

VISIT
HURUNUI
.CO.NZ

Destination Development Plan
2017 – 2022



Visit Hurunui: DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN

“ *New Zealand’s tourism sector is growing rapidly, with 4.5 million visitors expected in 2022. This Strategy repositions Hurunui Tourism to make the most of this opportunity. Our new focus – away from simply marketing our region to managing it as a destination – will bring numerous benefits to our region’s communities and businesses.* ”

Janice Fredric, Chair, Hurunui Tourism Board

In April 2017, the Hurunui Tourism Board released the Hurunui Tourism Strategy 2017 – 2022.

This outlined a bold, new approach to tourism management in Hurunui.

The fundamental shift was from a focus solely on destination marketing to destination management. As well as actively selling all the region has to offer, Visit Hurunui will collaborate with existing and potential stakeholders to build and improve its visitor offering.

This Destination Development Plan outlines key opportunities to grow Hurunui’s tourism product and outlines the path to their realisation.

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BACKGROUND

The Hurunui Tourism Strategy 2017 – 2022 governs how Visit Hurunui will manage and grow tourism in the Hurunui.

Within the Strategy, the Hurunui Tourism Board has clearly laid out the organisation’s core functions, focus areas, and the actions to be taken under each area.

Core Functions

- To develop our destination
- To enable Hurunui businesses to grow

Actions

Destination Development		Destination Marketing	
Developing	Collaborating	Targeting	Selling/growing
New products	Hurunui businesses and promotion groups	International visitors	Create selling organisation
Threading products together	Clusters (e.g. Hurunui Trails Trust)	Conference and Incentives	Digital channel focus
Attracting investment	External alliances	South Island drive market	Effective media relationships and results
Supporting ventures	Communities	Christchurch	Convert enquiries to sales
Events and conferences		North Island	Spread benefits across the district
		Special interest	

Focus Areas

- 1. Destination Development**
Developing Hurunui as a tourism destination and *collaborating* with key stakeholders within and outside our district.
- 2. Destination Marketing**
Targeting key markets to visit our district and actively *selling* all that our district offers.

OVERVIEW

Purpose

To identify opportunities and serve as an action plan to realise the destination development goals identified in the Hurunui Tourism Strategy. These goals are for Hurunui to have:

- 20 new visitor experiences
- Two leading national brands established
- 12 visitor experiences, established with help from the Tourism Investment Fund
- Eight iconic events every year
- Access to new funds and resources from outside the district
- The Alpine Pacific Triangle as a recognised touring route that attracts tourists to the district

Foundation

Visit Hurunui has employed a Product Development Manager to grow its capacity to realise the above goals.

The Product Development Manager collaborates with key stakeholders across the district, tourism officials and the Hurunui Tourism Board to identify potential areas for product development and/or visitor growth in Hurunui.

Potential Development Areas

1. Wine Tourism*
2. Food Experience*
3. Walking*
4. Cycling*
5. Events
6. The Big Country
7. Home and Farmstay
8. Regional Development
9. Cruise and Conference
10. Queen Mary Hospital

** Our first four potential development areas have been identified as special interest sectors by Tourism New Zealand. This means they hold high appeal to travellers and can be the main reason why they choose New Zealand as a destination, or one element of a broader holiday.*

Special Interest sectors are a priority for Tourism New Zealand, for three main reasons:

- Visitors who participate in special interest sectors generally have higher average spend than other visitors
- These activities encourage regional dispersal and product development
- They help drive non-peak travel

This plan contains information on each of these Potential Development Areas. This includes insight into probable opportunities and an action plan to progress and/or explore these.

1. Wine Tourism

Basic Premise

24% of international tourists visit a winery or vineyard when they come to New Zealand – around 372,000 people every year.

Their average spend is \$4,900 per trip (versus \$3,900 for all visitors) and their length of stay is 23 nights (versus 16).

The newly-rebranded North Canterbury Wine Region contains many quality wine and food producers, including:

- 1250 hectares of vines
- 37 wineries
- 12 cellar doors
- 4 winery restaurants

Situation

Relatively few wine businesses in the North Canterbury Wine Region are engaging directly with the visitor at present. The greatest interface that many have with the visitor is via the annual wine and food festival.

Opportunity

There is latent potential to expand wine tourism in the region, but costs and regulatory processes may be barriers to industry participation.

For some businesses, it is likely that the visitor industry is simply not part of their business plan despite the enormous growth in wine tourism in New Zealand. Their focus is instead on producing wine and selling it, both in New Zealand and offshore

Actions and Timeframe

Action	Timeframe
Engage with the wine industry	March 2018
Determine barriers to entry (investment costs, regulatory issues and lack of profile).	June 2018
Resolve/reduce barriers	August 2018
Determine Marketing Programme	September 2018
Work with tour businesses to provide transportation and itineraries	April 2019

2. Food Experience

Basic Premise

Food is an important part of the visitor experience and international visitors to New Zealand rate the country well (8.1/10) in this regard.

Hurunui is home to a diverse range of eateries and food producers.

Situation

Visitors to Hurunui will find plenty of options to meet their food and beverage requirements. The region has a very wide range of eateries – from cafés and family-friendly outlets to award-winning high-end restaurants.

The district also has a strong farming sector so is home to a large number of food producers offering a range of quality fare. This includes beef, venison, olives, olive oil, breads, honey and truffles.

This report focuses on the potential to profile food that is grown or served in the region or marketed in a way that generates profile for the region.

Opportunity

To better understand the food resources in the Hurunui and, where applicable, profile these.

Actions and Timeframe

Action	Timeframe
Engage with the food industry to determine opportunities	September 2018
Quantify and understand the size of the market, particularly its visitor offering	December 2018
Understand the balance between profile and profit for the visitor sector	March 2019
Establish product development and/or marketing plan	March 2019

3. Walking

Basic Premise

Walking is one of the most popular special interest activities for international visitors and enables them to experience our landscapes and scenery.

73% of international visitors to New Zealand in the three years to March 2017 participated in walking or hiking while they were here. That's an average of 1.1 million people per year.

14% cite walking and hiking as a factor that influenced their decision to visit New Zealand.

Walking is also popular with domestic tourists.

Situation

Walkers of all abilities are well catered for in Hurunui.

From easy short walks to multi-day tramps there is something for everyone. The scenery on offer is rich and varied, and includes beautiful coastlines, lakes, forests, alpine meadows and mountains.

While the region's walks are second to none, more could be done to increase the actual visitor spend of walkers within the region.

Opportunity

To promote the Hurunui walks in a manner which profiles both the walks and the infrastructure that the Hurunui provides.

Actions and Timeframe

Action	Timeframe
Investigate possible linkages between walks and the location of current and potential accommodation providers (for instance farmstays)	June 2018
Evaluate the opportunity to bring the St James walkway to end at Hanmer Springs	June 2018
Explore the development of luxury guided walks	September 2018
Establish product development and/or marketing plan	September 2018
Evaluate Molesworth track potential	March 2019
Work with tour businesses to provide transportation and itineraries	April 2019
Liaise with the Kaikoura District Council regarding the Hanmer Springs Kaikoura Great Walk	In progress

4. Cycling

Basic Premise

Each year around 138,000 international visitors participate in some form of cycling in New Zealand.

Cycle tourists spend more on their visit (\$4,900 compared to \$3,900) and stay longer (33 compared to 16 days). They also tend to visit regions such as the Hurunui and are likely to include a vineyard experience in their stay.

823,000 New Zealanders engage in bike riding so the sector lends itself well to boosting domestic tourism too. 59% of people riding the 23 Great Rides of New Zealand are aged 50+.

Situation

The Hurunui is rich in 'rides' to offer cycle tourists, although they are in varying stages of development.

The most developed are the tracks in the forests around Hanmer Springs. There are 23 main tracks that cater to all levels of ability and all ages.

The St James is officially one of New Zealand's Great Rides, but needs to be upgraded if it is to continue to live up to this billing.

The Hurunui Trails Trust has taken a lead role in the development of the Hurunui Heartland ride, which traverses the back roads from Amberley to Kaikoura. It will eventually link to Christchurch and form part of the cycle journey from Picton to Christchurch.

The Waipara Valley Vineyard Trail passes through world-class vineyards where users can visit cellar doors and dine at winery restaurants. There are plans to extend it in the next year or so.

This year has seen a series of rides around Cheviot successfully attract cyclists to the area as part of the plan to support businesses after the November 2016 earthquake.

Recently the concept of a ride originating in Christchurch and ending in the Waipara Valley (the North Canterbury Wine Region) has gained some momentum. This off-road trail is aimed at the same market that is riding the Alps to Ocean (between Aoraki/ Mt Cook and Oamaru) and the Central Otago Rail Trail.

5. Events

Opportunities

1. To have the St James upgraded, complete with accommodation, to reflect its status as a Great Ride.
2. To position Hanmer Springs as a hub for a variety of mountain biking experiences.
3. To promote the Hurunui Heartland ride in to the Visit Hurunui cycle marketing strategy.
4. To develop the Waipara Valley Vineyard Trail into a full experience.
5. To develop the Cheviot cycle strategy into a full product.
6. To develop the 'Wheels to Waipara' product.

Actions and Timeframe

Action	Timeframe
To engage the Hurunui Trails Trust (HTT)	<i>In progress</i>
To advocate for the St James upgrade	<i>2018</i>
To implement a regular dialogue with DOC	<i>March 2018</i>
To work with HTT to develop Cheviot and Waipara products	<i>June 2018</i>
Support the development of a feasibility study for Wheels to Waipara	<i>Ongoing</i>
Develop a promotional strategy for cycle tourism in Hurunui	<i>June 2018</i>
Develop a proposition for North Canterbury Cycling which encompasses the four local authorities to strengthen cycle tourism	<i>June 2018</i>

Basic Premise

- 33 events are currently listed on VisitHurunui.co.nz
- Four of these are iconic events based in the Hurunui

Events are a lucrative driver of both domestic and international tourism and can be used to leverage regional dispersal.

Situation

There is a wide variety of events which happen throughout the Hurunui. These range from local community focused events to commercial events driven from a profit perspective.

The highest profile events are the Waipara Wine and Food Festival, the Christmas Country Fete and Art in a Garden. There are also a number of sporting events which happen each year, the biggest being the Hanmer Springs half marathon.

In the last year Focus Hurunui has been formed to help drive existing events and look to develop new events. Focus Hurunui is in the process of forming a trust which will have standalone business reporting. This reporting will help inform a strategy to grow the events business across the region.

Opportunities

1. Develop and grow existing events
2. Evolve "Fete Week" into a broader programme across the region
3. Explore commercial events particularly in the agribusiness industry
4. Partner with the entertainment industry to increase the number of events in the region

Actions and Timeframe

Action	Timeframe
Fully investigate and identify all events in the region	<i>June 2018</i>
Identify and cluster "Fete Week" events and opportunities	<i>June 2018</i>
Ensure strong working relationship with Focus Hurunui	<i>Ongoing</i>
Develop relationship with key agribusiness industry players	<i>September 2018</i>
Understand the dynamics of the entertainment industry	<i>2019</i>
Connect with current event organisers	<i>Ongoing</i>

6. The Big Country

Basic Premise

The South Island's landscapes and scenery are the engine of the 100% Pure New Zealand brand that has long driven our international tourism.

Best of all, the brand lives up to its promise. 98% of international tourists who come to New Zealand say the natural environment met or exceeded their expectations.

Hurunui is rich in incredible scenery, and we have two areas in particular that showcase the very best big country experience that New Zealand has to offer – the Molesworth and St James Stations.

Both properties are owned by the Department of Conservation.

Walking and cycling tracks already exist at St James while Molesworth is currently tenanted. That tenancy allows for the property to be run as a working farm in a responsible way that respects the property's outstanding conservation and recreation values.

Opportunity

There is enormous opportunity to better position Hurunui as a place to go to see some of the best scenery in New Zealand.

With green rolling hills, wide blue skies, patchwork plains, mountains, forests, and

iconic stations, this is big country. We cannot underestimate the value of creating a brand and imagery that encapsulates this.

Some of the best experiences we have are free, and bringing visitors to experience them means that we boost the number of customers who spend in our paid attractions and businesses.

Both St James and Molesworth can be used to leverage this.

We need to understand how these properties are being used at the moment, their potential to accommodate more visitors, and how existing businesses on them operate.

Conversations with DOC are necessary to inform the development of this area over the next five to ten years. Unlocking these stations would grow any big country brand we create and lead to a variety of tourism opportunities, including:

1. Walking/Hiking
2. Cycling
3. Rafting
4. Farm tours
5. Night sky
6. Horse treks
7. Heli tourism
8. Cruises

Actions and Timeframe

Action	Timeframe
Participate in the DOC review of the Molesworth Station	2018
Engage with DOC to understand their approach in the region	March 2018
Understand existing usage patterns	June 2018
Evaluate the opportunity to bring the St James walkway to end at Hanmer Springs (credit to Jack Pearson)	June 2018
Investigate the opportunity to create a big country brand	September 2018
Develop conceptual papers exploring the development of Farm Tourism and Eco Tourism	March 2019
Quantify and qualify observatory opportunities	March 2019
Advocate for the upgrade of the St James cycle way	Ongoing
Contribute to the Kaikoura to Hanmer Springs feasibility study	Ongoing

7. Homestay/Farmstay

Basic Premise

There are 27 Bed and Breakfast businesses on the Visit Hurunui website, many of them based in homes and farms across our district.

The advent of AirBnB has made the marketing of such businesses easier and more accessible to the market.

Research shows simple experiences (for example, planting a tree), based around Kiwi homes and farms, are of huge value and appeal to international tourists.

Opportunity

We need to understand the breadth of what is being offered, in terms of accommodation and activities in Hurunui.

There may be opportunity to work with our existing operators (particularly our accommodation businesses) to encourage them to broaden the low-cost, high value experiences they offer.

Another opportunity is to “cluster” home stay/farm stay businesses.

Clustering opens the door to group tourism and gives greater exposure to the region and our tourism operators.

Actions and Timeframe

Action	Timeframe
Trial and evaluate a southern region cluster	June 2018
Engage with inbound operators to sell end product	June 2018
Market collectives through Visit Hurunui, CCT and Tourism NZ	June 2018
Map existing offering	June 2018
Identify low-cost, high value experiences and educate existing operators on their potential	March 2019

8. Regional Development

Basic Premise

While the village of Hanmer Springs is the most prominent and established part of the Hurunui tourism sector, there are potential growth opportunities in all pockets of the Hurunui.

It is important that we work with our communities to manage that growth so that what transpires is both good for our people and our visitors.

Opportunity

The Hurunui District Council has implemented a Hurunui 2050 programme.

This works with communities to establish a vision for their area for the year 2050.

We need to engage with this programme to:

1. Better understand if communities wish to engage with the tourism sector
2. Understand the potential of different areas
3. Identify existing tourism products
4. Develop a plan for each community that encapsulates both existing and potential products

There is also potential to work with external partners to resource this work.

Actions and Timeframe

Action	Timeframe
Understand the programme for 2050	March 2018
Engage with two communities to start the process	In line with HDC
Have a concept development plan in place with two communities	In line with HDC

9. Cruise/Conference

Basic Premise

Since 2010, cruise ship passenger numbers to New Zealand have more than doubled.

More than 250,000 passengers visited New Zealand last summer. By 2018, this number is expected to reach 350,000 .

Currently, the Canterbury cruise market is centred around Akaroa, although a new cruise ship terminal is scheduled to be built in Lyttelton in Spring 2020.

Construction of the Christchurch Convention Centre is scheduled to be completed in the first quarter of 2020, with events to be hosted from mid to late 2020.

Opportunity

The opportunity to entertain a considerable number of cruise passengers and conference delegates will increase dramatically over the next 3-4 years.

The two markets are similar in that they have defined time periods to visiting our region and, typically, the experience is managed by a third party.

Connecting with those third parties is a valuable opportunity that could deliver visitors enmasse to Hurunui.

Actions and Timeframe

Action	Timeframe
Meet with cruise and conference market providers to better understand how the industry works	June 2018
Use that knowledge to approach the market	September 2018
Facilitate the introduction of products that appeal to that market	March 2019
Evaluate connecting Hurunui operators to the cruise/ conference industry in order to sell product.	March 2019

10. Queen Mary Hospital

Basic Premise

The Queen Mary Hospital site is currently underused. The three main buildings, Chisholm Ward, The Old Soldiers' Block and The Nurses' Hostel, are vacant.

The surrounding grounds have been maintained, and recently a landscaping plan has been put in place to enhance the reserve, which is becoming popular with walkers.

While the building and surrounding land is in the heart of Hanmer Springs, there has been little or no interest in the site from potential developers. Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools and Spa has shown some interest in establishing a spa on the site but at the time of writing this has not attracted investor support.

The upkeep of these buildings is the responsibility of the Hurunui District Council and these assets have a negative impact on the council's budget.

Opportunity

The QMH site is one of the largest and most underused of HDC's assets.

Their location, in Hanmer Springs and right next door to the pools, means there is potential to use them to boost our visitor offering.

Actions and Timeframe

Action	Timeframe
Understand HDC bottom line for QMH	May 2018
Investigate funding options for community involvement	September 2018
Scope potential options document	March 2019