

Brash lambasted for “land grab” claims

HOW can National Party leader Don Brash accuse government of a land grab, when the government already owns the land, wonders Forest and Bird conservation manager Kevin Hackwell. “The real land grab is the proposal by some high country lessees to privatise the entire high country. Dr Brash appeared to be supporting this proposal...”

Adds Mr Hackwell: “It’s ironic that Dr Brash’s speech promoting increased privatisation of the high country occurred at a high county station, the Molesworth, where the private sector failed and the state had to take over.”

Price war fears!

QUEENSTOWN hoteliers are preparing for a possible price war, thanks to the arrival on the market of several hundred luxury apartments to be used for short-term accommodation.

They admit - it could happen soon.

Says one: “History tells us that there will be a price war but common sense would avoid it...”

The rise of Te Puia!

ROTORUA’S New Zealand Maori Arts And Crafts Institute on Monday launched its new name - Te Puia.

Meaning ‘geyser’ or ‘geothermal’, Te Puia is the name of the hill behind Pohutu, reportedly the world’s most easily accessible geyser.

CEO Andrew Te Whaiti says Te Puia has always been a place of sanctuary and now its name is used in association with protecting traditional Maori arts, crafts and culture.

“In times of threat, the people of Whakarewarewa would retreat to the safety of Te Puia, which is ringed by a moat of boiling water and mud - a dangerous place for any attacking party who didn’t know the area.”

The name brings with it an entire rebranding, where Te Puia becomes the umbrella for the three distinct experiences on offer. The branding brief required looking from within and the past, to find the path forward, he says.

It’s important people realise ‘The New Zealand Maori Arts And Crafts

Institute’ name has not been completely lost, but repositioned as one of the three sub-brands.

“Before, there was no distinction between the educational and training aspects of the carving school and the visitor attractions. Most visitors thought they were seeing a carving display rather than a working school set up to protect traditional Maori arts,” Mr Te Whaiti adds.

“By separating the carving and weaving schools from the other attractions, while still retaining The New Zealand Maori Arts And Crafts Institute name, we have clearly positioned it as a school of higher learning.”

Te Puia’s redevelopment plans include an enlarged working space for the carving and weaving schools and a new exhibition gallery.

Mr Te Whaiti says the sub-brands will make it easier to market the destination to appropriate audiences.

“The geothermal valley and cultural experiences on offer at Te Puia are the biggest drawcards for tourists. However, not all international travellers are interested in both.

“Tourists from countries with extensive cultural backgrounds, such as India and Australia, are often here to see the geothermal valley and Pohutu, which to them is a spectacular site.

“English tourists on the other hand are fascinated by Maori culture. By separating the three

(Over)

TEN years ago in IT...

MORE than 77 percent of operators are confident they'll make more money this year, than they did in 1994, judging by a PriceWaterhouse survey. The company questioned 400 executives and it was found that: the industry is more confident; more than 58 percent of companies exceeded their sales expectations last year; operators are investing in marketing, staff training and capital expenditure; there's concern as to whether infrastructure and the environment can sustain the predicted growth in arrivals.

There's also growing support for the argument that we should be catering to smaller groups of high yield visitors.

HOTELS are the most profitable sector of the industry, according to the PriceWaterhouse survey.

Some 27 percent reported increases of more than 20 percent last year alone.

And price rises seem to be on the way with 68 percent of respondents, with 44 percent of these expecting the rises within six months.

QUEENSTOWN Lakes District councillors have voted to reject mass tourism goals set by NZTB (now TNZ) and that they urge government to alter its marketing strategy to target "appreciative longstay" visitors - and to move out of markets from which we cannot draw such custom.

They also want to have greater input into government decisions relating to tourism.

An NZTIA (now TIANZ)/ NZTB/ Queenstown Promotion Board seminar was postponed due to differences between the council and industry on mass tourism.

Board GM Fraser Skinner said the workshop was called off "due to circumstances beyond our control."

Earlier, Cllr Barry Lawrence spoke out on the "widening gulf between informed local tourism business opinion and NZTB."

FLOATAIR and Sounds Air say they lost 40 percent of summer business, thanks to new Cook Strait fast ferries.

The rise of Te Puia!

(From pg 1) aspects of Te Puia we can market ourselves more appropriately to the various tourist markets."

Korero Tuku Iho - a nature walk - was also officially opened. It has been designed to share the stories of Te Puia and the history of the Whakarewarewa Thermal Valley. The section is only a third of what will eventually be a two-hour stroll.

Mr Te Whaiti says Korero Tuku Iho offers an interactive experience of the sights and sounds, using minimal signage.

"The intuitive nature of the walk overcomes language barriers to traditional signage and gives tour guides great tools for story-telling.

"Walkers will need to study their surroundings carefully to see things like tools, carvings, drying berries and flax racks. They'll also be encouraged to take their shoes off and feel the warmth of the path and sometimes even the earth's vibrations."

TNZ CEO George Hickton - who was unable to attend due to fog at Wellington airport - says developments such as Te Puia are welcome.

"The sorts of people Tourism New Zealand is targeting to attract to New Zealand are very interested in Maori culture, and are seeking an authentic and genuine exposure to it. Te Puia offers the kind of experience these visitors are looking for."

The rebranding will help the attraction stand out. "I would like to congratulate the team behind Te Puia for the research and development they have done to further develop their way of standing out from the crowd."

ITOC pleased with Minister's China comments

ITOC supports the views of Tourism Minister Mark Burton on the China market, that we should develop as a boutique destination, rather than go for "bulk" (IT538).

CEO Peter Lowry says ITOC has met TNZ, TIANZ, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and NZIS in a bid to find solutions to problems in the market. "In Australia, government licensing is not really working effectively and they seem to have worse problems than we do. We are working with our kindred association ATEC and new CEO Matt Hingerty will participate in the ITOC conference in Nelson from July 27 to 29."

The ITOC board has recommended that government and the industry support ITOC being seen as the self-regulated organisation maintaining standards and quality control for tour operators.

"This is our prime objective for this year and members are getting very angry about the damage unprofessional non-approved tour operators are doing to the good name of New Zealand tourism and quality branding."

ITOC China portfolio group chairman Dave Hogan tells *IT* the Minister's speech, where he attacked unprofessional conduct by fly-by-night operators, shows government is "onto the problem."

By luxury lodge pioneer Reg Turner

WHEN I first visited "God's Own" it was in 1965, and I was on leave from duty with the Royal Air Force. At that time SPANZ was fighting the then government in power for equal rights to compete with NAC, the government run airline. SPANZ founder Rex Daniell offered me the job of going to Wellington to fight for the company as its representative and save it from the unfair tactics of government regulations determined to close it down, as SPANZ was a threat to NAC - being innovative, imaginative, and private enterprise.

Resign

I returned to England with the intent to resign my commission, and work for SPANZ. Alas the government put SPANZ into liquidation six months later and my opportunity to help save it was lost.

This was my first example of a New Zealand government stopping a pioneer of aviation tourism. It took another, Mount Cook Airlines, to give a government airline a challenge. In 1965 I saw the world as it used to be, and maybe the way the world wanted to be.

Return

It was not until 1972 after terminating my career with the RAF, and travelling the world, that I again arrived in Auckland with the dream of creating my fishing lodge on one of the lakes near Rotorua. Gladly New Zealand was still the way the world used to be. After much fighting the Town and Country Planning Act, and the nimby attitude of the lake residents, - this took two years and wasted legal costs - I was able to create Solitaire Lodge at Lake Tarawera. I was pioneering the lodge philosophy, which I had gleaned from staying at exotic luxury lodges in Africa, the West Indies, and Pacific Islands.

"No government has *really* supported tourism"

As I fought the unbelievable bureaucracy of the Labour, and subsequent National governments, I realised that tourism was not on the radar scope of their manifests or policies.

From 1974 to the present day, no government has given the high office position to a Minister of Tourism that the industry deserves. Somehow, appointed ministers are always the Cinderella of ministerial positions.

Enthusiasm

As tourism becomes the number one earner of foreign exchange, it still is not given the priority it deserves in the realms of government. No government has really supported this industry, and it has only got to its position by the enthusiasm of its entrepreneurs, and the fact is that New Zealand is the most beautiful country in the world.

However, having said that, the bad news is, New Zealand is rapidly becoming the way the world is! The fact that crime is hitting the tourist. The fact that we kill eminent visitors on our roads, and in tragic light aircraft crashes. The fact that we are heading for bulk tourism and not quality tourism. The fact is, we are destroying the very back yard that makes this country special.

When Murray McCully was minister, in his brief time, he addressed the inaugural Cultural Tourism Symposium in Nelson, with the headlines, New Zealand should be marketed as a "boutique destination for the discerning traveller", rather than target the mass market.

That is why I pioneered the exclusive lodges, to primarily target that market.

Rush

Now, in the rush to please the mass market, we are suffering foreign guides poaching the Milford Track, foreign trout anglers acting as fishing guides, and treading on the toes of our professional fishing guides. Selling off beautiful

environments to foreign investors, because Kiwis can't afford to purchase them, but worse, allowing DoC to lock off special areas. We are now suffering the beginning of "tourist people pollution", and spoiling the country I fell in love with 40 years ago.

Attitudes

If one examines the attitudes of National and Labour governments, with their "anti small business" laws, and compliance costs, in the form of red tape, RMA, OSH, ACC, Holidays Act, Transit signage policies, and the most stupid Sunday Trading, Christmas Day, Easter Day, Anzac Day laws, and so on, it is a wonder that anyone wants to get involved in the tourism or hospitality industry, as an entrepreneur, or employer.

Whilst we promote this country in a manner that I disagree with, i.e. bulk visitor numbers - and to this I mean China, and Asia - the future is not good for the very environment that tourists are coming to visit.

Sensible

It will always be more sensible to have 500,000 tourists spending \$1,000 per person per day than two million tourists spending \$100 per person per day!

For the future we must have the vision to start now, and make this country the "Swiss watch" of world tourism. Expensive, exclusive, and with quality experiences, unequalled in other competitive destinations.

Reflect

We must have a government and a tourism policy that reflects this, and a minister who understands this, and a bureaucracy that promotes this. At this point, neither National, or Labour governments, have, in the last 30 years done this.

Somehow we stumble through, with the enthusiastic personnel, who love the tourism industry, and kid ourselves that the tourists will still keep coming, whatever we do, or do not do!

Name Change

One of New Zealand's iconic visitor destinations has undergone a name change.

The New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute, Guardians of Te Whakarewarewa Geothermal Reserve has changed its name to Te Puia, which means "Geyser" in Maori. It is also the name given to the hill behind the valley and also the name given to an old fortified Maori 'Pa' site on the hill.

It was a site that was attacked many times by marauding invaders, but was never conquered. It is name that better embraces what the visitor

experience is all about, and also one that in years to come will be better able to be recognized and appreciated as a world class visitor destination without the present day confusion as to what and where the experience is.

There is a lot of positive connotations in the name, both as representing one of the main features of the attraction, in that it is home of 'Pohutu' New Zealand's best known geyser, and also from the old fortified pa site, that, like the present day attractions, had been attacked many times but it had never been conquered, and still remains proud and strong to the present day.

The name change to Te Puia is just the first step on a journey that will see the entire complex undergo some major changes in the next 18 months.

A new visitor centre, carving and weaving schools, museum, café, 500 seat restaurant, a new innovative interactive attraction with state of the art technology, new viewing platforms which will give visitors world class views, are all part of the upgrade, and will all be completed by October of 2006. The upgrade will be done in such a way that the normal day to day running of the complex will not be disrupted so it will be business as usual.

One of the attractions that will be finished by the end of March 2005 will be the new interactive nature walk called Korero Tuku Iho which means 'stories handed down through time'.

This is a new walk that can be guided or unguided and takers the visitor on a journey of discovery, explaining the meaning of plants, trees, water and wildlife and what their significance was to the Maori people both spiritually and practically by way of foods and medicines.



Bewilderment at Massey decision to pull out of tourism

AT a time when employers are experiencing difficulty in recruiting staff, Massey University's decision to can its tourism courses is a hard one to understand, says ATTTO CEO Gayle Sheridan.

"Advice from training providers offering ATTTO qualifications is that their graduates are sought after. Perhaps Massey's decision is a reflection on their move several years ago to offer their own diploma programme," she adds.

Her comments follow reports to *IT* that Massey has confirmed to staff that tourism will be closed at the end of this academic year in November.

Adds one observer: "It beggars belief that an industry of global proportions is of no interest to a university which in the past have been leaders in tourism academic research, tourism education and tourism training.

"From an academic position the industry has ripe research pickings and from an applied position - well, the industry is just crying out for people who can actually do the hands-on work." We are told that 17 positions will have gone by the end of the year.

Tony Staniford, Visiting Fellow at Massey from 1994 to 2001 tells us: "It was always going to be a difficult process integrating the Wellington Polytechnic and its programmes into the university's system and academic

culture. Basically the tourism-related programmes the Wellington Polytech taught - catering and travel agents - were technical not academic subjects.

"Although they tried to redesign these programmes to fit the university model it was obvious from the start that this could not be achieved," he adds.

"The level of most students for both programmes was not high enough for university standards nor did they have the time to add an additional degree level course. Most students on these courses wanted to complete their diplomas and get a job.

"So it was not surprising that the Wellington campus eventually did away with the courses but the gap will be well filled by the other polytechnics in the Wellington region."

What is more disturbing is that the first university to introduce tourism to its management and marketing degrees has now all but abandoned all tourism teaching both at Palmerston North and Albany. "Especially when the demand for such teaching would be highest in Auckland. Many of the tourism programmes at other universities are run by teachers who have previously worked at Massey and one wonders why."

He has never supported a tourism degree because it has no practical application in the work place - only in research and academia. "But the universities are in a competitive market place and what one doesn't provide will soon be made available from another provider."

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Coach company says police complaints are “storm in teacup”

REDWOOD Coachlines, Christchurch, says claims it took 70 Special Olympic competitors on a hair-raising ride in unroadworthy buses are just a storm in a teacup. Nelson police are quoted as saying that two coaches had faulty brakes and steering. But owner Rod Smith denies the vehicles were in bad shape. They had recently passed WOF tests.

Media reports say one coach was damaged on a journey to Nelson when a following ute driver became concerned at seeing the vehicle's locker door open and pulled in front of it, forcing it to stop suddenly.

The driver was unaware the incident had caused the brake pipe to crack. Meanwhile, some lights on the second bus were broken in Nelson when the driver accidentally clipped the corner of a building, Mr Smith said. “Things like this do happen. It's just coincidental.”

The group terminated its contract with Redwood and returned home with another company.

Nelson police says they tested the buses after getting a call from Special Olympic management and found “serious problems” with them.

The problems included a “completely inadequate braking system” on one bus and “major defects” in the steering of the other. They were ordered off the road.

Statement due from Ngai Tahu

NGAI Tahu is said to be threatening to take the government to court to enforce its customary right to carry out economic activity within South Island national parks, including a \$100 million gondola linking Queenstown and Milford. But neither Ngai Tahu nor the Conservation Authority are commenting. However, IT understands the reports are “less than accurate” and a statement will be made soon.

Nats told to commit to DoC budget increase

FOREST and Bird is urging the National Party to commit to increasing DoC's budget after the party's conservation spokesman Simon Power criticised the department's efforts to save threatened species.

“Publicly owned conservation land is not only crucial for the survival of our indigenous flora and fauna, it also underpins our economy. It protects our soil and water, plays a key role in New Zealand's tourist trade and is the basis of the clean green image which farmers rely on to sell their products overseas,” says conservation manager Kevin Hackwell.

“We've heard a lot of criticism of DoC's capacity to protect nature, but no commitments yet from National that it would increase its funding.”

He adds: “In this election Forest and Bird will be looking for commitments to increase funding to DoC from all political parties so that DoC can do the job New Zealanders want it to do.

“By suggesting that managing high country conservation land is not DoC's role, Simon Power seems to have forgotten that threatened species need somewhere to live. Many of New Zealand's threatened species are found only in our high country. Giving DoC resources to protect threatened species will be pointless if the land they live on is privatised, subdivided and developed,” he adds. “National is wrong to accuse DoC of being a poor manager of high country conservation land.”

AirNZ long haul product due August

AIRNZ has unveiled the dates its new long haul product will be rolled out on dedicated routes.

The airline's in-flight product featuring lie-flat beds and a new premium economy section will be available on Auckland-San Francisco services from August 7. Boeing 747-400 services between Auckland, LA and London on flights NZ1 and NZ2 will be the next available from November 5 and November 6 for the flight departing London.

Pacific Premium Economy fares are available at an average 25 percent more than standard economy fares, with prices starting from \$2,399 for Auckland to LA return, \$2,499 return to San Francisco and \$2,999 return to London.

The refitted 747s will be configured with 36 Business Premier seats at the front of the main deck and a further 10 on the upper deck, 23 Pacific Premium Economy seats also on the upper deck and 324 Pacific Economy seats on the main deck.

Wired for sound

LE Race event organisers will be ‘wired for sound’ for this year's race, the seventh, on April 2. They are being provided with 80 hand-held radios.

“The safety of the event is our highest priority,” says organiser Astrid Andersen.

Up to 1,000 are expected to take part in the 100km event which starts in Christchurch and ends in Akaroa.

Ms Andersen was fined \$10,000 after the death of a competitor in the 2001 Le Race, which she organised.

This was later quashed by the Court of Appeal.

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

Councils should plan for tourism, says Hickton

TNZ CEO George Hickton says local government needs to realise the potential that tourism holds for regional economic development - and should be planning for it.

He emphasised the importance of tourism to an audience of local government authorities at the Regional Development Conference in Napier this week.

Mr Hickton said that ongoing regional tourism development will help to ensure that the regions continue to attract and accommodate a sustainable level of domestic and international visitors.

"In order to achieve this, we need to ensure that the plans, infrastructure and marketing strategies are in place to make the most of and effectively manage tourism opportunities."

To develop tourism in each region, he said the focus should be on the quality of the tourism experiences being delivered and on continuing to work to establish unique tourism selling points. "It's important that you have regional differentiation, so that you can communicate to our visitors exactly why they must come to your region."

Every region of New Zealand has something special to offer visitors - not just the big famous experiences but the little things, the local gems, which really make a holiday memorable.

150 join AA rewards

MORE than 150 travel and leisure partners have joined the AA Rewards programme since it started to include them last year.

National sales manager Bevan Dale says: "AA Tourism looks for partners that deliver a high quality visitor experience to join the travel partners in the AA Rewards programme. Latest to join was the New Zealand National Maritime Museum. Details: www.aa.co.nz/rewards, 021-361798 or bdale@aa.co.nz.

Little to leave shipshape BoP

AFTER more than four years as Tourism Bay of Plenty CEO Jim Little has decided to move on.

"My first responsibility is to ensure a smooth changeover and after that I will decide the next move," he tells us. "The state of the industry in the Bay of Plenty is excellent with a 24 percent increase in international guest nights, 27 cruise ship visits confirmed for 2005/2006 including Diamond Princess coming eight times, QE11 once and Statendam five times.

"There's also one new 120 room four plus star hotel being built, which should be completed by January 2006 - and another should get the go-ahead by May.

"The Hotel on Devonport's 36 suite type rooms is doing well and the new Kingsview Apartments will have 40 suite-type rooms which are due to open before the end of the year.

"The meetings and conference business is growing and more events are coming to Tauranga. Bob Clarkson has the go ahead to build an 8,000 square metre exhibition centre by Baypark Stadium. So you could say the industry is in a very healthy state in the Western Bay of Plenty."

Announcing Mr Little's departure Tourism Bay of Plenty chairman Jeff Major says it's time for a new approach to the RTO. "Jim's strengths are clearly in marketing and sales as evidenced by the significant progress which has been achieved in establishing the region as a preferred visitor destination. The new tourism and events strategy being developed will involve a different focus and potentially a new approach to management. "Jim was initially contracted by Tauranga City Council to rebuild Tourism Bay of Plenty into a credible and effective RTO as well as lifting the profile in all of the visitor markets such as domestic, international and the conference sector....Jim has made a huge contribution to tourism within the sector."

National park's aim is niche tourism - PM

PM Helen Clark has disputed a claim by Stewart Islanders that a \$1.7 million 50 percent Health Ministry subsidy for sewerage works does not constitute special funding. The sewerage scheme fund was specifically for smaller regions, she says.

"It's not as though nothing's been done."

Government officials are still "working through the issues" and will come up with an answer when they are ready.

The costs of keeping the island community alive has to be shared by local government, central government and private concerns. Coastal property is at a premium throughout New Zealand, while in Stewart Island's case a lucrative fishing industry has also dried up, the PM adds.

But the opening of Rakiura National Park in 2002 has created more tourism impetus for the island, although niche and not mass tourism is the aim of the national park.

Treble Cone chairlift

WORK has started on Treble Cone's \$5 million chairlift, which should be ready in time for this season.

Adventure operator now based at Hell's Gate

KAITIAKI Adventures is now based at Hell's Gate and Wai Ora Spa, Rotorua. The company has a 100 sq m base where clients may change into and out of their rafting gear.

Manager Jason Wright says that as well as offering water-based experiences clients will now be able to enjoy a relaxing hot geothermal mud bath, pure sulphurous spa or massage afterwards. He adds that an in-depth personalised, cultural and historical journey is provided as visitors choose whether to raft the bush clad canyons, plunge down the seven metre Tutea Falls or go white water sledging. Details: 029-2371469 or enquiries@kaitiaki.co.nz.

Focus on - AJ Hackett Bungy...Focus on - AJ Hackett Bungy

It started in a caravan!

WHAT started in a humble onsite caravan now has an \$8 million public facility and is a household word around the globe: bungy.

AJ Hackett Bungy was launched at Queenstown's Kawerau Bridge 18 years ago.

Since then the company has split with founder A.J.Hackett running his own franchises overseas - where he lives - and New Zealand-based Henry van Asch operating AJ Hackett Bungy New Zealand. The same brand - just different companies. It's called "tenancy in common."

While AJ now runs sites in the US, Germany, France and Switzerland, "ours" has also been successful at other Queenstown sites: the Ledge Bungy, Nevis High Wire and Pipeline. And on Auckland Harbour Bridge, where it is combined with a climb.

Lifespan

But what is the perceived lifespan of the bungy phenomena?

Mr van Asch: "It's been going over 16 years so far and there are no signs of it slowing. We have worked hard to ensure that the act of bungy doesn't become mainstream but is still accessible to the mainstream.

He tells us: "Most people have yet to do it. Most in the world are still intrigued, or scared, by it. In fact, most people who bungy are definitely scared, and most people who think about it are really scared by the whole concept. So it still produces a major reaction in people. It will be around for a long time yet!"

Percentage

Mr van Asch says his company attracts about six percent of all visitors to Queenstown.

"It goes up or down half a percent. To maintain this percentage is important to get in touch with our fundamentals and work with the people who understand we are committed to New Zealand. They remember we are here. They talk with their customers and know they can have a great time with us."

While other adventure activities have come, and some have gone, bungy carries on being popular - because it increases its offering.

Gravity

"Unlike other gravity related activities 'pure' bungy is something you can experience on your own, without an instructor. There is nothing quite like the physical and emotional forces that bungy offers.

"It's a different thing. There is nothing which combines everything that bungy has. Whether that will emerge who knows. It's certainly showing no signs of being overtaken."

Why? "Because it combines a bizarre physical activity that flies in the face of basic survival instincts, and an interesting and carefully designed and constructed technical machine, plus a highly trained team who take care of people physically, emotionally and intellectually.

Most importantly it combines someone's ability and desire to do something with all those other things in a beautiful environment.

"So," Mr van Asch adds, "it's actually a major combination of things which people have to get their head around: do they trust the company? Do they trust themselves? Do they trust the piece of rubber? Can they actually jump off?"

On their own

He says clients are never pushed! "People talk them through what will happen and eventually they are out there on their own. It's their own thing. They have to do it by themselves.

"It is a very individual thing and once it has occurred and they do get off the edge, for whatever the reasons are, or whatever they have to get themselves to do to go, they go through this bizarre motion which is also exhilarating because it's physically unusual.

"Afterwards they are able to reflect on their experience and think about what they have done and that's where the core experience of bungy is - as once they have overcome everything they feel fantastic.

"They have pushed themselves beyond their limits onto a new realm of thinking or physical. "It's a lot more complex than people probably care to think about. Bungy jumping is such an interesting thing to look at, being so bizarre, and still quite intriguing because most people are scared shitless about gravity.

Thinking

"But people who do it actually don't think about what they are doing in great depth. They don't get into the essence of it like we do. I have been thinking about it for 18 years or so."

Is a beautiful environment important? Mr van Asch says that at the height of bungy mania overseas there were about 450 sites in the US alone. But most were at sites like supermarket carparks....

"Yet the experience is quite primeval. You are getting down to core instincts and really reaching down into your psyche to do it.

"So having it in a wild or natural environment is very important. It is certainly important for us as we see it as being an essential aspect of the quality of the experience..."

Product

As important as the jump itself, from the company's point of view, are the secondary products like photographs, videos, memorabilia and other merchandise. Visitors want to take away something to remind them of the experience. "This, too, is very important and it extends the product."

Why buy the Auckland Bridge Climb business?

"What we do is heavily related to bridges and we saw it as a good business if the climb and jump were combined. But we are essentially focused on gravity-related things.

(To pg9)

Focus on - AJ Hackett Bungy

(from pg8) “And gravity-related activities is the direction we might develop further over the next few years.”

How is the Auckland Bridge jump doing? “It’s a different market to Queenstown as people tend to be in a transitory phase or a planning phase and Auckland is not really an adventure destination. Tourism is not our principal market at this stage, although it may change as people look for more adventure in the cities. At present travellers tend to head out of cities for adventure. So our market is domestic and corporate.”

Philosophy

So, what’s the company philosophy? “To develop gravity related personal challenge activities but more importantly to instill bungy as a ‘must do’ once in a lifetime activity.”

Mr van Asch says the base facility at the Kawarau Bridge, the Kawarau Bungy Centre, enables visitors to further understand bungy so that one day they may feel more inspired to do it. We want everyone to experience bungy one day as we know how good it is going to make them feel.

Reputation

People have died overseas bungy jumping. So far no one has in New Zealand. If it did occur would that be the end of AJ Hackett Bungy?

He replies” “People have died skiing and that’s not stopped people skiing. People die in cars every day and that’s not stopped people... AJ Hackett Bungy has a worldwide reputation for our commitment to safety. Our safety systems and procedures have always and will continue to be rigorously tested and externally assessed.”

Are there too many adventure activities? “It’s not that there are too many, but the industry does run a risk of suffering from ‘me-tooism’ The future of the strength of New Zealand tourism relies on our ability to innovate when it comes to adventure entertainment and adrenalin for our visitors. Visitors don’t need endless alternatives of similar products. It’s imperative that we develop activities through the eyes of our customers.”

Fear

How did Mr van Asch feel after his first jump in 1986?

“It was at about 25m over water and I’d already jumped it without a bungy. So I probably had slightly less fear than when I first jumped. It was definitely highly exciting. I’m a bit of a ‘tech head’ really, using mechanics and engineering to push our human limits.” He adds: “I was already doing that at the time, anyway, with speed skiing, just getting faster and faster...in the environment of high performance sport and a high level of challenge and continuing to expand my horizon in that area and bungy just clipped on side of what I was already doing.

“Then I was doing bigger jumps and things started to get more exciting after that.”

TV crews follow 20 Japanese students through NZ

SOME 20 Japanese high school students are helping to change Japanese perceptions of New Zealand.

They are being brought here by TNZ as a tie-in with the opening of the World Exposition (Expo) in Aichi, Japan. They will be accompanied by two TV crews. The resulting documentary will screen to 5 million people in central Japan in July.

“As well as having an impact on the students themselves, it is hoped that when the documentary is broadcast it will encourage more people to go to the New Zealand Pavilion at Expo, and to think about visiting New Zealand themselves,” says TNZ CEO George Hickton.

“The students will be experiencing a range of activities in New Zealand that fit with this year’s Expo theme - ‘Nature’s Wisdom’ - splitting into groups to experience New Zealand around tourism, energy, conservation and ‘using technology to enhance our lives’.”

Adds Mr Hickton: “It is normally very hard to get broadcast crews to this country from Japan so this is a fantastic added benefit from our presence at Aichi.”

Englishman killed in ice fall

AN English visitor died on the Franz Josef glacier on Saturday after falling into a narrow crevasse during a guided ice climb.

Anthony Paul Gaging, 52, had been taking part in a trek trip to the Defiance Ice Fall when he tripped and fell.

Summer WAS a boomer!

INTERNATIONAL tourism’s economic importance has increased again on the back of a booming summer season.

StatisticsNZ figures show there were 806,000 international visitors in the December to February quarter. These contributed around \$2,500 million to the economy, an \$84 million increase from the same quarter 2003/4.

TNZ CEO George Hickton says: “These figures once again reinforce tourism as New Zealand’s largest export earner.”

Arrivals for February were 250,070 up 5.1 percent, with big increases from Asian markets and the US.

“Chinese New Year fell in February in 2005, rather than January, and its influence can be seen in the significant increases in arrivals from our Asian markets, in particular China (up 57.7 percent), Hong Kong (up 170.2 percent) and Singapore (up 37.7 percent). These increases show New Zealand remains an appealing holiday choice for the Chinese New Year period,” says Mr Hickton. “Another important element is that arrivals from Australia were up 3.4 percent. This comes on the back of a 22.3 percent increase in February 2004 - a 25 percent increase in two years.”

There were 2.3 million visitors in the February year, - up 10.2 percent.

Education and tourism closely linked in Palmy

EDUCATION and tourism are closely linked in Palmerston North. "In a sense they have a symbiotic relationship," says Destination Manawatu CEO Kathy Gibson.

Ms Gibson, who is a member of the New Zealand International Education Advisory Board, says international students have a direct and positive impact on Palmerston North.

"They make the city more cosmopolitan and a huge numbers of businesses have and events have resulted directly from this. - ethnic restaurants; Japanese bars; Asian nightclubs; ethnic food, grocery outlets, goods and services; ethnic/Asian outlets at the city's Saturday and Sunday markets." She adds that Palmerston North has been recognised as a key education centre of excellence. "On the face of it, it seems almost improbable that this city of 75,000 could have risen to such a challenge. Historically, it was viewed by many as a service town to the wider rural community of Manawatu."

Culturally diverse

But now Palmerston North is seen as New Zealand's most culturally diverse city. Massey attracts academics, students and visiting family members from all corners of the globe and there is very little that can't be studied there today.

Having recognised its potential as a tourist destination, Massey responded by launching campus tours.

Led by Massey University block course and seminar coordinator Sarah Siebert, the university provides four options that must be pre-booked. Of particular interest is the university's Veterinary School which "hosted" many horses that appeared in the Lord of the Rings.

Also popular with visitors is the UCOL campus and the International Pacific College.

Sakura Festival

Every year, the latter hosts the Palmerston North Sakura Festival timed to coincide with the blossoming of the college's cherry trees.

It is one of the most eagerly awaited events on Palmerston North's calendar, Ms Gibson says. "So too are IPC's graduation days when parents and family members fly in from Asia to celebrate their children's success. Palmerston North is highly geared towards making visitors attending Massey University, UCOL and IPC graduation ceremonies feel very welcome.

Graduations are an exciting time for the whole city and the opportunity to host international visitors is relished by all."

Seminars on how to make most of shows

SHOW and exhibition expert Colin Green is holding seminars at the Barrycourt Conference Centre, Auckland, on May 10 and at Mystery Creek Conference Centre, Hamilton, next day.

"Successfully Exhibiting at Trade and Consumer Shows - Everywhere!" is a day-long session devoted to showing any organisation how to produce outstanding results at exhibitions.

The seminar draws on Mr Green's research and experience in Australia, New Zealand, the US, Europe and Asia. Details: www.bestofshow.co.nz or colin.green@bestofshow.co.nz.

Cardrona management restructures

THE increase in size of Cardrona Alpine Resort's business, together with the departure of long-running operations manager, Shaun Gilbertson, has resulted in a restructuring of the ski area's management.

The role of operations manager has been discontinued, with two new positions created in its place. Gary Husband, who has been with Cardrona since 1994, is the new field manager, while Andy Chapman, formerly of Coronet Peak and Turoa, is the new services manager. Mr Gilbertson is continuing as a consultant.

Luxurious oasis ready for opening

THE \$85 million five star SkyCity Grand Hotel and new signature restaurant - Dine by Peter Gordon - are on track to open on April 6. The property features 21 levels and 316 rooms.

Operations manager Paul Gallop says the hotel will offer a luxurious oasis in the central city.

"The hotel design is absolutely stunning. Guests of the Grand will be offered something truly unique - a five star experience in the heart of the city that's contemporary and friendly and often surprising," he says.

"Already advance bookings indicate that the Skycity Grand Hotel, combined with the new SkyCity Auckland Convention Centre, will provide a significant boost to New Zealand tourism.

He adds: "We now have the ability to host larger international conventions from the lucrative top end of the market that expects five star service and facilities. The location of the Grand above the new SkyCity Auckland Convention Centre and linked by over-bridge to SkyCity Auckland, means large scale convention guests have a world of accommodation and entertainment options all conveniently located under the one roof."

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IRD may be “coming off the fence” over GST on itinerary preparation

IS IRD about to insist that ALL New Zealand itinerary preparation services for overseas clients must now attract GST? GoToursNZ's John Fitzwater thinks so. He says that after seeking a ruling from the department as to why his company has had to pay GST on itinerary preparation services when others have been given an exemption, after three years of sitting on the fence, IRD may be changing its mind.

Mr Fitzwater has asked if the IRD is aware that by declining/refusing the request for zero-rating of itinerary planning services, that it is placing New Zealand registered companies at a competitive disadvantage vis-a-vis overseas operators?

If this has been considered, what is the IRD's stance on this scenario, he wondered.

“In fact, the policy of disallowing zero-rating will quite probably be reducing IRD's tax receipts by ensuring that many overseas tourists will choose a US/UK/EU based itinerary planner over a New Zealand based one - that's not doing IRD or us any good,” he pointed out. Now it appears the department has decided that the portion that he believed should be zero rated is deemed to be part of the supply in New Zealand and therefore attract GST.

Stuart Ching of Nelson IRD recently said: “Various offices around the country were interpreting this differently and the IRD is bringing out a ruling that will appear in a TIB (Tax Information Bulletin) in the future. We are not sure whether this will be retrospective, or not...”

But, either way, from now on it seems all companies preparing such itineraries will have to pay GST, according to Mr Fitzwater.

New PATA forecasts to show how industry may develop

NOW, more than ever, we need some indication as to how regional disasters, instability and setbacks affect travel and tourism flows across the region, says PATA. “The international visitor will return. History has shown us that in the past. But it has also shown us that they return unequally from various source markets. And they return at different rates to each destination.”

PATA's new series of forecasts will provide some indication of how the rapid growth in international visitor arrivals seen through 2003 and 2004 will develop and expand over the medium-term to 2007.

There are numerous factors influencing the forecasts: the recovery following the tsunami, the emergence of low-cost airlines, the rapidly rising middle-classes across Asia, and significant advances in avionics leading to new generation aircraft that will change how we move around the world. Combined, these factors look set to dramatically increase intra-regional travel flows, PATA adds. “Whatever the changes we expect - and those we don't - the travel industry needs an anchor, a meticulously researched set of predictions on which to plan future strategies. *Asia Pacific Tourism Forecasts 2005-2007*, produced by the eminent scholars Professor Lindsay Turner and Professor Stephen Witt, provide that anchor in an increasingly turbulent world...”

The forecasts cost US\$350 for members. Otherwise it's US\$499 for PATA chapters and non-members. Contact: patcharin@PATA.org.

DoC spending \$2.7M on Molesworth

DOC is to spend \$2.7 million over the next five years enhancing Molesworth Station as a visitor destination and park for conservation and farming. The 180,000 hectare park is the largest station in the country.

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Tourism & Lifestyle Opportunities

SPECTACULAR - development site seldom available, presently 6 motel units and owners residence. Panoramic views, a must to view. Nicki Kempthorne 0274541175 Rex Kempthorne 0276015233

MARUIA RIVER LODGE - Near Murchison. This luxury 5 star, world class fishing lodge is for sale - complete with its own airstrip and hanger. Enquiries upwards of \$2million negotiable.Carolynn Crawford 027 247 8716 Linda Hamilton 021 631 878.

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