

# ProGuides Newsletter

22 December 2025



## Merry Xmas from the Committee

With the season in full swing and Xmas celebrations all around, here is our last newsletter of the year. Read about the latest developments in our industry, get informed about initiatives and projects that makes our work more exciting. Have your say at our suggestion to join an international tourism event in Auckland. We welcome every idea and your input. And last but not least, mark the date for our **AGM, which will take place on September 19 in Oamaru**. Thrilling famils are already in the planning. A small number of guides enjoyed a festive gathering in Auckland on Dec 15 (picture above).

Have a wonderful festive season, whether it's with clients, friends or family. Here's to a merry Xmas and a happy New Year.

## Have Your Say

Tourism Export Council is hosting an interesting event on **22-23 April 2026 in Auckland**, connecting travel product suppliers and product managers of inbound travel wholesalers as well as destination management companies. It looks like an exceptional opportunity to form and maintain connections within the industry. This could be a chance for ProGuides NZ to be present and a voice within the industry. **Therefore, we are looking for ideas to promote our association.** We are looking for **videos and other visuals** to introduce our association, and we need volunteers to be our face and voice at the event. Please **contact us** if you are interested.

## From our Industry

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### Concerns for Cruiseships

Between the 2023/24 and 2025/26 seasons, cruise ship visits to the South Island are set to fall by 43%. Total **passenger and crew arrivals will drop by 29%**. Cruise lines cite rising port costs, regulatory volatility, and strict biosecurity compliance as major deterrents. A **new in-water cleaning technology**, developed by Port of Auckland and New Zealand Diving and Salvage Ltd with support from Biosecurity New Zealand, is set to address these issues. It is said to be ready for summer.

### Intrepid acquires Wild Bush Luxury

Intrepid Travel has acquired Wild Bush Luxury and its luxury lodges in Australia. Wild Bush operates guided walking tours. The acquisition is part of [Intrepid's strategy to expand premium, nature-based experiences in Australia](#). Wild Bush will join Intrepid's portfolio in February.

## The Mainlander returns

Rail and Tourism Group, the New Zealand-owned company behind Mainland Rail, announced it will resurrect inter-regional South Island rail, named The Mainlander, for [services between Christchurch, Dunedin and Invercargill](#). Chief executive Paul Jackson said the first series of journeys will be between January 20 and 23.

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## Nature Matters



## Kawarau Gorge Milestone

The dream of linking Queenstown and Cromwell via a backcountry trail network gets closer. The Kawarau Gorge Trail has reached a significant construction milestone early December and is said to hit its final phases of work in early 2026. Southern Lakes Trails now expects the new trail to open towards the end of summer 2026. [Click here to read the story](#).

## Tohu Whenua opens in Canterbury

A treasure trove of storytelling has opened in the Canterbury foothills. According to the Department of Conservation it is a very special site with a rich history. It will be recognized as a new Tohu Whenua site and is part of a growing nationwide network of designated sites to tell the

stories of Aotearoa/New Zealand's history. [Visitors will get informed via QR codes.](#)

## Walkway Updates

NZTA Waka Kotahi is on track in Wellington to complete the bridge over rail tracks on the shared pathway from Ngauranga to Petone, called Te Ara Tupua, in the first half of 2026. [NZTA informs](#), that the supports are fully installed, and work is being done to finish the bridge ramps.

Meanwhile, DOC is promoting a short walk through the lush beech forest in Canterbury. Called the Devils Punchbowl, it is a one-hour return track, including a fresh mountain waterfall. [Click here for an inspirational video clip.](#)

## Food for Thought



## Artificial Intelligence explained

Artificial intelligence is changing the way businesses attract, convert, and retain customers. For many business owners, it's hard to know what's genuinely practical and what's just tech hype. [Click here for a video clip](#), where Rachel Alexander and her colleague reveal practical AI tactics being used by progressive NZ businesses. It is specially recommended for small tour operators.

## Understanding Social Media

Tourism Waitaki has hosted the first part of a digital marketing webinar about paid Social Media, giving a practical overview and covering different types of Google and Meta campaigns and how to choose the

right one for marketing goals. [Click here to download the presentation.](#)  
You could also view the webinar recording.

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## Notes from the Road

### Tairua Bridge revised

A new two-lane bridge will replace the old single-lane [Pepe Stream Bridge on SH 25](#) in Tairua. Construction is expected to begin in late 2026. SH25 will stay open, with occasional night closures.



### Te Puia manages Waimangu

Rotorua tourist attraction Te Puia has taken a 50% share of Waimangu Volcanic Valley and will [manage day-to-day operations](#). The valley was created by the 1886 Tarawera eruption.



### Baby Seal in Bar

What initially sounds like the beginning of a joke actually happened in a pub in Richmond, a baby seal walked into the establishment and stunned the bar owner. [Click here to enjoy the encounter.](#)



## Welcoming new Members



### **Catherine Kirk**

Catherine is a New Zealander, who has been guiding since 2007. She loves to showcase our beautiful Aotearoa in the mainstream tourist spots. She has a P-licence and knows a lot about flora and fauna, food, gardening, NZ history as well as skiing and wine.

ProGuides New Zealand.

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