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Subscription rates on application.

ISSN 1176-3574

ISSUE 531/Executive Summary

January 28th, 2005

TIANZ, DoC concerned at illegal groups on top tracks

ALL tourism businesses operating in national parks must have a concession, and must always operate in accordance with that concession, says TIANZ CEO Fiona Luhrs. "That is the bottom line."

She was commenting after DoC announced it is considering taking legal action against a foreign businessman operating large guided tours on Fiordland's Great Walk tracks.

Ms Luhrs adds: "We do not condone any tourism business operating illegally in a national park. Illegal operations damage the reputation of our industry, can lead to increased pressure on our environment, and deny legitimate visitors space in huts and on tracks."

TIANZ is to work with organisations such as ITOC and TNZ to communicate the importance of overseas visitors choosing quality and bona fide guiding operators. "We also intend to continue to strongly promote the importance of tourism businesses holding concessions, strictly adhering to the conditions of their concessions," she adds.

New campaign for Christchurch

A major domestic advertising campaign for Christchurch is being launched today (Friday). It is aimed at convincing North Islanders in particular that the city is a vibrant, sophisticated and relaxed place to visit.

The campaign is designed to commence the process of positioning Christchurch as a desirable place to live, work, play, invest and visit.

Be aware of "Eric", warns Ratcliffe

WHO is Owusu Eric? Gina Ratcliffe of NZ Encounters is intrigued to know! She says he may be legitimate. But..."the way this just played out this week makes us want to warn others."

She says Mr Eric [kwabrane20@yahoo.com] contacted her company asking for urgent help for a group of 16 passengers requiring a seven day trip to New Zealand arriving on February 21.

If anyone knows of the person or this company please let us know. "Considering our experience of this person/company we would recommend you stay clear."

CAPA predicts high growth and profitability for airlines

THE aviation sector in Asia Pacific - and the Middle East - will continue to defy global industry trends in 2005, maintaining high growth and profitability after a record 2004.

Releasing its annual report on the regional outlook for aviation and tourism, Sydney-based Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation (CAPA) predicts a more subdued, but still robust performance for airlines and airports in the year ahead.

"While operators in Europe and North America licked their wounds, the region's carriers moved rapidly from recovery to robust growth and profitability," the report adds.

* Qantas's role as Australia's national airline will dwindle over the next five years as it joins more international partnerships and domestic routes are taken over by cut-price airlines, predicts CAPA.

* Despite its overall robust position, Qantas needs to address the loss-making Tasman and New Zealand markets, falling domestic yields - albeit at a more moderate rate - and excess capacity on interstate routes," the CAPA report says. "Its pursuit of further operating economies, especially through the devolvement of operations to cheaper overseas markets, also threatens to immerse the airline in industrial strife. "One almost immediate issue for Qantas in 2005 is the potentially daunting prospect of SIA realising its plans to gain entry to the South Pacific route to the US via Australia, and additional growth from Emirates to Australia and New Zealand."

DoC limits seal watching trips

DOC is placing a limit on seal watching trips at two Abel Tasman National Park breeding colonies - with no extra trips allowed for at least eight years.

In 2003, the department declared a 10-year moratorium on new permits for swimming with seals along the Abel Tasman coast.

That has been amended to include prohibiting new permits for commercial seal viewing at Tonga and Pinnacle islands. The moratorium does not apply to permits for seal viewing at other sites, however.

New accommodation concept

A new concept combining luxurious villa accommodation with superior guest services has been launched in Queenstown.

The Villas in Queenstown is the brainchild of Queenstown Project Management director Wayne Foley and Queenstown Destination Management director Vickie Hill. The new company exclusively manages villas developed by Queenstown Project Management and makes them available for executive holiday and business rental with room and concierge services.

First research scholarships

In an industry first, seven Tourism Research Scholarships have been awarded to seven postgraduate researchers throughout New Zealand.

TNZ relaunches website

FOLLOWING a year of upgrading, TNZ has re-launched its corporate website. The site, www.tourismnewzealand.com, replaces www.tourisminfo.govt.nz as the home of TNZ's research, publications, news, staff contact details and job vacancies.

New features include market guides covering our 14 main inbound markets - including interactive traveller profiles, visitor behaviour and a snapshot of the travel trade environment. An extended industry resources section provides detailed information about TNZ's programmes and the international tourism environment. A glossary section has been added to help new operators navigate through the acronym-filled tourism world. Applications for TNZ trade events will now only be accepted online.

Bisignani to keynote at PATA

IATA director-general and CEO Giovanni Bisignani will give the opening keynote address at the PATA 54th annual conference in Macau on April 18. His theme is: Connecting Tourism's Stakeholders.

Penguins dying - don't worry!

PENGUINS and shags around Oamaru are dying through a lack of the right food. But people are being asked not to intervene. Waitaki Development Board has contacted experts from around the Pacific. And the consensus is: let nature take its course

New flag campaign gains momentum

NEW Zealanders wanting to support a change to the New Zealand flag can now sign up for a referendum. The campaign officially took to the streets this week.

MCK opens first Taranaki property

COPTHORNE Hotel Grand Central, New Plymouth, opens on Tuesday! MCK COO Gordon Wilson says the property will help the company satisfy the many requests it receives for accommodation "in this incredibly vibrant area of New Zealand."

Kauri Museum's happy problem

NORTHLAND'S Kauri Museum is nudging 100,000 visitors a year with most being international visitors. "If the domestic market realises what the international market already know facilities may need to expand even faster than planned" says CEO Albert Lovell. "A good problem to have!"

Record numbers do the Napier walk

UP to 20,600 Napier visitors are expected to have taken an art deco walking tour in 2004/5, up from 17,000 the previous year. The Art Deco Trust wonders what other city offers an historic walking tour that attracts so many. The trust is 20 on February 8.

Oldies are younger and more educated

TODAY'S retirees and seniors are younger and better educated than their predecessors. They have leisure activities on their mind - but often want to return to school to build new skills and expand their minds. US-based Senior Summer School now offers education vacations. School president Seth Wirshba says seniors are more adventurous than ever and have a quest for lifelong education.

More on Stewart Island boom...

STEEP price rises for property on Stewart Island can be attributed to the island's popularity as a tourism/visitor destination AND as a holiday/recreational haven, according to David Hicks, of tourism consultancy firm TMEI Ltd, himself a fourth-generation member of the Stewart Island Hicks family.

Tekapo next to develop

LAKE Tekapo's new \$40 million 4.5 star Bluewater Resort is to include a spa and wellness centre in its development plans for completion at the end of 2006. Mackenzie Tourism chairman Graeme Murray says people have been visiting Lake Tekapo for its healthy climate for many years. "The town has amazing potential for tourism and this is just another step in Tekapo becoming a destination in its own right." The Mackenzie Basin is undergoing an "explosion" in visitor numbers.

Holiday bookings via search engines?

WE use them to find web pages and recipes and to hunt for music and lyrics, but next year the search engine could also become our first port of call for finding and booking our holidays.

Maritime cluster launches first initiative

TOURISM Auckland has set up a Maritime Tourism Cluster Group, which has 90 members ranging from tourism operators of sailing yachts and fishing charters, to marine industry associations including the Maritime Safety Authority. The group's first initiative is in offering special deals for the coming Anniversary Weekend.