

MEDIA RELEASE
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NEW ZEALAND LEADS THE WAY IN RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

New Zealand has been named as a world leader in responsible tourism.

Just announced in London, New Zealand won the 'Overall Winner' and 'Best Destination' categories in the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards.

The Awards recognise destinations and organisations that are making a positive contribution to local cultures, economies and the environment through tourism.

New Zealand was nominated for the first time this year, alongside 1900 other nominees from around the world.

Tourism New Zealand Chief Executive George Hickton says the win recognises that New Zealand is doing its best to look after its 100% Pure image and protect the future of the \$14.1 billion tourism industry.

The judges said: "New Zealand is our overall winner for proving that it is possible to develop a national strategy [[New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2015](#)] which uses tourism to help make better places to live and to visit."

"New Zealand has implemented many of the principles of the Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism in Destinations and demonstrated what national government can achieve - working with the private sector, local communities and local government - by harnessing tourism to benefit their people and their environment."

"If more national governments followed their example, tourism would make a much more positive contribution around the world."

The judges recognised Qualmark Green as one of New Zealand's most important achievements in responsible tourism. Qualmark is New Zealand tourism's official quality accreditation system now including responsible tourism criteria.

Qualmark Chief Executive Geoff Penrose says that over and above the improvements Qualmark Green is helping to promote on the ground, the international award reinforces its value as a marketing tool for New Zealand.

"The launch of Qualmark Green has been an important part of this win. By being the first country in the world to have a fully integrated quality and environmental accreditation system, we have made it clear that our environment is something we are protecting for the future."

George Hickton says "The green image is so important for New Zealand as it's what a New Zealand holiday is all about. Our landscapes are the main reason visitors come here.

“Through the New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2015 the industry has committed to being a leading contributor to a sustainable New Zealand economy. It’s fantastic for this commitment to be recognised in the UK, our second-largest tourist market.”



The win has the support of American adventurer, entrepreneur and broadcaster Richard Bangs. “When I first came to New Zealand, it was an environmental dark star, bent on felling forests, over-fishing and ‘unprotecting’. The Maori culture was in danger of collapse; there was more culture in a cup of yoghurt than in most Maori events,” he told the awards magazine, *r:travel*.

“But as I kept returning over the years the place kept getting better and recently it seems that while the rest of the world has been digging a deeper hole for itself, New Zealand is building a mountain of hope, and is a clear leader for sustainability.”

Award winners will be published in *The Daily Telegraph* (circulation 889,000) on Saturday 15 November and broadcast on the BBC World News travel show *Fast:Track*.

Awards website: www.responsibletourismawards.com

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Qualmark:

- New Zealand’s official mark of quality for tourism
- Owned by Tourism New Zealand and the New Zealand Automobile Association.
- A quality assurance accreditation system, including accommodation star gradings, and an endorsement system for visitor transport, service and activities.
- There are now over 2,150 Qualmark licence-holders
- Qualmark Green includes three levels of recognition for top performers in responsible tourism: Qualmark Enviro-Gold, Enviro-Silver and Enviro-Bronze.
- Visit www.qualmark.co.nz and www.responsibletourism.co.nz for more information.