

MEDIA RELEASE



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Qualmark toasts 15 year milestone with 2,100 plus licence holders

Qualmark is this week celebrating its 15 year anniversary and the success of the Qualmark rating system.

Qualmark is New Zealand tourism's official quality mark – which is now carried by over 2,100 tourism operators nationwide.

Officially started on 26 October 1993 as a joint venture between the Automobile Association and New Zealand Tourism Board, Qualmark was later relaunched in 2002. This created the quality assurance programme that is today widely recognised and sought after by tourists considering accommodation, visitor activity, service and transport options.

Tourism New Zealand Chief Executive George Hickton congratulated Qualmark this week on the role it had played in improving quality in the tourism industry over the last 15 years.

“In the last few years Qualmark has taken significant steps forward in realising the full potential of what is now a world-leading quality assurance system and in setting the benchmarks for how far it can go in the future,” says Mr Hickton.

Qualmark Chief Executive Geoff Penrose says the organisation is proud of the many initiatives implemented since its inception, which have raised the bar for all New Zealand tourism operators carrying the Qualmark rating.

“We now have over 2,100 accredited Qualmark tourism operators which account for over 75 percent of economic activity in the tourism sector. This number is growing steadily as more tourism businesses see the value of the Qualmark brand and the benefits the programme can deliver operationally, as well as for their guests or customers.

“This is particularly evident in our latest initiative, Qualmark Green, which is setting new environmental quality standards across the industry, helping New Zealand deliver on its 100% Pure New Zealand promise,” says Mr Penrose.

The 'world first' Qualmark Green programme was unveiled by the Minister of Tourism in May 2008 as an extension of environmental criteria in Qualmark's quality accreditation system .

"We are seeing a positive response to this latest initiative , with many operators striving to achieve the standards required under this environmental certification. There is broad understanding that responsible tourism is not only good for the environment and local communities, but good for their business and good for the entire industry," added Mr Penrose.

Another important milestone reached recently was the launch in December last year of the endorsed inbound tour operator category. By April 2009 a number of New Zealand tour operators will be accredited with Qualmark, meaning they are meeting minimum standards and quality criteria on packaging tours for groups of international visitors.

General Manager Tourism Services for the Automobile Association, Peter Blackwell, says Qualmark's processes and standards continue to be held up internationally as examples of tourism best practice.

"As a joint owner of Qualmark with Tourism New Zealand, the AA is proud that the commitment to customer satisfaction continues. As the AA markets the great joys of a New Zealand holiday, it is reassuring that in a destination that is unfamiliar consumers can still feel comfortable, due to the consistency of Qualmark, that they are making informed decisions," says Mr Blackwell.

Mr Penrose says each of the more than 2,100 Qualmark accredited tourism operators had played a role in the success of Qualmark and New Zealand's tourism industry.

"On behalf of Qualmark, I'd like to thank each of our operators. Each and every one plays an important role in upholding New Zealand's reputation for quality tourism products.

"We look forward to welcoming more Qualmark accredited operators in the years to come. Ultimately the more accommodation, visitor activity, service and transport providers that become quality assured with Qualmark, the more travellers can book and buy with confidence while holidaying in New Zealand."

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For more information: Visit www.qualmark.co.nz

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About Qualmark: Qualmark is New Zealand tourism's official mark of quality. All accommodation and tourism businesses that carry the Qualmark means they've been independently assessed as professional and trustworthy, so travellers can book and buy with confidence. The Qualmark can help travellers identify quality places to stay, things to do and ways to get around no matter where you are in New Zealand. From the North Island to the South Island, Auckland to Christchurch, Rotorua to Queenstown, Wellington to Dunedin – Qualmark® assured businesses can be found across the country. Qualmark is jointly owned by Tourism New Zealand and the AA.