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Alexander warns of lean times

IS the industry about to go into a lean period? BNZ chief economist Tony Alexander still thinks so. This is the third time Mr Alexander has warned of a possible slowing in growth...

TRENZ now more than a trade show

TRENZ this year is more than a trade show. It's a business meeting - the largest ever held in New Zealand, according to TIANZ CEO Fiona Luhrs.

A record 33,000 15 minute sessions have already been scheduled between operators and buyers in advance of the event, which is in Christchurch from June 13-16. "This year we are also getting those outside tourism to come to understand not only how big TRENZ is but how important tourism is to the country," Ms Luhrs adds.

This is being done through VIP programmes for 20 DoC managers and more than 30 local authority mayors, councillors and staff

Ms Luhrs says TRENZ is increasingly important to the industry.

"Some operators say that around 75 percent of their international business comes from contacts made at TRENZ. This indicates that around \$2,000 million potential revenue is generated over the four days. The statistics are staggering."

Using the most modern event management and booking system, the event is based around three days of meetings between 450 New Zealand companies and 400 international professionals.

Emirates announces new Chch service

EMIRATES this week announced a new daily connection between Christchurch and Sydney, starting on July 16.

File still open on Ave

POLICE files on former PATA chairman Joop Ave remain open, it was confirmed to *IT* this week. A spokesman said an investigation into claims Mr Ave made sexual advances to a male employee of the Carlton Hotel, Auckland, on April 24, 1995, has not reached a conclusion.

\$9 billion Cinderella sector

FIONA Luhrs, CEO of TIANZ, was reported in *IT542* as saying: "We don't have any solid information that a domestic tourism campaign is needed... I'm not convinced. I have nothing against it - I have just not seen anything that says there is a need for one." She is correct, writes *Jasons* publisher and CEO John Sandford in the latest *Speakers' Corner*. "There is no solid information - but in that statement lies the problem and challenge for our industry."

Rebranding idea for one small town

KNOW any small rural town that'd be ideal for "rebranding" as a book town? Otago University's Brent Lovelock would like to know. He visited Wigtown in Scotland to research the developing tourism phenomenon of the book town.

On the move...

TIM Cantlon has joined THL as GM of the company's coaching business which includes Johnston's Coachlines, Great Sights, Discover New Zealand, Kiwi Experience, Airbus, Tourist Transport Fiji and Feejee Experience. He is also responsible for THL's Contact Centre.

THL also announces that Grant Webster has been appointed COO Attractions beginning on June 20.

Nats will listen, says Smith

IT was while current National tourism spokesman Lockwood Smith was Tourism Minister in 1999 that the now successful 100%Pure campaign gained sign-off.

Mr Smith reminded us of this when we asked if the present government deserves a pat on the back for the campaign's international success!

He listened to the industry then, and Mr Smith adds, he will continue to listen to it.

Mr Smith introduced National's five policy points on tourism at a Victoria University organised industry seminar last Wednesday (*IT548*). He said a sixth point was introduced after he listened to his audience that day...

Pacific Blue makes history

PACIFIC Blue will make history today (Friday) by apparently becoming the first carrier in the southern hemisphere to offer new era inflight entertainment systems on board its flights.

Early snow good for start of ski season

BAD weather over the weekend may have kept most people indoors but it means just one thing at Mount Ruapehu - snow!

Winter snow sports enthusiasts in Canterbury and Queenstown were also fizzing on Sunday as clouds cleared over Mount Hutt, Coronet Peak and The Remarkables ski areas to reveal mountains thickly covered in snow.

Academics study Indian market

OPPORTUNITIES exist for us to target the Indian market with urban-based activities, according to a paper by Asad Mohsin and Chris Ryan of Waikato University's Department of Tourism Management. Dr Mohsin and Prof Ryan have just completed a study of more than 1,000 students at 20 institutes and universities throughout India.

They say that India is likely to be the next major emergent tourism-generating country after the People's Republic of China - but an advantage for us is that it is an English speaking market. And early indicators are that Indians can be the highest daily spenders after the Japanese.

TNZ plans 100% Welcome for fans

TNZ has made sure the 15,000 Lions fans expected here in coming days will feel welcome. It has organised lamppost banners in every game town, bus and ferry signs and on the centre line of each match. The theme is "Make Yourself 100 percent at home."

Lions visit Te Puia

AFTER being officially welcomed to New Zealand in Rotorua on Sunday, the Lions finished the day with a visit to Te Puia. It was a chance for them to sign autographs, meet locals, mingle with the media and exchange gifts with Te Puia staff.

Black carpet treatment for Barmy Army!

BARMY Army members were due for a surprise when they turned up at Maui's Auckland Airport branch on Wednesday to collect motorhomes they will use to tour New Zealand in over the next six weeks. The red carpet will literally be rolled out for the Lions supporters but after that it all turns black - and white!

THL coaches and campers in thick of it

THL'S coaching and rentals divisions are deeply involved in the Lions tour, transporting players and thousands of fans around the country. Johnston's Coachlines is providing the official touring

coaches for the All Blacks and the Lions teams and management, plus 80 coaches for Lions fans.

Official transport for the fans travelling under the banner of the Barmy Army is being provided by THL's Rentals division and its alternative coaching operation, Kiwi Experience.

More than 2,000 campervans on the road!

TOURISM Auckland believes that the number of campervans booked has increased to 2009.

CEO Graeme Osborne says they are expecting between 15-20,000 international visitors from the key UK and Ireland markets to come to New Zealand for the tour. Many of them will be in Auckland for the third test match on July 9.

Room rates up 400%?

HOSPITALITY suppliers are reportedly quoting Lions tour fans room rates that are between 200 percent and 400 percent higher than normal, says business consultant Richard Gee.

Flashpackers opens just in time...

WHO says that there are no spare beds in Wellington for the Lions tour, asks Gordon Burrow of Nomads World Hotels Pty Ltd. Nomads Capital, Wellington's newest "Flashpackers" hotel opens today (Friday).

Marlborough plans to capture the fans...

MARLBOROUGH is hoping to capture some of the Lions fans as they travel between games, either between June 16-17 or June 26 to July 2.

Destination Marlborough is advising operators the biggest opportunity will likely come when the fans head north from Christchurch to Wellington.

* Although it is not hosting a game, Destination Northland is aware of more than 650 bednights booked in the region already, and anticipates further spin-off from FIT and campervan bookings.

Major addition to Waitomo Caves

RUAKURI, the longest and most complex of the three original tourist caves in the Waitomo region, is about to reopen after being closed to visitors for 20 years.

It is a place of ancient Maori lore, meandering underground streams, vast chambers with intricate stalagmite and stalactite formations, secret passages, fossilised sea shells and the distant thunder of subterranean waterfalls.

Mayor wants ownership of airport

GOVERNMENT should hand ownership of New Plymouth Airport to the community to avoid it being stuck in a time warp, says New Plymouth's mayor Peter Tennent.