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Media Release

Supreme Tourism Award winner rockets to success

Rotorua Canopy Tours, a business that in just four years has visitors raving and nature flourishing, has beaten off stiff competition to win the tourism industry's highest accolade, the Air New Zealand Supreme Tourism Award.

The Awards Programme is owned and organised by Tourism Industry Aotearoa with the Awards night put on with the assistance of partners Air New Zealand and the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment. The award winners were announced at a black-tie dinner in Auckland this evening attended by more than 300 industry leaders and supporters.

Mixing thrills and conservation, Rotorua Canopy Tours offers visitors a phenomenal nature experience – a three hour small group journey into an ancient native forest, using walking rails, treetop platforms, swinging bridges and ziplines.

The judges said this thriving business just a 10 minute drive from downtown Rotorua is an excellent combination of people, culture, environment and a fantastic activity for all ages to enjoy.

"Rotorua Canopy Tours has demonstrated incredible progress. Visitor numbers have been growing rapidly year on year, the business has reinvested into a new headquarters at the entrance to Rotorua and outstanding environmental outcomes have been achieved as a result of passion, innovation and perseverance."

As part of their prize, Rotorua Canopy Tours receives international air travel to any Air New Zealand destination valued at \$10,000 (+GST) to help them grow their tourism business.

Rotorua Canopy Tours also won the Visitor Experience Award, supported by ServiceIQ, and the Environmental Award, supported by Mercury.

TIA Chief Executive Chris Roberts says Rotorua Canopy Tours is a complete product that ticks all the boxes.

"At the heart of its success is an exceptional visitor experience that has raised the bar of personalisation, authenticity and fun, attracting a premium price tag."

The industry's most prestigious individual award, the Sir Jack Newman Award, supported by Crowe Horwath International, went to George Hickton, the man who drove the development of the tourism industry's 100% Pure New Zealand international marketing brand.

It was Mr Hickton's most outstanding achievement during his successful 10 years as Chief Executive of Tourism New Zealand from 1999 to 2009. Seventeen years on it remains the envy of tourism organisations worldwide.

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The judges said the tourism industry continues to benefit from George's inspirational leadership. He is Chair of the Hawke's Bay Tourism Board, a Weta Workshop Director, Hobbiton board member and has carved out a niche in the film tourism space, including most recently as the Project Director of Wellington's new Movie Museum.

Mr Roberts says this year's Awards were extremely competitive, a reflection of a buoyant industry that is pumping billions of dollars into communities up and down the country and supporting several hundred thousand jobs. He says the awards programme is closely aligned to the tourism industry's Tourism 2025 growth framework which aspires to grow annual tourism revenue to \$41 billion by 2025.

"We had entries from big corporates to small businesses, ranging from one operator that has been in business for over 100 years to our Supreme Award winner, an exciting young company achieving fantastic results in just four years of business."

For more information and photos from the winners or the Awards presentation contact:

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New Zealand Tourism Awards 2016 Winners

- **Air New Zealand Supreme Tourism Industry Award, and Environmental Tourism Award, supported by Mercury, and Visitor Experience Award, supported by ServiceIQ**
Rotorua Canopy Tours
- **Sir Jack Newman Award (outstanding industry leader) supported by Crowe Horwath International**
George Hickton, Wellington
- **Emerging Tourism Leader Award, supported by PATA New Zealand Trust**
Bradley Garnett, SKYCITY Entertainment Group, Auckland
- **Tourism Industry Champion Award, supported by Sudima Hotels & Resorts**
Graeme Abbot, Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa
- **Business Excellence Award – annual turnover less than \$6 million, supported by Westpac**
Black Cat Cruises, Canterbury
- **Business Excellence Award – annual turnover more than \$6 million, supported by JLT & AIG**
Hobbiton Movie Set & Farm Tours, Waikato

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- **Industry Alignment Award, supported by the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment**
Destination Rotorua
- **Maori Cultural Tourism Award, supported by Auckland Tourism, Events & Economic Development**
Waitangi Treaty Grounds
- **People's Choice Award, supported by NZME.**
Hobbiton Movie Set & Farm Tours, Waikato
- **Tourism 2025 Enabler Award, supported by Auckland Airport**
Angus & Associates Ltd
- **Tourism Marketing Campaign Award, supported by Spark**
Hobbiton Movie Set & Farm Tours

About the New Zealand Tourism Awards

These are the New Zealand tourism industry's most prestigious annual awards. Managed by TIA, they set a benchmark of excellence and celebrate outstanding success.

For more information go to www.tourismawards.org.nz

Thanks

TIA thanks key New Zealand Tourism Awards 2016 Partners and Supporters:

Award Partners: Air New Zealand and the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment

Award Supporters: PATA New Zealand Trust, Sudima Hotels & Resorts, Westpac, JLT & AIG, Mercury, Auckland Tourism, Events & Economic Development, Auckland Airport, Spark, and ServiceIQ

Event Supporters: Department of Conservation, Mission Estate Winery, Black Market, Monteiths, Epay, PATA International & Official Media Partner, NZME.

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KEY FACTS

- Tourism in New Zealand is an \$81.6 million per day industry. Tourism delivers around \$32 million in foreign exchange to the New Zealand economy each day of the year. Domestic tourism contributes another \$49 million in economic activity every day
- Tourism is one of New Zealand's biggest export industries, earning \$11.8 billion or 17.4% of New Zealand's foreign exchange earnings (year ended March 2015)
- 12.1% of the total number of people employed in New Zealand work directly or indirectly in tourism. That means 295,908 people are working in the visitor economy
- The [Tourism 2025](#) growth framework has a goal of growing total tourism revenue to \$41 billion a year by 2025.

Visit www.tia.org.nz for more information

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