
9 Events and activities infrastructure

■ Summary

- › As more international tourists visit New Zealand, most National Parks are becoming more highly frequented, though there are some parts of the network that are currently under-utilised.
- › The best opportunities will be at locations close to existing tourism areas and where appropriate infrastructure is available such as transport, accommodation and complementary services and experiences.
- › There is also significant capacity, even at popular sites, outside of the peak season. However, as demand increases, investment should be made to ensure that infrastructure in the parks can support the additional tourism.
- › Business events are becoming a larger part of New Zealand's international presence. Business event attendees tend to spend more, so are viewed as high value to the tourism industry.
- › Visitors for business events are trending up, especially from Australia. The tourism industry and government have made a concerted effort in recent years to capture a larger part of this international conference market, led by significant investments in world-class conference facilities in New Zealand.
- › The overall opinion of international visitors about activities on offer in New Zealand is consistently high, reaffirming the country's place as a 'premium' travelling destination.

9.1 Introduction

This section will explore two aspects of tourism infrastructure for events and activities: national parks and business events.

9.2 National parks

9.2.1 National park infrastructure demand

Figure 38 shows a map of the 13 national parks in New Zealand. The majority are concentrated either side of the South Island's main divide.

In addition, there are a number of iconic tourist experiences (eg, Cathedral Cove, Cape Reinga/Te Rerenga Wairua) provided on conservation land that is outside of national parks.

Figure 38: Map of New Zealand national parks

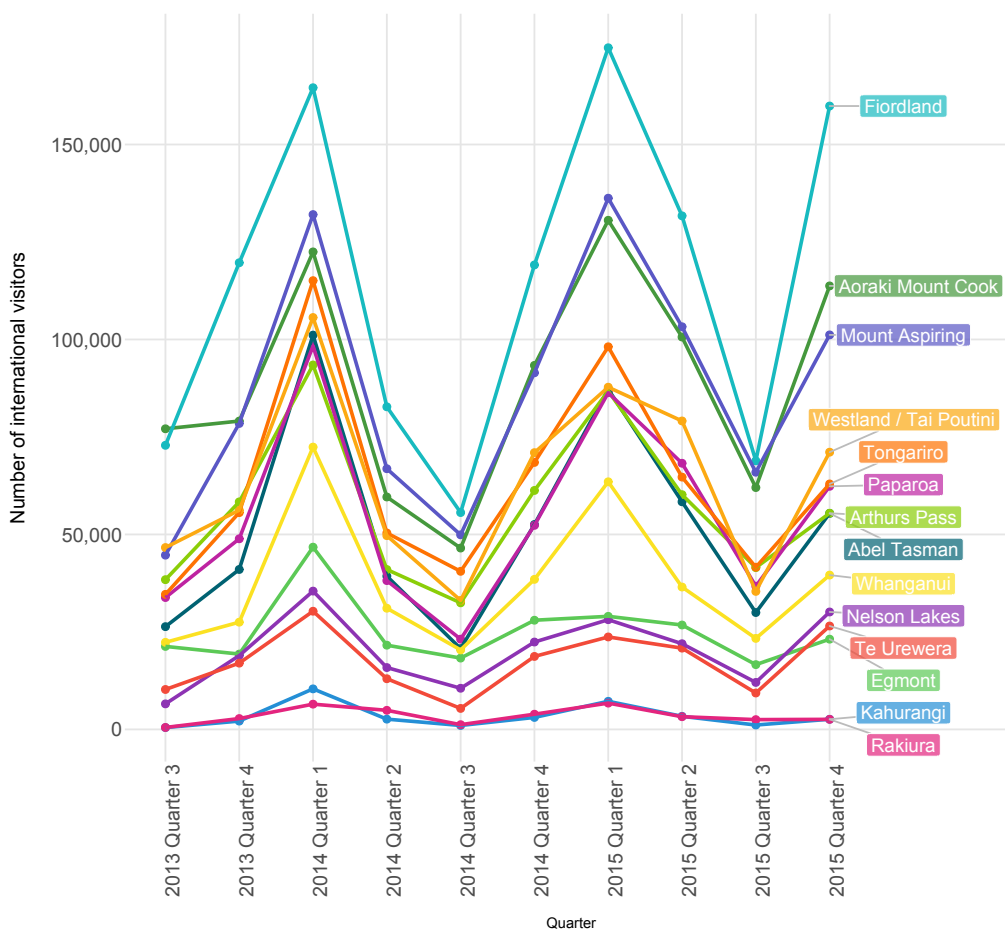
Source: Department of Conservation

An estimated 1.3 million international visitors went to one or more of New Zealand's national parks in 2015. Over a third of these visited during January–March 2015, while just 16 per cent visited during the winter months of July–September 2015. Ten of the 13 national parks saw an increase in international tourism number over 2015.

An additional estimated 1.3 million New Zealanders used national parks from 2014 to 2015, with Tongariro National Park being the most visited.

The most popular national park for international visitors is Fiordland, where an estimated 535,300 visited in 2015. This is an increase of 27 per cent from the previous year, when 422,000 visited. Other popular national parks include Aoraki/Mount Cook with 407,000 visitors (up 26 per cent from 321,900) and Mount Aspiring with 406,600 visitors (up 20 per cent from 340,200). Paparoa National Park also saw a surge of visitors over the year, increasing 20 per cent to 243,600.

Figure 39: International visitor attendance for national parks



Source: International Visitor Survey

9.2.2 National park infrastructure supply

A total of 13 national parks are distributed around New Zealand, of which 10 are located in the South Island.²⁸ Tourism concessions are managed by the Department of Conservation. They allow for commercial operators to provide tourist activities within a national park (that are compatible with our national park concept). Examples of activities include guided walking, transport, accommodation, scenic flights and the operation of ski fields.

²⁸ A 14th national park, Te Urewera, was disestablished in 2014, and it is now a legal entity operated by local Iwi (but which still meets the International Union for Conservation of Nature criteria for a national park). Te Urewera remains open to the public, and the Department of Conservation continues to maintain the tracks and facilities there.

It is difficult to measure the capacity of national parks. Several different practices are in place to measure capacity. These include:

- › the limit to the number of tourists that can visit hiking and walking trails at the same time without causing a negative impact to the environment
- › the capacity of huts and campsites available for accommodation within the national park
- › the capacity of activities occurring in the park run by commercial operators
- › the maximum number of concessionaire clients (ie, tourists).

Technically, information on hut and campsite capacity and allocated concessions are available, but will require further analysis. Most sites are likely only used over some parts of the year, and may have low demand.

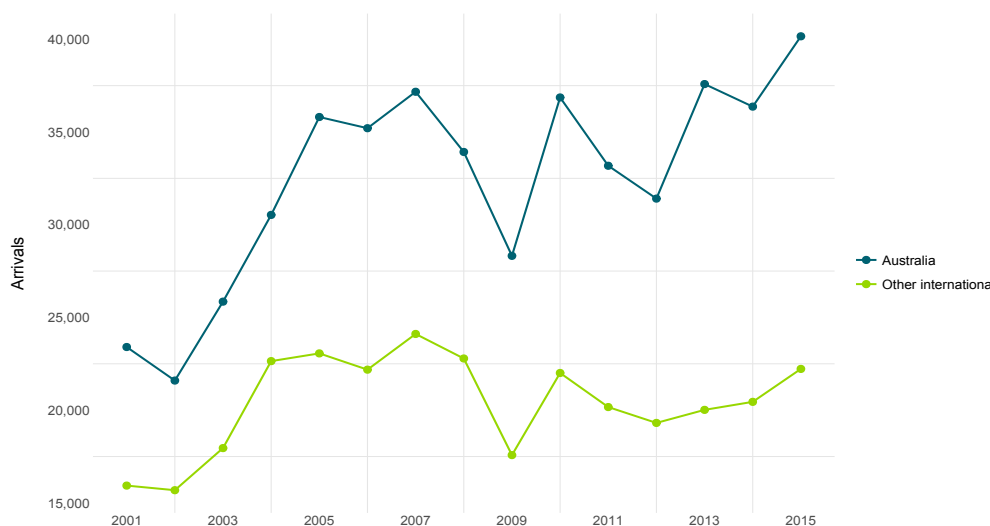
There comes a point for national parks where overcrowding and its resultant damage to the natural environment can have a detrimental effect on the quality of national parks and the visitor experience. These critical points should be identified early in order to preserve our natural diversity, the country's green image, and tourists' experience. Some iconic locations such as the Tongariro Alpine Crossing and Milford Sound are already showing signs of ill effects from increasing numbers of tourists.

9.3 Business events

9.3.1 Business event infrastructure demand

The Convention Activity Survey gives an estimate of the number of international visitors coming to New Zealand for conferences or conventions. In 2015, an estimated 40,200 visitors arrived for these events from Australia, and 22,700 arrived from other international locations – a total of 62,900 people. This is an increase of 9.5 per cent from 2014. Australian visitors have almost doubled over the last 15 years, making this a key target market. There are considerably fewer convention visitors from other countries.

Figure 40: International visitor arrivals for conference and convention events



Source: International Visitor Survey

9.3.2 Business event infrastructure supply

Investment into conference centres

A number of very high profile builds of conference centres are currently in the construction pipeline.

Auckland

In downtown Auckland, work has begun on the \$471 million New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC), a two-storey convention centre. A new 5-star, 300-room hotel developed by SkyCity Entertainment Group will be associated with the centre. The construction of the centre will take approximately three years to complete, finishing in 2019. The NZICC will be capable of hosting conventions of around 3,000 people, and one-off events of up to 4,000 people.

A feasibility study of the NZICC²⁹ assumed that the new conference centre will attract the following additional international conferences to Auckland per year:

- › eight global conferences with an average size of 1,440 delegates
- › five Asia-Pacific conferences with an average size of 1,120 delegates
- › 12 Australasian conferences with an average size of 530 delegates.

Overall, the NZICC should attract approximately 33,000 additional international convention delegates each year.

Christchurch

The Christchurch Convention Centre, a Government Anchor project of the Canterbury rebuild, will be able to host several events at the same time. Starting with space for events of up to 2,000 people, this will complement facilities in Auckland and Queenstown. The Crown has set aside \$284 million to develop the centre.

Plenary Conventions New Zealand, a consortium of international infrastructure firm Plenary Group and local entities Ngāi Tahu Property and The Carter Group, has been selected as the preferred consortium for the master-planning and development stage of the convention centre project.

Negotiations with the preferred development consortium and centre operator to determine the exact design and layout of the Convention Centre Precinct are ongoing.

Wellington

Public consultation was completed in March 2016 on a \$134 million convention centre and movie museum in the Wellington CBD. If greenlighted, the centre will take two years to complete and could accommodate up to 1,200 delegates.

Queenstown

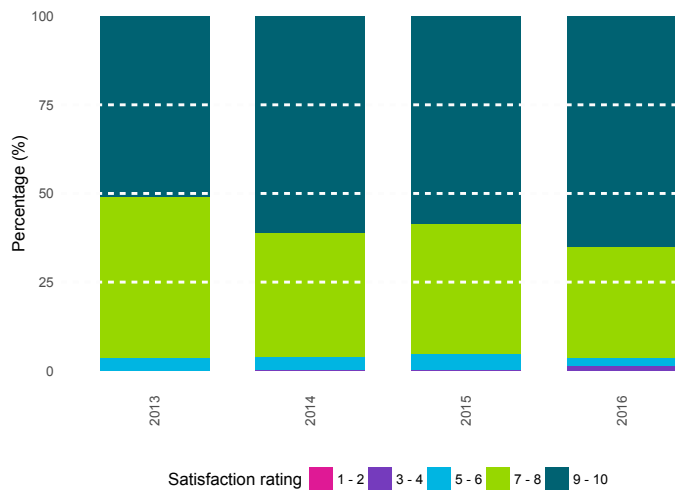
Queenstown has plans to build a 750-delegate convention centre on Lakeview.

29 Auckland City Council & Ministry of Economic Development. (2009). *International Convention and Exhibition Centre: Summary of findings of a feasibility study and supplementary research*. Retrieved from <http://www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/sectors-industries/tourism/tourism-research-data/other-research-and-reports/International%20Convention%20and%20Exhibition%20Centre%20Feasibility%20Report.pdf>

Visitor experience

Overall satisfaction with activities undertaken while visitors are in New Zealand are generally very high. Around 95 per cent of international visitors stated a satisfaction rating of 7–10 in 2015, and less than 1 per cent stated 1–4.

Figure 41: International visitor experience: activities



Source: International Visitor Survey