



Ecotourism NZ Conference 09

NELSON, 5-6 August 2009

Media Release – for immediate use.

March 16, 2009

The economic forecast may not be great, but at least ecotourism operators have something to look forward to this year - the annual Ecotourism NZ Conference in Nelson on 5-6 August.

Register now at ecotourismnz.com.

The conference aims to enhance the ecotourism industry by supporting businesses at the grassroots level. It is a practical, hands-on event providing advice, training and discussion on every-day issues facing ecotourism businesses.

“It’s a good investment, it’s relevant and it’s great fun too!” Ecotourism NZ spokesperson Hugh Canard says.

Ecotourism NZ project manager Sarah Caseley says the Nelson region’s natural environment, established ecotourism industry and convenient location make it the ideal location for a conference on ecotourism.

“We can learn a lot from this region, particularly how operators and local agencies can collaborate to promote and improve ecotourism at a regional level.”

Each year the conference attracts around 150 delegates from New Zealand and overseas, including representatives from Tourism New Zealand, the Department of Conservation, environmental experts and leading tourism operators. Highlights this year include field trips to Nelson attractions and successful ecotourism operations, a wide range of keynote speakers and fun social events.

This year will see a focus on the economic downturn - a big issue for the tourism industry in the coming year. Mr Canard says operators can expect advice on how to navigate through the tough financial times, and how to add value without adding cost.

“Research indicates that visitors want to experience not only our natural assets but also our New Zealand culture. The best ecotourism products integrate nature and culture, and they engage the visitor at an emotional level,” he says. “The conference will be showing businesses how to profit by delivering products that combine these three elements.”

The conference also looks at the big questions facing the industry, including how best to protect, promote and manage it. Discussion topics include an in depth look at eco-tourists –who they are, what they want and how to attract them; the state of ecotourism and future predictions; and how New Zealand’s environmental policy stacks up against its 100% Pure promise.

Sarah Caseley says it will be the first time the conference is held outside of the West Coast since it began in 2006. The new location is an opportunity to get a fresh a perspective on ecotourism and work alongside agencies from a different region.

Ecotourism NZ, an initiative of Tai Poutini Polytechnic, has teamed up with Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology (NMIT) to host this years' event.

The two-day conference will be based at NMIT's newly completed School of Tourism, Hospitality and Wellbeing.

The objectives of Ecotourism NZ 09 are to:

- Develop strategies to support and advance the ecotourism sector through the economic downturn in collaboration with key stakeholders such as the Department of Conservation, Ministry of Tourism and operators.
- Give ecotourism operators skills and cost-effective ideas to raise the standard of their business without adding cost.
- Continue to build on the positive culture of collaboration and partnerships already inherent in the industry.
- Inspire, engage and motivate ecotourism operators

To register for Ecotourism NZ Conference 09 or for further information go to www.ecotourismnz.com.