

# Canterbury Visitor Strategy 2016

A Work Programme of the  
Canterbury Regional Economic Development Strategy

Canterbury Mayoral Forum

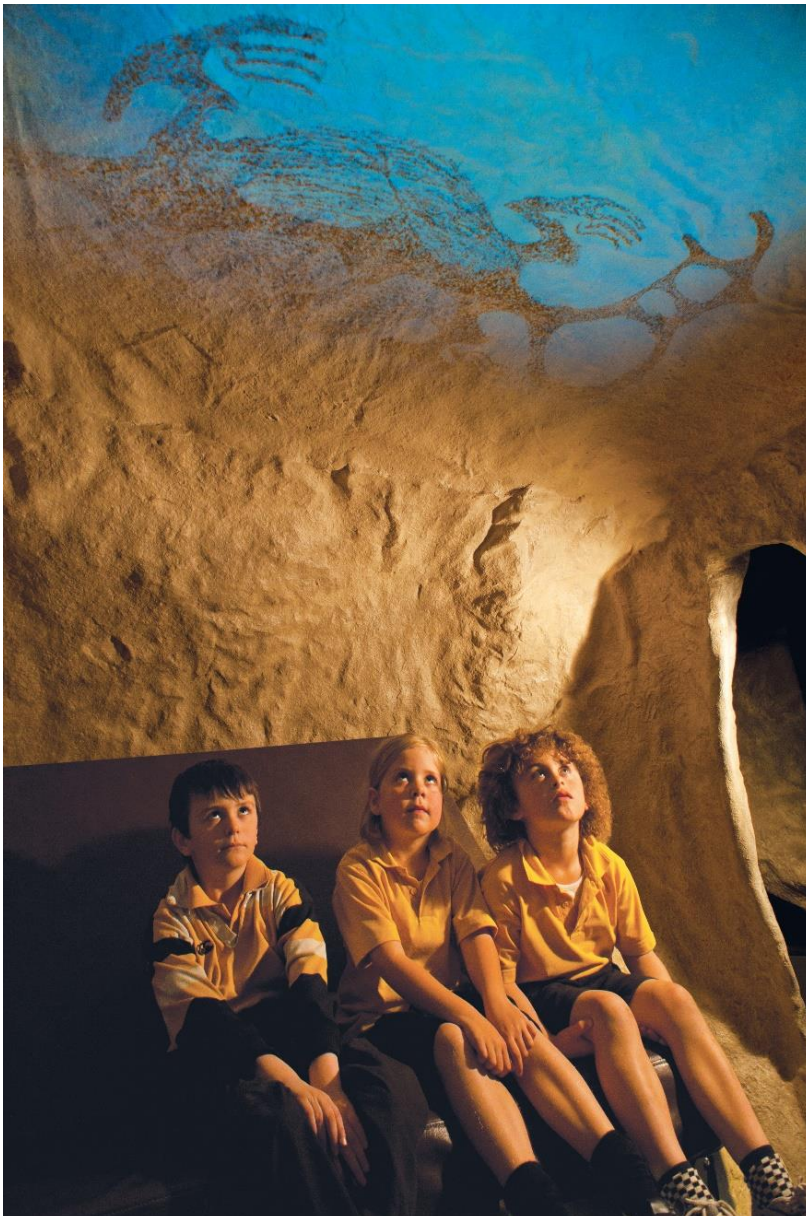


... a strong regional economy with resilient, connected communities and a better quality of life for all



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*Taniwha Cave  
Te Ana Māori Rock Art Centre, Timaru*

Photographic images courtesy of Aoraki Development Business & Tourism, Experience Mid-Canterbury, Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism, and Kaikōura Information & Tourism



## Foreword

The Canterbury earthquakes of 2010-11 not only damaged infrastructure and facilities, but also compromised visitor perceptions and confidence. The resulting loss of market share impacted on the region as a whole, because Christchurch is both a destination in its own right and a gateway to the Canterbury region and the South Island.

International tourism overtook dairying in the year to September 2015 as New Zealand's biggest export earner. It is imperative that Canterbury recovers and keeps growing its market share, so our communities can prosper from the opportunities tourism affords.

This is why the Canterbury Mayoral Forum has developed a visitor strategy for the Canterbury region. Our goal is to attract visitors to Canterbury and the South Island, keep them here longer, and encourage them to spend more. We want to make sure our guests have every opportunity to explore the diversity of landscapes and attractions offered by Canterbury and the South Island, and that they return home with great memories and positive stories of the experiences they have enjoyed.

This strategy builds on and is complementary to the work of the Canterbury Tourism Partnership between Christchurch International Airport Ltd, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, the Christchurch City Council and Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism. Other key stakeholders are Christchurch Educated and Ngāi Tahu Tourism. It also builds on a great deal of hard work between the regional and district tourism organisations and tourism operators in Canterbury, and aligns with Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism's 2016/17 Business Plan.<sup>1</sup>

This strategy focuses on some practical actions the Mayoral Forum has initiated for 2016, to build on Christchurch City's visitor strategy and support the development of tourism in our region.



Mayor Winston Gray  
for Canterbury Mayoral Forum

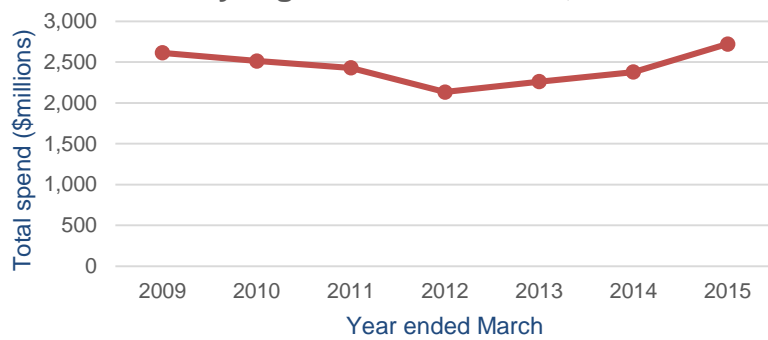


<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://www.christchurchnz.com/media/2347423/christchurch-and-canterbury-tourism-2016-17-business-plan.pdf>

## Economic benefits of tourism to New Zealand and Canterbury

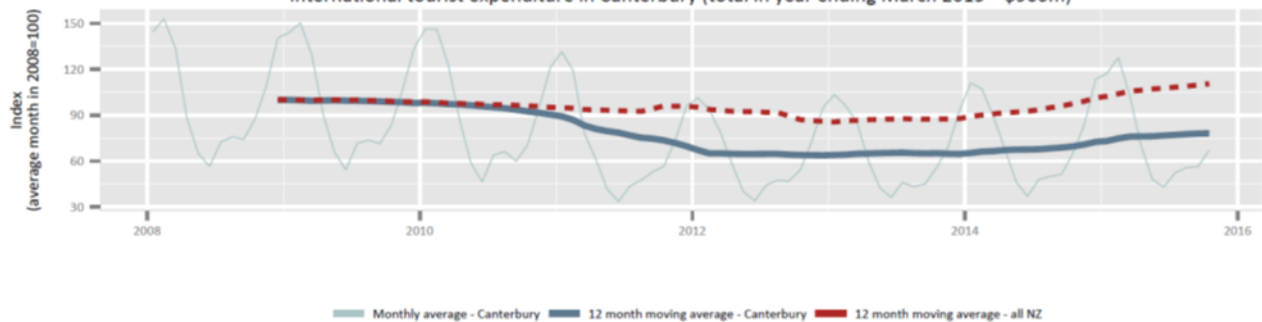


### Tourism expenditure Canterbury regional council area, 2009-15

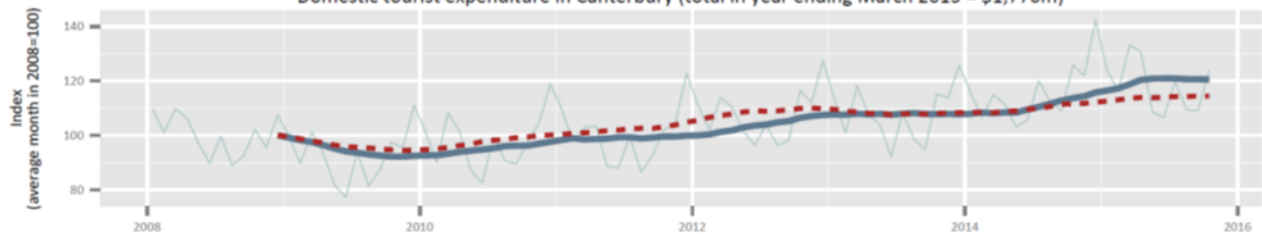


Source: Regional tourism estimates  
Ministry of Business, Innovation and  
Employment

### International tourist expenditure in Canterbury (total in year ending March 2015 = \$960m)



### Domestic tourist expenditure in Canterbury (total in year ending March 2015 = \$1,770m)



*Exploring the night sky  
Mt John Observatory,  
Tekapo*



# Canterbury Regional Economic Development Strategy

***... a strong regional economy with resilient, connected communities  
and a better quality of life for all.***

Canterbury's Mayors want to minimise a downturn in the region's economy as the earthquake rebuild levels off, and ensure the long-term prosperity and social wellbeing of Canterbury and its communities.

That's why the Mayoral Forum developed and launched its Canterbury Regional Economic Development Strategy (CREDS) in August 2015 – available at <http://ecan.govt.nz/CREDS>

The CREDS has seven, interdependent work programmes, each with a lead Mayor. The regional visitor strategy work programme is led by Mayor Winston Gray (Kaikōura District Council).

The Mayoral Forum's objectives for regional tourism are to:

- grow tourism in the Canterbury region through advocating for the fast recovery of Christchurch as the primary gateway to the region and the wider South Island; and
- support regional destinations in Canterbury to develop and promote their iconic visitor activities and landmarks.

The following CREDS work programmes have a particular contribution to make, if we are to grow visitor numbers sustainably in the Canterbury region:

- regional transport planning and investment that is well co-ordinated across modes (air, sea, road and rail) and provides safe, efficient travel to and between visitor destinations
- digital connectivity that enables visitors to access information, share their travel experiences with friends and family (thereby marketing our region for us), and keep themselves safe on our roads, rivers, lakes and coasts, and in our mountains
- freshwater management that enables economic development while protecting our natural environment, for the enjoyment of New Zealanders and our visitors, now and in the future
- value-added production, which can become a visitor attraction in its own right; e.g. farm visits/farmstays; visits to food processing factories
- education and training brings a significant number of students to Canterbury, from the rest of New Zealand and overseas, as well as their families and friends, who come to visit them
- welcoming newcomers and migrants to our region relates closely to the welcome and warmth of hospitality (manaakitanga) we extend to visitors passing through.



This Strategy outlines how the Mayoral Forum is working with Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism, the Canterbury Development Corporation and the region's Tourism Organisations to achieve this objective during 2016.

## Challenges



As the graphs show on page 5, tourism in Canterbury was significantly impacted by the 2010-11 earthquakes. Growth in international tourist expenditure continues to lag behind expenditure in New Zealand as a whole, while domestic tourist expenditure has stayed more in line with national expenditure.

A particular challenge for the Canterbury region is to progress key visitor

infrastructure in areas of high current and projected visitor numbers, to provide quality services, recover market share and position the tourism sector for sustainable growth. This includes:

- rebuilding sports, conference and entertainment venues
- increasing accommodation supply in Christchurch, and in key tourism areas of Canterbury and the South Island generally
- funding tourist facilities and services (e.g. public toilets and campervan dumping stations, drinking water supply and rubbish removal) in districts with a small number of ratepayers but high tourist flows (especially Mackenzie and Kaikōura Districts)
- retaining existing attractions and services, particularly the TranzAlpine and Coastal Pacific scenic rail journeys
- developing new, high quality visitor attractions to regain market attention, and market share
- enhancing visitor experiences, particularly for the growing number of visitors from Asia
- recovering Canterbury's share of the Australian market post- earthquakes.





## Opportunities

*Destination 2025* sets out a 10-year vision for Christchurch and its region:

*Christchurch is the front door to the South Island and beyond to Antarctica. Within easy reach of the refined comfort of its modern centre abounds breath-taking coastal and alpine scenery, world-renowned wildlife encounters, crystal-clear star gazing, cycling and hiking trails along with a wide range of winter and alpine sports and recreation options.<sup>2</sup>*

By 2025, the Christchurch rebuild will have delivered ‘the refined comfort’ of a modern city centre, but all the other attractions mentioned in the vision are available here and now.

Visitor forecasts for Canterbury are positive. Based on known international and domestic air schedules, we can assume overall inbound tourism growth in the range of 3.5% to 4.5% per year over the next five years.

A boom time for Chinese holidaymakers visiting New Zealand is the ‘Golden Week’ of Chinese New Year. Around 50,000 Chinese visitors will have flown to New Zealand for Chinese New Year (8 February) in 2016, ushering in the Year of the Monkey. Canterbury is benefiting from the commencement on 16 December 2015 of China Southern Airline’s direct flights, three times per week, from Guangzhou to Christchurch. Each flight has an average capacity of 228 passengers, i.e. 35,568 one-way seats over a 12-month period. This is estimated to increase tourist spending in Canterbury by more than \$100 million per year.

Looking forward, we can also anticipate strong growth in visitor numbers from Indonesia and India.



Aoraki/Mt Cook

<sup>2</sup> Christchurch International Airport Ltd (2015), *Destination 2025: A discussion paper on capturing the economic and social development opportunities from Christchurch’s visitor economy*, p.ii.



## Christchurch and its region

Christchurch City and the nine districts in Canterbury, from Kaikōura in the north to Waitaki in the south, have a symbiotic relationship – the city and its region are mutually dependent on each other for prosperity and wellbeing.

In relation to tourism, for example, Christchurch is the major hub for international and domestic air arrivals in Canterbury, has 50% of the region's commercial beds, and is the base for most of the region's rental car, coach fleets and passenger train services.



On the other hand, most of Canterbury's key tourism attractions are found outside the city, along with the majority of our outdoor tourism, scenery and road trip experiences. Tourism has, moreover, a low environmental impact on our iconic landscapes.

This is why we need a visitor strategy for Christchurch *and* the Canterbury region.

The *Christchurch Visitor Strategy* (2015) identifies the following strategic framework to rebuild, recover and grow Christchurch's role and status as both a visitor destination in its own right, and as a gateway to the wider region and beyond:

- enhance the visitor proposition – transform Christchurch into an edgy 21<sup>st</sup>-century city with a difference that becomes a 'must see' destination for domestic and international visitors
- target the right visitors at the right time – attract high-spending visitors in shoulder and off-peak periods to grow value and reduce seasonality
- connect with residents – increase local pride, awareness, off-peak demand and marketing reach by encouraging residents to experience and endorse their own region
- strengthen the gateway role – expand domestic and international air networks and position Christchurch as the preferred gateway to the South Island and Antarctica.



## Canterbury Visitor Strategy

The Canterbury Mayoral Forum has considered how best to provide leadership, facilitation and advocacy to grow the visitor economy of Christchurch and its region, through discussions with:

- Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism
- Canterbury Development Corporation
- Christchurch International Airport Ltd
- Jin Zhijian, Consul-General, People's Republic of China.

Three principles have guided the development of the Action Plan that follows.

1. **Turn aspirations into action** – and clearly identify who will do what, why and by when.
2. **Respect our different roles and responsibilities.** For the most part, local government's role is to provide core infrastructure (e.g. public toilets and campervan dumping stations, drinking water, rubbish disposal), regulate for sustainable development, and facilitate and advocate for solutions that are best identified and marketed by tourism organisations and the private sector.
3. **Less is more** – given inevitable resource constraints, priority must be given to the few actions that have potential to make the greatest difference.

Priority actions agreed by the Mayoral Forum for 2016 are grouped in three clusters:

- visitor infrastructure
- enhanced visitor experiences
- supporting the sector to market the region to domestic and international visitors.

*Church of the Good Shepherd, Tekapo*





## Action Plan 2016

### Visitor infrastructure

WHAT	WHY	WHO	WHEN
1. Work with central government, Tourism New Zealand, Canterbury Development Corporation, Development Christchurch Ltd and Christchurch Airport to secure investment in tourism infrastructure	To address seasonality and improve the business case for additional, quality accommodation services in areas with high current and projected visitor numbers	Mayoral Forum with Canterbury Development Corporation, Christchurch Airport and Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism	by Dec 2016
2. Advocate with Kiwirail for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintenance and expansion of Scenic Journeys (TranzAlpine and Coastal Pacific)</li> <li>• railcar services (Christchurch-Dunedin)</li> <li>• access to main trunk line for excursion trains</li> </ul>	To retain the TranzAlpine (one of the world's great train journeys) and the viability of the Midland line to the West Coast, reduce traffic on our roads and enable additional excursion journeys; e.g. historic steam trains	Mayoral Forum with Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism and Experience Mid-Canterbury	Feb 2016
3. Work with Canterbury local authorities to encourage and promote provision of free wifi	To enhance the visitor experience and co-ordinated marketing (website, app, social media) of our region and its attractions	Mayor Winston Gray with Chief Executives Forum	by Dec 2016
4. Investigate bulk purchase and installation of solar charging tables in selected Canterbury towns	To enhance the visitor experience and encourage travellers to stop and see something of our towns	Mayor Winston Gray with Chief Executives Forum	by Dec 2016

### Enhanced visitor experiences

WHAT	WHY	WHO	WHEN
5. Work with the Consul-General of the People's Republic of China to identify additional opportunities to enhance Chinese visitor experiences	To grow the Chinese visitor market sustainably and add value	Mayoral Forum with Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism and district tourism organisations	Feb 2016 and ongoing
6. Work with Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism and economic development agencies to promote Chinese language and signage in museums, shops and cafés, particularly for Chinese New Year	To welcome the significant and growing number of visitors from the People's Republic of China, and encourage them to stay in Canterbury longer and experience more of what our region has to offer	Mayoral Forum secretariat with Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism	Feb 2016 and ongoing

7. Encourage limousine services to consider expanding private driver services, including Chinese-speaking drivers	To support independent travellers, promote road safety and enhance visitor experiences	Mayor Winston Gray and Glenn Ormsby (Kaikōura)	by Dec 2016
8. Investigate opportunities to install signs (in English and Chinese) to welcome visitors to Canterbury towns – and encourage safe driving	To welcome visitors and promote road safety	Mayoral Forum secretariat with Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism and NZ Transport Agency	by Dec 2016
9. Investigate, develop and promote quality visitor experiences (paddock to plate) via farm visits, demonstrations of technology, farm stays, etc. across the region	To support the rural economy, promote Canterbury produce, and diversify and enhance quality visitor experiences	Bruce Moffatt (Experience Mid-Canterbury)	by Dec 2016
10. Encourage RTOs and DTOs to develop and market additional tourism products; e.g. a range of 'trails' (food and wine; wildlife; cycle trails, walking tracks, night sky ...)	To attract more visitors to our region and keep them here longer – but in a sustainable way that capitalises on Canterbury's wealth of attractions and activities without overloading infrastructure or displacing residents' own recreation activities	Glenn Ormsby (Kaikōura) with Graeme Abbott (Hanmer Springs) and Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism	by Dec 2016 and ongoing

## Support whole-of-region marketing

WHAT	WHY	WHO	WHEN
11. Convene an annual forum of key stakeholders in the tourism/visitor sector	To maintain connections, build consensus on whole-of-region strategy, and co-ordinate action	Mayor Winston Gray	June 2016
12. Communicate that 'Christchurch is open for business'	To restore visitor confidence in Christchurch and its region as a great place to be	Mayor Lianne Dalziel – with Christchurch Airport and Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism	by Sep 2016
13. Encourage and support regional tourism marketing onshore and offshore (including marketing of international education); e.g. by attending and presenting at tourism conferences and meeting with trade delegations	To support the sector's marketing and signal a warm Canterbury welcome to domestic and international visitors	All Canterbury Mayors	by Dec 2016





*Caroline Bay, Timaru*

For further information on the Canterbury  
Regional Economic Development Strategy,  
go to: <http://www.ecan.govt.nz/CREDS>

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