



Rotorua steams ahead

Polynesian Spa

Highlighting specific sectors most relevant to the region and initiating an ambassador programme around those industries and interests is a priority for the conventions and incentives arm of Destination Rotorua.

Craig Murray, business events manager Destination Rotorua, says the organisation's objective is to gain new and repeat business, with a big focus on Australian and world congresses.

'We're working on five key sectors to achieve this, areas where Rotorua has an advantage over other places,' says Murray.

'The first sector is spa, health and wellness. That includes the lakes and the activities people can do on water.'

He says the second area of focus is geothermal activity and the sciences based around that, including geology.

'Indigenous culture is another major area

for us. We are hosting the World Indigenous Suicide Prevention Conference in June this year and we are aware of a huge range of indigenous conferences globally.'

He says Rotorua is the heartland of Maori culture, particularly Maori tourism. 'Some of the guides at Te Puia are fifth generation.'

The fourth sector is forestry and forestry science. 'New Zealand is a leader in quite a few fields of forestry engineering and a lot of the associations are based here in Rotorua.'

Mountain biking and associated fields, such as specialised bikes, is the fifth sector being focused on.

'We are now in the early stages of identifying

ambassadors or advocates in all of these areas - people who attend conferences globally, who are on national and/or world committees and who are influential in their industry. Of course they need to be passionate about bringing the event to Rotorua as well.'

Murray says there is a general confidence around the region and the new set up at Destination Rotorua adds to that. 'We've now got a dedicated business events team, which provides transparent reports and gives the industry value.'

He says another important message to associations and professional conference organisers is that they can earn commission through the Rotorua i-Site when delegates book through that channel for activities, partner programmes and pre and post touring.

'They should talk to the business events team, who can put them on to the i-Site, who in turn can put the relevant links on the (conference) website.'

Big event

Warren Harvey, also with Destination Rotorua business events, points out that the city is about to host the Apiculture New Zealand Conference 2016. Being held at the Energy Events Centre from 19 - 21 June, the event is expected to attract some 900 plus delegates, as well as 80 to 90 trade stands. The theme of the conference is Bee Business - Science: Health: Trade. The PCO is Event Dynamics.

Rotorua has also just come out of hosting Tourism Rendezvous New Zealand (TRENZ), an event that attracts international tourism buyers, inbound operators and media from around the world. This year was the second consecutive time the event had been held in the city.



Star gazing at Skyline

New perspective in the trees

The Redwoods Treewalk has attracted more than 18,000 customers since it opened in Christmas last year. While most of the custom has come from leisure visitors - local, national and international - the walk has already drawn incentive groups from the agriculture sector and from Asia.



Karen Mather

Treewalk park assistant and ranger Karen Mather says the aim is to attract more corporate activity, such as functions on the platforms for small groups.

The adjacent Sails in the Redwoods could be used for larger functions, with attendees also doing the walk progressively through the evening.

'The walk gives people a whole new perspective of the Redwoods. It is a totally

different view on top of the silver ferns and black tree ferns.'

Alex Schmid, general manager of the attraction points out that Redwoods Treewalk consists of 21 suspension bridges traversing between 22 Californian coastal redwoods. 'At 553 meters long it allows plenty of time to appreciate the beauty of the forest that is quite different from what visitors experience on the ground.'

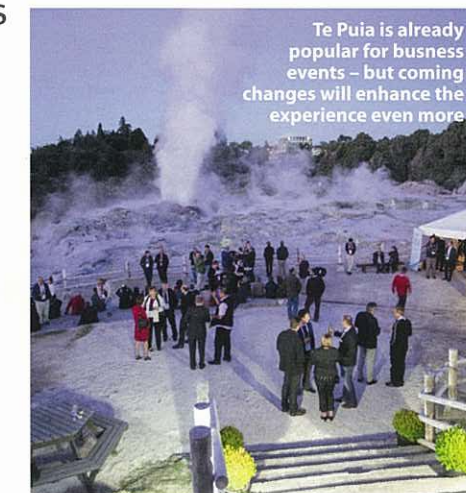
Te Puia changes to enhance events

Developments such as a new restaurant (with an indigenous inspired approach to food) and an expansive school at the NZ Maori Arts and Crafts Institute (MACI) will add to the appeal of business events at Te Puia, says chief executive Tim Cossar.

The attraction is also having a new Kiwi House built, which will free up the existing facility - possibly as a meeting and events space.

Then in 2017 the current marquee overlooking Pohutu Geyser will be replaced by a more suitable structure. The marquee is a favourite for dinner functions and cocktail events.

'It doesn't really suit the environment,' says Cossar. 'Previously we had a geyser observation rotunda there, based around eight carved poles and a roof structure. They went missing but we would like to utilise that concept again. But we will build it with materials that are suitable to the



Te Puia is already popular for business events - but coming changes will enhance the experience even more

environment - so that could be fibreglass or modern canvass materials. We will have toilets and kitchen facilities so it will improve the experience for the events industry.'

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