



**Media release  
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### **1900<sup>th</sup> QUALMARK LICENCE AWARDED TO NEW LUXURY CRUISE VENTURE**

New Zealand tourism's official quality agency, Qualmark, today awarded its 1900<sup>th</sup> licence to a tourism business bringing world-class cruise luxury to Auckland waters.

Island Escape Cruises was presented with its Qualmark licence at a special event aboard its luxurious small ship Island Passage, attended by Auckland City Mayor Dick Hubbard.

Mr Hubbard said Qualmark had played a critical role in preserving the high standards of New Zealand tourism and the presentation of its 1900<sup>th</sup> licence was a major milestone.

"It is fitting that Qualmark should celebrate this milestone aboard a ship like this that epitomises quality in tourism. It's especially wonderful to see a tourism venture of such quality established around the beautiful attributes of the Hauraki Gulf and bringing world class standards to Auckland and New Zealand waters," said Mr Hubbard.

Qualmark recognises businesses providing visitor activities, transport and services, that meet strict criteria, with endorsement licences. Qualmark also has an aligned system for assessing accommodation.

Awarded a Qualmark endorsed visitor activity certificate, Island Escape Cruises offers luxury excursions around the Hauraki Gulf on its purpose built 42 metre expedition cruise ship Island Passage.

The vessel boasts 10 large suites with private facilities, a library, generous outdoor spaces, five on-board boats for landing parties and excursions and a twin-engine helicopter.

Qualmark Chief Executive Geoff Penrose said the company's commitment to building an environmentally sustainable operation was particularly impressive.

"From the conception stage of this tourism operation, Island Escape Cruises' owner Peter Bissett has been committed to ensuring this business is fully sustainable and friendly on the environment in its daily operations.

"Not only has the company achieved the high standards required for the Qualmark standard, but it is also an excellent example of a tourism operation committed to sustainability now and in the future," said Geoff.

“As the 1900<sup>th</sup> New Zealand tourism business to receive the Qualmark standard, we congratulate Peter and his team for their commitment to strive for quality,” he said.

Island Escape Cruises Managing Director Peter Bissett said achieving the Qualmark criteria was excellent endorsement of his company’s high standards for its discerning customers.

Island Escape Cruises started in January 2007 after three and half years of planning and the building of Island Passage. The vessel features predominantly New Zealand materials including Macrocarpa panelling and Kauri furniture throughout its interior.

The company offers weekly departures from Princes Wharf in downtown Auckland departing every Sunday afternoon, returning Friday morning. Shorter overnight excursions are made possible by the onboard helicopter which takes clients from Auckland central directly to the ship.

Qualmark New Zealand is a joint venture between the Automobile Association and Tourism New Zealand. Since its relaunch in 2002, Qualmark has licensed 1900 tourism businesses throughout New Zealand. These businesses account for over 70% of all tourism economic activity.

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