

Embargoed to 11.30pm, 29 September 2016
Please do not contact the winners in advance

Media Release

Upper North Island winners at NZ Tourism Awards

Businesses featuring ziplining, hobbit holes and the birthplace of the nation are amongst the upper North Island winners in this year's New Zealand Tourism Awards, announced tonight.

They include Rotorua Canopy Tours, a business that in just four years has rocketed to success to be named the Air New Zealand Supreme Tourism Award winner. The Rotorua business, which combines thrills and conservation, also won the Visitor Experience Award, supported by ServiceIQ, and the Environmental Tourism Award supported by Mercury.

Completing a fantastic night for New Zealand's 'coolest hotspot', Destination Rotorua won the Industry Alignment Award, supported by the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (MBIE).

It was a trifecta for Hobbiton Movie Set & Farm Tours, with the Matamata business winning the Business Excellence Award – annual turnover more than \$6 million, supported by JLT & AIG; the Tourism Marketing Campaign Award, supported by Spark; and a new award introduced this year, the People's Choice Award, supported by NZME.

An impressive transformation over the past four years saw the Waitangi Treaty Grounds win the Maori Cultural Tourism Award, supported by Auckland Tourism, Events & Economic Development.

Completing the upper North Island winners, talented young hotelier Bradley Garnett, Hotel Group Revenue Manager at Auckland's SKYCITY Entertainment Group, won the Emerging Tourism Leader Award, supported by PATA New Zealand Trust.

The Awards were presented at a black-tie dinner at The Langham, Auckland this evening attended by more than 300 tourism industry leaders and supporters. 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 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. The judges said 17 years on, 100% Pure is the envy of tourism organisations around the world and Mr Hickton continues to be an inspirational tourism leader.

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.

TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

Level 4, 79 Boulcott Street, PO Box 1697, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

P +64 4 499 0104 www.tia.org.nz E info@tia.org.nz

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#)

"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 that is proving what New Zealand tourism can do."

About the upper North Island winners:

Rotorua Canopy Tours, winner of the:

- *Air New Zealand Supreme Tourism Award*
- *Visitor Experience Award, supported by ServiceIQ*
- *Environmental Tourism Award supported by Mercury*

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.

Business is flourishing – from just four part time staff four years ago it now has 22 permanent staff, expanding to 40 over summer.

As well as fun and adventure, visitors learn about Rotorua Canopy Tours' promise to restore the 500 hectare forest it operates in. By the end of winter 2016 over \$250,000 had been poured back into the reserve. Today, more than one third of the forest reserve is pest free.

The judges said this thriving business, just 10 minutes' 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 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."

Destination Rotorua, winner of the:

- *Industry Alignment Award, supported by the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment*

Four years ago Rotorua was languishing as one of the worst performing visitor regions. This spurred Destination Rotorua and over 150 local operators to join together to fund Famously Rotorua, a high profile domestic marketing campaign, originally targeting the Auckland market and more recently Auckland's Chinese community.

The judges said the Famously Rotorua campaign is maximising results for local tourism operators and ramping up the economic benefits to the local community. It has changed perceptions of Rotorua, reinvigorated the destination as a place for New Zealanders to visit more often, stay longer and spend more.

TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

Level 4, 79 Boulcott Street, PO Box 1697, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

P +64 4 499 0104 www.tia.org.nz E info@tia.org.nz

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#)

Hobbiton Movie Set & Farm Tours, winner of the:

- *Business Excellence Award – annual turnover more than \$6 million, supported by JLT & AIG*
- *Tourism Marketing Campaign Award, supported by Spark*
- *People's Choice Award, supported by NZME.*

Last year Hobbiton Movie Set & Farm Tours welcomed over 460,000 guests to this living movie set located in rural New Zealand. Visitors have grown almost tenfold over the past four years – almost all international. Growth has been driven by the perseverance of the Alexander family, a dedicated team of staff, the support of Sir Peter Jackson and innovative marketing alliances. These include life sized Hobbit Holes in London and Singapore; a Hobbit Cricket Cup, and a Hobbiton episode of a Chinese reality TV show which had a viewership of over 400 million.

The judges said Hobbiton has become an iconic, must-see attraction in a short space of time.

Waitangi Treaty Grounds, winner of the:

- *Maori Cultural Tourism Award, supported by Auckland Tourism, Events & Economic Development*

A transformation over the past four years has seen Waitangi Treaty Grounds develop into a major visitor attraction featuring historic buildings, guided tours, authentic cultural performances, hangi and concerts. The recent completion of the multi-million dollar Te Kōngahu-Museum of Waitangi enhances the cultural experience, telling stories of Waitangi and the origin of the nation.

The judges said through the presentation of lively, interactive and authentic Maori cultural elements, the Waitangi Treaty Grounds are trading profitably and displaying a newfound pride in its rich Maori culture. The business is growing and the Treaty Grounds are also critical to the economic well-being of the local community.

Bradley Garnett, SKYCITY Entertainment Group, Auckland, winner of the:

- *Emerging Tourism Leader Award, supported by PATA New Zealand Trust*

Working as a hotel porter while he was studying gave Bradley Garnett a taste for tourism and hospitality. He's gone on to work in hotels across the world, quickly climbing the career ladder.

In 2013 Bradley was promoted to SKYCITY Entertainment Group's Hotels Group Revenue Manager. Since then he has consistently produced record revenue results for both SKYCITY's Auckland hotels. Bradley is also Manager of the SKYCITY Contact Centre, managing a team which averages an incredible 2000 customer touch points daily!

The judges were very impressed with Bradley's performance in a highly competitive area. His commitment doesn't stop at the doors of SKYCITY. Bradley is a passionate contributor to New Zealand's tourism industry and loves any excuse to get in front of people to explain the importance of revenue management!

TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

Level 4, 79 Boulcott Street, PO Box 1697, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

P +64 4 499 0104 www.tia.org.nz E info@tia.org.nz

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#)

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

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

Ann-Marie Johnson
Communications Manager
TIA
Email ann-marie.johnson@tia.org.nz
Mobile 027 600 4565
www.tia.org.nz

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
- **Industry Alignment Award, supported by the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment**
Destination Rotorua

TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

Level 4, 79 Boulcott Street, PO Box 1697, Wellington 6140, New Zealand
P +64 4 499 0104 www.tia.org.nz E info@tia.org.nz
[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#)

- **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

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.

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

TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

Level 4, 79 Boulcott Street, PO Box 1697, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

P +64 4 499 0104 www.tia.org.nz E info@tia.org.nz

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#)