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Partnering is answer to quality research - Henry

AN industry that contributes 10 percent of New Zealand's GDP, 17.8 percent of export earning and which is in a rapid growth phase cannot afford to develop without support of quality data and forecasts, and investigative research into better management, mitigation and growth opportunities. So says Tourism Research Council (TRC) chairman Lex Henry. "We are making progress. For instance, the Ministry of Tourism, TIANZ and Lincoln University are engaged in a major three-year project to research yield in the tourism sector and to generate recommendations and tools on how we can generate better performance from tourism."

* In November, 2,652,000 guest nights were spent in commercial accommodation, up 137,000 or 5.5 percent on the same month the previous year.

All accommodation types recorded an increase in guest nights in November, led by caravan parks and camping grounds (up 52,000 or 13.9 percent), then motel (up 41,000 or 4.8 percent), backpacker (up 28,000 or 8.6 percent), hotel (up 8,000 or 0.9 percent) and hosted (up 7,000 or 14.3 percent).

Massey may drop tourism

"IT is ironic!" says ATTTO CEO Gayle Sheridan. "Just after the release of the Tourism Workforce and Skills Projections Report in November, highlighting a requirement for 17,250 new entrants across the broader industry a year, Massey University announces it may stop offering vocational courses in tourism, travel, hospitality and catering from 2006."

TIANZ says: "We've had a look at the material from Massey and on balance it looks like a business decision. As long as there are other providers of tourism courses - which there are - it shouldn't impact negatively on the industry at large.

"The objective for tourism is to have enough high quality courses that are closely linked to industry needs and workplace requirements. Obviously Massey is more concerned long term with students going into degrees rather than practical courses leading into work placements."

Centre Stage dissolves - alliances form

GREATER Wellington region and Wairarapa and Nelson and Marlborough have formed two separate marketing alliances following the dissolution of the Centre Stage group in December. Each will build on the achievements of Centre Stage which operated for six years.

Centre Stage was owned by Wellington, Regional Wellington, Wairarapa, Marlborough and Nelson. There is so far no news as to what Nature Coast, which was also part of Centre Stage, plans to do.

Alfresco 'nightmare' was sweet as...

HOW do you feed and entertain 560 of the world's wealthiest people in the middle of a field two kilometres from the nearest road when you have no electricity, water or sewage? That was the headache facing Rings Scenic Tours MD Russell Alexander when told passengers from the luxury liner Crystal Serenity would be visiting Hobbiton Movie Set and Farm, Matamata, on Saturday. But they did it. In fact passengers and crew agreed it was a highlight of their 105 day world cruise.

Industry in DoC Milford meeting

DOC'S proposals to control aircraft flying into and out of Milford Sound have hit a watershed with the department now realising the whole visitor industry is interested in the outcome - and not just a small group of airlines.

Tourism Flight Operators (TFO) chairman Geoff Ensor adds that the outcome will be a template for other national parks where flightseeing is popular. "We have a great responsibility to get things right."

The industry is putting forward a counter proposal in readiness for a meeting with DoC this month.

"On our part, we also need to ensure there isn't a breakdown in our relationship with DoC. We have to keep working with the department, rather than them saying 'this is how it is' and we say 'no we are not going to do it', There must be middle ground."

Six holiday parks for sale

BAYLEYS Real Estate is marketing six holiday parks for sale throughout the country.

ITOC licensing agency for IBOs?

ITOC should be the licensing agency for all inbound operators, reckons Travel Time South Pacific MD Jim Monahan.

He says the council should seek approval from government as soon as possible. "I am very concerned about the proliferation of so called inbound operators who have no experience, lack a financial base, no understanding of the New Zealand product, culture or the way we do things..."

"Anyone can set up a business in a garage or their front room and call themselves inbound operators. It's that easy!"

Resources needed - Brady

A government agency is unlikely to license inbound operators. So if licensing comes in it means the scheme would have to be self-sector operated, says Pan Pacific Travel MD Matt Brady.

"ITOC has lifted the bar recently to include a far more rigorous vetting and assessment programme with the appointment of two assessors.

"However, the resources required to take it to the next level would be substantial and expensive."

Luxury train for Auckland-Rotorua ?

A twice-a-day passenger service between Auckland and Rotorua is on the cards, according to Regional Rail Rotorua and Geysersland Express Trust spokesman Scotty Watson. And Destination Rotorua Tourism Marketing CEO Don Gunn is delighted.

NZ growth higher than world average

WORLD tourism grew 10 percent last year, according to the World Tourism Organisation (WTO). But StatisticsNZ figures for the same period show international visitor arrivals to New Zealand increased 11.5 percent to total 2,347,672. This represents an estimated boost of \$754 million to the New Zealand economy for the year.

Armada sells gondola and tramway

ARMADA Tourism Ltd has reached agreement to sell the Christchurch Gondola and Christchurch Tramway to The Wood Scenic Line Ltd.

MD Martin Mongan says the sale process is at an advanced stage, subject only to regulatory consents.

Wood Scenic Line MD Michael Esposito says: "We are delighted with the purchase of these outstanding Christchurch attractions. We are looking forward to continuing to build on the performance of both businesses and to further developing their importance to the New Zealand tourism industry."

Waitaki recruits MCK in Australia!

TOURISM Waitaki has enlisted the help of Millennium, Copthorne, Kingsgate Hotels and Resorts (MCK) to promote Oamaru and the district in Australia. Manager Julie FAMILTON says MCK sales offices in

Australia play a strong role in the room night and revenue production from the New Zealand wholesale, conference, corporate and coach market.

Use gut feeling on scams

WHAT to do about scams (IT531)? New Zealand Tourism Online GM Garry Bond suggests looking to see if the email address is a free hotmail or yahoo address.

His final advice: "Use your gut feeling. It's not often wrong."

Rainbow's End gets new look

RAINBOW'S End has a new face, two new rides and new product. Gone is the 25-year-old arcade building that used to greet visitors at the front of the park. In its place is a two storey entry pavilion. The building houses the latest in redemption and interactive games and a new retail outlet.

Stray builds backpacker buses

STRAY, reputedly New Zealand's fastest growing backpacker bus network, has unveiled the first of its new purpose built buses, tailored for the New Zealand backpacker market. They have been designed and developed by Stray owner Neil Geddes in partnership with Ritchies Coachlines.

Southland pins hopes on Australia

INTERNATIONAL flights to Invercargill are feasible because the fundamentals of market size and growth are robust, according to Venture Southland's John Grant. He says the region is the country's most rapidly growing destination for Australian travellers who are increasingly looking for convenience. Invercargill airport is the most conveniently located international gateway to Fiordland, Queenstown and the Southern Lakes - other than Queenstown which, he points out, has operational constraints.

There's strong support from Australian-based travel wholesalers and a willingness to partner in joint venture product and promotional activity.

When the runway is extended by 500m to 2210m in May, Mr Grant says it will then be one of the few regional airports that can accommodate unrestricted trans Tasman deployed aircraft such as the Airbus 320 and Boeing 737-800s.

Our biggest risk? Indigestion!

TOP country as far as readers of *Wanderlust Magazine* are concerned is Namibia, followed by Jordan - and then New Zealand. But the results were close: we had a satisfaction rating of 93.9 percent, just 0.4 percent behind Jordan.

Editor-in-chief Lyn Hughes says: "That's safe as in 'you can do anything and everything here safely', not safe as in 'boring'. New Zealand's outstanding cuisine and fine wineries mean that the biggest risk is probably indigestion!"