

TARANAKI

like no other



DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN: OVERVIEW 2022

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INTRODUCTION TO TARANAKI

Taranaki has played a foundational role throughout Aotearoa New Zealand's history. Vibrant and stunningly beautiful, our ancestral Maunga guides and protects us, stretching to the Tasman sea and an endless horizon. The whakapapa of our eight iwi is tied to the lands, forests, waterways and speaks to a unique history stretching back to the beginning of time.

Our abundant nature, remarkable history, unique events, iconic arts offering, incredible food, and unrivalled experiences have always looked to nourish, replenish and energise the spirit of our manuhiri (guests).

Significant progress has been made on how best to develop our existing regional strengths to build on

our current destination offering, as well as continuing to share our manaakitanga as a visitor destination. Our approach is summarised in this Destination Management Plan Overview. The plan recognises the challenges of Covid-19, as well as the unique opportunity to reimagine what a regenerative, sustainable, future-focused tourism sector should look like.

This overview has been developed by Te Puna Umanga (Venture Taranaki), and captures the vision, values, and actions from core regional strategies, derived from extensive engagement across several programmes of work.

Taranaki is a region that is 'coming of age' proudly committed to offering a visitor experience like no other.

Nau mai whakatau mai – we look forward to meeting you.



VISION

Our visitor sector will be prosperous, with a range of diverse, high-value, and customer-centric offerings, driven and supported by a collaborative and passionate region bursting with pride.

The sustainability of our taiao (environment), and the wellbeing of the tangata (our people) is at the heart of what we do.

Our visitor sector will provide authentic experiences that leverage our rich natural landscape, capture our cultural heritage and creative spirit and give back to our community.

We will be renowned for our manaakitanga, our commitment to low-emissions practices, and our regard for the whenua we walk upon and that we care-take for generations to come.

Photo: Charlotte Curd



THE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PROCESS

The Taranaki visitor sector holds untapped potential to not only help diversify our economy, but share our environmental mahi (work) and our rich and significant histories.

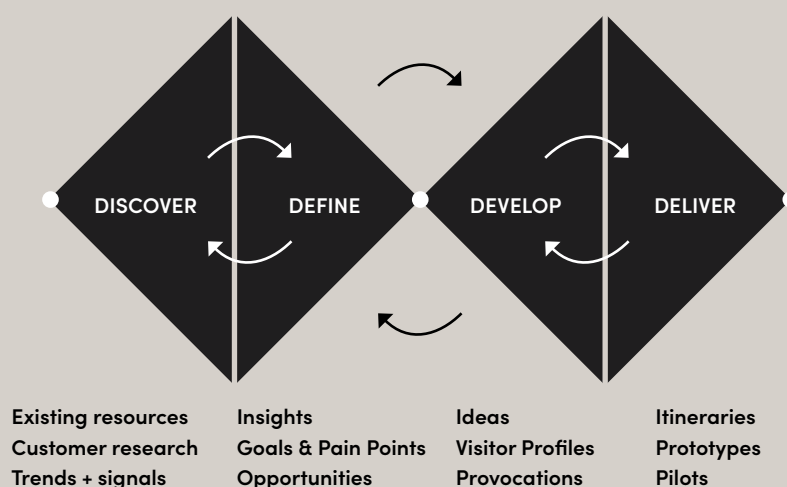
International trends show people are looking for authentic experiences that shape and transform them, while leaving as small a footprint on the environment as possible. Significant investments in ecological and cultural experiences provide an opportunity to shape a Taranaki visitor experience into something truly unique and in line with our strategic aspirations.

The format of this plan has been guided by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's Destination Management Framework. This ensures an inclusive, holistic, and integrated approach, moving from a purely visitor-driven approach to a wider destination-driven approach.

Development has evolved over four stages:

- In 2017, key visitor sector partners and stakeholders were consulted in the development of a Destination Strategy which determined a number of key actions going forward
- In 2018, the above strategy was incorporated into a wider Taranaki Economic Development Strategy – Tapuae Roa. **Tapuae Roa** was undertaken with wide stakeholder engagement and identified four 'Futures' critical to the success of the region – Energy, Food, Visitor and the Maori Economy. These futures were underpinned by four 'Foundations' – talent, enterprise and innovation, accessibility and connectivity, vibrancy and liveability, and investment. The three district councils adopted Tapuae Roa as the regional strategy and provide ongoing funding for key projects.
- In 2020, a co-design process with the wider community (including youth, mana whenua, unions, local and central government, residents and industry) developed the Taranaki 2050 pathway and 11 associated Transition Pathway Action Plans, providing the necessary steps to create a low emissions future. The **Visitor Transition Pathway Action Plan** was one of these.
- More recently, a design-thinking and future-thinking lens has been applied to the visitor sector. This used the 'Double Diamond' design thinking model with futures thinking and emerging mega-trends to stretch and inspire new ideas.

'Double Diamond' design thinking model



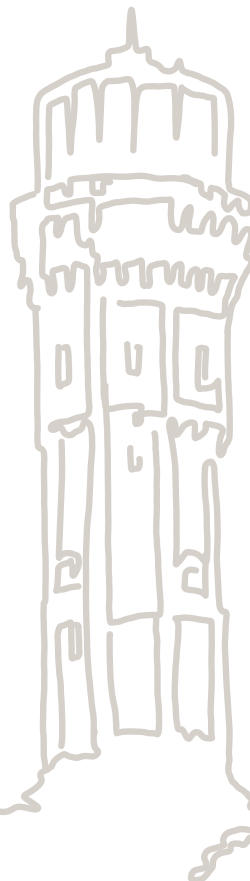
The above processes have involved countless workshops, interviews, research, and surveys with engagement reaching across all sections of the community

Consistent messages and themes emerging from the consultation have been:

- Tourism is an opportunity to restore our taiao (environment), rather than degrading it. Taranaki is reimagining its environmental future, restoring the life force of our Maunga and pushing the boundaries in landscape-scale, ecological restoration. We need to protect and maintain our uniquely biodiverse region for generations to come.
- Taranaki is rich with pre-European and colonial history and there are a number of sites of significance associated with this history, including the birthplace of the passive resistance movement – Parihaka. Sharing these stories should not be a purely commercial exercise, but about creating authentic and historically accurate experiences that contribute to shaping and changing people's perspective and outlook.
- Māori, iwi, and hapū have significant stories to tell. They must have ownership of these stories, and the time to develop and share them at their own pace.
- Collaboration is crucial to making this plan happen. Be it within Taranaki, with other sectors, such as the food sector, with other regions or with central government.
- The visitor sector is made-up of many small and medium businesses, where people have taken risks, suffered through a pandemic, and dedicated significant mahi to make their business successful. Prosperity of the sector is important to support wider wellbeing and increase resiliency.
- Infrastructure investment matters. Underpinning a sustainable visitor sector is appropriate transport and other infrastructure.
- Some mahi in the tourism and hospitality sector can be low wage, seasonal, and insecure. We need to invest in capability and capacity to support mahi that is valued and meaningful, with career opportunities and pathways.
- Tourism provides an opportunity to diversify our economy and can help increase regional vibrancy to support the wellbeing of our community and local people.
- Looking after and caring for our visitors is founded on a key cultural value of manaakitanga. We want all of our visitor to be welcomed and cared for. By achieving the above, our wider community will view visitation as a positive, and support this.

The following values have also been identified as being both important to visitors, but also likely to align with those found in communities across Taranaki. Taranaki is looking to attract and welcome visitors who follow these values.

- **Authenticity:** Not a show or fabrication, but local, honest, and real.
- **Community:** Camaraderie in local community and between tourist segments, such as campers.
- **Achievement:** Through embarking in challenging activities, visiting new places or engaging in a new experience.
- **Responsibility:** Individually for the environment and collectively for health and wellbeing.
- **Safety:** Both in travelling and in protecting themselves and communities from health related industry disrupters, i.e. Covid-19.
- **Learning:** About the local area, history and local stories, businesses and products.
- **Influence:** Through sharing stories, recommendations and reviews through digital and face-to-face channels.
- **Loyalty:** In exchange for good service or a positive experience and shown by support, purchase, promotion, and repeat visitation.
- **Service:** Good service is provided and rewarded.



TARANAKI AS A DESTINATION

Taranaki is a vibrant, culturally and artistically rich region that covers the western corner of the North Island, including the three districts of South Taranaki, Stratford, and New Plymouth.

There are eight iwi who whakapapa to Taranaki: Ngāti Tama, Ngāti Mutunga, Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Maru, Taranaki, Ngāruahine, Ngāti Ruanui, and Ngā Rauru Kīhahi. They are mana whenua – the indigenous people of Taranaki.

The region is blessed with a combination of mountain and sea and offers something for everyone – families, kids, garden and nature fans, music and art lovers, foodies, adventurers, and more. We're home to some of New Zealand's most spectacular landscapes, iconic attractions and events, and a thriving foodie and arts scene.

CURRENT SNAPSHOT AND CHALLENGES

The Taranaki visitor sector has traditionally been dominated by domestic tourism (approximately 80% of visitors are domestic) given its driving distance from many places in the North Island, and its location off the main international visitor "trunk route". The region is a 'destination' with visitors having to make a conscious decision to come. Traditionally access from the north has been a key issue, with the Awakino Gorge and Mount Messenger often having been perceived as barriers to travel.

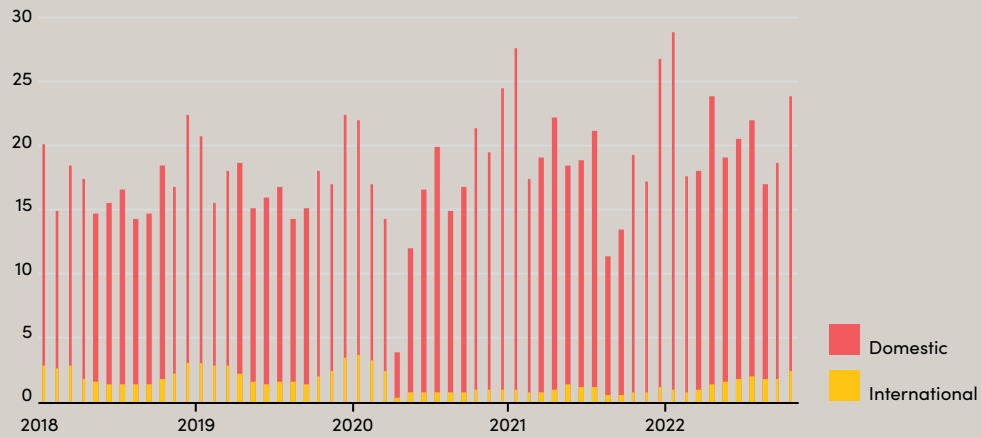
The region must therefore work to create a distinctive offering which is worth the journey, and with recent upgrades to infrastructure, must work to proactively dispel this perception ongoing.

It is also estimated around 50% of domestic tourists stay with friends and family, creating a low expenditure per visitor. This is further compounded by a lack of paid product which limits the potential of the sector to contribute to regional GDP. There are very few visitor activities currently that can survive purely on the tourist market, and many products are built from adding value to public infrastructure such as the Puke Ariki (historical walk), or Govett Brewster/Len Lye Centre (guided tours).

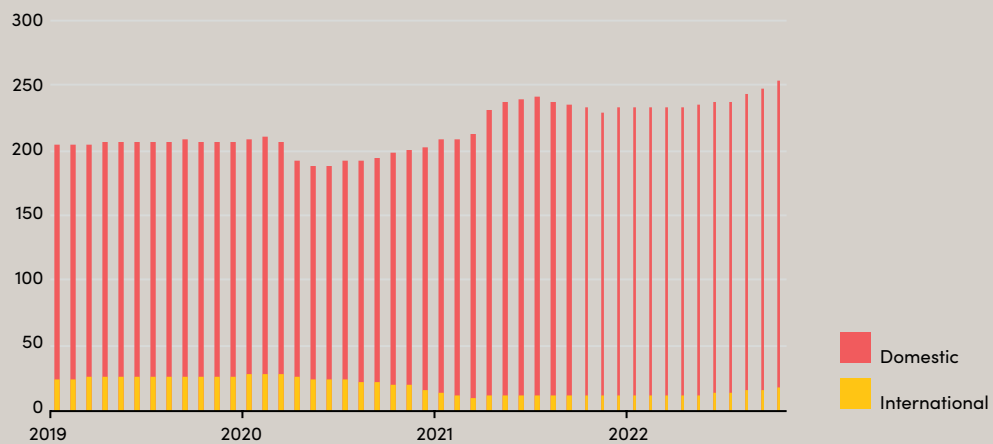
Pre-Covid however, the sector and the number of international visitors were growing significantly. Tourists were looking for a more "off the beaten track" authentic experience, and Taranaki gained from its ranking by Lonely Planet as the second-best region to visit in the world in 2017 as well as iconic photos of the Maunga on social media, and international inclusions in publications through the support of Tourism New Zealand media and PR. The region was beginning to find its place as a visitor destination.



**Monthly Tourism Spend
(Electronic Card Transactions) (\$million)**



**Annual Total Tourism Spend
(Electronic Card Transactions) (\$million)**



In the year to February 2020, before New Zealand's borders were closed, visitor spend in the region was \$238m. In the next 12 months this fell to \$220m, but rebounded strongly to \$245m in the year to February 2022.

While the loss of international visitors, the reduction of business travel, and the impact of Covid-restrictions had an impact, Taranaki benefited from its attractiveness to domestic visitors, particularly North Islanders who wanted to explore more of New Zealand. However, the sector has not yet recovered from the pandemic. There are extreme highs and lows in terms of visitation and key products have been lost.

The region sees a large seasonal growth of visitors in summer, and significant uplifts around events and festivals, such as the Garden Festival in October, and WOMAD and Americana from February to April. This seasonality impacts job security for many across the wider sector including hospitality and accommodation.

Taranaki needs to develop into a year-round destination to support stable and ongoing employment.

Previous visitor strategies have focused on growing the number of visitors. While this is still a necessary goal to provide business sustainability – the region needs to grow both visitor numbers and visitor expenditure to sustainable levels – growing environmental interest and a desire to create higher-paid jobs has meant the focus has expanded to incorporate a regenerative approach. Taranaki aims to develop experiences and products that will protect the environment and enable visitors to give back to the community they are visiting.

The need for investment into the sector is also a barrier that needs to be overcome. There has been significant Government support for developing tourism attractions in the region, with investment in drawcards such as the Taranaki Crossing, the Parihaka Visitor Experience, New Plymouth Cathedral, and Yarrow's Stadium – all of which are still under development. Ongoing investment is still required however, particularly in relation to developing our rich cultural and Māori heritage and the incredible stories that stretch across the entire region, as well as our burgeoning creative sector, our growing network of paths and cycleways, alongside the infrastructure necessary to protect key visitor attractions such as Taranaki Maunga.



FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

In determining 'where to from here', this Destination Management Plan has considered the trends expected to affect tourism, now and in the future.

The following mega-trends are driving changes at a local and global level:

- **Covid-induced change:** Impacting how we travel and the need for safe, flexible, and technology-enabled accommodation
- **Shifting demographics:**
 - **Increasing accessibility:** Increased demand for inclusive and accessible products to assist travellers with disabilities, the growing number of seniors and families with young children.
 - **Solo travel:** Increased demand for solo packages, and people seeking life-changing experiences, making authentic connections with local communities, and exploring food, craft, and cultural connections.
 - **Intergenerational travel:** Travellers seeking safe ways to reunite with whānau and friends.
- **Regeneration and restoration:** Visitor and the community values and beliefs are evolving, and it is expected that the environment will be enhanced and carbon emissions reduced and offset.

- **Maturing technologies:** Increased use of technology, such as 5G and augmented and virtual reality to inspire visitors and encourage participation.

In addition, the trends below have emerged:

- **Work from anywhere:** Rapid and widespread acceptance of remote working likely to mean travellers venture further, blending business and leisure.
- **The rise of self-catering accommodation:** The peer-to-peer accommodation and self-contained vehicle markets are continuing to rise.
- **Regenerative wellness:** Offering therapy and respite to travellers seeking inspiration in healthy-living, self-care, fitness, nutrition, and spiritual practices.
- **Engaging people and place:** Creating new ways to build authentic, personal connections, safeguarding local traditions and habitats.
- **Food provenance:** People wanting to understand where food comes from, who farms it, and how it connects with our health and wellbeing.
- **Calculating carbon:** Travellers wanting to calculate, reduce, and offset carbon emissions.
- **Touchless travel:** To facilitate safe and seamless transit.
- **Augmented experiences:** To invite visitors to engage with attractions in new ways, either from the comfort of their home, or via enriched on-site experiences.

ACTIONS

The following actions have been developed to achieve our vision. They are grouped into key categories of destination planning.

1. REGIONAL POSITIONING, BRANDING, MARKETING AND PROMOTION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the range of market development initiatives, including enhanced funding support for destination marketing and major event attraction. • Continue to refine how the Taranaki Destination is best communicated to the domestic and international visitor markets. • Continue to enhance the regional branding of 'Taranaki - Like No Other' • Work to define unique positioning platforms for major towns and associated visitor attraction development • Maintain and refresh delivery of the Taranaki story and associated assets 		
2. LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION	3. EXPERIENCE AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venture Taranaki, Taranaki local authorities, visitor sector operators and DOC to work closely together • Provide a policy and regulatory environment which anticipates visitor sector projects, service and experience needs • Collaborate and support iwi and entities such as Te Aranga in their visitor aspirations • Ensure social licence of the sector is maintained with the community • Bring interest sectors together to collaborate on event delivery and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek out more paid/commissionable product and develop more joined-up itineraries • Continue to implement the Taranaki Regional Event strategy and administer the Major Events Fund to grow sustainable and successful events • Explore product development across the following ideas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Eat the region: Develop products and events based on Taranaki's rich food provenance – Tailored Taranaki: Enhance the visitor experience through personalisation and an augmented delivery – All inclusive: Create package options that make the region more accessible and inclusive – Voyage with us: Create experiences that encourage visitation around the Maunga • Experience and event development in cluster areas (e.g. ecotourism, artisan food, arts, rural experiences, education offerings, cycleway experiences, well-being tourism and products). • Develop and support drive journeys in conjunction with neighbouring regions to the north and south • Maintain relationships with stakeholders, iwi, trusts and entities including district and regional councils, Tracks and Trails trust, St Mary's Cathedral to support planned and existing product development including gardens, Parihaka Visitor Centre and new infrastructure • Support Iwi where required to enhance storytelling, and undertake cultural product delivery • Develop educational tourism product for school camps through to NCEA level • Packaging – encourage operators to package products/experiences and accommodation together to provide paid and/or commissionable product. • Support smaller towns and distinctive CBD experiences • Explore further opportunities to grow the Taranaki Cruise Sector • Work collaboratively with venues on conference and meeting attraction 	
4. CAPABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT	5. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP	6. ACCESS, AMENITIES, SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build the capacity and capability of visitor sector businesses • Assist iwi to develop their capacity to participate in the visitor sector • Implement an Ambassador programme • Encourage qualmark accreditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for emerging investments, especially those reducing pressure on the environment and supporting low-emissions transport and active modes of travel • Implement sustainability initiatives, e.g. signage and information on the Tiaki Promise, and support tourism operators to undertake sustainability commitments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build additional walkways and cycleways • Development of a project to significantly upgrade the North Egmont Visitor Centre • Review visitor sector pressure on infrastructure and create actions to resolve issues • Support amenity development that enhances event and larger-format conference provision • Support roading and access infrastructure development • Ensure freedom camping regulations are well articulated

OVERSIGHT AND IMPLEMENTATION

The overarching governance group for regional strategy Ngā Kaiwhakatere o Taranaki exists in region and has responsibility for steering and ensuring alignment to regional strategy and the founding documents of this summary Destination Management Plan, Taranaki 2050, and Tapuae Roa.

This group is currently being reviewed by regional leaders, and once collective agreement is confirmed between councils and iwi, a group will be established to oversee the delivery and implementation of regional strategy, including this destination. Until this is confirmed, VT will continue to support and facilitate opportunities identified within this plan, connecting with partners and funders to support Destination Management in Taranaki.

Our long-term view is that input from the governance group will ensure a regional approach that is inclusive and strategically aligned through delivery on the ground to ensure the vision and aspirations of our region are met. This is a living document that will continue to be reviewed and updated to ensure we are continually refining our approach based on evolving information and best-practice, and to respond to the changing destination landscape in Taranaki.

The continued commitment to our DMP with the support of our governance group will ensure the stability and vibrancy of our region.





METRICS

ASPECT	MEASURES
Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of visitors • Domestic and international visitor split
Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average spend per visitor • \$ visitor spend • % international visitor spend
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread of visitor \$ across the region • Number of tourism businesses births and deaths
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GDP contribution per person employed in tourism • Average wage rate of visitor sector • Proportion of full time jobs in visitor sector
Māori tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Māori visitor businesses • Contribution of Māori tourism to GDP • Average wage of Māori employed in tourism
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive perception of tourism by community • Number of visitor businesses that have completed some measure of environmental action e.g. carbon zero certified
Future growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor satisfaction surveys



venture
TARANAKI
Te Puna Umanga

Taranaki's Regional Development Agency

25 Dawson Street, PO Box 670
New Plymouth 4340, New Zealand

T+64 6 759 5150
E info@venture.org.nz

taranaki.co.nz

An initiative of



Te Kaunihera-ā-Rohe o Ngāmotu
**New Plymouth
District Council**