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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!"

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..."

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.

Economic development officer Lisa Knight outlined plans for a winter marketing campaign that will be based on www.ruapehunz.com.

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.

First a plane and now a hobbit hole...

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!

Are we going far enough?

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, writes marketing strategist Richard P. Gee

Priorities 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 determining what Generation Xers prefer.

Great Downunder Wine Challenge 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.

Interpretation 24/7 just a 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.

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.

MTB riders warned off Heaphy

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

Locals support DoC

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

Air Milford pays \$1M for 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.

Top trainers to lecture at Q'tn 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.

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.

They 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.

Ski planes celebrate 50 years

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

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.

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.

AIS launches degree

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

Collingwood not turning a blind eye

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.

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.

SkyCity Auckland buys Hamilton

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.

Peppers, Great Mercury are hot

ROTORUA'S Peppers on the Point has been named on *Conde Naste Traveller* magazine's Hot List for 2005.

Pacific Blue flying Aussie-Auckland

PACIFIC Blue made its inaugural flight from Brisbane to Auckland yesterday (Thursday).

Friendly reminder

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