

ProGuides Newsletter

26 July 2026



From the Chair

Our annual meeting in Oamaru is getting closer. If you haven't signed up to our AGM yet, don't wait any longer. We have a fantastic panel of speakers at the conference on Saturday, **September 19 at the Brydone in Oamaru**, in particular the eminent Susan Houge Mackenzie, lecturer at Otago University, who will share insights about Mental Health in Tourism – something we have all been confronted to at one point or another. Click here for the [full programme](#).

Famil fairy Sharron Hickman has organised transfers and local visits, that you can check out as well. If you are planning to join the famil from Christchurch and are looking for somewhere to stay there before, she recommends [Hotel Give in Hereford Street](#).

Meantime, our big famil has ended in Auckland (see below) with a visit at the All Black Experience (picture above), just before the beloved New Zealand rugby team protected their fortress with a crushing win over Ireland at Eden Park on Saturday, July 18.

'Kaitiakitanga' has been named the world's most beautiful word by language-learning platform Babbel. The Maori word means guardianship of the environment and protection. Let's act accordingly.

Read about the latest development in our industry, the Department of Conservation, updates on the roads and a lot more.

Nga mihi Angela



Famil Finish in Auckland

By Melanie Wittwer

In June, ProGuides gave their new and emerging tour guides the fantastic opportunity to take part in a 16-day Mega Famil all around Aotearoa, with veteran ProGuides members generously donating their time and expertise as guides and drivers. Six of us joined for the entire 16-day Famil, while another four joined for sections of the tour. We learned so much from the local guides, their different guiding styles and

vast knowledge of this country, its culture, its natural beauty as well as the tour guiding industry.

We listened to local stories and visited places off the beaten track from the quaint to the spectacular. We learned how to keep our luggage down to a manageable size, the importance of good timekeeping, and how to make sure your group gets the most out of their day, even and especially in adverse weather. Forced to abandon our route toward Franz Josef Glacier when Haast Pass was closed, we learned the importance of making decisions fast and thinking on our feet.

We now know where the best bathroom facilities are along the road, where to get the best pies and where to spot a kea, kiwi or weka. None of this could have happened without the generous support of local suppliers who provided us with transport or invited us into their venues, experiences and shows. We cannot wait to bring our own tour groups along to showcase what New Zealand is all about. **For a detailed write-up of the Mega Famil see the ProGuides website.**



Focus on Queenstown

The destination, best known for being a tourism hotspot, wants to become a travel technology hub. WiT, short for Web in Travel and described as the Asia Pacific region's leading travel technology media and events platform, gathered there this month, bringing together senior executives, founders and investors, for a conference. Technology Queenstown, the trading name of the Whakatipu Hangarau Trust, has the goal to build a billion-dollar tech sector in the Queenstown Lake District over the next 20 years. [Read more here.](#)

On another note: [Skyline Queenstown](#) informs that with every sold gondola ticket customers have access to professional photos taken throughout their visit. Photo-matching technology helps to automatically identify and collect photos of visitors during their experience, making it easy to find and download favourite moments.

And finally, [Netflix picked the popular destination](#) as its set for a new series about a wealthy family at war with itself. Popular actor Rufus Sewell is starring in it.

DOC Matters



Parking Information

PG-Committee-member Brian Farrant advised that DOC-Paid parking will continue at Punakaiki Pancake Rocks, Paparoa National Park Franz Josef Glacier, Westland Tai Poutini National Park and White Horse Hill, Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park. Free parking permits issued to eligible concession holders for the duration of the pilot will now be issued on a yearly basis. If you have already registered your parking permit account, you don't need to do anything – your permit has been extended by one year. Now is a good time to log in to your permit account and check that your list of business vehicle licence plates is up to date. Remember that it is your responsibility to maintain this list. [Full terms and conditions can be found here.](#)

Reactions to Conservation Amendment Bill

Tourism Industry Aotearoa has made a submission on the Conservation Amendment Bill, the biggest update to New Zealand's conservation management framework in decades. The organisation supports the need to modernise the system, particularly where reforms can improve DOC concession processes, but also identifies areas where the Bill needs further refinement and stronger safeguards. [Read more about it here.](#)

The [Conservation Amendment Bill](#) was introduced to Parliament this year in May and is the most significant reform of conservation law in nearly 40 years. While the Government argues the Bill will modernise conservation management, support regional economies, and improve visitor experiences, critics, including [Forest & Bird](#), warn that it may prioritise economic development over conservation values amongst other criticism.

From our Industry



Shaping the Future

The Tourism Export Council New Zealand (TECNZ) Conference 2026 on 5 & 6 August at the Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre will bring together industry leaders, innovators, and export-ready tourism operators. Designed to inspire, connect, and inform, the conference offers a programme focused on the future of inbound tourism, global market trends, and the opportunities shaping New Zealand's visitor economy. [Read more here.](#)

Michelin Stars revealed

New Zealand's first Michelin Guide has been unveiled, marking a milestone for the food and beverage sector and giving **Tourism New Zealand a platform** to share their culinary story with the world. Tourism New Zealand congratulates the 110 restaurants featured in the inaugural Michelin Guide for Aotearoa New Zealand and Oceania. [Read more here.](#)

Notes from the Road

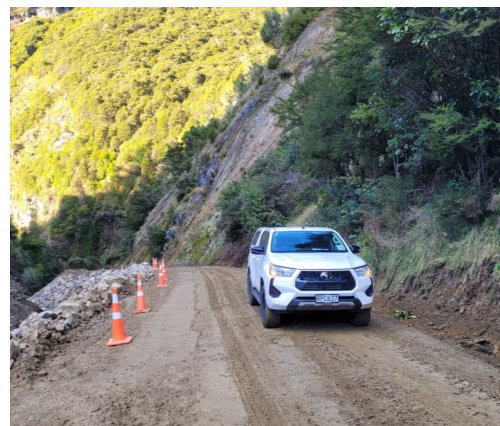
Walk and Cycle Way will open

The **Kawarau Gorge Trail** is officially scheduled to open in September. This new 34 km walking and cycling Great Ride connects Gibbston Valley to Bannockburn.



Kahurangi Road repaired

Graham Valley Road, a key road into Kahurangi National Park has reopened after **almost \$1 million in repairs** and a year after it was badly damaged by storms.



Mountain Bridge opens

The anticipated new bridge up the **Hooker Valley at Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park** is set to open in July. It's the longest suspension bridge in New Zealand.



Recreating History

Arts collective **Te Whare**

Tapere o Te Arawa retells the story of the 1886 Tarawera eruption in a theatrical production, from January 15 to February 14, 2027, in Rotorua.



Membership News

RENEWAL 2026-2027

ProGuides membership has been extended for another year for the members who have their membership **renewed online** and paid their subscription (\$130 for full members, \$65 Affiliate Members, and \$245 Industry Partners) - Thank you to all of you, we look forward to another fabulous year together.

If you haven't done so yet, this is a kind reminder that you are running out of time as the deadline is 31 July, after which your membership will be suspended.

NEW MEMBERS:

We received a flurry of new members in the past few weeks, and we would like to welcome them officially. Some are Affiliate members, new to guiding, and we trust we will help facilitate their growth, while others are Full members who have been working for several years already. Don't hesitate to get in touch with them.

FULL MEMBERS:

Huey Rurehe, Tauranga

Maori guide, educator, musician, artist, designer, and enthusiast of all things on wheels, he brings creativity and confidence to every tour. He guides across Aotearoa and Australia, crafting tailored experiences rich in cultural understanding.

Joshua Wharton, Christchurch

Born in Bolivia, his passion for travel led him across four continents, but it is New Zealand and its spectacular scenery that anchored him. He has a deep connection with Canterbury, and a particular interest in gardens, wildlife, food and wine.

Srdan Sepetavc, Auckland

From Croatia originally, he has been living in New Zealand for over 30 years. When he is not guiding visitors around the country or driving his taxi, his favourite hobby is fishing.

Mariana Wagner, Christchurch

Originally from Namibia, nature is close to her heart. She is well travelled, having visited 35 countries, and has been in New Zealand for 15 years. Her husband Jurgen is also a tour guide.

AFFILIATE MEMBERS:

Jason Stokes, Auckland

Raised in Tauranga, he brings a diverse background from beekeeping to truck driving to law and property, and enjoys outdoor pursuits in his spare time.

Katharina Marshall, Auckland

Born and raised in Berlin, she first moved to Boston then London before settling down in New Zealand in 2005. An eager explorer, she has a keen interest in history and nature.

Vishwas Patel, Queenstown

Originally from India and now based in Queenstown, he offers premium chauffeur services for high end passengers across South Island destinations like Milford Sound, Mt. Cook, and Franz Josef Glacier.



