

MEDIA RELEASE

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Qualmark travel guide goes green

In an industry first, AA Guides and Qualmark released a travel guide this week listing only businesses annually assessed to meet both Qualmark quality and environmental criteria.

While the AA Qualmark Travel Guide 2010 is the second edition printed, the free guide book now includes Enviro Award logos next to businesses assessed as top performers in environmental practices.

Qualmark chief executive, Geoff Penrose, says it is the first guide book to provide assurance tourism businesses are meeting both quality and environmental standards.

“When we visit businesses, we look at their environmental practices as part of the comprehensive, on-site quality assessment. They must meet the standards before they can carry our official quality mark and over 400 Enviro Award logos, now found throughout the book, recognise excellence in this area,” says Mr Penrose.

This provides guidance for travellers wishing to limit the environmental impact of their tourism experiences and value for tourism businesses committed to caring for the environment, he says.

AA Tourism CEO, Peter Blackwell, says the second edition of the guide book is expected to be in demand from increasingly environmentally conscious travelers.

“This book is unique within the range of information we provide and a useful tool for travelling with both quality and the environment in mind,” says Mr Blackwell.

The guide book is now available free from i-SITES throughout the country.

Since August 2008, the environmental performance of all tourism businesses with a Qualmark has been assessed under Responsible Tourism Operations criteria as part of on-site quality assessments. Businesses performing well in reducing environmental impact in five key action areas (energy efficiency, waste management, water conservation, community activities and conservation initiatives) are eligible to apply for an Enviro-Gold, Enviro-Silver or Enviro-Bronze Award.

The initiative, referred to as Qualmark Green, was unveiled to the tourism industry by the Minister of Tourism on 27 May 2008. The introduction of the Responsible Tourism criteria marked a ‘world first’, with New Zealand being the first country to have a fully integrated quality and environmental performance tourism assurance system.

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Qualmark

- Qualmark® is New Zealand's trusted guide to quality travel experiences - helping travellers identify over 2,300 great places to stay, things to do and ways to get around.
- Accommodation, activities and transport businesses carrying the Qualmark® logo have been independently assessed to meet tough quality standards and environmental criteria - earning New Zealand tourism's official quality mark.
- Over 400 businesses have achieved Enviro Award status - recognising their commitment to Qualmark's responsible tourism criteria and environmental practices.
- Qualmark is jointly owned by Tourism New Zealand and the New Zealand Automobile Association. The programme is run as an industry service, on a not-for-profit basis.