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MEDIA RELEASE TO CONSUMER PUBLICATIONS

New Quality Mark for Visitor industry

An official quality assurance system for the whole of the tourism industry has been launched today to inform and protect domestic and international travellers.

The Qualmark™ identifies professional and trustworthy tourism businesses – from accommodation through to horse trekking, flightseeing, bungee jumping and museums – so consumers can book and buy with confidence.

Several hundred accommodation businesses have already been brought into the official Qualmark™ licensing system. And they're being joined in the lead up to the summer season by a growing range of other tourism businesses, to assist consumers selecting things to do and ways to get around, as well as places to stay.

The launch coincides with the release of research by Tourism New Zealand that shows that quality is, more than ever, key to the success of tourism in New Zealand.

Tourism New Zealand Chief Executive and Qualmark Chairman George Hickton says consumers are attracted by the activities they can do in New Zealand's natural landscape but the total tourism experience is important.

"We might have a beautiful country, but if visitors have had any bad experiences that's the lasting experience they will take away. We want to make sure that the power of word-of-mouth works in our favour."

Mr Hickton says the launch of Qualmark is timely because the goal of the system is to help visitors find and use professional tourism operators. "Every business carrying the Qualmark™ quality mark will have undergone a detailed and comprehensive quality

assessment based around what's important to consumers – including customer service, facilities, safety and security, and staff training.”

The programme has published a “Guide to Quality Assured Accommodation” available through i-SITE visitor information centres and other outlets. Comprehensive listings of quality assured businesses are also online at www.qualmark.co.nz.

The new Qualmark™ system has been built onto the existing accommodation star grading service provided by Qualmark New Zealand Limited, a government–private sector joint venture company between Tourism New Zealand and New Zealand Automobile Association.

A new Qualmark™ “endorsement” system for visitor activities, visitor transport and visitor services has been designed to complement the accommodation star grades, and paves the way for the Qualmark™ system to expand over the next 3-4 years to include around 3000 tourism businesses .

The new endorsement assessment system has been reviewed and approved by the Consumers’ Institute. The system also has the full support of the Tourism Industry Association which represents operators, and the Inbound Tour Operators’ Council which represents wholesale buyers.

More information at www.qualmark.co.nz.

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Note

Following are the categories in which customers will find businesses that carry tourism's Qualmark™ quality mark:

Category	Qualmark™ assessment	Examples
Backpackers	Star grade	Backpacker lodges, budget hotels
Guest & Hosted	Star grade	Character homes, B&Bs, farmstays, boutique lodges
Holiday Park	Star grade	Holiday parks, motor camps, camp grounds
Hotel	Star grade	Hotels, hotel apartments and resorts
Self contained & serviced	Star grade	Motels, motor inns, serviced apartments, serviced holiday homes
Visitor activities	Endorsement	Adventure (horse trekking, sea kayaking, bungee jumping, all terrain vehicles etc), tourist flights, charter boats, museums, shopping, wine tours, attractions
Visitor transport	Endorsement	Ferries, rental cars, coaches, airlines, limousines, taxis, trains
Visitor services	Endorsement	Publishers, inbound tour operators, visitor information centres

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