

24 October 2024

Media release

Kia ora! Labour Weekend marks start of tourism season

Tourism operators are looking forward to a great few months ahead with Labour weekend and Easter marking the traditional start and finish of the New Zealand tourism industry's high season.

Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA) Chief Executive Rebecca Ingram says operators nationwide are preparing to provide incredible experiences that visitors can remember for a lifetime. While the quieter winter has been challenging for many tourism businesses, feedback from TIA members suggests good forward bookings for the summer and general optimism for the 12 months ahead.

"The combination of kiwis escaping for a well-earned holiday and international visitors arriving will have a positive impact on communities across the country this summer in terms of vibrancy, spend and employment opportunities. Many business owners will be putting the finishing touches on plans in preparation, and are looking forward to being busy," Ms Ingram says.

LyLo Managing Director Tim Alpe said his team "are super excited for the upcoming summer and hoping to see good demand across all LyLo properties".

"LyLo is all about meeting other likeminded travellers and it's our role to ensure we provide unique experiences that bring people together. Whether that's organising day trips to Waiheke Island, morning yoga classes or hitting the CBD bars on an organised pub crawl, a massive focus for LyLo crew over summer is providing more than just a bed. Summer weather makes it easier to embrace all that New Zealand has to offer."

LyLo, a New Zealand Tourism Awards Booking.com Resilience and Innovation category finalist, operates lifestyle hotels in locations across the country and has recently opened in Australia.

"Like all tourism players, summer is key for our business and the signs are positive that we will see our properties full of visitors. Summer also brings a lot more events such as Sail GP, Laneway, Rhythm and Alps, and Cup week to our cities, which are an important source of business," Mr Alpe says.

Hobbiton Movie Set's General Manager Tourism Shayne Forrest said the summer ahead is looking positive, with strong forward bookings and demand already in place.

"We're anticipating the summer season to be a sellout, as it was last year. International visitors have returned to our beautiful country quicker than anticipated," Mr Forrest says.

"Last summer was the big change to the Hobbiton Movie Set tour with the addition of the Bagshot Row interior Hobbit Holes. With this addition, we increased our experience from 2 hours to 2.5 hours and reduced our tour departures to ensure we offer the best visitor experience possible.

"This summer we will continue to refine our processes and enjoy hosting visitors from New Zealand and around the world. We're really looking forward to hosting them and sharing our slice of real Middle-earth," Mr Forrest says.

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The Matamata-based experience is a finalist in this year's tourism awards for the NZME Visitor Experience Award, Johnston's Coachlines Tourism Excellence Award (Large Business), and the Booking.com Resilience and Innovation Award.

Coming summer an important one for tourism

Tourism businesses and many hospitality and retail businesses are preparing to welcome visitors from across Aotearoa New Zealand and from overseas.

"Tourism brings economic diversity, resilience, generates jobs and fosters regional prosperity while showcasing our cultural richness and fostering pride of place. We're looking forward to making a difference this season to the over 300,000 kiwis directly and indirectly employed by tourism," says Ms Ingram.

Overall, in the year to August, international visitor arrivals are up 19.9% over the previous year but this is about 83% of 2019 levels. However, the industry still has a way to go to restore its place as the country's number one export earner, as per the industry's goal set out in *Tourism 2050: A Blueprint for Impact*.

"We always thought it would take a few years for tourism to regain its momentum and this is proving to be the case with holiday arrivals to New Zealand plateauing. There is opportunity to make an even greater contribution to our economy and the communities we're part of. We believe that, with the right settings, tourism could be worth \$55 billion a year by 2030," Ms Ingram says.

For more information, please contact TIA Strategic Communications Advisor Hamish Stuart – hamish.stuart@tia.org.nz or (021) 073-8455.

KEY FACTS

- The industry had an expenditure of \$37.7 billion for the year ending March 2023, about 90% of what was recorded for the same period for 2020.
- Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA) is New Zealand tourism's peak industry body. We are the only independent association that represents all sectors of New Zealand's large and diverse tourism industry.
- TIA has about 1200 member businesses, ranging from small owner/operators to large publicly listed tourism corporates and international hotel chains.
- TIA leads implementation of the industry's *Tourism Sustainability Commitment* which aims to see every tourism business contributing positively to our people, culture, environment and economy.
- TIA delivers a comprehensive and diverse range of industry events including TRENZ, New Zealand Tourism Awards and the Tourism Summit Aotearoa.
- The latest tourism data is released through the *Tourism Evidence and Insights Centre*.

Visit www.tia.org.nz for more information

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