named after Nelson's 2/IC Admiral Lord Cuthbert Collingwood. And he will "land" in the town on October 22.

Local textile artist Liza Eastman is constructing an almost-life size effigy of Lord Collingwood, dressed in full naval regalia. It will be brought ashore by a flotilla of local boats and ceremoniously conducted to the Collingwood Hall, where it will be on display.

The ceremony will be the start of a day of family festivities with local music, stalls, a dance, and a fireworks display sponsored by seafood company Sealord.

Ms Eastman is the daughter of an admiral, and her family links to the British Navy prompted her to become involved in the commemorations.

The rich and chequered history of Collingwood and the surrounding Aorere River Valley has been captured in a series of historical information panels that will be dedicated on October 15.

The early Maori settlement, the thrill of the gold rush, the grandiose town plan drawn up in England, the once-bustling harbour with three wharves, the historic cemetery and church, the numerous fires and Collingwood's relationship with Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood, second-in-command at the Battle of Trafalgar, are the subject of the panels in and around the township. Merrill Coke, of Stonehouse Arts, says that people in the UK will be intrigued by the fact that a sleepy little South Island town is part of the Trafalgar commemorations. Contact: 03-5248314, 021-480652 or www.stonehousearts.co.nz.

Last chance to view frigate before it sinks

THE Frigate HMNZS Wellington - also known as F69 - will be parked outside Te Papa for the next six months until she is ready to be scuttled off the south coast. The vessel will be open to the public at weekends and lunchtimes during the week until November 12 when she will be sunk. The government sold the warship to the F69 Trust for \$1. It is estimated she will survive 70 years on the seabed during which time she will become a flourishing reef. She is expected to attract 15,000 divers a year, plus partners and family.

\$8,000 a night to book estate

RECENTLY opened Westbury Estate - set within a horse stud in Karaka 30 minutes' drive south of Auckland - features five double rooms, bathrooms, a billiard room, theatre room, wireless internet connection, a study, library, gourmet kitchen, extensive wine cellar and wall-to-wall international and New Zealand art.

It also boasts a nine-hole golf course with PGA standard greens, a lake with jetty, heated outdoor 15 metre swimming pool, state-of-art fitness centre, flood-lit tennis court, barbecue and outdoor dining areas. The tariff is \$8,000 plus GST a night with a minimum two-night-stay. The estate sleeps up to 10 people.

Marketing manager Joanne Urlich says the rate includes exclusive use of the property and on-site facilities including the golf course as well as fully cooked breakfast, evening meals and daily maid service. Details: 09-9632256, info@westburyestate.co.nz or www.westburyestate.co.nz.

Earnslaw ashore for replacement of propellers

REAL Journeys' 93-year-old steamship Earnslaw was taken out of Lake Wakatipu on Tuesday to have her two propellers replaced for the first time in 50 years.

Dixon tight-lipped

QANTAS CEO Geoff Dixon isn't saying how long QF will fly the Tasman if and when its low cost subsidiary Jetstar starts flying between Australia and New Zealand. Australian media reports claim Jetstar could be introduced early next year.

Development at park

RAINBOW Springs Nature Park and Kiwi Encounter, Rotorua, is spending \$500,000 upgrading its retail store and customer services area.

GM Stewart Brown says work will start mid July and be completed by mid September.

Details:

www.rainbowsprings.co.nz or www.kiwiencounter.co.nz.

Changes to codes

AVIS New Zealand has made changes to its SIPP booking codes and car group categories. But wholesalers and retail agents are assured that existing bookings using the previous codes will still be honoured, nor affected in any way.

Careful with your gifts

AVOID giving umbrellas, handkerchiefs, locks or shoes as gifts to visitors from China, Taiwan or Hong Kong, as they are signs of bad luck, advises TNZ. And smile a lot if dealing with Thais as this is equated to patience. Thais admire people who are patient. Details: market guides at www.tourismnewzealand.com.

Views sought

THE Bus and Coach Association wants to hear members' views on Queenstown Lakes District Council proposals to restrict the size of vehicles using the Crown Range Road between Wanaka and Queenstown. Council wants to ban vehicles over 14,200 kg or 12.6m in length as it says that since the road was sealed more heavy vehicles have been using it - causing damage. Council blames ski buses in the main - but won't be banning these!

TIANZ working for its members

TIANZ is seeking ways of helping members put in place improvements so they continue to provide world class experiences during the current labour shortage. "Quality continues as an issue," says CEO Fiona Luhrs. "And that's connected to having the right people. So we get nervous about the quality of the visitor experience in times of real labour shortages. We have to watch that one closely to ensure that when members call on temporary staff that it's not a degradation of experience."

The association and "funding partners" such as Lincoln University are working on a project which will help identify what it is that drives the good financial performance of tourism firms.

The yield project should result in tools or templates which TIANZ will be able to take to members during this year's annual conference.

"We want to be able to say 'these are the things that you may want to focus on if you want to improve your bottom line'. We want to do the same thing for public sector investment in tourism, too."

Are tourism businesses different to others? "Yes. A lot of their product is perishable, unlike other industries - and they are also people intensive. So you have that big issue on how you improve the productivity of something which is so people intensive," Ms Luhrs says. "Some tourism businesses have a lot of capital but others don't - and they are the people delivering the experience... They might have a couple of mini vans and a real challenge for them is to think how to improve yield on their return on business."

Quad adventures still available

GISBORNE Quad Adventures has closed. But visitors can still go riding. Safari Adventures is offering half day and full day tours from Tangihau Station.

SkyCity Hamilton now all owned by Auckland

SKYCITY Entertainment Group now owns 100 percent of SkyCity Hamilton. It has reached agreement with interests associated with the Perry Group to acquire the remaining 30 percent shareholding for about \$33 million. This follows the acquisition in July last year of Tainui's 15 percent share.

SkyCity will also acquire the front section of the Post Office building from the Perry interests for \$4 million.

This will enable SkyCity Hamilton to enhance the front entrance to its gaming and entertainment precinct.

SkyCity MD Evan Davies says: "SkyCity Hamilton has performed well since opening and, as the majority shareholder and operator of the business, we were naturally interested in acquiring full ownership." It is expected the transactions will be completed by June 30.

Operator of Year nominations

ELITE Limousines, Hyatt Regency Auckland, InterCity Group (NZ) Ltd, Longlands Farm Restaurant, Qantas Airways, Scenic Coachlines, Stamford Plaza Auckland, The Hermitage Mount Cook, The Kauri Museum and Tourism Holdings Ltd have been nominated to receive this year's ITOC Operator of the Year Award.

The allied members will now make a presentation to the ITOC board who will select three finalists.

McTague leaves industry

LANDMARK Travel South Pacific GM Ken

McTague has retired from the ITOC board and is no longer in the inbound industry.

Metroliners still safe, despite two crashes

THE Civil Aviation Authority says Metroliner planes are safe, despite two fatal crashes in a week.

Four days after two men died when their Fairchild Metroliner, carrying NZ Post courier cargo, crashed in Taranaki, another aircraft of the same type crashed in remote northern Queensland, killing all 15 on board. CAA spokesman Bill Sommer says there has been no call to ground the remaining Metroliners, three of which are run by Air Chatham, between the Chatham Islands and Wellington/Christchurch five times a week. Another four are owned by Airwork, the Wellington company that owned the plane that crashed near Stratford.

Waiheke on UK TV

LOCAL tourism is expected to benefit from Waiheke Island and three local wineries starring in a popular UK TV show, due to screen in October.

Cable Bay Vineyards, Babich Wines and Villa Maria will feature in the Richard and Judy Wine Club series. The programme's film crew, who spent nearly a week in New Zealand, was enchanted with Waiheke Island in particular.

Burton at Manukau seminar

TOURISM Minister Mark Burton will address the Manukau City Council tourism seminar next Thursday entitled 'Tourism - Everyone's Business - Growing the Tourism.

Other speakers will be: Tourism Auckland CEO Graeme Osborne, Fabian Yukich of Villa Maria Wines; and Counties Manukau Pacific Trust CEO Richard Jeffery. Details: Irene Steiner on 04-263 7100 ext 8656.

New b and bs down south

CENTREWOOD Estate, Waimate, is a 110-year-old French style homestead now taking visitors for b and b. Hosts are Johnny and Jo Sutherland. Details: 03-6896035, 0231-399180, fax 6897464 or jo@eventful.co.nz.

Also recently opened as a b and b is The Down, Geraldine. Details: phone/fax 03-6937338, 021-675249 or cournane.m.a.@xtra.co.nz.

Peppers is “hotter” but Great Mercury island is “hottest”

ROTORUA'S Peppers on the Point has been named on *Conde Naste Traveller* magazine's Hot List for 2005. Hot List 2005 features what the magazine considers to be the hot, hotter and hottest properties around the world.

Only Peppers on the Point “hotter” and Great Mercury Island “hottest” feature from New Zealand. Australia has seven “hot” properties. The US has 12.

New Timaru tours

TEKIHI Tours is a new company based in Timaru which offers “cultural sightseeing and adventure...”
Details: 027-2237167, parris@tekihittours.co.nz or www.tekihittours.nl.

Where visitors leave with greater understanding of Maoritanga

MAORI Tours Kaikoura is fast gaining a reputation for delivering a cultural experience at a level that has not been seen there before.

Guests learn, participate and have fun when they journey deep into the natural, cultural and social world of Kaikoura subtribe 'Ngati Kuri', then leave with a deep understanding and insight into what it is to be Maori today.

It is a boutique tour catering to no more than 10 guests at a time and operated by Maurice and Heather Manawatu and members of their extended family. Mr and Mrs Manawatu previously worked for Whale Watch Kaikoura and have combined experience of more than 25 years in the industry. The Qualmark endorsed business operates year round. Details: www.maoritours.co.nz.

Pacific Blue now flying Aussie-Auckland

PACIFIC Blue made its inaugural flight from Brisbane to Auckland yesterday (Thursday). It is the 29th international carrier to use the airport, says AIAL CEO Don Huse.

The airline will initially operate 12 flights a week to and from Auckland, serving Gold Coast and Brisbane airports.

Where guests will be inspired

A stylishly appointed boutique hotel opened in central Queenstown this week. The Spire Hotel has 10 suites, a small dining room and a cocktail bar.

A consortium of four New Zealand investors bought the almost completed hotel from its Australian owners last year.

Auckland investor Christiaan Palsenbarg says that at \$885 (plus GST) a night, the hotel is aimed at international and domestic travellers who welcome “the finer things in life.”

Each suite has an open log fire, underfloor heating and a walk-in wardrobe complete with a safe large enough to fit a laptop, as well as a private outdoor balcony and automatic awning.

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