



OUR PLACE

# Ko Konei

Your Whakatane District Council  
Community Update - March 2017

## STRONG TOURISM GROWTH

The Whakatane District is experiencing strong tourism growth, with the number of international visitors in particular continuing to show significant increases.

Latest figures for the year ending November 2016 show international guest nights rose by an exceptional 57%, to 54,225, with total guest nights (including domestic) rising 11% to 257,113. Whakatane District Council Business Services Manager Roslyn Mortimer says that with nearly 50% of visitor spending going into the retail and hospitality sectors, this was great news for the local economy.

"International visitors are often attracted to Whakatane by the opportunity to visit White Island (Whakaari), but they are now staying overnight to visit other attractions and enjoy more of what the District has to offer," Ms Mortimer says. "That means there is definitely room for existing tourism operators to enhance their products and for new tourism ventures to enter the market."

"All indications are that we can look forward to continued growth in this sector, with anecdotal feedback confirming that there were good domestic visitor numbers over the December/January peak, and strong international visitor arrivals expected through February, March and April."

## Be a part of Oxfam Trailwalker

Oxfam Trailwalker challenges teams of four to walk 50 or 100 kilometres and raise vital funds for Oxfam New Zealand to support people living in poverty in the Pacific. For this annual endurance event, Oxfam looks to recruit up to 300 volunteers to help out over the weekend. Volunteer roles include registration, out-and-about activities on the trail, and event hosts and cheer squads, but a key role is to be the smile and encouragement for walkers as they tackle an impressive mental and physical feat.

As a volunteer, you will be part of the global phenomenon where ordinary people achieve something extraordinary and make a lasting difference by supporting Oxfam's work. Oxfam Trailwalker 2017 will take place on Saturday, 25 March and Sunday, 26 March. Volunteer shifts start on the Friday afternoon (24 March), and continue throughout the weekend. Shifts are usually 6-8 hours long.

Head to the website ([oxfamtrailwalker.org.nz/about/volunteer](http://oxfamtrailwalker.org.nz/about/volunteer)) to find out more, or email [otwvolunteer@oxfam.org.nz](mailto:otwvolunteer@oxfam.org.nz) to apply! Make an occasion of it and invite family and friends — there are plenty of shifts where groups can work together. Volunteers will receive event memorabilia, plus meals for each shift worked.



Charlotte Haeusler and Julie Allerby of Whakatane District Council gearing up for Oxfam Trailwalker 2017.

## 2017 SPORT NEW ZEALAND RURAL TRAVEL FUND



**Does your sports group cater for 5-19 year olds, and do you need to travel to compete in regular sporting competitions? If so, we may be able to help.**

Sport NZ has recognised the need to assist rural communities and has provided councils with a grant to help rural sports clubs and rural school teams meet the transport costs required to participate in local sporting competitions. Further information on the fund can be obtained from Janie Storey, Administration Officer Community on 07 306 0530 or 0800 306 0500. Application forms can be collected from Whakatane District Council offices and Public Libraries, or at [whakatane.govt.nz/sport-nz-fund](http://whakatane.govt.nz/sport-nz-fund). Applications close at 5 pm on Friday, 31 March 2017 and should be posted or delivered to the Whakatane District Council, Private Bag 1002, Whakatane 3158.



## Magical Parks a fantastical challenge for Parks Week

Parks Week runs from 4-12 March 2017 and is being marked with some fantastical additions to some of the Whakatane District's public spaces.

Warren Park in Whakatane, Matata Lagoon Reserve in Matata, and Edgcombe Domain will all be turned into digital fantasy playgrounds with the 'Magical Parks' mobile app for two weeks, starting on Saturday, 4 March. Locals and visitors are invited to come along and experience some great new technology.

The Magical Park app was created in New Zealand and blends a virtual world with an existing park. Users get to interact and explore a fantasy world where they have to herd kittens, run away from a bad fairy or come face to face with a giant T-Rex — all in a local park, using a smartphone or tablet.

Parks Week is promoted by the New Zealand Recreation Association, whose chief executive Andrew Leslie says he is looking forward to seeing Magical Parks springing up throughout New Zealand.

"We believe combining outdoor play with technology can motivate kids to get off the couch and be more physically active," he says. "We can't reverse the effects of technology, and nor should we try. What we can do is create healthy relationships with technology by using the screen to get kids outdoors and moving around. Kids love playing mobile games outside, because they get to run around and have fun in a really engaging way."

Whakatane District Council Public Affairs Officer, Richard Parfitt, says



The Magical Parks app is easy to install and use, and although there are some technical requirements, the majority of mobile devices will be compatible.

"It pays to download the 'Magic Parks' app from the Google Play or App Store before heading to the park. If your device is missing a required component, you'll see a 'not compatible' message then," he says. "To play at a Magical Park, you'll need GPS turned on and access to mobile data. Each game uses only a small amount of data, around 50 KB, so you don't need to worry about data usage. Head to your nearest Magical Park, read the signage, head into the play area, turn on the app and follow the instructions from there. We've been testing it, and it's lots of fun!"

### Other Parks Week highlights include:

- Sullivan Lake Stroll and Picnic (Sunday, 5 March at 11 am)
- REAP Trike-a-thon and Teddy Bears Picnic in Murupara (Monday, 6 March 10 am - 12:30 pm)
- All Ages Tai Chi in the Whakatane Gardens (Thursday, 9 March at 10 am)
- Awatapu Lagoon Clean-Up (Friday, 10 March from 10 am to 2 pm).

For the full schedule of Parks Week events, see the events calendar on [whakatane.com](http://whakatane.com).

## POETRY SLAM

### coming to Te Kōputu

Te Kōputu a te whanga a Toi — the Whakatane Library and Exhibition Centre — is hosting its first 'poetry slam' on Thursday, 9 March 2017, and local bards are urged to get in quick to book a spot. Poetry slams have been growing in popularity throughout New Zealand and involve original spoken word pieces being performed for a live audience. This will be the first for Whakatane, and for the first time in New Zealand, there will be a Te Reo category to be judged by two eminent Te Reo speakers.

Anneke Philips, Public Programmes Officer at Te Kōputu, says Library staff have been planning to bring a slam to Whakatane for some time and are excited to finally see the event become a reality. "Performers have three minutes to perform an original poem in front of the audience," she says. "It takes courage to perform your own work, so we will be acknowledging all entrants with a prize, and the top three performers will compete for tablets and movie vouchers."

The slam will be held from 5:30 to 7 pm on Thursday, 9 March, and entry is free. MC for the evening is Te Haunui Tuna. While you can register on the day (before 5 pm), Ms Philips is urging prospective performers to get in touch as soon as possible by emailing [library@whakatane.govt.nz](mailto:library@whakatane.govt.nz) or calling Te Kōputu on 07 306 0509. She also notes that while children are welcome at the slam, people should be advised that some content may require parental guidance.