



It was no time for the faint hearted when Auckland Business Tourism and partners hosted a Halloween Lunch at Lower NZI Room, The EDGE®. Key sponsors were Austin's Food Design Events, Steve Dean Design and Auckland Convention Centre at The EDGE®. Comedian John Glass, appearing through Celebrity Speakers, provided the entertainment. Over 150 people were at the event, among them was Cyril (Freddie Kruger) Brace, of Austin's and Elba Escobar, Dominique Rennell and Rebecca Wigram; all from Gen-i New Zealand. (Photo by Kathryn Twort). More on page 66.

Some will 'do it tough', but for many it's business as usual

The conference, incentive and exhibition industries are all closely watching the economic fallout from the ongoing global financial crisis, but most operators in the sector say that difficulties will be overcome by working smarter, being flexible and providing top service.

Paul Walker, the head of the Conventions and Incentives New Zealand (CINZ) professional conference organiser group says he has talked to some PCOs who say they are 'doing it tough'.

And his own company, Convention Management Services (CMS), has noticed a reduction in numbers at a recent event it organised.

'The drop off was mainly from the United States - we actually had more New Zealanders than we expected.'

Despite impact on delegate numbers, Walker is retaining a positive outlook.

'As a business owner, I am not worried about my business. There is enough business next year, so we are certainly not panicking and we have business booked for 2010 and 11 and even 2014.'

'If you are involved in association, medical, national and local government, that's not going away. They will still hold conferences.'

Walker adds that 2008 was the strongest year

CMS has had and that the work CINZ and various bureaux are doing in the international market is really paying off.

Article

He says particularly with government sector business the challenge for the industry is 'to do it smarter' and to look at ways costs can be reduced.

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Wanaka's winning ways



The New Zealand Snow Sports Industries Federation Trade Fair in full swing at Lake Wanaka

Wanaka may be a 'fledgling' destination when it comes to conferences, incentives and exhibitions. However, the region does have a reputation for hosting corporate retreats and the wider sector took a boost with the recent hosting of the New Zealand Snow Sports Industries Federation (NZSIF) Trade Fair. It is also looking forward to being the host region for the i-SITE Conference in September.

John Alldred, chief executive of Lake Wanaka Tourism, points out that The Warehouse held its annual conference in Lake Wanaka recently as well, using the same venue as the snow sports exhibition.

Wanaka based Victoria Murray-Orr, of evenZ, says people are realising that Wanaka provides a real alternative to more familiar conference and incentive destinations, particularly at the boutique end of the scale.

'We have all the outdoor activities that Queenstown has. We've got trekking, canyoning, on-water activities and a host of team building options.'

Murray-Orr says groups contemplating a progressive dinner in town can choose from well known Botswana Butchery, Missies Kitchen and White House along with a selection of casual restaurants, cafés and bars.

Off-site catering is not a problem either. She says high-end groups could set up a marquee in a mountain setting, fly in by helicopter and have the catering bought in.

'We are used to catering for the film industry, so that sort of thing is not a problem.'

Oakridge

When i-SITE visits next year, the conference will utilise the facilities at Grand Mercure Oakridge Resort. The hotel has a conference room that can take 250 theatre style and has 173 accommodation rooms. Many breakout spaces are available - both indoors and outdoors.

Conference manager Charlotte Wallace says the hotel also accommodated many of the participants at the snow sports trade fair and the final night function was held there as well.

Like others in Wanaka, Wallace sees plenty of potential for the region. 'We've got the venues, the accommodation and the space to be a successful C and I destination.'

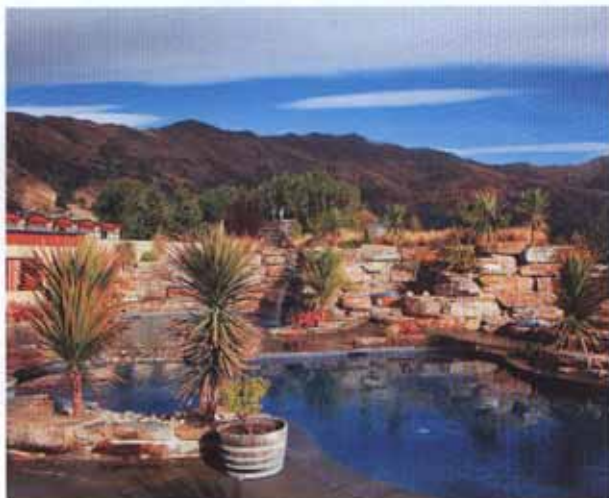
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Grand Mercure Oakridge Resort Lake Wanaka... well known for its pool and spa facilities

Oakridge itself is well known for its pool and spa facilities, and current developments will be highlighting these even more. The new Pool House Restaurant opens mid December, with 120 seats inside and a further 50 outdoors.

Oakridge has two leisure pools, seven hot tubs and a new 25 metre, three lane lap pool, plus a day spa with four treatment rooms.

Wallace says the area around the lap pool is perfect for opening parties, final functions and other events.

Other features of Oakridge include plenty of on-site parking, a dedicated on-site conference coordinator, natural light in all rooms (with blackout option available), an extensive range of the latest audio-visual and presentation equipment, wireless broadband internet and the availability of staging.

Trade fair

When the New Zealand Snow Sports Industries Federation (NZSIF) Trade fair was held in Wanaka in October it represented the first time the event had taken place in the South Island for seven years.

'We have been looking for a suitable venue in the South Island for many years and with the development of 2000 square metres of versatile space at the Wanaka Transport and Toy Museum, Wanaka is ideal,' says Miles Davidson of the NZSIF.

The trade fair attracted 38 wholesalers and approximately 450 buyers from throughout New Zealand to the town.

Zealand to the town.

i-SITE

Next year's i-SITE Conference is expected to attract over 160 delegates from i-SITES throughout New Zealand as well as key tourism stakeholders and front line staff and is held over three days with pre and post famils of the area. The conference will discuss common goals and activity sector strategy and the i-SITE New Zealand response, together with global and national tourism trends.

John Alldred, of Lake Wanaka Tourism, says having the i-SITE Conference in Wanaka has the potential to boost not only the conference and incentive industry but also build on the awareness of the region as a major tourism destination.

Guest chef at threesixty

Queenstown's threesixty restaurant has a guest chef. Phil Ryan, new to Queenstown, is a talented New Zealand chef with an impressive background in international cuisine.

Working alongside threesixty's executive chef Joji Iwama, Ryan has been immersing himself in threesixty's menu while infusing it with his own style of cooking.

Ryan's most recent accomplishment was securing the highest rating ever received from Christopher Hayes (principal of Australia's food and wine guide, Eat and Drink) during his tenure as executive chef at The Apartment in Melbourne. Fresh from working for the Conran Group in London, he was employed to overhaul the lunchtime menu which transformed the restaurant.

Before that, as senior sous chef at Butlers Wharf Chop House in London, Phil was part of a team that took the restaurant's rating from two to three Rosettes - one rating short of a Michelin Star.

Ryan enjoys meeting with guests and has already been keen to talk through menus with conference organisers. threesixty is in the Crowne Plaza Queenstown. It is located on Beach Street, opposite Queenstown's Steamer Wharf.



Retreat in
Grand Style

Grand Mercure Oakridge Resort Lake Wanaka is the luxury venue with a difference; ideal for conferences and incentives, meetings or corporate retreats. Relax, revitalize and enjoy in Wanaka style amidst the grandeur of the southern lakes!


Oakridge Resort
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