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Subscription rates on application.

ISSN1176-3574

ISSUE 520

October 22nd, 2004

AirNZ eyeing Asia again?

AIRNZ will refocus on Asia from late next year when it takes delivery of the first of eight Boeing 777 aircraft.

CEO Ralph Norris says the airline does not have the right aircraft in terms of range and seat capacity to allow expansion into Asia. "But with the 777s, the problem will be solved and we'll be able to look at new destinations, including places such as Shanghai."

In the Singapore *Business Times* on Tuesday he is quoted as saying: "Like many airlines, China is high on our priority list and we are actively evaluating opportunities in this burgeoning market."

Mr Norris is also quoted as saying that he will sit down with Qantas CEO Geoff Dixon to discuss ways in which the airlines can co-operate following the carriers' failure to create a trans Tasman alliance.

Cycling may get go-ahead in national parks

MOUNTAIN bikers may soon be able to use national parks. The Conservation Authority has provisionally given the thumbs up to bicycles on tracks that are deemed appropriate for sharing with other users. Mountain Bike New Zealand is delighted. It's been campaigning for the rights of cyclists to use the tracks for eight years. Of 1,305 submissions received by the authority only 22 were opposed to tracks being opened to cyclists.

Turbulence to continue - expert

TOURISM operators must expect to see significant changes in airline industry structure over the next few years.

"We cannot expect stability in an industry with so many questions about shareholding and relationships," says Tourism Futures International (TFI) MD Bob Cain. "Qantas and Air New Zealand have indicated that they will not pursue their strategic relationship given rejection by the competition authorities of Australia and New Zealand.

"If the relationship is not with AirNZ, and with BA selling its Qantas stake, will Qantas look for a relationship with an Asian airline such as Singapore Airlines?" He adds: "Singapore Airlines has sold its stake in Air New Zealand.

AirNZ is substantially owned by the New Zealand government. Will Air New Zealand look to a shareholding by a partner airline?"

Virgin Blue has cemented its position in the Australian domestic market with a passenger share of around 30 percent. Pacific Blue expects to expand its trans Tasman share but to what level, he asks. Mr Cain says Auckland/Sydney is the busiest trans Tasman route. But not all travellers are New Zealand or Australian residents. "Around one-third of overseas (non-Australian) visitors to New Zealand also visit Australia. They also travel on trans Tasman routes."

Because of the capacity growth on the Tasman, fares and airline yields - revenue divided by passenger kilometres - are low. TFI considers current passenger growth of 20 percent plus on the Tasman as unsustainable. "We expect to see fares gradually rise, load factors to rise and demand growth to slow significantly."

TFI also expects the low cost carrier (LCC) share to increase on the Tasman.

Mr Cain says LCCs promote shorter-haul and more frequent travel. And cheaper fares encourage opportunistic airfare shopping. "As a result we will see an increase in trip frequency by Australian visitors and a reduction in average stay in New Zealand destinations such as Auckland."

He has advised Tourism Auckland to continue to increase the proportion of visitors that (over)

Inside

- * Are we killing our guests? pg3
- * Ballot for fishing pg3
- * Few countries demand escort visas pg5
- * What is really worrying AIAL? pg6
- * Wing It with the YHA pg8
- * Big hearted RTO pg9
- * Coach ban proposed pg10

TEN years ago in IT...

AIRNZ says it's "deeply alarmed" at the Australian government decision to pull out of the single aviation policy with this country.

MD Jim McCrea says the policy is a contract between the two governments and there's no clause which enables the Australians to walk away from it.

TOPLINE speakers from Canada, Australia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Wales, England and the US are set to make Massey University's tourism conference one of the most thought provoking in years. It also brings out some "old" industry names...

SOUP, toast, chocolate fish - and hot showers - have always been a feature of blackwater rafting at Waitomo. But as the business has grown so has the demand for the items. Now operators are forced to buy such things from outside the host community.

Victoria University student Stephen Dorne adds that in his research on backpackers he has found: 11,000 litres of soup a year is brought in from Hamilton, 500 loaves of bread arrive from Otorohanga and 50,000 chocolate fish are brought down from Auckland.

The economic focus of goods purchasing has moved from the local environment to larger urban centres where economies of scale provide bulk goods at competitive prices, he notes.

Geoff Gabites has joined TIA (now TIANZ) as executive officer responsible for the Adventure Tourism Council.

THIS week's RTO meeting will discuss the domestic tourism strategy, led by chairman Paul Watkins.

The ski industry is enjoying its best year on record with more than 1,076,000 visits, according to the Mountain Safety Council. And the season isn't over yet!

GOVERNMENT is considering selling its interests in airports to overseas interests. Representatives from Lockheed Air Terminal Inc and the British Airports Authority have made several visits to look into the opportunities. Government is under increasing pressure from business and local government to put privatisation back on the agenda.

Turbulence to continue - expert

(from pg 1) want to visit attractions in and around Auckland. "This implies ongoing product development and marketing.

"Operators need to recognise the uncertainties in the aviation industry and plan for realistic levels of growth. "The participants in the tourism industry need to create 'win-win' strategies for tourism delivery.

"The industry is often fragmented with significant conflicts. Airlines and travel agents debate commissions, airlines and airports debate landing fees, tourism operators and government tourism promoters debate funding and approach."

Much of this conflict is due to a lack of understanding of where value is created in the travel chain and by whom.

Mr Cain adds: "It is TFI's contention that understanding the source of value provided to tourists and value provided to suppliers throughout the travel chain is essential to the development of positive, and cooperative, strategies across the tourism industry."

* He says the Tasman has been dynamic with AirNZ introducing its Express Services, Pacific Blue entering the trans Tasman and increased capacity by Freedom Air and Qantas. Emirates have also increased capacity. Full service airlines have a 72 percent share with Air NZ (Express) holding 35 percent and Qantas 37 percent. Freedom Air has 13 percent, Pacific Blue eight percent, Emirates at four percent while Garuda, Royal Brunei and Thai Airways hold a total of three percent.

Emirates adds frequency, again

EMIRATES is to increase the frequency of its Christchurch-Melbourne-Dubai service for the second time since it started flying into the South Island at the beginning of July.

From December 5, the service will move from six times a week to daily.

When Emirates started flying to Christchurch it operated three times a week, shifting up to six times a week on August 17. The flights are operated by leading-edge Airbus A340-500 aircraft.

Emirates' Senior VP Commercial Operations Richard Vaughan says: "The Christchurch route has been building up nicely for us and we are delighted that we can have a full daily operation in time for New Zealand's busy summer holiday season. We are sure the many South Islanders and visitors who have welcomed the addition of a South Island gateway to our network will appreciate this latest enhancement to our service."

With the extra service Emirates will have 28 New Zealand flights a week, in each direction.

Southland discusses strategy

VENTURE Southland Tourism is drawing up a regional tourism strategy. Public consultation is due to finish next Friday. A draft is expected by December. This will be taken back to the community for further comment between February and April.

Are we killing our guests?

ARE accommodation providers and restaurateurs killing their guests, asks the *Australian Hospitality Digest*. It quotes Marriott Hotels as introducing a “fit for you” programme of menus for all meals.

“Fit for You” caters for guests’ personal dietary regimens with carb-conscious, low-cholesterol, low-fat or other offerings.

It reports that health-conscious travellers are challenged with finding food and beverage choices that match their particular diets and lifestyles when on the road or at business events. “Retail snack offerings are diverse, ranging from low-carb nuts to beverages sweetened with Splenda (read sugar substitute). Wines, light beers and low-carb cocktails are also available in bars and lounges.”

The *Digest* notes that Marriott closely monitors lifestyle trends to cater for guest preferences. As the company tracked consumer dining trends, it found guests have a wide range of eating habits and want menu options that meet their needs. Programmes to fit all lifestyles have now been developed.

Commitment

Marriott says it is committed to staying at the forefront of food and beverage trends. Rather than focusing on just one trend, such as low-carb, the programme can be easily adapted to diverse lifestyles and dietary needs. Adds the *Digest*: “For instance, hotel chefs have the flexibility to quickly respond to the growing interest in organic foods and no trans fats (the current identified evil)...

“In general Australian catering leaves much to be desired. In recent times there has been the tendency to offer high calorie exotic dishes in the belief they are what guests want. But as Marriott has found out that is not necessarily the case.”

It adds: “One can see from Marriott’s ‘Fit for You’ programme there are many aspects to be considered when satisfying the range of diets people desire.

It may not be possible to satisfy all demands but it should be possible to be knowledgeable about the contents so one can advise guests.

“Indeed if you are not aware of the ingredients you could kill your guest. For example, some people can be put into hospital with a life threatening anaphylactic shock by merely eating one cashew or even a product just containing cashew essence.

“Try asking a waitress if the fruit juice contains sugar or if the sliced peaches are in syrup or natural juices. Only one in 10 can answer the question and many will not even offer to find out.”

As if obesity and resultant heart conditions or diabetes is not enough, it continues, eye specialists have recently issued a warning concerning the use of some vegetable oil ‘trans fats’ and their effect on the eyes. “It is contended in the long run they may cause macular degeneration which, in its extreme form, can cause blindness.

“When initially revealed on television it cleared the butter shelves on supermarkets for weeks and left most margarine shelves full...”

Fish and Game slammed over ballot for fishing

OTAGO Fish and Game have introduced a ballot system for people wanting to fish the Greenstone River after the results of a survey earlier this year. Professional Fishing Guides Association executive member Harvey Maguire of Queenstown says the survey has been designed to come up with a “special result” - one question in particular.

“Do you think the Greenstone is crowded, a little crowded, very crowded?... -well the answer’s obvious isn’t it.”

Mr Maguire is waiting to hear from Conservation Minister Chris Carter, although the ballot is due to take effect in January.

“I had a meeting with the Minister three weeks ago in Wellington ago and told him he had to do something and that it just wasn’t good enough.” It could be very bad for Queenstown as overseas anglers would move away to fishing grounds up north. “We can’t have Fish and Game simply setting up a regime because of one question in a survey - it’s not on,” he tells *IT*.

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BIZtips

**By Christmas Gouwland
business adviser Leicester
Gouwland**

MANY of you will have encountered business operators who are willing to offer a discount for “cash”.

Cash payments are widespread in some industries and can be an indication of tax evasion.

How does a taxpayer who has evaded tax in the past and wants to begin complying with the law come forward and sort out their tax affairs without disadvantaging those taxpayers who have always complied with the tax laws?

Similarly a company that pays tax

Do cash jobs pay?

when its competitors do not face a pricing disadvantage as they have to take tax costs into account when pricing their goods or services.

The government recently released a discussion document titled “*Options for dealing with industry-wide tax evasion*”, outlining a proposed new policy in tax enforcement.

It proposes that there be a “tax amnesty” whereby for any taxpayer who participates in an amnesty the number of past income years which would be subject to audit and reassessment would be limited. Penalties and use of money interest would continue to apply to the deficient tax. It also proposes that certain industries be targeted, although potential industries have not yet been decided.

Alongside the limited amnesty would be an intensive enforcement against those who did not take up the offer.

Each amnesty would only be offered for a limited time to a specific industry - but there are no guarantees that any particular industry would be offered an amnesty, and there would be no general amnesty for all taxpayers. The object would be to reduce the level of evasion within those target industries or areas where evasion is rife. Ultimately it is hoped that this would help to reduce competitive pressure to evade tax in the future.

Anyone already being audited by the IRD when an amnesty is announced would not be eligible to participate.

Capital captures Aussie market: more staying and twice as long

MORE Australians than ever are choosing to holiday in Wellington - and they're staying nearly twice as long. The latest IVS shows Australian visitor arrivals to the capital have increased 10 percent to the year ending June, compared with the year before.

Their average length-of-stay has stretched from four to seven nights, with guest nights up by nearly 60 percent. Positively Wellington Tourism CEO Tim Cossar says: “Australia is Wellington’s most important international visitor market, so to see this kind of growth is very encouraging.”

Positively Wellington Tourism has significantly increased Wellington’s marketing presence in Australia over the last two years.

Last week, 11 operators and Positively Wellington Tourism promoted the region to the Australian travel trade in a roadshow which called at Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

It is the first time Wellington operators have travelled internationally as a group, independent of other regions, to promote their experience and the city.

Positively Wellington Tourism has contracted a general sales agent to make regular sales calls to the trade. And it has an Australian based PR agent responsible for

raising the profile of Wellington in the media.

The Australian Society of Travel Writers’ annual meeting, held recently in the city, is expected to further boost Wellington’s profile as a holiday destination. Wellington’s role in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy has also added to the city’s appeal.

Adds Mr Cossar: “Our marketing of Wellington within Australia has become really intensive, so we can confidently predict growth will continue in this very important market.”

The latest Commercial Accommodation Monitor indicates guest arrivals in the city have grown seven percent to the year ending August. In the same period, guest nights went up six percent.

The results show growth in international visitor guest nights to August was five percent, while domestic guest night growth was six percent.

“While commercial accommodation is doing well, we’re also seeing a high number of New Zealanders taking advantage of cheap trans Tasman airfares and heading to Australia for their holidays. We must continue to make Wellington an attractive destination for Kiwis to keep those domestic visitor numbers up,” Mr Cossar says.

ADVERT

Visiting Stewart Island?

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

NZ one of the few destinations to demand tour escorts have visas

WE are one of the few countries requiring visas for tour escorts, according to research carried out by ITOC members. They contacted their overseas wholesalers to see what the situation was in different countries. And the message back was that few destinations require such visas.

ITOC has given this research to the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS), the Minister of Tourism and TNZ.

“We will arrange to meet with the Minister of Immigration to discuss tour escorts and work visas and changing the law and we are working through the visa problems with the NZIS,” says CEO Peter Lowry.

Approval has now been given to ITOC Japanese tour operator members to increase the work permit duration from two to three years.

Mr Lowry adds that the NZIS appreciates its concerns over shortages of skilled people and problems with visas and work permits. “Over recent months I have worked with several ITOC members on work permits and visas for skilled staff. The Department of Labour is carrying out another review of their occupational shortages list and priority occupational list.” Submissions have to be in by November 10.

“We have been advised that the Department of Labour and New Zealand Immigration Service have cleared their backlog of applications and are now in a much better position to work with us on issues of concern to ITOC members.”

* ITOC is also working on solutions relating to approved and non-approved ADS group travel from China, including benchmarking quality standards and different processing arrangements.

Lions tour sees HAPNZ change conference plans

HAPNZ CEO Fergus Brown has told ITOC that his organisation has moved its annual conference from June to late July - to ensure that park operators are available to welcome rental vehicles during the Lions tour.

“We are concerned, however, that many of the overseas operators do not appear to be planning to book sites for motor homes.”

He adds: “Many of the cities where games are being played have a limited number of holiday park sites available. We want to ensure that these existing facilities are fully utilised before temporary facilities are introduced.”

Ensure overseas visitors are aware of new smoking laws

EVERYONE in the industry should ensure overseas visitors are aware of the new smoke free laws when they come into effect on December 10, says HANZ CEO Bruce Robertson.

“The hospitality industry is making every effort to ensure that the tourism industry is informed about the changes.”

He adds: “Everyone wants our international visitors to enjoy their stay and respect our laws. It is important that every opportunity is taken to ensure that our international visitors understand New Zealand laws, are happy to comply with them, and enjoy their New Zealand experience.”

From December 10, smoking will only be allowed in hotel rooms that are allocated to smokers, and in outdoor licensed areas.

“It is the responsibility of the licensee to ensure that nobody smokes in indoor licensed areas and they must take all reasonable steps to ensure this occurs.”

HANZ is working with the Ministry of Health to put together a publicity campaign to explain the legislation.

One of world’s top cities - again

WELLINGTON has again been voted one of the world’s best cities to visit - this time in the US *Condé Nast Traveler*.

Tourism is top employer on West Coast

TOURISM is the number one employer on the West Coast, and is the major provider of net household income, according to a report commissioned by Tai Poutini Polytechnic.

The industry directly employs almost 2,800 full-time equivalent people, and generates a further 650 full-time equivalent jobs. This accounts for 28 percent of all jobs in the region.

The report also shows that, on a number of indicators, the West Coast is leading the field.

Compared to Hawke’s Bay, Eastern Bay of Plenty, Manawatu-Wanganui and Wairarapa, the Coast produces more GDP per capita, more GDP per full-time employee, more net household income per full-time employee, and more exports per full-time employee.

Compared to the New Zealand average, the region produces 11 percent more GDP per capita, and four percent more GDP per full-time employee.

Tai Poutini Polytechnic CEO Don Campbell said the report is good news.

“Locals have known for some time that the region is booming, but to read in the report that the West Coast leads the field for all the ratio indicators is extremely heartening, particularly the message about Coast productivity.”

Water village planned

GULF Corporation wants to turn Gulf Harbour, Rodney, into a resort for boaties, with a new harbour, beach and a European-style waterfront village.

No limits at InterCity

INTERCITY Coachlines Flexi-Pass passengers can now top up their passes in 10 hour blocks - with no limits. Previously, they could only do this in five hour blocks.

A new online management option enables them to manage their travel using a dedicated, password protected account. Pass holders can book, amend, cancel and top up their passes through this account.

What is *really* worrying AIAL?

IN the chairman's section of Auckland International Airport's latest annual report, over twice as much space is given to attacking proposals for Whenuapai Airport than any single operational or financial aspect of AIAL's own year or plans, points out Infratil executive Tim Brown.

"Slightly less than 50 percent of AIAL's income is aeronautical. Over 50 percent comes from retail, rent and so on. And AIAL's own calculation is that Whenuapai may capture four percent of AIAL's traffic by 2020."

He adds: "They predict having 200,000 aircraft movements a year by then with Whenuapai's forecast 24,000 movements comprising 8,000 poached from AIAL and 16,000 resulting from Whenuapai stimulating the market.

If Whenuapai's impact on AIAL's bottom line is in the order of one to two percent, why so much attention to the cross-town potential rival?

"AIAL's propensity to increase charges and its calls for enhanced roading to link AIAL with Auckland may give the answer.

Competition

"Facing the zephyr of competition AIAL may be worrying about its prices. On a per-passenger basis AIAL is Australasia's most expensive airport - not to mention \$30 a day parking - and its ability to demand that tax/rate payers fund better land transport access."

Mr Brown says Whenuapai's future is in the hands of Cabinet. The officials' group - from Treasury, Economic Development, Transport, Environment, Defence - reported to the Minister of Economic Development in late September.

"He is expected to take a report to Cabinet...If Cabinet approves the Waitakere City/Infratil development of Whenuapai it will be some time before the airport is upgraded and consented for civil use, but in time it will be a boon for tourism. Auckland City Council is a supporter because it sees Whenuapai's connectivity to the Waitemata Harbour being a major bonus for short stay visitors. Auckland City is AIAL's largest shareholder so clearly will have weighed up the respective benefits for its citizens of Whenuapai coming on stream."

Qantas to increase fuel surcharge

QANTAS on Wednesday was due to increase its fuel surcharge - because of the continued escalation in the price of crude oil. The surcharge will increase \$2 to \$12 per sector, for domestic travel and by \$7 to \$29 per sector, for international travel.

MACI wants to stay ahead of the game

WHILE New Zealand is a hot destination, we can't forget we're competing with many others on our side of the globe, says Maori Arts and Crafts Institute (MACI) CEO Andrew Te Whaiti.

Over the next 18 months MACI is to add to what it has to offer the visitor "both as a response to tourism demand and also to stay ahead of the game." He adds: "The main growth is in the interactive tourist market. That's a market looking for an authentic experience, has money to spend, and wants to be in control of their own travel. That makes them a good market for us, but also one that is discerning, so it's important to keep up-to-date and keep the offering fresh."

The increase in visitor numbers will have a strong economic benefit across the board in Rotorua. That's reflected in the major investment in tourism facilities, not only at MACI but also at the Agrodome, Polynesian Spa, Skyline and the new Ibis Hotel.

Mr Te Whaiti says such growth comes as a direct result of international marketing. He and Skyline's Neville Nicholson have just returned from Kiwilink UK.

Rotorua is already a strong performer and Te Whaiti says visitor growth in the region will be above average this season.

Avalanche warning

DOC is warning trampers to be aware of snow and avalanche conditions in alpine sections of popular tracks in Fiordland and Mount Aspiring National Parks as the summer season approaches.

Fraud on increase

FRAUD is on the increase. And ITOC is warning members of the dangers which can come via emails.

"We warn you to be on your guard against fraud, especially requests for business from people you do not know (often using credit cards for payment) and scams including requests for free advertising with 'small print' conditions regarding payment," says CEO Peter Lowry.

CAH wants \$3.2M comp

PALMERSTON North Airport chairman Derek Walker is making no comment on the company's minority shareholder, Central Avion Holdings (CAH), claiming \$3.2 million compensation through the High Court for "oppressive practice" by the majority shareholder, Palmerston North City Council.

CAH claims the sum represents the financial disadvantage it has suffered since it bought the government's shareholding in 1998. CAH cites the city council as first respondent, the airport company as second.

Airport to self destruct?

TAUPO airport could self destruct with all scheduled commercial flights going through Rotorua - and light aircraft using an alternative grassed airstrip - a Taupo District Council committee was told on Friday.

Eagle Air GM Doug Roberts told the committee one new flight due to be introduced in December has already been lost to Rotorua.

He said it was a choice between Taupo and Rotorua and because of the "difficulties" the company has experienced with Taupo, it went to Rotorua instead.

Reasons why Canterbury is doing better than most...

RECENTLY released statistics show that Canterbury is doing better than most other regions when it comes to international tourism.

Christchurch and Canterbury Marketing CEO Ian Bougen attributes the region's rapidly growing popularity as a tourist destination to a number of factors. "The Canterbury region has earned a reputation in the trade for aggressive international marketing."

He adds: "In association with the Christchurch International Airport Company and other industry partners, there has been long and hard lobbying for increased air capacity into Christchurch. It's no accident that the increased capacity is now a fact. There has been a huge increase in the number of people who are now willing and able to travel to Christchurch and Canterbury. We have supported that with a major offshore marketing effort - more particularly recently in the eastern Australian states. The benefit of that is now being realised."

Mr Bougen says there's more to see and do than in any other region in the country. "We are extraordinarily lucky to have a very high level of professionalism amongst our tourism operators in this region - that leads to very positive experiences for the visitor and that sort of reputation travels very quickly. The drive for quality amongst our operators is amply evidenced by the fact that the Canterbury region has more Qualmark registered operators than any other region."

The most recent CAM figures show that Canterbury is well ahead of the national average when it comes to the increase in guest nights over the past 12 months.

And it appears the region is becoming more popular in comparison with other major tourist spots. Canterbury's market share of all guest nights has increased from 14.9 per cent to 15.4 per cent between August 2002 and August 2004. This represents more than 120,000 extra guest nights. Conservative estimates put the direct economic benefit of this increased market share at about \$40 million a year. This is over and above the increase in tourism across the nation. "In other words, not only has the size of the tourism pie increased, but the Canterbury region has also increased the size of its slice of the tourism pie," Mr Bougen adds.

A fine place to stay...

MCHARDY House - one of the oldest and finest estates on Napier Hill - is now offering private luxury accommodation in four suites and two deluxe rooms. Owners Brenda and Markus Burkhard have developed a relaxing, quiet getaway.

Treble Cone has best season ever!

THE Treble Cone ski season was the best yet in its 37 years of operation. Ski area manager Jackie Van der Voort says she was delighted with the season. Not only was the product fantastic for skiers and snowboarders this year, but the ski area continues to see an increase in visitor numbers. Investment in facilities had helped boost visitors along with growing international awareness of the ski area.

With snow cover recorded as the best in 10 years - and some saying the best they can remember in 30 years - skiers and snowboarders could not have wished for a better season.

There's to be \$4 million expansion over summer with the installation of a new quad chairlift from the bottom of the existing double chairlift to Tim's Table. This opens up more terrain and increases the ski area boundary. A new kiosk and more car parking are also planned.

Treble Cone reopens for summer from December 30 to January 16. A six-seater chairlift and café facilities will be open for sightseeing and mountain biking.

ACT decision raises questions - Qantas

QANTAS says the decision of the Australian Competition Tribunal (ACT) to authorise a proposed alliance between itself and AirNZ raises significant questions for the future of aviation in the region.

CEO Geoff Dixon, says that while the reasons for the decision had not yet been released the tribunal must have accepted the thrust of the airlines' arguments - that the benefits that would flow from the alliance would outweigh any detrimental effect.

"We assume the tribunal also agreed with the argument that the alliance would be in the national interest," he adds.

Grape Escape go-ahead
TASMAN District Council has decided to grant resource consent for expanding the Grape Escape, Appleby. The multimillion-dollar expansion will turn the complex into a hub for arts and crafts.

Wanaka service is wow!

AIRNZ'S new daily Christchurch-Wanaka service has been a great success. Lake Wanaka Tourism CEO John Aildred says: "We have far exceeded the numbers needed to make the service commercially viable. Many of the flights are full and as we enter the busy summer season, the demand will certainly warrant an additional service. The introduction of direct flights has been a great development for Wanaka and the service is enjoyed by both visitors and locals."

Fiordland growth

THERE'S been big growth in the number and range of accommodation properties on offer in Fiordland, particularly within the b and b and luxury accommodation areas catering for the discerning FIT traveller.

The ever-increasing standards extend to holiday parks within the region: four of the seven holiday parks have achieved four star plus Qualmark rating. The range of activities continues to expand, too.

New conservation book provides plenty to chew over

OUR Islands, Our Selves - a History of Conservation in New Zealand by David Young tells the story of New Zealand's conservation from antiquity, well before humans ever set foot here, up to 2003.

David Young is probably best known for *Woven By Water: Histories of the Whangai River*, and in *Our Islands, Our Selves*, he follows a similar theme of the people, the land, the history and the environment.

The book attempts to show the origins of Maori and Pakeha conservation ideas on land and sea, placing them in context. It follows both a thematic and chronological process, identifying individuals and organisations who have had the most impact.

As well as being packed with information, Young introduces topics that force us to look at our own motives and ideals, especially when he writes about what went wrong - the introduction of possums, how the simple act of a Rotorua guide placing her huia feather in the headband of the Duke of York's bowler hat, thereby increasing the demand and price of huia feathers a hundredfold to meet the demands of European fashionistas, aided by NZ government-assisted searches for the furtive and rapidly diminishing huia. In fact, various government departments and official policies have had much to answer for at various times, and would have had much more were it not for the behaviour of the few who disagreed with the orthodoxy of the time, such as the view that rats and mustelids were not a danger to New Zealand birds.

With photos on almost every page, plenty of sub-headings, and informative insert boxes, this book is well-laid out and easy to follow. There are also a comprehensive index, bibliography and chapter notes. - **RLW**.

Our Islands, Our Selves - a History of Conservation in New Zealand is published by the University of Otago Press. RRP \$59.95.

* IF you would like a copy of *Our Islands, Our Selves* - email us the name of the author in the subject line. Your name will go in the draw for one.

Origin and YHA want backpackers to wing it

ORIGIN Pacific and YHA have launched what is believed to be a New Zealand first for the backpacker market.

The Wing It ticket has been developed for budget travellers. The five part ticket offers unique flexibility and fares, with standby direct fares for only \$59. Punters can use two parts of the pass to confirm a seat on any direct route.

A recent TNT Backpackers Uncovered survey shows only five percent of backpackers are using domestic air travel while 40 percent are using buses. YHA marketing manager Daniel Shields sees the ticket as playing a major role in the travel plans of backpackers.

"Wing It adds impulse to independent travel. Travellers can cut back for festivals or revisit favourite spots. I think you'll see people using it to make itineraries based on interests, even weather or say surf, rather than fixed routes."

AA Rewards expanding...

The AA Rewards programme has expanded to include new travel and leisure partners.

Members can now earn AA Rewards Points when they travel and enjoy adventure pursuits all over New Zealand. One AA Rewards Point is earned for every complete \$10 spent.

Over 100 accommodation and leisure activity providers across the country have joined as foundation partners including Kelly Tarlton's, RedBalloon Days, Waitomo Glowworm Caves, Aoraki Balloon Safaris, and Milford Sounds Red Boat Cruises. Accommodation providers include the Mainstay and Golden Chain groups.

Best kept secret no more!

WHAT is described as "Auckland's best kept secret and hottest new tourist attraction" - Butterfly Creek's Tropical Butterfly House two minutes from Auckland International Airport - is to open to the public tomorrow (Saturday) for the first time.

Construction of Butterfly Creek commenced in November 2002 and the development has in many ways been similar to the stages of a Butterfly life cycle. Stage one included Papillon Bar and Café and conference facilities. Stage two saw Buttermilk Farm and the Red Admiral Express miniature steam train completed. And stage three is now complete including Flutterbuys gift shop and the star attraction, the Tropical Butterfly House.

Butterfly Creek is home to what is reputedly New Zealand's largest tropical fresh water aquarium, holding 10,000 litres of fresh water. Visitors can also spot movie stars - think Nemo and Dory - in one of the largest coral reef tanks in the country, holding some 3,000 litres of salt water. Details: 025-2911503, c.sanders@butterflycreek.co.nz or www.butterflycreek.co.nz.

* Kapiti's Nikau Butterfly Gardens has been sold to singer songwriter Steve McDonald who will turn it into a recording studio. The homestead was built in the 1920s and more recently belonged to entrepreneur Jon Austin who turned the grounds into New Zealand's first sanctuary for plants and invertebrates, with the butterfly house a major feature. It closed in the late 1990s.

Train trip to "republic"

THE Railway Enthusiasts' Society is running an excursion from Auckland to Palmerston North from January 14-17 including a side trip to Whangamomona for the town's "republic day", and visits to the Tararua wind farm, Owlcatraz at Shannon and Foxton Beach. Fares including meals and accommodation are \$475 each. Details: 09-6369361, 0800-472453, secretary@railfan.org.nz or www.railfan.org.nz

Big hearted RTO treats victims to a good time

TOURISM Bay of Plenty and a local paper have come to the rescue of the British tourist bashed with a crowbar on his first day in this country. Paul Speakman and son Christian, 12, are visiting some of the region's top tourist attractions in a bid to erase their first impressions after last week's attack. They had been in New Zealand less than 24 hours when a group of men broke into their campervan and stole money, cameras and other gear. Father and son are visiting White Island, jetboating at Longridge, swimming with dolphins, enjoying tours of Kiwifruit Country and Te Puke Auto Barn as well as taking a fishing trip off Opotiki.

* The invitation to host the Speakmans was the idea of Tourism Bay of Plenty staffer Melissa Wright.

Four remanded on eight charges

FOUR men charged with aggravated robberies and damaging two vehicles were remanded in custody for two weeks when they appeared in Rotorua District Court this week.

They face eight charges relating to the robbing of a British father and son parked in a camper van at Athenree, between Katikati and Waihi, and a Wellington man parked in a car at a rest area between Rotorua and Tauranga on October 12.

The accused allegedly used weapons, stole money and personal belongings and damaged the victims' vehicles.

They are jointly charged with two counts of threatening to kill the father and son, two counts of destroying vehicles, three counts of aggravated robbery and a charge of aggravated wounding. The men are to reappear on November 1.

Hotel managerial changes...

MERCURE Hotel Wellington GM Murray Davison has been appointed GM of the Fiji International Dominion Hotel which is to be relaunched in 2005 as Mercure Hotel Nadi Fiji. And Brian Townsend will be GM at the new Mercure Hotel Dunedin from November 1. He is currently f and b manager at Novotel St. Kilda.

* David Caldwell is Stamford Plaza Auckland's new sales director. He has worked in senior management roles with hotel chains and travel organisations including Radisson Suites and Hotels, Choice Hotels International, and Rosenbluth International. His most recent appointment was with American Express International in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Golf cluster commissions publicity on top courses

THE New Zealand Golf Cluster has commissioned a comprehensive illustrated article on this country's top courses in the latest *Golf Leisure and Lifestyle* magazine. Details: Pip King 027-2203060 or www.bestofgolfnewzealand.com.

Shark on wheels delivers 'em to Kelly Tarlton's

A 10-seat shuttle bus - covered in a swirling undersea scene topped off with life-like penguins and a bronze whaler shark with a mouthful of sharp teeth - now carries visitors from Auckland's CBD to Kelly Tarlton's Antarctic Encounter and Underwater World four times a day. The bus-with-a-difference calls at major hotels and backpacker hostels. Details: 09-5280603 or 0800-805050.

Lonely Planet has bear facts

THE latest Lonely Planet 700-plus page New Zealand guide has some interesting Kiwi words and phrases including "Kiwi bear." That's a possum!

Investment opportunities?

LOCK Hill Cottages, a tourist accommodation business with panoramic views over Akaroa Harbour, is for sale.

It has 10 guest cottages - each with sea and hillside views - scattered around 2.76 hectares of park-like grounds.

The property, business and chattels are for sale through Bayleys by international tender, closing November 11. Details: 03-3772215.

A property with tourism development potential, near the edge of Lake Taupo is also for sale. Offers over \$800,000 are being sought.

The property at Waitahanui on SH1 is close to Taupo airfield.

Tom Mounsey of Bayleys Taupo says the property has a resource consent to operate as a b and b and could be used for skiers, or as a fishing lodge. Contact: 0274-804259.

Ups and downs

SOME 8,203 visitors called at the Punakaiki Visitor Centre last month, according to spokeswoman Robin Reid. It was their second busiest September ever.

Franz Josef Glacier had almost 6,500 visitors. There were 5,842 tourists to Haast.

During the month there was a dramatic drop for Reefton Visitor Centre, with only 3,812 compared with 6,199 at the same time in 2003.

Buller visitor numbers continue to fall as most monthly totals at the district's four visitor centres drop below last year's monthly figures. In Westport, numbers decreased to 2,478 from 2,919 in September 2003.

* The Reefton Visitor Centre is in financial strife and faces an independent review, according to local media.

The centre was set up in 1993 as a joint project between DoC and the Reefton Visitor Centre. Last year it operated at a deficit and this year it has also been unable to meet staffing and operating expenditure.

Walking Legends back on Waikaremoana track

THE Lake Waikaremoana Track was the last of New Zealand's nine "Great Walks" to get a guided service.

Walking Legends' operators Hilary Sheaff and Rob Franklin say their first season, 2003/4, sparked a huge interest. And they were amazed by the number of New Zealanders who took part in the walks: about 70 percent were Kiwis, of whom more than half were over 50.

They expect this trend to continue with bookings for the coming season showing a strong Kiwi contingent. It opens next Wednesday.

Mr Franklin believes that what appeals is that they provide everything from raincoats and packs, to tasty cooked meals and wine, transport to and from Rotorua, and a support boat, so walkers carry small packs. The advantage of having a guide who is knowledgeable on the area also appeals to many.

The Lake Waikaremoana Guided Walk is a four-day, all-inclusive package. Walking Legends also provide accommodation; snacks and refreshments; full interpretation of flora, fauna, natural and cultural history.

The track follows the lake edge for two days, before climbing the Panekiri Ridge for the last two days to give expansive views of the lake, Urewera Mountains, and Pacific Ocean. Walking times vary from four to six hours a day.

Walking Legends run other tours of the park, catering for a variety of fitness levels and interests. See: www.walkinglegends.com. Details: 07-3457363, 021-545068, fax 3457364 or hilary@walkinglegends.com.

InterCity upgrades

INTERCITY Group has upgraded its daily services between Queenstown/Wanaka and the West Coast Glaciers to the Newmans brand. Newmans Coach Lines is aimed at the premium tourist. The company says the move shows its commitment to tourism and the West Coast.

It also reinforces the Newmans position as New Zealand's leading daily tourism transport operator, offering one of the widest daily tourist transport networks in the country.

Other upgrades: a new 50-seat Newmans coach will operate Auckland - Waitomo Caves - Rotorua from February; two new glass roofed coaches for the daily Newmans service to Milford Sound from Queenstown and Te Anau from next month.

Research bid to stop coach ban on Mt Eden

NEITHER the Bus and Coach Association (BCA) nor Auckland City Council want to ban coaches from taking visitors up Mount Eden - although that's what local pressure groups are arguing.

So a working party has been set up to help find an answer. Part of the work includes undertaking a survey of visitor numbers, looking at what they do on the summit, how long they're there and attempting to identify the nationality. The BCA hopes this work will be carried out over the summer using tourism students in conjunction with Tourism Auckland. Results will be used as part of BCA's submission on the council's management plan for Mount Eden.

Simeonidis resigns!

AFTER more than five years as CEO of MANZ Theo Simeonidis has resigned to become membership services manager at the Real Estate Institute of New Zealand, based in Parnell, Auckland. He leaves in January.

News and views
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KAPITI COAST - Country Life Restaurant on State Highway 1 at Waikanae. The 60-seat restaurant undergone significant upgrading. Bar area, outdoor deck and private dining area. Selling land, buildings and chattels. John Welch 025 434 800 or 04 499 6044

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