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Ngan fears room rates may drop

WILL room rates soon start to drop? That's the big question facing the industry, believes Horwath Asia Pacific director Terry Ngan.

He says research shows that hotel and serviced apartment occupancies are continuing to be hit by decreases in overseas and domestic visitor arrivals.

"The big question facing the hotel industry in the next 12-24 months is whether room rates will drop as hotel operators try to maintain their market share.

"The hotel industry's track record in the past has been to do this."

Growth in new hotel and serviced apartment supply during 2005, rooms under construction and publicly announced - if they proceed - will provide additional challenges for hotel operators in the next few years. Queenstown hotel and serviced apartment supply could increase 29 percent, while Wellington's may rise 26 percent, Dunedin's 22 percent and Auckland's 14 percent.

Concern over "explosion" of apartments

THE "explosion" of serviced apartments being offered to tourists is of deep concern to the New Zealand Hotel Council (NZHC).

CEO Jennie Langley says that in some regions, such as Queenstown, the number of serviced apartment rooms will outstrip hotel rooms within three years.

"Of course this is responding to a changing trend for visitors who want to feel more independent, are happy to cook for themselves and have the option to have friends and family stay with them. It is certainly increasing competition in the accommodation sector, although there is little hard information available."

Few restaurants open at Christmas?

THERE will be few restaurants open over Christmas, judging by the results of a survey by Millennium Queenstown GM John Clarke.

He contacted 17 and 16 said they would not be open on Christmas day.

"It's hard enough as it is to find skilled staff without having to pay time and a half then juggle additional leave over the busy period.

"The guys have done their sums and know that it's just not worth opening."

New Zealand Hotel Council (NZHC) chairman Steve Kirkpatrick says it is increasingly obvious that as the real financial costs are factored in, fewer restaurants will open over holiday periods.

Tamaki dismisses performer

TAMAKI Maori Village has a new cultural group and a redesigned public "encounter", says marketing manager Kiri Atkinson-Crean. Richard Mitai has been dismissed from his daytime role as maintenance manager and as a performer. "The cultural group Richard Mitai and his wife own, and who has been with us for 15 years, is no longer contracted to our company - such is the seriousness with which we view this incident."

Ms Atkinson-Crean was commenting after Mr Mitai's appearance in court accused of breaking the nose of Dutch visitor Johannes Scheffers when he was visiting the award winning attraction with 17 other tourists on November 24.

Historic hotel for sale

WHANGAROA Harbour's 100-year-old Marlin Hotel is for sale. The harbour, 30 minutes' drive north of Kerikeri, has been tagged "The Striped Marlin Capital of New Zealand."

Until it became too large, Whangaroa's big game fishing club had its headquarters in the hotel. The property was gutted by fire last year and has since been renovated.

Real Journeys helps save rare ducks

NINE blue ducklings (whio) have successfully hatched at the Te Anau Wildlife Park as part of Operation Nest Egg, a programme that has been made possible by the support of Real Journeys.

Steady growth continues

ASIA-Pacific travel is continuing its steady growth pattern, according to the latest booking figures issued by leading travel facilitator Abacus International. Total bookings increased one percent in October compared with the same period in 2004, to nearly four million.

Think domestic, and Asia - de Jong

IF we are seeking sustained growth, we must think domestic as well as international.

If this happens in 2005 the worldwide travel and tourism sector could generate more than US\$6,200 million. This year it will also create 221 million jobs and attract US\$918,000 million of capital investment. PATA president and CEO Peter de Jong says domestic travel movements globally outnumber international movements 10 to one.

On Asia, Mr de Jong says China and India are rapidly developing - as destinations and source markets.

He says that travel volume growth will expand unevenly - in time and place. The mix of travellers will remain in flux. Liberalisation and de-regulation will be the key growth drivers. Competition will intensify.

“We know this because we look at how these elements have driven change in some countries in the recent past. “Japan is coming back as an economic force after a decade of restructuring. So too is Argentina, which not long ago was virtually written off by some analysts. Brazil, Russia, India and China are expected to drive new economic growth, with help from Poland and the Middle East. India’s continued liberalisation of its civil aviation policies is attracting phenomenal investment - just look at aircraft orders and proposed infrastructure projects there.”

Opposing factors may be natural, man-made or intentional, and will appear on a variety of fronts - political, social and economic.

He asks if environmental concerns will depress aviation growth in developed economies.

“I say this because there are concerns that the aviation sector is a principal contributor to the depletion of the ozone layer and therefore a contributor to global warming. Will we see caps on routes and frequencies or will advances in jet-engine efficiencies allow for more expansion without greater volumes of exhaust emissions?”

TIA makes awards entry easier

CHANGES are afoot for the New Zealand Tourism Industry Awards in 2006! A new phase is being introduced to the entry process which opens today (Friday).

Based on research and feedback from members, TIA has addressed a key issue - that the entry process was too hard and too time-consuming.

“sobering reality check” - PATA

THE industry needs to become part of what Worldwatch calls “a global value shift on how we handle Earth, a new sense of global interdependence, and a shared responsibility in humanity’s relationship with nature.” Worldwatch asserts: “We need a Global Glasnost - openness, transparency, and public dialogue - on the part of nations, governments, and citizens today to build consensus around these challenges.”

And, PATA’s latest *Issues and Trends* adds, we need a policy of “preventive engagement,” International and

individual solidarity and action to meet the challenges of poverty, disease, environmental degradation and conflict in a sustainable and non-violent way.

PATA says terrorism is only symptomatic of a broader set of complex problems that require more than a military response.

Wellington doubles tourism value

TOURISM in Wellington has doubled in value in the past 10 years, and Positively Wellington Tourism marked its 10th anniversary with a celebration hosted by Mayor Kerry Prendergast.

QLDC may be “bureaucracy gone mad”

TOP hoteliers are amongst many tourism operators outraged at a draft bylaw proposed by Queenstown-Lakes District to restrict signage. Queenstown New Zealand Hotel Council (NZHC) regional chairman and Millennium Hotel GM John Clarke says it’s a case of bureaucracy gone mad.

Jetstar interested in NZ domestic?

JETSTAR will start long-haul international services no later than January 2007, according to parent airline Qantas - “while continuing to look for opportunities to expand further in the Australian and domestic New Zealand markets.”

Jasons open SI distribution centre

JASONS Travel Media has opened a distribution centre facility in Sydenham, Christchurch.

A national park in the sky!

THE heavens above Omarama could become the world’s first “national park in the sky”.

Scenic Circle out of Marama Resort

SCENIC Circle Hotels says it has been forced to withdraw from managing Marama Resort, Lake Rotorua.

Global media focus on Taupo

LAKE Taupo has had an abundance of international media in the region over the past year with more expected in 2006.

Buried Village to celebrate 75th

ROTORUA’S Buried Village celebrates its 75th jubilee next year. The tourist attraction was bought by Reginald and Violet Smith in 1931. Granddaughter Pam and husband Pat McGrath now manage the intriguing complex - representing three generations involved at Te Wairoa.

Hilton planned for Queenstown

QUEENSTOWN’S latest superior luxury hotel is to be a Hilton. The \$60 million Pounamu Hilton is planned for the site where the iconic Bottle House, part of the Mountain View Lodge once stood.