

Inside Nigel Coventry Tourism

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Hotel rates need to rise!

HOTEL managers need to significantly increase their room rates over time, believes New Zealand Hotel Council CEO Jennie Langley. She says many rates are lower than they were 10 years ago. So they need to rise to provide a return big enough to attract investment.

Hoteliers also have to stop thinking of high and low seasons and rate for throughout the year.

Ms Langley says the council, which has 100 members representing properties worth more than \$2,000 million,

is also concerned about the effect of recent giant leaps in power prices.

But, on rates, she says hotels do not need to discount because in many areas at peak times there aren't enough beds as it is.

"We should all be fully priced and concentrating on yield rather than numbers. We should be working with inbound operators, RTOs and convention people to ensure rates that are offered ahead of time reflect the quality of the product and aren't discounted."

Confidence

The council has nothing to do with setting rates. "In fact, we don't even talk rates at our meetings. But my feeling is that hoteliers need to develop the confidence to put their prices up. We have to lift our game, but do it progressively. ITOC works 18-24 months ahead and they need to know where we are heading. At the same time hoteliers need to stick to what we say we will give and not discount at the last minute through distressed inventory."

Ms Langley says that 20 years ago when The Regent opened in Auckland, the room rate was around \$180. "Year-to-date average room rate for similar hotels is around \$130." She also quotes a hotel chain where airline crews were paying \$160 a night per room. Now it's \$70! "That's an absolute nonsense. Our room rates have, in fact, gone steadily down over the years. I'm not saying (over)

ITOC making progress on long-standing issues

ITOC feels it is getting somewhere with the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) on long standing issues including tour escorts and work visas, China and approved destination status visas, concerns of the Japan Operators' Committee over work visas and facilitation, occupational shortages and immigration issues, skilled staff shortages and Auckland Airport facilitation.

"Although solutions have not been negotiated we now have a positive platform for further discussion and there is a new mood and appreciation of what we have been saying for the past two years," CEO Peter Lowry says. "We are hopeful that we will have some success in the coming weeks. We thank TNZ for their assistance in our negotiations with the NZIS. They fully support the ITOC views. We have had a very frustrating time over the past two years with little progress made."

Lowry to retire

AFTER more than 40 years in travel and tourism, 25 as CEO of ITOC, Peter Lowry is retiring at the council's annual conference in Nelson next year.

"ITOC is in good heart with \$120,000 in accumulated funds. The board is fully focused on the issues that matter to members and we are building positive ongoing business relationships with the NZ Hotel Council, TIANZ, Qualmark, RTONZ and the Bus and Coach Association through a series of Memoranda of Understanding."

Mr Lowry says ITOC also has a close relationship with TNZ, the Minister and the Ministry of Tourism.

"It is therefore a good time for me to retire and it will encourage fresh blood to take ITOC into the future."

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TEN years ago in IT...

THE future of Wellington lies in a single tourism organisation according to the capital's mayor Fran Wilde.

Speaking at a tourism seminar in the city she said it's time to tear down divisions and become more focused and professional.

She called for a new Tourism Wellington. The current RTO has a budget of \$200,000 while the city council's Capital Development Agency has \$2 million.

BUSINESS Development Minister Roger Maxwell says he played no part in the approval of two grants to a company owned and run by his sister Annette Shaw of Wharekauhau Lodge.

A steering committee is to spend up to six months finding an appropriate trademark for Maori souvenirs. This follows a meeting of 50 Maori operators which called for steps to protect their culture.

WELLINGTON needs a 200-room 3.5 star and a 200-room four star hotel, according to Plaza International GM Roger Gorman. He says the city should target Asians as they are the most likely to use hotels.

PIPITEA Marae, Wellington, is an ideal venue for cultural experiences. It's well placed for orientation sessions prior to visiting historic sights or town belt excursions.

And it's where cruise ship passengers can gain an insight into Maoritanga, says Ngati Poneke Maori Club president Bill Nathan.

SYDNEY-based tourism expert Dain Simpson says Wellington needs a masterplan to coordinate future growth. The industry should try to control the future rather than just respond to it.

VIDEO games giant Sega is considering a \$250 million chain of space age theme parks throughout New Zealand.

NZTB (now TNZ) GM marketing Miles Wilson says the board is telling the world we offer quality experiences, service, facilities, information and product.

Hotel rates need to rise!

(From pg 1) rates should be increased in one big leap. But we need to emphasise that for quality the market has to face the fact that rates must go up.

"Unless we can have the return on investment we will not reach the level of investment needed to keep the quality we have now let alone continually enhance it." The sector is facing major rises in electricity charges with one chain being confronted with a \$1.5 million increase and other individual properties having to find up to 60 percent more than last year.

She says the council has lobbied government and the power companies with little effect. "In the past we have probably stood back and complained amongst ourselves. Now this is serious stuff. We are all being undermined by the jump in prices. Electricity companies are saying that they can get a higher return by dealing with other consumers. So they don't really want us. But a part of that is a lack of understanding on both sides."

The council hopes to get alongside the companies to see where their highs and lows are and try to work with them and reduce costs through power conservation.

Top staff

The council has been encouraging hotel members to look at ways to attract and retain high quality staff. One initiative that's working well is for mid level managers and supervisors to meet regularly in Christchurch in a bid to encourage them to realise they are part of an industry which provides career paths. It's hoped similar groups will be set up in other cities and regions.

Ms Langley says they are also considering the provision of more training for new entrants and mid level managers, perhaps through corporate traineeships.

"The council's role will be to establish a programme that will be part training on the job. People will be matched with hotels. These will be coming from outside the industry. There will be on-the-job training and some classroom work. Hotels will have the opportunity to put their own people through the courses. So it will be two-way and up to individual hotels to decide how much involvement they want. So far there's been a lot of interest."

Another council initiative is an arrangement with the Ministry of Tourism where it is supplied with occupancy and other information in confidence to be used as building blocks for better research. This will be used for forecasting which, in turn, will give hoteliers confidence to raise their prices.

Largest resort spa to open

THE largest resort spa facility in New Zealand is to open at Queenstown's Millbrook Resort this month. The Spa at Millbrook has eight dry treatment rooms, two wet treatment rooms, a hair salon, manicure and pedicure areas. The spa will offer a selection of massages, facials, wraps, hand and feet treats, packages for women, men, couples and groups and personal grooming. Details: Kylie Walker 03-4417000 or kyliew@millbrook.co.nz.

When the gloves come off...

NEITHER AirNZ nor Qantas seemed too concerned about the Appeal Court rejecting the carriers' plans for an alliance between them, says Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation MD Peter Harbison.

"Qantas CEO Geoff Dixon quickly announced that it is 'time to move on.' Although this apparently caught AirNZ CEO Ralph Norris by surprise, neither airline appears distraught by the effective termination of this long running saga."

He adds: "Few observers were shocked by the outcome - except perhaps the lawyers who have worked so long and hard (and expensively) on the matter.

"Assuming that the gloves now come off, there are going to be some interesting changes."

Each must now get on with life in the commercial world. "They are both listed entities, even though AirNZ is majority owned by its country's taxpayers.

Governments

"But there is another dimension, made more relevant by AirNZ's ownership. That is the future role of governments - and politics - in determining an appropriate aviation market environment for Australasia." Mr Harbison says the respective government ministers actively and vocally supported the alliance proposal.

"Now that the legal process has rejected their desired outcome, it must surely be time for them to stop hiding behind the legal barriers and responsibly face up to their policy imperatives.

"That does not necessarily imply adopting the alliance model, but it does mean putting in place a policy framework which will provide the economies and consumers of Australia and New Zealand with a sustainable and competitive airline system. It will be unacceptable for the governments to remain on the sidelines and wring their hands when the wheels fall off," he adds.

20 Queenstown operators in trans Tasman roadshow

TWENTY local operators are joining the Queenstown Convention Bureau roadshow to Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane from October 26 to 29.

Wakatu and Wilsons unite

WAKATU Incorporation is about to move into a new era with its tourism activities in the Abel Tasman National Park through a partnership with Abel Tasman Wilson's Experiences Ltd.

It will see Wakatu merge Abel Tasman Adventures kayaking brands, Abel Tasman Kayaks and Ocean River, with Abel Tasman Wilson's Experiences' one-day sea kayaking activities.

CEO Keith Palmer says this will serve the interests of both businesses in the park. He says the Wilson family has a long history in the park as do the families of Wakatu. "Quite apart from our commercial interests we both have an interest in the protection and sustainability of quality experiences in the park and its environs."

Abel Tasman Adventures Ltd GM Shelley Skinner is confident that the alliance will strengthen the sea kayaking industry in the region as well as become a key player in the region.

Abel Tasman Wilson's Experiences Ltd will take over management of the partnership with a centralised booking system providing access to the largest range of activities in the Abel Tasman region.

* Ms Skinner left yesterday (Thursday) for an extended break in Australia. Her job has been disestablished. She can still be contacted at: 027 224 9555 or shell_skinner@yahoo.co.nz.

Extra flights

AIRNZ is introducing Tuesday flights year round from Sydney to Queenstown, in addition to Saturday flights, from November 2.

**Now with Totally Tourism
FORMER Parkroyal Queenstown
GM Michael Johnson is Totally
Tourism's new GM.**

Here come the Aussies...

CONSUMERS in New Zealand and the US are about to see Tourism Australia's new advertising campaigns on TV.

As part of the new brand marketing approach a total of six ads were produced, at a cost of \$3 million dollars. They will be used to market Australia worldwide as part of Tourism Australia's four year global brand marketing spend of \$360 million.

* Media reports this week claimed Tourism Australia was forced back to the drawing board after the campaign failed to woo test audiences in the US.

The campaign aims to promote a more "sophisticated" image of the country but tourism bosses have been forced to splice in more traditional images including kangaroos and Uluru (Ayers Rock).

Tourism Australia acting MD Ken Boundy said the country needs "to create greater awareness of who we are and what we stand for.

"We will do so in a way that projects Australia as a country and a culture, not just as a theme park or a holiday."

\$4M expansion

A \$4 million expansion is planned for the Saddle Basin, Treble Cone. Plans include a new quad chairlift from the bottom of the current double chair to Tim's Table, a large natural plateau just short of the summit.

The new chairlift will be one kilometre in length and have a vertical elevation of 370 metres, rising to an altitude of 1,950 metres. The lift will open up a vast amount of ski terrain, which is currently not accessible from the existing T bar lift.

Airport to get the albatross treatment

DESIGN plans for Dunedin International Airport's \$23 million terminal redevelopment show a two-storey, 10,600 sq m complex on the concrete foundation of the existing building.

Work will begin next month with the demolition of the terminal's northern section, and conclude in May 2006 with the gutting and refurbishment of the southern end.

Only the newest section of the existing terminal's southern end and the airport's existing upstairs office area will be retained, having been successfully integrated into the new design.

Architects Craig Moller, the firm responsible for the Auckland Sky Tower and Wellington Airport's terminal, want to ensure the result reflects the city and surrounding environment.

The roof of the terminal will be curved to reflect the topography of Mount Maungatua, as well as the shape of a wing. And columns facing the car park will subtly reflect an albatross beak.

Colours will reflect the light and dark shadings of the albatross, while the exterior cladding will resemble feathers.

30% more Australians here to ski

THIRTY percent more Australians have been flying here for skiing holidays this season than last, reckons Christchurch International Airport marketing manager Glenn Wedlock. This is due to low trans Tasman airfares and consistent snow. Overall, overseas arrivals were up 49 per cent to 60,261 passengers in August compared to the same month a year earlier, making it the best August on record.

ITOC lobbying works, says Lowry

PM Helen Clark's announcement of \$5.75 million this financial year for border processing with increased funding to \$7.7 million in future years is good news, says ITOC CEO Peter Lowry.

"It shows that our lobby is working and this is one of several issues the board discussed with the Minister of Tourism..."

He adds: "ITOC has been working hard to lobby government and Auckland International Airport management to improve facilitation processes for our overseas visitors. We have established a good working relationship with Customs, MAF, NZIS and the Auckland International Airport management. "Member complaints will be fully investigated by Customs and the airport company management as long as they are supported by evidence."

No election for DQ board

DESTINATION Queenstown (DQ) chairman Adrian Januszkiewicz - who was co-opted on to the board last year - has been nominated to represent the corporate sector this year. Present member Tracey Maclaren retains her seat as a non-corporate member. New to the board is Anderson Lloyd Caudwell partner Jim Castiglione, who is also a non-corporate member. There is no election because three seats became vacant and three people were nominated.

Great need for quality hotel in Timaru - O'Brien

THE Tourism Research Council's prediction that international visitors to Timaru district will jump by 49 percent by the year 2010 means there's an even greater need for a quality hotel, says Central South Island Tourism GM Glen O'Brien.

Last year international tourists spent 395,000 visitor nights in the region but that figure is predicted to be 589,000 by 2010.

International and domestic tourists spent \$149 million in the Timaru district in 2003 - but that figure is expected to increase 56 per cent within six years. The only areas with a higher forecast increase in international visitor numbers are Auckland, Rotorua and Hurunui.

Members to discuss range of issues

AN ITOC members' forum in Auckland on December 2 will discuss: the size of its board; attendance at the annual conference; funding; the secretariat; the advocacy role of TIANZ; ITOC marketing and promotion; board portfolio groups and marketing.

MoU to include TRENZ

ITOC and TIANZ are negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding which will include TRENZ.

ITOC CEO Peter Lowry says the council is working with the association on the New Zealand-based buyer criteria.

Milford drivers slow to take up code

ONLY 46 of up to 500 coach drivers who take tour coaches to Milford Sound from Te Anau have so far been assessed for the new Code of Practice.

So the Bus and Coach Association is to hold a workshop in Queenstown on Sunday to emphasise the need for the assessment, which has been endorsed by Transit NZ, LTSA, Police and DoC.

Association executive director John Collyns says that although the certification is confined to the Milford Road the day may come when an "alpine qualification" is required for drivers using passes like the Lindis or the Haast.

The idea for the code came from a near tragic coach fire in the Homer Tunnel in 2002.

Says Mr Collyns: "A serious accident on the Milford Road will undermine New Zealand's image as a safe destination for the two million overseas visitors who come here each year."

Airport increases "fair"

TAUPO Airport Authority chairman Peter Wilson says proposed increases to leases are fair, although it is thought some will rise 10-fold. But Mr Wilson says some have been in place 20 years. There are 26 operators including air charter, parachuting and rental vehicles.

TNZ's "Exclusive" category is good for travellers and industry

TNZ's website, newzealand.com, is to introduce a category for 'exclusive' accommodation.

CEO George Hickton says that the change is to better meet the needs of potential travellers - and industry.

"At present the categories on the site in this area contain quite a range of accommodation options. The feedback we have been getting was that the category was not clear enough for potential consumers to be able to make an informed choice.

"By creating this new category on the site, we are aiming to assist them to find what they are looking for, and, ultimately, create more satisfied guests."

"Exclusive" is a collection of intimate individual establishments which offer the finest of locations, facilities, food, wine, activities and service.

Wharekauhau GM Bruce Garrett has been asking for a category for 'best-of-the-best' for some time.

"At the moment in the luxury section on the website there is a huge selection of accommodation, which varies in type and quality. It is just not definitive enough for consumers who are really looking for the best of the best," he adds.

"Having a separate section on newzealand.com will narrow down the choices for them and identifies the accommodation they are looking for more clearly."

New Zealand Lodge Association chairman Roy Vannini says: "We are pleased this is happening. This will separate out the top-end properties from what has become a significant number of five-star properties - far in excess of what one would expect in New Zealand. The new section will give credibility to these top-end properties."

*Exclusive goes live on December 1.

International aviation gets shot in arm

INTERNATIONAL air passenger traffic increased 18.7 percent in the first eight months of this year, compared to the same period in 2003, according to the latest IATA statistics. "The increase in traffic is well beyond our expectations," says IATA CEO Giovanni Bisignani.

"It will not mitigate the high cost of fuel, but it is certainly a much needed shot in the arm for a beleaguered industry.

"Airlines have done a great job of reducing costs with some very difficult circumstances. Unfortunately, the high price of fuel is eating up these gains and more."

Load factors also remain high, at 78 percent on average for August, even as more capacity is added to most major markets.

AIAL faces access issues

AUCKLAND International Airport Limited (AIAL) is undertaking a major study into land transport issues at the airport, helping identify options to improve roading and public transport access.

Says CEO Don Huse: "This initiative follows concerns about access at peak periods and the unpredictability of the time it takes people to get to and from the airport.

"Over 10 million passengers used the airport in the past year and numbers are growing by five to seven per cent a year. Given the vital role the airport plays in the New Zealand and Auckland regional economy, it is crucial that passengers and freight are able to get to and from the airport easily."

Over 10,000 people are employed on the airport.

Mayor to open new look branch

THL Rentals' new look Auckland branch is to be opened by Manukau Mayor Sir Barry Curtis on Monday.

PATA Gold Awards

SUBMISSIONS for the 2005 PATA Gold Awards close on December 1. There is a range of categories including environmental, education and training, heritage and culture, marketing, travel journalism and multimedia. Last year TNZ won a Grand Award for marketing.

Art deco award for homestay

COBDEN Villa Homestay, Napier, has won an Art Deco Trust Supreme Award for its interior décor. Amy and Cornel Walewski moved to Napier from California after enjoying an Art Deco Weekend. They bought the old Nathaniel Kettle House, redecorated it and filled it with period furniture and art objects. Now it is an attraction in its own right.

Go-ahead for bypass

PM and Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Helen Clark has just announced that the government will fully fund the construction of the Kerikeri Heritage Bypass, designed to protect historic Kemp House and the Stone Store, Northland.

Nothing's impossible
NOTHING Is Impossible is the theme for the MANZ annual conference in Christchurch next year.

Police investigation

POLICE and OSH are investigating a fatal accident at Mountain Action, Ngongotaha, Rotorua, last Wednesday. Auckland James Skipper, 18, died while riding an Offroad Freestyle trike. The attraction will likely remain closed until investigations have been completed.

New magazine

NEW Zealand Motorhomes, Caravans & Destinations is a new monthly magazine dedicated to motorhome and caravan owners, holiday-makers and traders. The glossy 84-page magazine is on sale now and costs \$4.95.

Monorail and/or gondolas will hit coach companies, warns BCA

PROPOSALS to build a monorail and/or gondola system between Queenstown and Milford/Te Anau threaten to “literally tear the middle out” of profitable day tours from Queenstown, says Bus and Coach Association (BCA) executive officer Mark Stockdale. Writing in the latest *BCA Circular* Mr Stockdale says the 12 hour Queenstown-Milford trip is for many coach operators their bread and butter. Trips cost \$130-\$200 including a cruise on the fiord.

He writes that the monorail trip to Te Anau will take about two hours, the same time to complete as travelling by coach.

If the monorail goes ahead Te Anau will expand - but coaches will have to be driven to Queenstown every six months for their Certificates of Fitness. Operators specialising in FIT could earn less revenue while still running fleets of expensive coaches.

“There is also the possibility that some tourists will opt for rental vehicles instead of coaches for the final leg, ignoring the risks posed by this dangerous and crowded stretch of road to inexperienced drivers, and further diluting patronage for coach operators.”

He suggests the RMA may be the best hope coach companies have for retaining their monopoly on the Queenstown-Milford route.

Like open cast mining!

ALL the attraction of open cast mining. That’s how Federated Mountain Clubs’ South Island VP David Barnes describes proposed monorail and gondola systems between Queenstown and Fiordland. “Sure, they may help the economy for a while - particularly for the promoters - but only for a while and the benefits are not widespread and come at a considerable cost to locals.”

Chinese students here to learn - and tour

ALL citizens of the People’s Republic of China must be fluent in English by the time of the Beijing Olympic Games, according to Tuatara Tours of Christchurch. That’s why the company and King’s Education Ltd, also based in Christchurch, are running tours for Chinese students. The companies last month looked after 65 students and four teachers from the Chaoyang Language School. They combined English tuition followed by visits to Akaroa, Hanmer Springs, a local marae and enjoyed jetboating and skiing. Details: 03-9623280 or headhoncho@tuataratours.co.nz.

YHA hosting more

YHAS hosted 627,651 guests last financial year, three percent more than in 2002/3. Of these 83,307 were New Zealanders.

There were 179,110 visitors from the UK, 110,017 from Europe, 98,966 from Asia, 53,575 from North America and 45,725 from Australia.

Napier may gain World Heritage Site status

NAPIER may soon gain World Heritage Site status, according to Geoff Myles, outgoing chairman of the city’s Art Deco Trust. Mr Myles says PM Helen Clark - who is also Minister of Arts, Heritage and Culture - has given “a very positive response” to a request for help in progressing the proposal. “It now looks almost possible for it to happen,” Mr Myles says in his annual report.

More than 306,000 people have taken the city’s Art Deco Walk since it was introduced in 1985.

Trust executive director Robert McGregor says Napier may also have the makings of a new industry with couples from as far afield as Japan and Australia flying in to celebrate their weddings there.

Kiwis on coaches

ABOUT 44 percent of all visitors who took coach tours in the last June quarter, were New Zealanders. This reflects the usual decline in international tourists at that time of year, says the Bus and Coach Association (BCA).

Korea is the biggest group from overseas at 20 percent of total, followed by Australia at nine percent and UK at eight percent.

New look for Black Cat

THE Black Cat fleet has a new look with high profile images of Hector’s dolphins added to the side of vessels. The graphics depict the dolphins swimming underwater. The technology is similar to that used by Air New Zealand to attach *Lord of the Rings* decals to their aircraft.

ATTTO forums

ATTTO is holding regional training provider forums in Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington, Auckland and Rotorua on November 17, 18, 22, 25 and 26 respectively.

AirNZ upgrading?

AIRNZ is reportedly prepared to spend \$180 million replacing its fleet of 17 Saab 340A aircraft operated by Air Nelson.

Bumper Friars’ Guide

THE 10th bumper anniversary issue of the *Friars’ Guide To New Zealand Accommodation For The Discerning Traveller* is out - all 512 pages! Publishers Hodder Moa Beckett say the guide is ideal for tour operators and independent travellers. It can be accessed from: <http://friars.co.nz>.

Also just out is *Wineries and Vineyards of New Zealand*.

Fares rise

FULL economy airfares from New Zealand increased 0.6 percent last quarter, compared with the previous three months. Discount economy went up 0.3 percent, as did first class fares. Business class decreased by the same amount, according to American Express Airfare Index.

Operators benefit from Turner's persistence

ALL lodges, b and bs, farm and home stay owners can now have road signs pointing to their properties, thanks to a nine year battle just won by Reg Turner.

Mr Turner - who owns Cassimir Lodge, Tauranga - says he has at last forced Transit NZ to make the most significant and sensible signage change in its manual in 30 years.

"In the past they would only put up generic terms. This is nonsense for someone looking for a destination. You don't see signs saying 'town' do you?"

Mr Turner says he has had to battle four Ministers of Transport and an equal number of Ministers of Tourism to get there.

"It's been nine years of patient persistence, plus six Western Bay of Plenty District Council hearings, and six Environment Court hearings.

"The cost to ratepayers was \$50,000 and to add insult to injury I was fined \$14,000 for alleged breach of an enforcement order to prevent the name of Cassimir on road signage!"

He was successful, he says, thanks to dogged persistence. He regularly contacted the CEO of Transit NZ to plead his case! "Eventually he had to capitulate..."

Now all out-of-the-way properties can have directional signs erected - up to 50km away. Each sign will cost from \$100 to \$800 depending on where they are required.

"My next challenge is to get the nomination for the National Party in Rotorua and then become Minister of Tourism!"

* Mr Turner established Solitaire Lodge overlooking Lake Tarawera in 1974 and moved to Cassimir about 10 years ago.

Returning chairman finds Rolls-Royce of an RTO

LIKE driving a Rolls-Royce after being behind the wheel of a Mini Minor. That's how Rodney Walshe feels now he is back as chairman of Tourism Auckland.

Mr Walshe was foundation chairman of the RTO almost 20 years ago.

"We had three trustees, no CEO - and no money. This time it's incredible. Today, Tourism Auckland is financially strong and extremely well managed. There's a good CEO, excellent staff...60 full and part time...who are doing an incredible job for Auckland."

As in the 1980s Auckland City is the main funder, with contributions from all other local authorities except Waitakere.

But now the RTO receives income from its visitor information centres at the international and domestic airports, Viaduct Basin, SkyCity, Waiheke Island and Great Barrier Island. He adds: "For funding 20 years ago we relied on membership fees from the industry. Now there's no such thing as membership."

Awareness

Another big change is the greater awareness of the value of tourism in the region. "We now have figures to tell us how well Auckland is doing and the percentage of GDP and how it all compares with other regions. We didn't have that information 20 years ago. We are now on a beautifully maintained machine with all the control gauges to see how we are doing."

Mr Walshe sees Auckland today as remaining the main gateway to the rest of the country.

"We have to continue that way. I also see Auckland wanting more visitors staying here longer and spending more. But we have to be careful that it is balanced and that we don't do that at the expense of other regions within New Zealand.

"We should get more but at the same time do it on the basis that those people are also going to the rest of New Zealand and spending more and staying longer there, too. So it is a balance - and not a competition."

TNZ, RTOs focus on Lions tour

TNZ has set up a working group for RTOs involved in next year's Lions rugby tour. The group will work through infrastructural and marketing issues.

It is estimated that there will be 1,500 campervans travelling the country during the tour, along with 180 tour coaches.

And extra accommodation in the form of a cruise ship has been hired by Gulliver's Travel to host 1,200 fans in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch during June/July.

TNZ says that more than 15,000 visitors could flock to New Zealand for the tour - spending around \$50 million.

But getting them here and then ensuring they return home satisfied requires a good deal more work, according to TNZ.

Opportunity

CEO George Hickton says: "The Lions Tour is an amazing opportunity to profile New Zealand in the UK. If we can satisfy the visitors that come here for the tour, that's going to create a real benefit for New Zealand tourism in this major market.

"With Lions supporters paying as much as £7,000 for their package to New Zealand - these are not people travelling on a budget, or stereotypical football hooligans. This is a holiday of a lifetime, and these people have money to spend." Mr Hickton says that if we can give the fans the best experience possible, they will return home as 'walking brochures' for New Zealand. "To ensure this we need to get the infrastructure in place, and give fans a great welcome during their time in the country."

* TNZ is also on the New Zealand Rugby Union tourism working party.

History of conservation

CONSERVATION Minister Chris Carter is launching *Our Islands, Our Selves, a History of Conservation in New Zealand* by David Young, on October 12. It tells how a conservation ethic emerged in New Zealand.

Research will help industry's sustainability..

THE industry's general support for research that focuses on the sustainable management of natural areas reflects its increasing recognition that a sustainable future depends on careful management of its most important resources.

These are the natural environment, and socially and culturally diverse communities.

A research programme funded by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST) aims to help develop a "dynamic tourism industry which is environmentally, socially, culturally and economically sustainable".

Direction

The research is providing direction for linking these through tools for managing sometimes competing requirements of tourism and recreation activities, cultural and amenity values, and the conservation of natural areas.

CRESA's Julie Warren says the objectives are to: evaluate existing approaches to planning and managing tourist related developments in natural areas; define an integrated model for application in multi-stakeholder management contexts - with a particular focus on Maori stakeholders; pilot, evaluate and refine that model.

"In the first year of the research we reviewed a wide range of approaches and models for tourism, recreation and related activities that are already applied both overseas and in New Zealand," she tells us.

Case studies

The second year's work included 23 case studies where practical and/or innovative approaches to management of natural areas for tourism/recreation had occurred. "Some of the specific tools we are considering for wider use are: the Limits to Acceptable Change model based on user surveys and social carrying capacity; allocating resources on public conservation land by concessions; structuring community input into strategic plans and key decisions; giving land special status where suitable to recognise its particular values; initiating working parties and other collaborative working arrangements between stakeholders; monitoring and management of cumulative effects; more innovative and informative interpretation and other information dissemination, including codes for visitor behaviour.

Tools

"The range of tools already available provides a good basis for achieving essential aspects of integrated management," she adds.

"Key to achieving these, however, is capacity building at a number of levels - in local and central government management agencies, in industry and its organisations and operators, and in host communities, including hapu and iwi.

"Capacity building will require a combination of improving people's and organisations' understanding of the tourism industry and the tools available, and where and how they might be applied. People will need up-

skilling so that they can select and apply the appropriate tools."

Ms Warren says the research team is now working at a practical level testing out key parts of the management tool kit in the Catlins, Tongariro Crossing, Orakei and Great Barrier Island.

"We are testing out ways to capacity build at hapu and iwi levels, develop a shared vision for tourism development amongst stakeholders, provide the basis for setting and implementing limits to visitor activity/numbers, and identify and address capacity issues for communities, agencies and the industry as a basis for implementing a tourism strategy."

The outcome will include a multi-levelled management resource kit that helps users to find information about the tools available and appropriate for a range of management contexts. Details: julie@cresa.co.nz.

Ministry wants industry to help students

THE Ministry of Tourism is encouraging operators to help students who may contact them as part of their research for scholarship applications. The students have until November 19 to apply for five new \$15,000 scholarships, announced recently by Tourism Minister Mark Burton.

The Ministry says the 2005 scholarships are to support Masters-level thesis research and are designed "to facilitate greater linkages between industry and researchers."

The programme aims to ensure that applicants' research topics are directly based on real industry needs. The Ministry points out that there is also the opportunity for businesses to approach universities or students directly with an issue or problem which research could help solve.

Manager research Bruce Bassett says: "This programme is potentially a really useful way to get research undertaken in your business.

"The establishment of the tourism scholarship programme is an important development for the industry. It forms part of a wider body of initiatives to gear up the research capability in the industry, and so foster a real research culture across the sector."

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RTOs missing opportunities, claims former colleague

RTOs may be missing opportunities to better cater for short break holidaymakers.

Queensland University tourism lecturer and former GM of Tourism Rotorua Dr Steve Pike is to tell the second leisure futures conference in Italy next month that about 80 percent of domestic travel in New Zealand involves private vehicles.

The mean number of short breaks taken each year is four with the maximum comfortable driving time considered to be four hours.

People believe they need short breaks “to retain sanity” - but no RTO Dr Pike contacted during his research explicitly targeted this segment of the domestic market. But he did discover that holidaymakers are spoilt for choice when it comes to the number of destinations they can visit from home.

Key goal

He tells us: “One of the key goals in RTO marketing should be enhanced destination brand loyalty.

“Targeting the short break segment represents an opportunity to do so, given the level of trips indicated each year by participants and the preference for places previously visited.”

Dr Pike says the answer may be customer relationship management (CRM).

“The rationale for stimulating relationships with existing customers is that these will be more profitable over time than one-off sales transactions, since the cost of reaching a continuous stream of new customers will far outweigh the cost of keeping in touch with existing customers.”

Relationship marketing

Relationship marketing is the attempt to establish a long-term bond with the customer “which presents challenges for RTOs, the least of which is the difficulty in obtaining quality customer data from service providers...”

Dr Pike suggests that RTOs consider: selecting customers who offer maximum yield; ensuring high quality service encounters; providing added value to selected customers and developing a philosophy of nurturing long term mutually beneficial relationships. “RTOs may be missing a valuable opportunity to enhance destination loyalty, in the face of intense competition, by not explicitly targeting the domestic short break segment.” CRM may be mutually beneficial for the traveller as much as the industry.

* Dr Pike found similar results in Australia.

Edgewater Adventures sold

WANAKA aviation identities Graeme Lloyd and Andy Woods have bought Edgewater Adventures, founded by Karl Hall 18 years ago.

Mr Lloyd says the new business will compliment their existing flightseeing operation.

Edgewater Adventures is the longest provider of skifield transport and is said to be the first to run guided treks into Mount Aspiring National Park.

Wine trail hotel for sale

THE landmark 122-year-old Martinborough Hotel - a well-known boutique property on the Classic New Zealand Wine Trail - is up for sale.

The 16-room hotel was built in 1882 as “one of the finest hostelries that has ever been erected in any inland country town in New Zealand”.

Since then, it has had a succession of owners and the building has seen many changes. In the mid 1990s, it was bought by a group of investors headed by current owners Mike and Sally Laven. The Lavens renovated and restored the hotel to its former colonial glory and opened the 16-room hotel in 1996.

Popular

Bayleys tourism specialist John Welch says the hotel has been popular as a weekend retreat for Wellingtonians since its inception. “More recently, international visitors have discovered the hotel and about 30 percent of the hotel business is now from overseas guests.”

Some 11 per cent of guests come from the UK, 8.7 per cent from Australia and 6.5 percent from the US. As part of a plan to expand the hotel’s international client base, it has formed relationships with a number of travel wholesalers. Mr Laven says the Classic New Zealand Wine Trail - a 380 km touring route he developed in 2002 which links the wine regions of Hawke’s Bay, Martinborough, and Marlborough - is a significant factor in increasing overseas visitor numbers.

Growth

“The Classic New Zealand Wine Trail has been introduced at a time when the global market for food and wine tourism is experiencing substantial growth and New Zealand wine and food in particular, is gaining prominence. Already, the trail features in at least 15 key international travel agent brochures. Since 2002, we have seen our international business almost double and forward bookings at this stage indicate there will be another significant increase this summer.”

The property is for sale by tender, as a freehold going concern . Tenders close on October 28.

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Visiting Stewart Island?

There’s plenty of accommodation at Beach House and Kereru House. Bookings: Brenda and Roger Hicks on phone/fax 03-2191348

American plans luxury lodge

AN exclusive luxury lodge is planned for Queenstown's Gibbston Valley.

Owner Las Vegas businessman Phil Griffith - who also has a stake in the Gibbston Winery and the town's Wharf Casino - hired high profile American architects Scheurer Ltd from New Orleans to design the property. The lodge, modelled on the styles of Blanket Bay and Matakauri Lodges, will have its own salmon pond for catch and release, plus spa pools, a lawn tennis court, gymnasium, petanque, horse-riding and a small hobby vineyard.

Consent applications show there will be seven luxury units with free-standing gazebos and covered walkways to the main Tuscan-villa style building.

It will be an upscale accommodation with an expensive wine cellar and its own chef, Mr Griffith says.

Mr Griffith paid more than \$1 million for the site after reportedly selling five casinos in Las Vegas and other parts of the US.

Airline staff threaten strike

AIRNZ ground staff say the airline has declared war on them and they have no choice but to strike, which could affect the travel plans of thousands.

About 400 members of the Service and Food Workers Union have voted to take industrial action. The strike will be confined to Auckland International Airport, but could have wide-ranging flow-on effects with disruption to domestic and international services expected.

While about 75 per cent of the workforce are members of the union, advocate Alastair Duncan says the strike is unlikely to stop the airline from flying.

He says the need to issue a strike notice came after five

months of fruitless negotiation. Workers are seeking a six per cent wage increase, but the carrier is offering half that.

AirNZ also wants to break up the single collective agreement covering ground workers into four separate agreements. "We see it as a declaration of war on the front-line counter staff," Mr Duncan adds.

Submissions on "pit stop" due

SUBMISSIONS on Whangarei District Council's proposed "Project Arrival" to open a visitor centre at Blue Goose have to be in by Monday.

Opponents say the site could be just a pit stop and that the council's proposal is light on facts and heavy on salesmanship.

Anglers, rafters worried at hydro plans

MAJAC Trust, which wants to build a hydro power station on the Gowan River, is offering to stop the turbines to allow the river to return to peak flow so it can be used by kayakers.

But Lake Rotoroa Lodge fishing guide Scott Murray says the lack of warning about changes in the river means such users could be killed.

"There is going to be no way of knowing if a rafting group has asked for full flow of water to be restored while we are further down the river.

"We consider the chances of an accident highly likely and the possibility of death cannot be overlooked," he says.

Anglers are also worried changes will ruin the untouched nature of the river, and damage fish stocks. It is the "largest remaining unmodified stretch of lake-fed river in the country" - and should be left untouched.

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