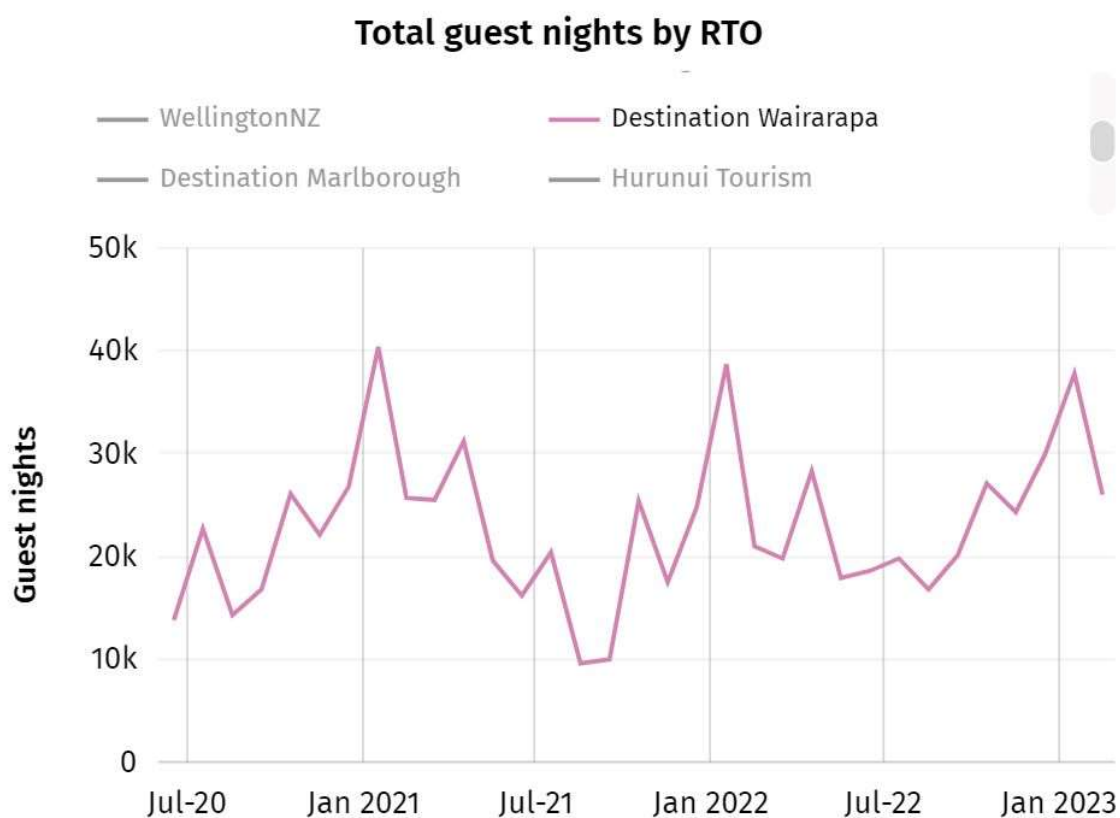


Destination Wairarapa
Q3 General Manager's and Marketing Report 2023
January 2023 – March 2023

2022/2023 Deliverables

Visitors

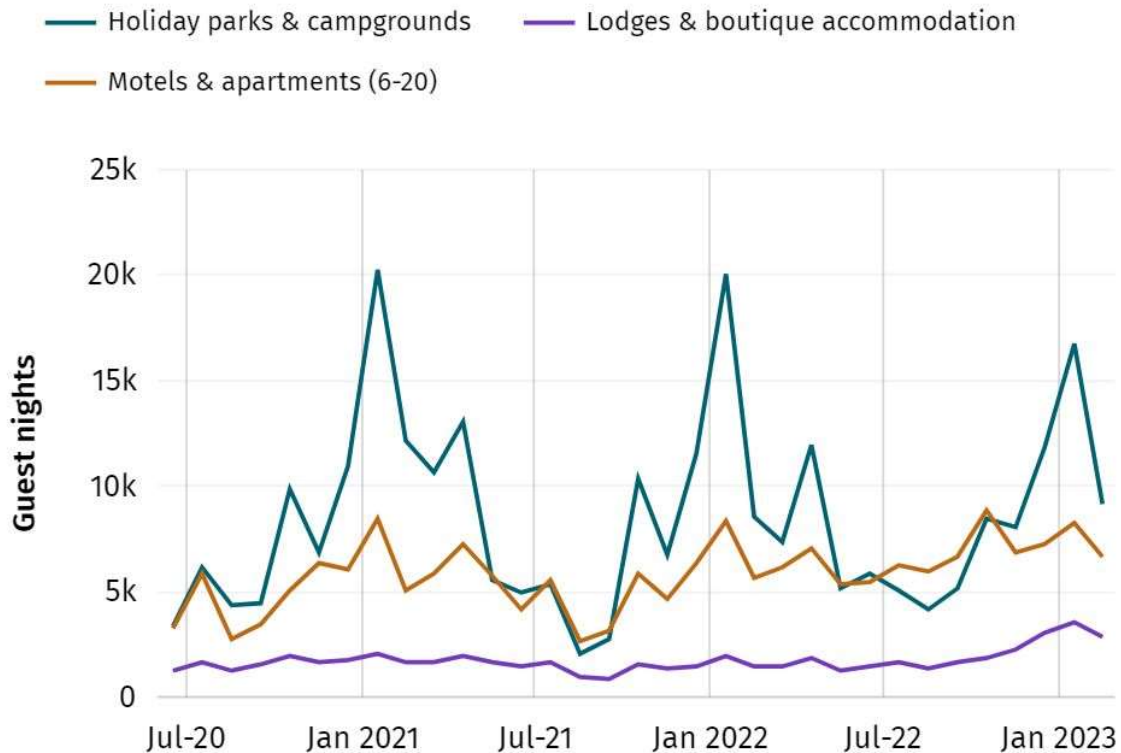
The below graph shows the Accommodation Data Programme (ADP) data for Wairarapa until February 2023.



Source: MBIE - Accommodation Data Programme. Last updated on 2023-04-06 11:00:00.
From <https://teic.mbie.govt.nz/teiccategories/datareleases/adp/>

February 2022: 21.1k vs February 2023: 26.1K

Total guest nights in Destination Wairarapa by property type



Source: MBIE - Accommodation Data Programme. Last updated on 2023-04-06 11:00:00.
 From <https://teic.mbie.govt.nz/teiccategories/datareleases/adp/>

When the data is broken down by accommodation type, you can see guest nights for Motels & Apartments and Lodges & Boutique Accommodation is trending upwards - compared to the same period last year. However, Holiday Parks & Campgrounds have had a less than favourable high season – most likely due to a weather pattern experienced over the summer that was not conjunctive to camping.

Measures for all accommodation types in Wairarapa RTO, Feb-2023

Month	Measure	Wairarapa RTO	New Zealand	Wairarapa RTO (Same Month Last Year)	New Zealand (Same Month Last Year)
Feb-23	Number of establishments	33	2816	31	2843
	Number of active establishments	31	2642	29	2529
	Number of stay units	1000	122900	1000	123900
	Average stay units per establishment	31.2	43.7	31	43.6
	Monthly stay unit capacity	28800	3442100	26900	3468800
	Available monthly stay unit capacity	23800	3017900	23600	2749700
	Percentage of stay unit capacity available	0.83	0.88	0.88	0.79
	Stay unit nights occupied	13200	1979100	10500	965700
	Capacity utilisation rate	0.46	0.57	0.39	0.28
	Occupancy rate	0.56	0.66	0.44	0.35
	Total guest nights	26100	3534900	21100	1796800
	Domestic guest nights	21800	2257900	20900	1737600
	International guest nights	4400	1277100	200	59200
	Guest arrivals	13900	1744400	11200	818600
	Average guests per stay unit night	2	1.8	2	1.9
	Average nights stayed per guest	1.9	2	1.9	2.2

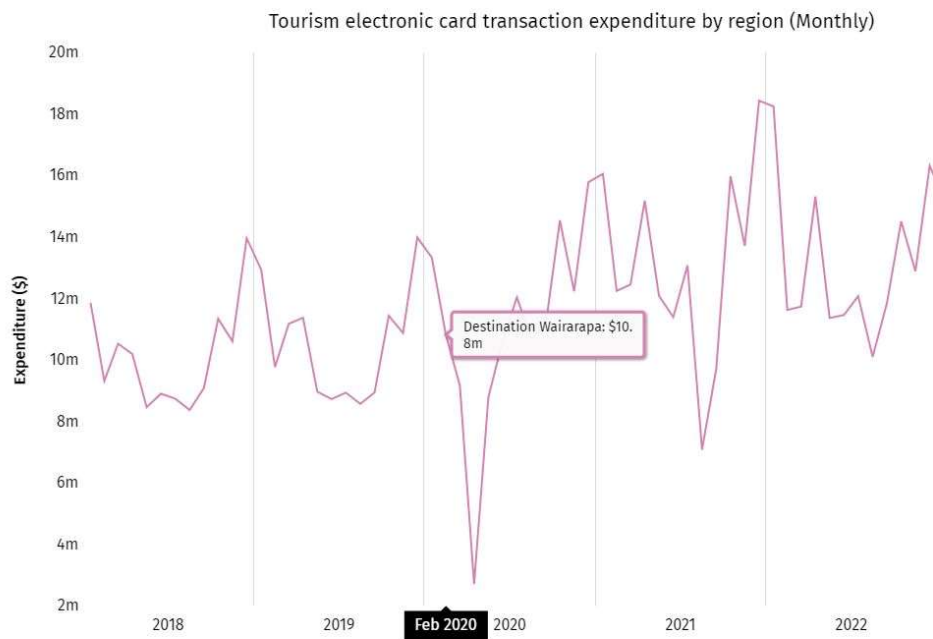
Holiday Parks & Campgrounds make up 26% of Wairarapa's number of active establishments, so when they have a bad season, this is acutely felt in our regional statistics. As an example, Wairarapa's occupancy rate for February was 56%, but if you ask any accommodation provider in the region (except for Holiday Parks & Campgrounds) what they thought their average occupancy was for February, it would be much higher.

Spend

The MRTE series of data has been disrupted by COVID-19, as the methodology for weighting the measured electronic card transaction spend up to the whole of industry spend became unusable.

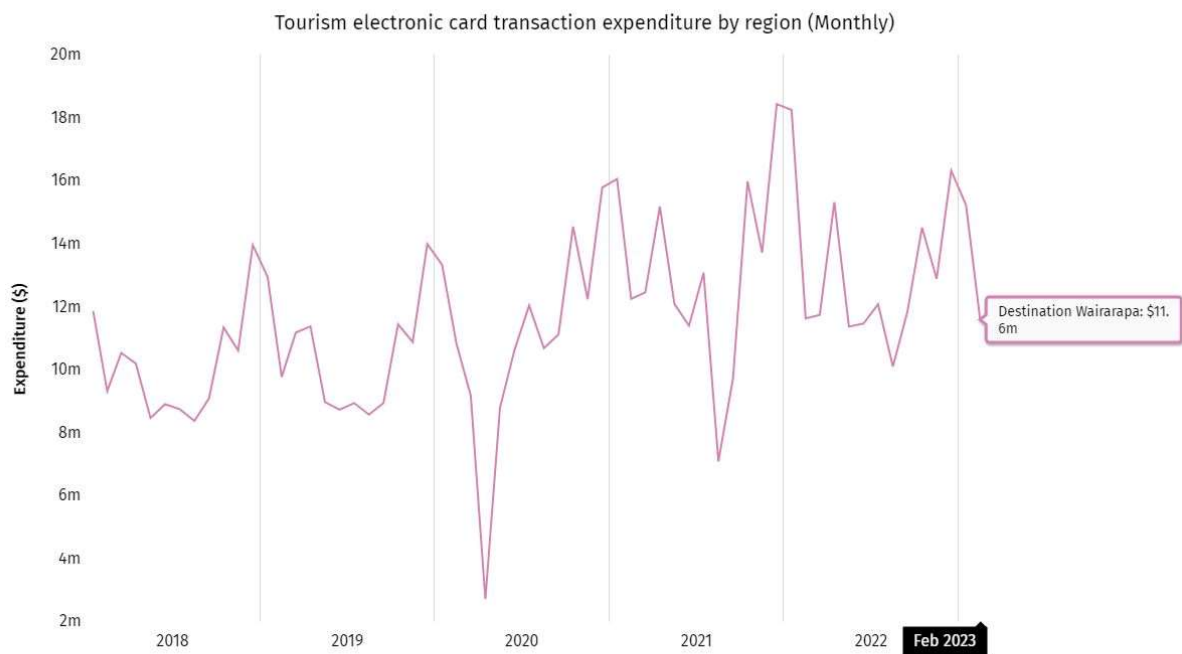
When using TECT data, it is recommended we look at trends and comparison figures instead of dollar amounts

TECT expenditure Wairarapa (monthly)



Updated on: 2023-04-06 11:00:00 NZDT

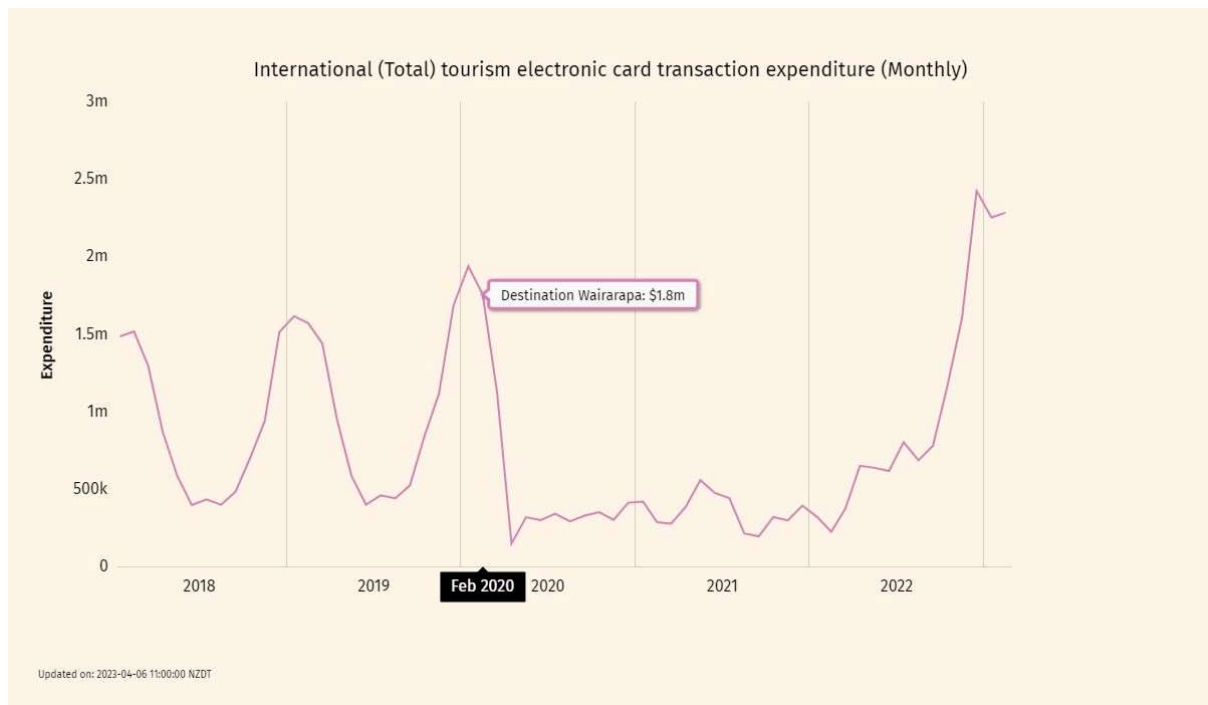
Pre Covid Domestic Visitor Spend. February 2020: \$10.8million



Updated on: 2023-04-06 11:00:00 NZDT

Current Domestic Visitor Spend. February 2023: \$11.6million

International TECT expenditure Wairarapa (monthly)



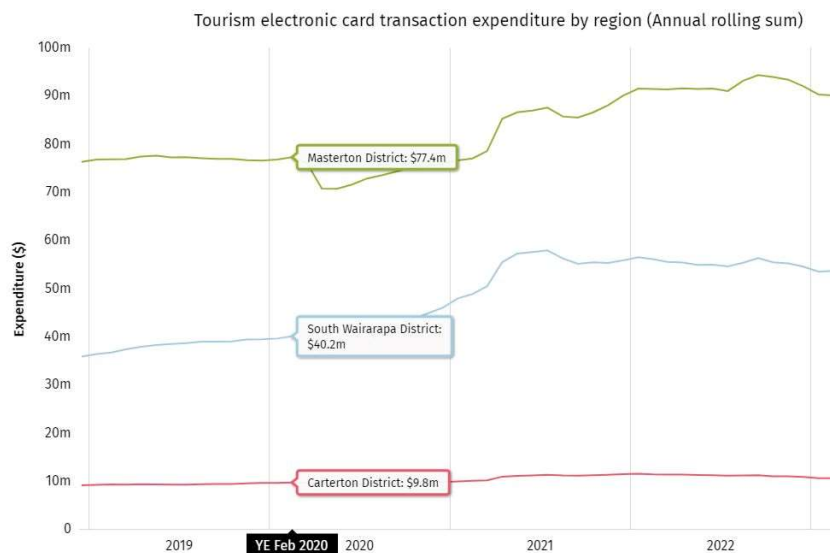
Pre Covid International Visitor Spend. February 2020: \$1.8million



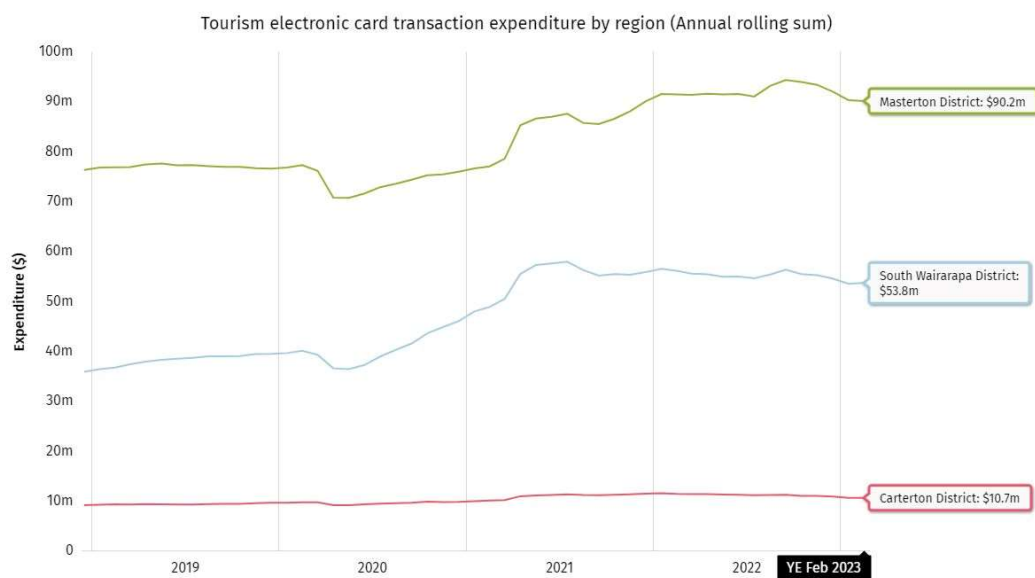
Current International Visitor Spend. February 2023: \$2.3million

Wairarapa still performs better than pre covid, both now for domestic and international visitor spend

TECT expenditure by TLA (Total annual rolling sum)



Pre Covid Visitor Spend YE February 2020. MDC: \$77.4m, SWDC: \$40.2m, CDC: \$9.8m



Current Visitor Spend YE February 2023. MDC: \$90.2m, SWDC: \$53.8m, CDC: \$10.7m

Considering the devastating impact Covid and the closing of New Zealand's borders (March 2020 – August 2022) had on New Zealand's tourism industry, the Wairarapa tourism industry continues to grow – however at a slower rate of growth than when compared to New Zealand.

In the latest Infometrics report (December 2022) it was noted that "Total tourism expenditure in Wairarapa increased by 4.3% in the year to December 2022, compared to a year earlier. This compares with an increase of 18.9% in New Zealand." Now that full tourism is back, our region therefore is now underperforming when compared to the rest of New Zealand with regards growth in spend.

However, if you remove Campgrounds & Holiday Parks from the occupancy data above for February, it would be fair to assume that our accommodation occupancy percentage would be roughly the same as the national figure.

This data therefore supports a well-known fact that although visitors are coming to the region, most of what they can see and do here can be done with very little investment. I.e growth in tourism spend cannot be achieved if there is not a lot to buy.

A trip to Castlepoint or Palliser Lighthouses – with a side visit to the Pinnacles and the seal colony requires at the very least, the cost of a tank of petrol. A day tasting wines in the world class vineyards of Martinborough costs as little as \$5 per person, per vineyard to taste. A family day in Queen Elizabeth Park – utilising the wonderful new skate park, playing on the outstanding Kids Own Playground and riding the ever-popular miniature train – costs \$1 per person. And a hike up to Rocky Lookout in Mount Holdsworth, or a stroll through Fensham Reserve is again – at no cost.

We know from research conducted while developing the Wairarapa Destination Management Plan (DMP), these activities are what our visitors to the region come to do and most enjoy. Usually there is accommodation on top of that experience and a meal or a visit to a café added as well. However, when accommodation is full – which it is more often than not these days (especially mid week in Masterton with contractors), and our regional cafes/restaurants do not have enough staff to work at their full capacity, it is no wonder visitor spend for Wairarapa is not growing at the rate it should or could be.

The answer is not to charge people at the gate for these popular activities, the answer is to develop tourism 'product' (packaged tourism experiences) that allows visitors to invest in our region by experiencing the best that we have to offer - in a sustainable and authentic way.

The answer also lies in leveraging the opportunities that Dark Skies accreditation, the development of 5 Town Trails and the opening of the new Tākina Conference and Exhibition Centre in Wellington brings to the region. And it lies in ensuring we support and develop a thriving events industry.

The answer is also in working together in a joined up way as a region to make doing business here attractive - thereby encouraging suitable tourism infrastructure investment, while balancing what our community said they wanted to see out of tourism ie "tourism is valuable to the region and we are happy for it to grow, but not at the cost of my environment, culture or way of life." This is what the WAIRARAPA Destination Management Plan (DMP) clearly articulates, and it is why it is very important all Stakeholders linked to that plan continue to ensure it is a living, breathing plan for the region post 30th June 2023 when STAPP funding concludes.

STAPP Funding

The Strategic Tourism Assets Protection Programme contract with the Govt. requires Destination Wairarapa to lead and deliver outcomes under 3 headings in order to help re-imagine tourism in the region post Covid.

1. Destination Management Plan Development
2. Capability Building
3. Marketing (Domestic – but not local, and in 2022 International)

Destination Wairarapa's contract with MBIE was varied in quarter one of this year to allow the organisation further time to deliver on the contracted outcomes.

The existence of this funding has allowed Destination Wairarapa to undertake activity that has not been funded for previously.

STAPP funding for the Wairarapa will finish at the end of this financial year (June 2023), and there will be no further variations.

1. Destination Management Plan

The Wairarapa Destination Management Plan (DMP) has been received and endorsed by all 3 of the Wairarapa Councils. It is now truly a plan for the sustainable growth of tourism in the region - as aspired to by the Wairarapa community.

Tourism is acknowledged in the refreshed Wairarapa Economic Development as a sector of importance and the DMP is noted as a plan to be supported within that strategy and subsequently by the governing forum.

2. Product Development and Capability Building

As identified in the Wairarapa Destination Management Plan under Strategic Imperative 2- ENHANCE THE BEACON – Empowering Destination Development, work has begun on 4 identified actions.

2.1 Develop experiences that support the positioning of the region.

The Martin Jenkins investment proposal to develop dark skies experiences that support the positioning of the region has been completed and submitted to WEDS for consideration. Destination Wairarapa will continue to support this work through the marketing and promotion of Wairarapa Dark Skies experiences.

2.2 Work with iwi to determine tourism aspirations and provide support in the development of experiences.

A Wairarapa Maori Tourism Strategy – in conjunction with Iwi, has been completed and passed to Iwi for their consideration. Destination Wairarapa will support Maori where and when we can to help them realise their aspirations in tourism.

2.3 Develop a strategic approach for events that will invite investment and assist in positioning the region.

At the recommendation of the WellingtonNZ Major Events Team, a consultant specialising in this area has been engaged to begin the groundwork on this strategic imperative. This groundwork will be complete by June 2023 and the results submitted to the 3 councils for consideration. Destination Wairarapa will continue to market and promote Major Events that attract visitors to the region.

2.4 Develop the capability of new and existing operators in the region.

For the past 9 months – and thanks to central Government STAPP funding, Destination Wairarapa has had the opportunity to employ an FTE to focus solely on product development and capability for the region. This is the first time the region has had someone dedicated to do this work for Tourism. In this relatively short time period Chrissy Cummings has been able to achieve a considerable amount for the region. Least of all – attracting \$85,000 spend from confirmed group bookings to the region in the next 6 months with another \$150,000 potentially in the pipeline in the next 12 months – and that is just the tip of the iceberg. With her connections and knowledge, enquires for events and groups like this land in her inbox on a weekly basis now. In addition, she has coached 6 new operators to achieve Tourism New Zealand Qualmark status, with another 20 in discussions.

A Qualmark accredited operator working in the export market is able to increase their per person yield considerably. In simple terms that means an increase in visitor spend for the region.

Unless an alternative source of funding can be found before the end of June, Chrissy Cummings contract with Destination Wairarapa will conclude and so too will the work she has been doing to build product and capability in the Wairarapa. Destination Wairarapa however will continue to support the building of capability for tourism operators by partnering with Business Wairarapa.

3. Marketing

This reporting period covered “Summer”, a term we can use loosely this year due to rain, cyclones and grey skies. That aside we had many, many weddings, lots of visitors, retail did well, and the region held many great events and saw high accommodation demand.

This period covered Summer School Holidays, Wellington Anniversary Weekend and Waitangi Weekend.

Events and Operators

Events we supported and promoted through our channels included:

- Tauherenikau Races Music in the Country at Tauherenikau
- Lavender picking at various locations
- Martinborough Fairs x 2
- Wheels at Wairarapa
- Harvest Festival (first day cancelled)
- Wings over Wairarapa – postponed

Wings over Wairarapa.

Wings is an event with the ability to draw big numbers to the region and it is an event looked forward to with much anticipation by the team. We worked closely with the new Wings Over Wairarapa event team in the lead up to the event utilising our own deep knowledge of the event and all our market channels and tools.

We funded refreshed artwork using STAPP funding - the last event was heavily impacted by Covid and it was important to revitalize and freshen up the graphics. It also helped to highlight the family appeal of the event.



We also used STAPP funds to edit the promotional video used on the Wings website and our own website and social media channels.

We developed a 'false' wrap for the Dompost (see below) which ran at Waitangi Weekend, and which captured a range of events being held in the region including Wings. Timing also meant we were able to highlight the announcement of our Dark Sky Reserve status (more on this below). These wraps - which were enabled due to STAPP funding, have been effective and high profile. This will be the last of this type as funding no longer available.

ADVERTISEMENT

It's all going on **RIGHT ABOVE WAIRARAPA**



Image: Stonehenge Aotearoa

WAIRARAPA HAS RECEIVED OFFICIAL DARK SKY RESERVE STATUS!

This means Wairarapa is one of the best places in the world to view the never-ending star filled skies – and it's only an hour's drive from Wellington.

With **Wings Over Wairarapa** just weeks away and the **Wairarapa Balloon Festival** on the horizon, the sky's the limit!

Wings Over Wairarapa



24-26
FEB

Wairarapa Balloon Festival



6-10
APR
EASTER

Wairarapa Dark Sky Reserve



EVERY
CLEAR
NIGHT

FIND OUT MORE AT www.wairarapanz.com

MORE TO DISCOVER OVERLEAF

ADVERTISEMENT

WINGS OVER WAIRARAPA

FRI SUN
24-26
FEB

GREAT FAMILIES
WAIKATO

Friday 24 – Sunday 26 February
Wings Over Wairarapa Air Festival returns to Hood Aerodrome, Masterton.
An airshow like no other with Wairarapa scenery providing a stunning backdrop. See aircraft including vintage, military, jets, helicopters, aerobatic displays, and much more! Plus see the Royal New Zealand Air Force P-8A Poseidon for the first time in action. Don't wait to buy your ticket, buy in advance and save.
See full show details and secure your ticket now at www.wings.org.nz

WHAT'S HAPPENING AND WHEN?
Friday 24th Feb
Gates open 12 noon
Take Flight local Schools Programme
Practice Day
Saturday 25th & Sunday 26th Feb
Gates open 8am-4pm
Airshow flying programme starts 10am-4.30pm
Enjoy the same flying programme both days
Take Flight programme – all 3 days
Fun interactive displays, demonstrations and hands-on activities. Meet aviation experts, engineers, pilots and technicians. The NanoGirl team will be there all weekend with their explosive, engaging, entertaining science experiments. The New Zealand Defence Force are bringing their fun equipment for kids to get involved with. Chat to personnel about the Defence Force, and how it works to protect New Zealand and its role around the world.

SO MANY GREAT WAIRARAPA EVENTS COMING UP...

17-18 FEB

Wairarapa Wines Harvest Festival
Town meets country at this quality annual event held on the banks of the Ruamahanga River in Gladstone. Saturday is sold out! Come on Friday for the same great food, wine and entertainment.

18-19 FEB

NZ Drag Racing Nationals, Masterton Motorplex
It's all go once the wheels hit the road at Masterton Motorplex and the 55th New Zealand Nationals is set to be one of the best. All classes are included, including Group One.

26 MAR

Golden Shears, Masterton
The best sheep shearers, wool pressers and wool handlers put it all on the line for the title in the Shearing and Wool handling Championship each year. Held at the War Memorial Stadium in Masterton, people flock to it from all over to see speed shearing at its best.

26 MAR

Toki Truck Stop Show & Shine at Tui Brewery
This annual truck show is a highlight on the NZ trucking calendar, where trucks from all over the country descend on Tui Brewery for a great day out – providing an impressive display of big rigs for truck fanatics to enjoy.

5 MAR

The Martinborough Fair
A fun street market around the Martinborough Square. It's a treasure trove full of top-quality New Zealand-made craft and clothing, great food and music.

10-12 MAR

121 Festival 2023
Featuring a top tier line-up of international, emerging and heritage musicians and artists across multiple stages playing house, techno, dub, roots, soul, funk, rock and hip hop over three days. At the stunning venue at Tauherenikau Racecourse, this makes for an incredible experience. Grab your ticket now.

6-10 APR

Wairarapa Balloon Festival
This magical five-day festival promises fun for the whole family, with balloons filling the wonderful Wairarapa skies. The absolute highlight is the Night Glow on Saturday 8th set to be bigger and brighter than ever with five hours of action-packed entertainment for the whole family. Buy your Night Glow tickets now.

8 APR

National Tweed Ride 2023
Tally ho tweeders! Greytown's charming leafy streets will be filled with bicycle bells as riders take part in the third National Tweed Ride. Dress up in your finest vintage attire and enjoy a ride throughout the village, a post-ride gin party and swing jazz.

PLAN YOUR WAIRARAPA ESCAPE HERE www.wairarapanz.com

121 Festival.

121 Festival were more fortunate with the weather and after being cancelled due to Covid for the last two years, had a strong offering and good numbers this year. We worked closely with the small Festival team and with WgtnNZ as this is a Regional Events Fund funded event. This 3-day dance odyssey is unlike anything else in the wider Wellington region, attracting a young audience to the region and one which by design, fully embraces the beautiful location at Tauherenikau.

www.121festival.co.nz

Space Science Centre

Hari and Sam from Milky Way Kiwi/Star Safari developed a pop-up Space Science Centre in the old Video Ezy building in Carterton. We got right behind promoting this and it was terrific to see over 3000 people (lots and lots of kids) visit the between December and Waitangi

13 | Page

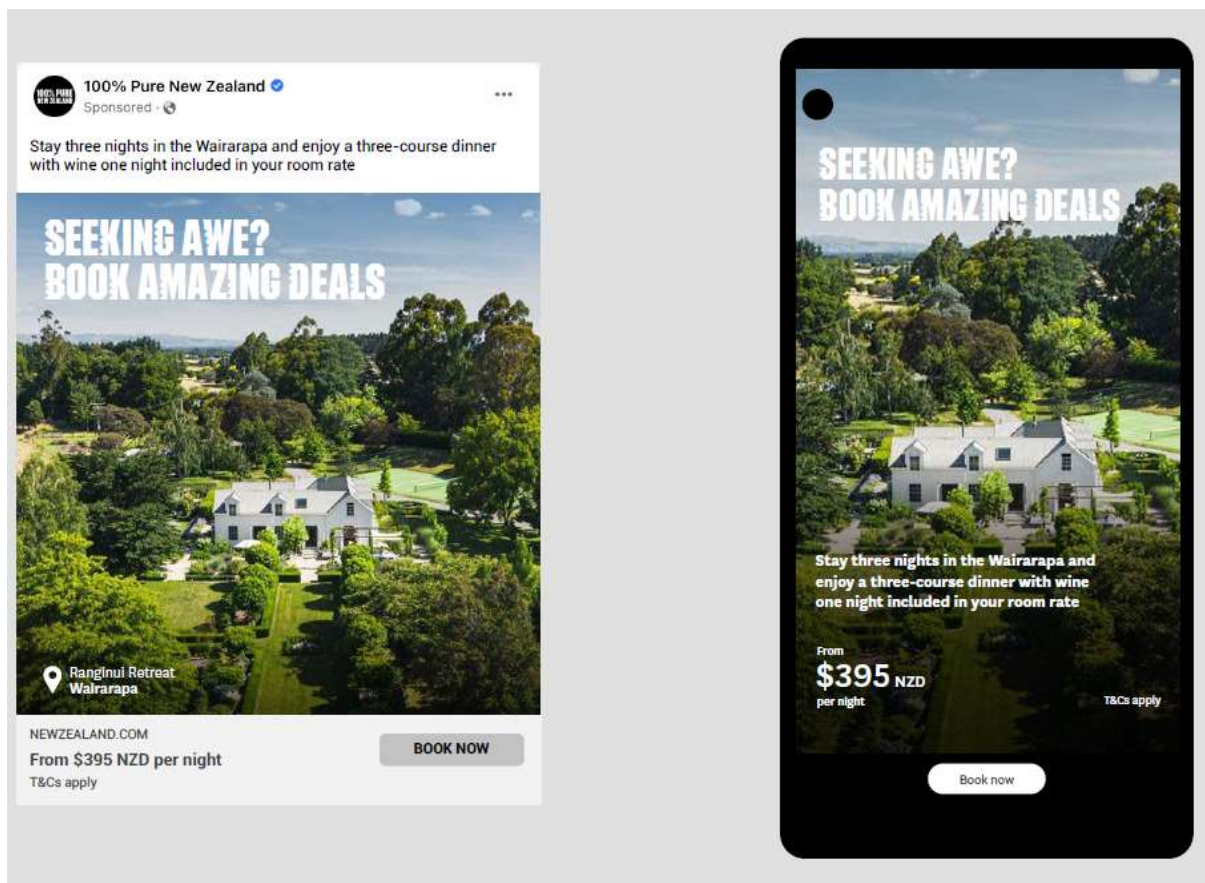
weekend. Hari is very media savvy and featured in numerous media interviews, many of which DW facilitated.

Dark Sky Reserve Announcement

This was a major project during this period, and I am very proud of the work led and managed by the team to insure well-structured effective comms, image provision and strong media pick up. We crafted a media release in conjunction with the Wairarapa Dark Sky group and provisioned it widely to partners including WgtnNZ and Tourism NZ. We sourced top quality images and made these available – vital in the power of the message these days. (Media results of the announcement are below)

Tourism NZ Summer campaign

Ranginui Retreat was a feature product in their summer campaign.



The Classic NZ Wine Trail

We joined forces with our Classic NZ Wine Trail whānau Hawke's Bay, Wellington and Marlborough to co-invest (STAPP funded) in a Trail wide photo and video shoot. Objective was to portray Australian visitors on this road trip and their experiences across the entire Trail. This is the first time we've worked on an integrated shoot with our partner regions and the process and quality of the images is outstanding:

Some examples below:





Imagery

Roady is both an app and a social channel which inspires and enable travelers to find, plan, and share epic New Zealand trips. It is the place travelers go for inspiration on planning their NZ Road Trip. Roady has a social media audience of 195,000+ across platforms (*Roady App, Facebook, Instagram & Tiktok*) with a monthly reach averaging around a million people organically. They've worked with 23 RTOs and completed a successful campaign with Tourism

New Zealand. In February 2023 we hosted 2 content creators from Roady for two days capturing travel content. This was funded with STAPP funding.

The deliverables were:

- 100+ professionally captured images, full DW rights at locations including Cape Palliser Lighthouse, Castlepoint, Cape Palliser coastal drive, Putangirua Pinnacles, Waiohine Gorge, Lake Ferry and Ngawi Seal Colony.
- 36 Instagram stories which averaged 3800 views on each
- Instagram Reels x3:
 - The 7 must visit places, Guide to Cape Palliser and Castlepoint reel
- Total IG reach = 73,603 people with 2463 likes, 547 shares & 1135 saves.
- Tiktok Posts
 - 3 reels on Tiktok, totaling 4703 views

Brand Toolkit

We developed and released this toolkit with imagery, video and copy for shared use.

www.wairarapanz.com/toolkit

Destination Wairarapa website development – RFP

In this period we identified the high priorities for our new site being primarily self-managed, top performing, and have engaging and visually appealing content. This will support increased website traffic with users having a positive user-experience. The website Request for Proposal (RFP) went out to three businesses on 22nd March. Following a structured process, we will ensure fair judgement to gain the best candidate for our requirements. We received quality questions back from all three businesses regarding the RFP, which highlights their ideas and thinking around the upcoming project while probing our thinking even further.

We are awaiting the final proposals when our team will individually and then collaboratively evaluate all three. We will also bring in our current external website developer who is technically very experienced and has a strong grasp on what will be required for the future site. The three proposals will be judged on a range of criteria established to ensure our goals and requirements are met:

- Technical ability
- SEO and content support
- Development and ongoing budget
- Development length
- Account management

Trade

We attended Tourism Connect – the annual two-day event with face-to-face meeting with over 100 trade representatives. After a busy season and with high awareness of our Dark Sky status, there's good interest in the region and opportunities for new business.

Following Cycle Gabrielle we proactively approached some tour series companies and trade partners and offered assistance with tours/groups unable to visit Hawke's Bay – this displacement assistance was very well received and product like Greytown Honey and Le Gra was for several operators 'discovered' and liked!

Media

Denise Landow joined us as our media comms contractor.

We hosted one of our first international journalists since Covid . Rob McGregor from Forbes Advisor (USA) was a freelancer who worked with the CNZWT family to do the North Island section.

We worked with Wairarapa Lifestyle magazine on content and delivered prepared stories. We continue to fund placement of this well-regarded magazine into Koru Clubs in Wellington, Auckland and Palmerston North (prepaid for the year using STAPP funding).

Below is a selection of media results during this period:

121 Festival in Dompost

The Dompost

TE KARANGA AUUAHA
Wellington's creative voice arts@dompost.co.nz

80 acts line up for music festival

Piers Fuller

Billed as "a celebration of life, love, and the power of music and art" a popular Wairarapa music festival is set to host thousands of revellers.

More than 80 performers and artists will descend on the leafy grounds of a South Wairarapa racecourse for the three-day 121 Festival that has waited three years since the inaugural music festival in 2020.

Co-organiser Tim Ward said the event, which runs from March 10-12, was a celebration of music, art and wellness.

They were gearing up for an unforgettable event. "We have been working tirelessly behind the scenes to bring an experience like no other, and we are excited to finally share it."

The first running of 121 in 2020 attracted 3000 revellers and last year they had 5000 booked but had to cancel due to Covid restrictions.

The lineup of world-class musicians and artists on multiple stages throughout the festival would be performing across multiple genres.

From house to techno, hip-hop to jazz it was some of the most diverse and exciting talent available at any New Zealand festival, Ward said.

Among some of the headline acts at this year's festival are Anetha, Bradley Zero, FJAAK, LSDXOXO, Kettama, Peach, Overmono (live), and Avantdale Bowling Club.

But the music is just the beginning, Ward said, with 121 Festival and Newlife Studio joining forces to premier multimedia fashion show Don't Grow Up! at the festival.

Ward said there were still plenty of tickets available for this year's event and the long-term forecast was looking favourable.

As part of its holistic approach to a good time, the festival was offering a stargazing event in collaboration with a former Nasa employee and TEDx astrobiologist Hari Mogosanu.

"It promises to be an unforgettable experience that will deepen your understanding of our place in the cosmos," Ward said.

One of the things about 121 that organisers were most proud of was its sustainable credentials.

They have made great efforts to cut down on waste to the point that guests are expected to bring their own water containers because disposables bottles will not be available.

"So we're compromising our own sales in order to save the planet," Ward said.

"We can control what goes onto site, which then in turn results in what has to be dealt with and taken off site."

The 121 Festival, is on at the Tauherenikau Racecourse, Featherston, on March 10-12, tickets available from the website.

Revellers at the 121 Festival at the Tauherenikau Racecourse in South Wairarapa.

Arts events in the region this week

Dark Sky Announcement Feb 2023

Fantastic pick up of the announcement – on all key media channels including TV 1 news
<https://www.1news.co.nz/2023/01/19/wairarapa-districts-named-as-dark-sky-reserves/>
<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/482744/wairarapa-districts-become-dark-sky-reserves>
<https://www.stuff.co.nz/travel/130998426/new-zealands-newest-dark-sky-reserve-gets-international-sign-off>

As well as an immediate media result, the Wairarapa Dark Skies story will have a long tail provided we keep highlighting it – as we see here in March's Kia Ora magazine



And in the space of two days in March, we hit both the major dailies: Extraordinary! STUFF

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/travel/destinations/nz/wellington/131340762/taking-a-safari-through-the-stars-in-the-worlds-newest-dark-sky-reserve>

NZ Herald

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/travel/wairarapa-becomes-official-dark-sky-reserve-for-stargazing-in-new-zealand/GHCQQBDUCNE33PGCRN36CIRLXA/>

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Kia Ora March issue; a regional feature which we set up and wrangled:

Travel Wairarapa

Wine Right, May Hall Vineyard, Martinborough.

WEEKEND IN WAIRARAPA

Go for the wine tasting, stay for the great food and boutique offerings in a region that packs a lot into its fetching townships and countryside.

STORY SHARON STEPHENSON

Travel Wairarapa

FRIDAY

You deserve a treat after navigating the winding Rimutaka Range. That comes in the form of your accommodation for the weekend – the Martinborough Hotel. Built in 1902 on a corner of Martinborough's village square, this two-storey hotel/restaurant is proof that even the grandest of grand old houses can benefit from a nip and tuck. Check into one of the 20 stylish rooms, named after the region's early pioneers, and put down the car keys because you won't be needing them tonight.

Walk across the road to the Tahi Gin Room, where Jeremy Wilson will whip you up a G&T from one of 10 mainly domestic gins that line the walls of this former BNZ bank (the tables occupy what was once the bank manager's accommodation). Wilson knows all there is to know about the jumper-heavy spirit and will run you through a tasting flight of three drops, including some from Martinborough craft distillers Reid + Reid and Dr Beak. It would be remiss not to comment on the decor, especially the vintage typewriters and adding machines on loan from the Martinborough Museum.

Another treat is dinner, mere steps away. The front section of the 1900s villa opened last year as Karahū Wine Bar & Eatery. Owners Dudley-Anne Hill and Karen Anne Frost (who own the adjacent Tahi Gin Room) let their interior-designer flags fly here, gifting the former wine bar, filling it with chandeliers by Wairarapa glass makers the Crystal Chain Gang and covering the walls in handmade wallpaper from local company Paperhands.

No surprise that the food is equally excellent. Former Roristia chef James Anderson and chef David Napier, who once cooked for British chef Heston Blumenthal, turn local seasonal produce into dishes such as wild Austroa venison loin with pomme puree, and confit duck with kūmara and pinot noir. Pro tips: save room for a rebena doughnut.

SATURDAY

Ever since winemakers realised that its free-draining gravel river terraces, low rainfall and warm summers were ideal for growing grapes, the Wairarapa has been popular with those who like their beverages produced not far from where they're sipping. But first, breakfast, because there's a big day of riding and sipping ahead. A fly-up from Cafe Medici in Kitchener Street will see to that. Afterwards, wander down to Green Jersey Cycle Hire, where staff fit you out with either an e-bike or a regular/tandem bike for a winery tour. Two of the region's great charms are its flat terrain and wide streets, which make getting around on two wheels a breeze. This is a town that rewards the thrifty, with more than 40 wine producers, half of which have cellar doors. One way to narrow your options is to use the Martinborough Wine Map, which makes it easy to plot a route.

A good place to start is at one of the newest cellar doors. Nga Waka in Kitchener Street is one of the region's earliest wineries, started 30-plus years ago by winemaker Roger Parkinson. But Parkinson was so focused on making the wine that he didn't get around to building a cellar door. "Good things take time," says general manager Mack Hodson of the vineyard's tasting room, which opened last year. The architecturally designed building features enough space for tastings housing up to 20 people at a time. Breakfast wasn't that long ago so you might not be too hungry, but it would be mistake to leave without trying a creamy chicken and bacon pie with feijoa kasumi, made by the famous Clareville Bakery.

Next door, beautiful Palliser Estate's cellar door offers guided and unguided wine tastings and the food coming out of Nana Rang's knowledgeable guides, including cellar door manager Vanessa Paton (daughter of the winery's founder), they'll soon have you appreciating the subtleties of the 2021 Crispin Pinot Noir or the 2020 Celebre, a popular blend of merlot, syrah, malbec and cabernet franc.

No matter which cellar doors you visit, make sure you aim for Moy Hall Vineyard & Restaurant for lunch. One of the stars of the local wine scene, this stylish winery is modelled on a traditional Scottish longhouse. Owners PMB and Carolyn McArthur bought it in 2015 and hired Welsh chef Tony Brooker to oversee the busy kitchen. Sip a glass of Moy Hall sauvignon blanc or merlot among the vines, while you enjoy Creole-spiced fish with roasted yams, or fresh gnocchi that could well be the best you've ever tasted.

Head back to the hotel for a rest because you'll want to be alert for this evening's star-gazing experience. Scientists Harilaos Mousas and Samuel Leake run these guided tours at Stonehenge Antares.

SUNDAY

Everyone, including Gwyneth Paltrow and Novak Djokovic, has raved about the benefits of mānuka honey. Experience for yourself how this liquid gold finds its way to the stars, at Greytown Honey. Early Polaschek is a fifth-generation beekeeper and from her Tahurangi property produces mānuka, kānuka, kīnaki, rewarawa, wildflower and clover honey. Make your own beeswax candle or suit up to enjoy the beekeeper experience.

When is a bike shop not a bike shop? When it's also a gin distillery. Adam Blackwell, who opened vintage bicycle business Blackwell and Sons in 2018, recently branched out into another of his passions with the Greytown Distilling Company. He had long been following the rise of craft spirits in the US, where he spends half the year running an advertising agency, so last year he turned

1. The Martinborough Hotel. 2. Tahi Gin Room. 3. Karahū Wine Bar & Eatery. 4. Nga Waka. 5. Lunch at Moy Hall. 6. Nga Waka Cellar Door.

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a tin shed at the back of his bike shop into a distillery. Using classic British gin recipes, but naming the three after historical Greytown stories, he uses local botanicals for his gin, which comes in recyclable stainless steel tins.

If gin isn't your thing, how about another winery? This time there are no rural vistas. Alexia Urban Winery is set on an industrial site in Greytown, which might seem like an unlikely place to make and drink boutique wines but, as founder/vintner Jane Cooper says, "It makes sense to put a winery where the people are". Take a seat, admire the colourful hand-painted mural, and order the Alexia Experiment – a tasting paddle of four wines. I highly recommend a glass of Cooper's chilled red wine.

It's almost time to head back over the Remutaka Range but before you do so, call into Featherston's Royal Hotel. Built in 1868, it recently underwent a major renovation. No matter what the weather is doing, order the smoked fish and prawn chowder and congratulate yourself on a weekend well spent. wairarapanz.com



7. Jane Cooper, Alexia Urban Winery. 8. Adam Blackwell, Blackwell and Sons. 9. Royal Hotel, Featherston.



10. Wairarapa

Getting there



The Wairarapa is a one-hour drive from Wellington. Air New Zealand operates non-stop daily flights to Wellington from Auckland, Christchurch, Queenstown and Dunedin, with connections across the domestic network.

- 1. Contact Centre 0800 733 000
- 2. Inland Travel Breakers 0800 733 787
- 3. airnewzealand.co.nz

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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

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Anna Nielson – General Manager
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