

MEDIA RELEASE



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Three Rotorua tourism activities among first in NZ to achieve green status

Three of Rotorua's visitor attractions are celebrating their green leadership as the first tourism activities in the region to achieve Qualmark's new Enviro-logos.

Recipients of the prestigious new environmental rating from Qualmark include Rainbow Springs Nature Park and Kiwi Encounter, which has been awarded an Enviro-Gold logo, and the Agrodome and Rotorua Aquatic Centre which have both achieved Enviro-Silver logos.

Rotorua has achieved highly under the new environmental accreditation programme, with the country's first-ever Enviro-logo awarded to the city's Alpin Motel in September.

Announcement of the first Enviro-logo recipients around the country marks a significant milestone for the Qualmark Green programme, which was unveiled by the Minister of Tourism in May 2008 as an extension of environmental criteria in Qualmark's quality accreditation system.

Geoff Penrose, Chief Executive of Qualmark, says the three Rotorua visitor activities are an excellent example to other businesses of how environmentally responsible activities can best be fully integrated into day to day operations.

"This is an impressive achievement for these three visitor activities and testament to how each has fully integrated environmental sustainability into quality tourism products. These Enviro-logos are evidence that each has achieved sound responsible tourism processes within their respective operations.

"On behalf of Qualmark, I extend my sincere congratulations to the operators and management teams of Rainbow Springs, the Agrodome and the Rotorua Aquatic Centre."

Don Gunn, General Manager of Destination Rotorua, says the new environmental standard for tourism operations is extremely positive for the entire region.

"Achieving this Enviro-logo level is indicative of the serious commitment each of these operations has made to responsible tourism operations.

"We support Qualmark and are very keen to see more operators work towards achieving the Enviro-logo rating. The Rotorua Sustainable Tourism Charter is working to help other members in the region achieve this prestigious rating which is great for the businesses, their visitors and Rotorua as a whole," he says.

Rainbow Springs Nature Park and Kiwi Encounter

Regional General Manager for Rainbow Springs, Stewart Brown, says achieving the Enviro-Gold logo is an important step for the 76 year old conservation focused business and demonstrates a broad commitment to the highest level in environmental practices.

“Our team is 100% behind our sustainable business ethic and are constantly looking for ideas that we can introduce into the business to make improvements,” says Mr Brown.

Rainbow Springs has been hugely successful with breeding programmes for Kiwi and other endangered New Zealand birds and animals. The commitment to sustainable business practices is diverse, ranging from the planting of over 750 native trees to implementation of park wide recycling programmes, including the recycling of all green waste through industrial worm farms that create fertiliser for the park’s own organic vegetable garden, which in turn supplies the on-site café.

Agrodome

As an educational and agricultural activity park, Agrodome is quintessentially New Zealand and ensures that sustainable practices underpin all aspects of its tourism operation.

Joint Managing Director Warren Harford says the Agrodome takes a serious approach to reinforcing New Zealand’s 100% pure branding by adopting good environmental polices across the business.

“Receiving the Responsible Tourism Enviro-Silver logo gives the Agrodome the comfort of marketing alongside the 100% pure brand, knowing that our visitors will be delivered a quality and environmental friendly product. The next stage for Agrodome is to go for Gold.”

Through its entire showcase of New Zealand live stock and farming methodology, Agrodome reflects a consistent approach to sustainability. The show auditorium is lit with sodium lighting and an organic orchard has been established, together with environmentally sensitive tracks. Voluntary fencing has occurred 10 metres from streams to keep animals from defecating near waterways and both streams and soil are regularly tested.

Rotorua Aquatic Centre

As a community facility owned by Rotorua District Council, Aquatic and Leisure Manager Louis Sylvester sees the Rotorua Aquatic Centre’s Enviro-Silver logo as providing an excellent example for other businesses in the area.

“We’re thrilled to achieve this environmental standard which is a win-win for everyone – for the environment, for the Council and for all residents. We believe we are the first swimming pool in the country to achieve the Enviro-logo and we hope our experience will encourage other pool and visitor recreation facilities to pursue this level of environmental sustainability.”

A number of major water and energy saving initiatives have been implemented through the Rotorua Aquatic Centre including air handler units on automatic timers, variable speed drives on main pool pumps, the use of low energy bulbs and installation of 15-second push delay shower buttons to avoid running showers being left on. The Centre also makes a significant contribution to educating Rotorua’s children about conservation and the environment by organising tree planting and litter removal as part of its Green Team School Holiday Programme.

“We have just completed a comprehensive audit of water use, resulting in valuable advice about how this can be improved – so that we can go for Enviro-Gold next year,” says Mr Sylvester.

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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.

About Qualmark® Environmental performance standards and branding:

Once operators have met minimum requirements, additional scoring in the Responsible Tourism Operations criteria will contribute to their overall Qualmark score. Qualmark is working on a range of activities that will promote and leverage this aspect of the Qualmark criteria, including marketing communications and website information. Part of this work has included the development of additional branding (logos) available to operators who score above 3 out of 5 in the criteria. There are three levels of logos for this (shown alongside the existing Qualmark identity as an example):



Example only - the three levels of Qualmark's environmental verification are shown above. Based on scoring a certain level within the Responsible Tourism Operations criteria, these logos are available to operators once they are assessed from August 2008. The relevant logo is designed to be used alongside (not in place of) existing Qualmark star grading and Endorsed logos on websites and in collateral such as brochures. Electronic versions available for media on request.

Operators who score above 3 out of 5 in the criteria are eligible to apply for the use of the Enviro-Bronze logo; those that score 4 out of 5 can apply for use of the Enviro-Silver logo; and the highest performers (achieving 5 out of 5) can apply for the use of Enviro-Gold. The logos have been tested on international visitors staying in a range of accommodation categories.

