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Alexander warns again of potential downturn

TOURISM will continue with slow growth. But this is countered in the backpacker sector by increased competition as new entrants put pressure on prices and service standards, says BNZ chief economist Tony Alexander.

He says the industry is feeling the effect of the high dollar. Travellers are also arriving on lower priced airfares but without money to spend on attractions and products, purchasing lower end merchandise rather than the higher end products.

Incoming tourists are spreading the word about much higher prices in NZ. "Rising interest rates, dollar, inflation, and falling tourism numbers are not good indications for the business I am in," he adds.

Luhrs spells out industry priorities

DEVELOPING industry capability in staff recruitment, skills development and retention are priorities facing the industry, TIANZ CEO, Fiona Luhrs told a seminar at Victoria University on Wednesday.

She said other priorities include effective industry involvement in conservation management, greater central and local government investment in local infrastructure and improvement in understanding quality standards and environmental sustainability.

She flagged that under the Kyoto Protocol energy costs will rise from 2007 and our competitiveness will become an issue relative to non-Kyoto countries. Carbon taxes might apply to international air travel from 2012.

MACI to get new name and branding

THE New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute, Rotorua, is to launch its new name and brand on March 21.

CEO Andrew Te Whaiti says: "With more than 600,000 tourists visiting each year - the majority of them first-timers - it is important our name is easy to pronounce and memorable to tourists. The word 'institute' only conjures images of an education facility!"

Lowry delighted with Minister

ITOC CEO Peter Lowry says he was delighted to read in *IT536* that Tourism Minister Mark Burton would like all inbound operators to meet the council's standards. "ITOC is addressing this issue as their number one goal for 2005," he tells us.

Creative workshops set to take off

CREATIVE Tourism of Nelson has produced a brochure which details excellent workshops which are ideal for travellers in town for a few days. They enable visitors to make their own souvenirs!

Warning on future of airlines

INTERNATIONAL controls on airline ownership threaten to drive a number of Asia Pacific carriers into bankruptcy or government ownership within the next five years, warns Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation MD Peter Harbison.

He says governments should move to relax regulatory structures and allow airline consolidation - or face the consequences.

Treetop walkway being considered

NGAI Tahu Tourism is still evaluating the possibility of a treetop walkway and tower at Franz Josef, confirms CEO Adrian Januszkiewicz.

Dent says he has the answer...

CREDIT control. That's the answer to the likes of TAT Travel, which went into receivership in January, reportedly owing \$2.6 million (*IT535*).

All they want is a trans Tasman airline

INVERCARGILL needs only three percent of all Australians who come to New Zealand to fly into the city to pay for the airport runway.

Venture Southland Tourism says that with the runway almost completed it is now a "robust and compelling proposition" to airlines - with strong market and operational drivers that will work in the region's favour.

Only sour note is NZIS

THE "Full Monty" - the full edition of *IT* - is really interesting even if it is time consuming, industry doyen Duncan Hamilton tells us. "(TIANZ CEO) Fiona Luhrs is coming into her own in a sane, sensible and knowledgeable way. (TNZ CEO) George Hickton and the Minister in their quite different ways are positive and constructive but appear to be fully aware of the pitfalls that could - and usually do - occur if vigilance is not on everyone's mind. It really is refreshing. The only sour note was Paul Swain's Immigration Service (NZIS) on tour escorts," he says.

Golden Oldies to be well looked after!
WELLINGTON is to host the World Golden Oldies Rugby Festival in 2006. The week-long event could pump up to \$15 million into the local economy.

Contiki founder into the limelight

CONTIKI founder, Marlborough-based John Anderson has decided to come into the limelight - for the first time since he started a business that eventually introduced 1.6 million young people to the world.

Cable Car Museum popular with public
AS visitor numbers continue to climb at the Wellington Cable Car Museum, it's no surprise that 96 percent of visitors would recommend the experience to others. What is more, three out of four rated their experience "very good" or "good", while no-one was dissatisfied.

Operators not told about health dangers
SOME kayakers and whitewater rafters using Rotorua's Kaituna River are furious that they have not been told about health warnings concerning an outbreak of toxic algal bloom.

Luxury boutique hotel's timely opening
HUNTLEY House is the newest luxury boutique hotel to open in Christchurch. It has 17 large guestrooms, including one and two bedroom suites.

Growth despite Asia decrease
A decrease in visitors to New Zealand from Asian countries could not stifle the increase in international visitors arriving here in January.

Airline profiting from surcharge?
AIRNZ makes millions from fuel surcharges, according to the *Sunday Star-Times*.

Fewer visitors stayed longer
ALTHOUGH slightly fewer visitors stayed overnight in Marlborough during December they stayed longer and thus provided more visitor nights. The month was a record, as was the whole of 2004.

Opportunity in Hawke's Bay

THERE remains an opportunity for someone to provide a four star plus hotel in Hawke's Bay to complement existing accommodation capacity, says Hawke's Bay Tourism CEO Hamish Lowry.

Future looking good!

BY 2010 total visitors to Marlborough are expected to increase by 16 percent to 1.2 million, an average annual growth rate of 2.1 percent. Total visitor nights will increase to 2.5 million, up 18 percent, and visitor expenditure 54 percent to \$320 million.

The latest Marlborough Tourism Monitor also shows the industry provides 2,037 jobs, or 13 percent of all employment. Some 769 are employed in food and beverage services, 530 in accommodation services and 59 in museums and other cultural services.

Burrow appeals for bell sponsorship
GORDON Burrow of Nomads New Zealand is appealing to the industry to help support the World Peace Bell, to be unveiled in Christchurch. The bell costs around \$70,000 and the NZ Peace Bell Association is looking for donations.

Jasons move into Christchurch

JASONS Travel Media Ltd has bought Christchurch-based Brochure Distribution Services. It completes the national coverage offered through the company's comprehensive brochure distribution service.

Marine reserve for Nelson

A new marine reserve has been set up near Nelson.

New holiday parks group setting up

FAMILY Parks of Australia along with 16 top New Zealand parks have released their first directory of their parks this side the Tasman.

Soccer star here for us

AN Argentinian soccer star is in New Zealand this week as part of TNZ's IMP programme. Sergio Goycochea played in two soccer World Cups in Maradona's heyday, is in the FIFA hall of fame and is considered a hero in Argentina.

International students worth millions

INTERNATIONAL students were worth \$46.5 million to the Manukau economy in 2004.

The reason why...

TELECOM is to introduce new payphone access charges at the end of April, confirms the company's public affairs and government relations manager John Goulter. But many tourism operators are furious...

A straw poll of readers shows that 95 percent of those who replied are aghast that Telecom should even consider such charges.