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Media release

## **Busy summer puts the zing back in tourism's stride**

The New Zealand tourism industry's summer season has ended on a very healthy note, with many tourism operators across the country reporting strong business and even being "rushed off their feet".

"The end of March is the end of the peak season for our international visitors and domestic holidaymakers, and the warm sunny weather has made it one of the busiest for many of our members," says Tourism Industry Aotearoa Chief Executive Rebecca Ingram.

"While there is some variability in places, as well as from some of our markets, the general sentiment is this summer has been buoyant and will continue to make an essential contribution to the economy, and to New Zealanders."

Ben Thornton, of Auckland and Waikato guided tour operator Bush and Beach, says he and his staff have been working flat out.

"I know some operators are still recovering but for us it's by far the best summer ever. The numbers have been phenomenal. Since the beginning of October, most of our tours have been fully booked."

It has also been an "incredible" season on Waiheke Island, says Gavin Oliver of zipline company EcoZip.

"Summer has gone on longer than we thought, the visitor numbers have been great, and we've enjoyed really good patronage from North America."

The summer has also brought an array of new attractions, including the new Hobbit Hole at Hobbiton, and EcoZip's own recently opened new zipline in Kaikoura.

Oliver says operators have used the uncertain times during Covid well. "Some of this planning is starting to come to fruition now and it's good to be going into a market that's kind of rejuvenated with some new product and innovation."

Ingram said the summer was crucial for tourism businesses heading into the winter when domestic holidaymakers often head offshore. However, New Zealand's exchange rate continues to be advantageous for some overseas visitors

"I think it could be a little soft over the next few months, we're not taking for granted the successful season."

TRENZ, the tourism industry's biggest trade event in May, is a critical step in ensuring New Zealand is competitive and well represented on a global tourism stage, Ms Ingram says.

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“More than 300 buyers from all around the world will be in Wellington meeting with 313 tourism businesses, and the conversations they have, and the business conducted, lays the groundwork for the next few years.”

One thousand delegates are expected at TRENZ this year, which for the first time will be held in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington.

TRENZ is managed by Tourism Industry Aotearoa on behalf of the Tourism Industry New Zealand Trust. The event aims to bring together New Zealand tourism businesses to showcase their products and services to high quality international and New Zealand travel buyers.

#### **Data details**

- While the summer arrival and spending data is still to come, early indications are that the summer was a strong one, although below 2019 levels.

Total international visitor spend was \$9.9 billion in the year to December 2023, according to MBIE’s International Visitor Survey for December. Tourism placed second as an export sector, behind dairy at \$19.4b, indicating the growth potential of tourism in the years ahead (Stats NZ, Overseas Merchandise Trade, December 2023).

- Holiday parks have reported their strongest January month ever, hitting the 2 million mark for guest nights (source: Holiday Parks NZ).
- Overall, tourism’s total contribution to the economy is rebuilding strongly, generating \$37.7b in the year ended March 2023. Tourism directly and indirectly contributed 6.2 per cent to the country’s economy (Stats NZ’s Tourism Satellite Account).
- Tourism has returned to being one of the country’s biggest employers. As at March 2023, more than 317,000 jobs were directly or indirectly related to tourism, making up 11.3 per cent of the jobs market.

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## KEY FACTS

- Tourism Industry Aotearoa 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 from across the industry, ranging from small owner/operators to large publicly listed tourism corporates and international hotel chains.
- TIA is deeply involved in discussions on recovery and what the future of tourism in New Zealand will look like.
- TIA leads implementation of the industry's **Tourism Sustainability Commitment** which aims to see every New Zealand tourism business contributing positively to our people and cultures, our environment and our economy.
- TIA delivers a comprehensive and diverse range of industry events including TRENZ, New Zealand Tourism Awards, Discussing Tourism regional events and the Tourism Summit Aotearoa.

Visit [www.tia.org.nz](http://www.tia.org.nz) for more information

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