

MEDIA RELEASE



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'First to see the light' backpacker receives 2000th Qualmark licence

One of the first backpacker hostels in the world to see the sunrise, the YHA Gisborne, is about to receive the 2000th Qualmark licence.

The Minister of Tourism, the Hon. Damien O'Connor, will present the licence to YHA Gisborne operators at an event in Gisborne tomorrow.

"I would like to congratulate YHA Gisborne for becoming the 2000th tourism business to receive a Qualmark licence. The investment they have made in becoming Qualmark accredited will no doubt see returns for them in the future as visitors identify Qualmark as a sign of quality products and services. The importance of offering a quality tourism product is a central focus of the soon to be released Tourism Strategy 2015," says Mr O'Connor.

The 2000 tourism businesses with Qualmark licences account for a significant percentage of economic activity in tourism. Qualmark CEO Geoff Penrose says reaching the 2000 mark has been in Qualmark's sights for some time.

"More and more tourism businesses are realising the benefits of having a Qualmark licence – New Zealand tourism's official mark of quality. This demonstrates the commitment that an increasing number of tourism operators have to quality."

That means the awarding of the 2000th licence is also good news for travellers within New Zealand and further a field.

“With 2000 accommodation, visitor activity, service and transport providers now quality assured, travellers can book and buy with confidence when they are on holiday. All they need to do is look for the distinctive yellow and black Qualmark logos,” says Mr Penrose.

“With more than 50 hostels in our network, YHA New Zealand is very aware of the need to demonstrate its commitment to providing quality accommodation,” says YHA New Zealand CEO Mark Wells.

“In the last year, yet another of our hostels, YHA Mt Cook, achieved a five-star Qualmark rating, and we are very proud of the fact that there are now six five-star hostels in our network. We have also recently introduced a new, mandatory requirement that our Associate hostels – those which aren’t owned by YHA, but carry our brand and are part of our network such as YHA Gisborne – become Qualmark licensed. This is further evidence of our commitment to providing a quality experience for our guests.”

Tourism New Zealand Chief Executive George Hickton says signing up the 2000th business is a milestone which gives New Zealand’s quality assurance programme a significant footprint in New Zealand’s tourism industry.

“Qualmark helps underpin Tourism New Zealand’s promotion of the country overseas, because it enhances our reputation as a world-class visitor destination,” Mr Hickton says.

“Qualmark looks forward to welcoming the 2001st tourism business,” says Mr Penrose.

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Photos of event available on request.

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Background on 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.

www.qualmark.co.nz

Background on YHA Gisborne

YHA Gisborne is a cosy and charming hostel originally built as a private residence in 1925. The hostel is well set out in spacious grounds within New Zealand's sunniest city. Clive Dean, YHA Gisborne Hostel Manager, says the building is well designed for hostel life, comprising a variety of rooms to suit any individual or group. YHA Gisborne has been a YHA Associate Hostel for close to 10 years.

www.yha.co.nz