

ProGuides Newsletter

24 January 2026



From the Chair

I hope the season is going well for all of you, and that 2026 is lining up to be a fabulous year for the Constellation of ProGuides members. It is busy for us at the committee, and sometimes difficult to find the time to achieve all we have set out to do this year on top of our professional commitments, but rest assured we are doing the best we can.

We are well underway with preparations for the 2026 AGM, the dates and venue have been booked: **19 Sept at the Brydone Oamaru**. We will also have access to rooms at a reduced rate at the Brydone Hotel, **so please let us know** if you would like to stay there and we will take care

of it. The AGM content is still a work in progress, but it will cover topics that are essential to us all... more to be revealed in due course.

From the Committee

A very happy new year to all of you and a warm welcome to our new members. Although you might be busy on the road, take some time and get informed about the latest developments with our first newsletter of the year. It includes some interesting links that will give you food for thought. It also contains some useful information for your guests, for instance about dairy farming and the development of the average income in New Zealand. Enjoy the read!

Things to Ponder



Famils

Our famil fairy Sharron Hickmann has been carefully curating **famils around our AGM** in Oamaru in September and we can already share the main outlines, with full details to be published closer to the date.

Friday 18 Sep - coach from Christchurch to Oamaru, with stops in Temuka & Timaru - ending at Steampunk HQ in Oamaru

Sunday 20 Sep - Oamaru famil, including Parkside Quarries, Totara Estate, the Victorian precinct, Oamaru Penguins, and more

Monday 21 Sep - 2 options:

- Oamaru to Christchurch, with stops in Timaru & Geraldine

- Oamaru to Dunedin, with an "I didn't know that was there" tour in Dunedin

Beside our traditional famils around the AGM we would like to hear your **ideas for explorations around the country**. The quieter season around mid-April is a perfect time to find out about the hidden gems of the country. Do you have any ideas? [Get in touch](#) and let us know what region you want to discover.

For our Industry Partners

Anthony Kerr from Exodesk offers **complimentary cyber security audits** for organisations with more than 5 staff, specifically tour operators. Exodesk is a New Zealand based IT and cyber security provider supporting SMEs with practical, straightforward improvements. [Get in touch with Anthony](#) if you want to find out more.

A Controversial Levy

The International Visitor Levy was introduced to help manage the impact of tourism. However, it looks like it is used for marketing initiatives to bring more international visitors into the country. Some critics see it as a 'cynical misuse'. Professor of Tourism James Higham argues that the IVL was introduced to manage high growth and increasing pressure on the infrastructure, and now it's "being used to fuel further growth." The Post had a lengthy article about this topic. [Click here to read it.](#)

Tipping Culture

Tipping isn't really in the DNA of Kiwis or Australians, but it keeps popping up whenever we travel with our guests. Instead of hiding behind vague wording about "local customs", Mat Newton, boss of Australian tour company Leatherback Travel, has pulled back the curtain on how American groups change the game for everyone else and why tipping ends up mattering more than any of us would like. [Click here for his thoughts](#) and feel free to share your ideas on the topic.

Useful Information



Dairy Industry

Sometimes your guests ask questions only an expert could answer. When it comes to dairy, you will be safe with facts and figures, compiled by Dairy NZ, which gives you informative background information. The organisation has put together a comprehensive overview of all things important to the industry, with professional insight into facts about dairy farming, from financial and pasture management, cow feed requirements to managing a herd and a lot more. [Check it out here.](#)

Income Statistics

The 2025 statistics about earnings in New Zealand has been published by Stats NZ in January. It provides a snapshot of what Kiwis are earning but also highlights the inequality and lack of transparency. According to the report the [median salary in New Zealand is NZ\\$ 69,836](#). A standout statistic is that 750 New Zealanders earn over NZ\$ 1 million annually. However, they represent less than 0.02% of wage and salary workers.

Explaining the Kākā

The New Zealand kākā is a large species of parrot living in native forests across the country. It is endangered and has disappeared from much of its former range. However, in Wellington's Zealandia, there is a project group which studies the behaviour of the bird with the big mouth. [Click here and find out](#) what challenges they have to deal with.

Avo Tours in Katikati

Learn about avocados with [tailormade tours in a picturesque orchard](#) in Katikati. Owners Tim and Michele are passionate advocates for avocados and love to share their knowledge.



Experience Michelangelo

The genius of the sixteenth-century artist can be viewed from a new perspective and a different view until [February 8 at the Wellington Convention Centre](#). Over 50 works of Michelangelo are on display.



Queenstown Bridge closed

Residents and visitors have been cut off from a popular tourist area north of Queenstown after [Skippers Bridge, the only access route, was closed](#) indefinitely due to serious structural failures.



Polish and Pan

is the idea of Brook Robinson, a third-generation West Coast gold miner, and his business partner Shaun Drylie. On [offer is the experience of finding and panning your own gold](#).



Welcoming new Members

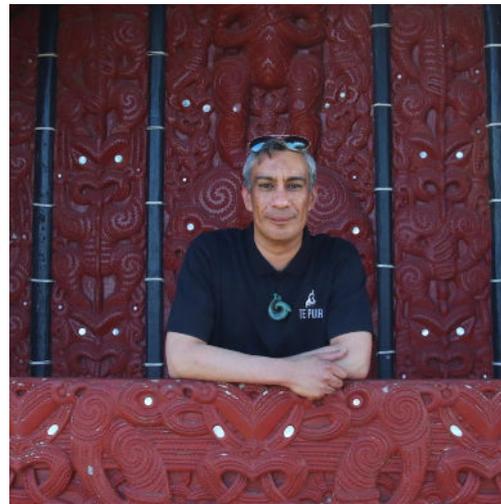


Robert Mignault

(French, English, Basic German) is a Native French Canadian but has called New Zealand home for the last 30 years. He has a deep experience in adventure tourism, spanning over 45 years, and a keen interest in eco and adventure tourism.

On a Personal Note

It is with great sadness that we learned about the death of Puia duty manager and guide **Robert (Piripi) John Kihi Mita Taupopoki Phillips**. A lot of our members knew and loved him for his enthusiasm and professionalism. May he rest in peace. Our thoughts are with his whanau.



ProGuides New Zealand.

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