

Taitokerau Northland

Destination Management Plan 2021

Executive Summary





Our Vision

A Mātou Moemoea

Taitokerau Northland has been an extraordinary meeting place over centuries. It is steeped in rich cultural history, is a place of spiritual significance and the birthplace of modern Aotearoa New Zealand. Visitors have been drawn to this region to explore and experience our people and place.

Regional partners have been discussing destination management since 2016 and this, our Taitokerau Northland Destination Management Plan (TNDMP) outlines our hopes for how we evolve going forward. While the tourism industry faces great challenges, we seek to re-imagine what it will take to capture the Mauri (life force) of Taitokerau Northland, so it is positively felt by all who live and visit.

The TNDMP is designed to be unique to Taitokerau Northland and has been co-created through the partnership of Te Au Mārie Sestercentennial Trust, Te Hiringa Trust & Business Promotions, Northland Inc. and Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK) Taitokerau. With the objective being:

To enhance the value of our visitor experiences in collaboration with iwi, hapū and stakeholders, for the benefit of our communities, businesses, the environment, and future generations.



The Destination Management Approach

Huarahi Anga Mua

Taitokerau Northland remains relatively undiscovered by the domestic and international visitor and so has room for intentional growth in the tourism sector. This objective must be achieved through careful management of the destination consistent with local expectations and aspirations, seeking a balance across economic, cultural, social and environmental wellbeings that support our communities in a positive way while sharing it with others.

Through the development of this Plan, key considerations were:

- Immediate actions that support existing visitor experiences;
- Identifying actions that could have a positive impact on the Visitor industry in the next five years;
- How this generation reimagines for the next generation, what Taitokerau Northland should look, feel and be like by 2040;
- Develop alliances that build buy-in for economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefit;
- Alignment with WAI 262 and contemporary Treaty of Waitangi claims and kaupapa that impact on Māori;
- Māori, hapū and iwi aspirations for the visitor industry as informed by engagement and the Taitokerau Māori Tourism Strategy 2018 – 2023;

- The importance of Māori traditions, practices and knowledge already existing in a values-based destination management approach; and
- Alignment with the Destination Management Guidelines 2020 released by Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (MBIE).

Important key values we will seek to reflect in this plan will include:

- Seeking to understand the impact welcoming visitors has on our region and proactively manage those impacts;
- Working collaboratively with Māori, communities, agencies, and industry to progress and develop the visitor industry, while protecting and nurturing our natural world; and
- Developing our people to participate in the visitor industry.

Regional Engagement

The TNDMP was informed by a comprehensive consultation and engagement process with the tourism industry, supporting businesses, local communities and residents, iwi and hapū, councils and government agencies. 14 workshops were held across the region, over 4000 online surveys were sent and interviews conducted alongside desktop research.

Key headlines from engagement included:

- **Physical Infrastructure** improvements to connectivity including roading, mobile phone coverage, and high-speed broadband.
- **Cultural Infrastructure** enhancement key to future success for community and visitor experience.
- **Māori traditions, cultural identity** and values need to be at the forefront.
- **Seasonality** currently prevents economic viability of many businesses and creates significant unemployment issues.
- **Stories** have high cultural and potentially economic value and need to be told by those with the right to tell them.
- **Signage, wayfinding and interpretation improvements** required across the region.
- A strong appetite for greater **environmental protection** (land and marine).
- Acceptance to move to a variety of **user pays models** and a willingness to explore additional revenue streams.
- Emphasis on lifting the **quality of product offerings** and service levels.

Our Visitor Industry Story

Kōrero Mā Ngā Manuhiri

Taitokerau Northland's Unique Proposition

Taitokerau Northland is not only a place of astounding beauty with rugged coastlines, sweeping turquoise bays, ancient kauri forests and abundant wildlife, it is a place of deep cultural and historical significance, from the arrival of Kupe the first Polynesian explorer to Aotearoa shores, to the first encounters between Māori and Pākehā peoples.

The region covers a large geographical area including the three districts of Far North, Kaipara and Whangārei, several tribal rohe and is home to some of Aotearoa New Zealand's most recognised visitor icons and attractions such as Tāwhiti Rahi / Poor Knights Islands marine reserve, Waitangi Treaty Grounds, Motukokako / Hole in the Rock – Bay of Islands, Tāne Mahuta in Waipoua Forest and Te Rerenga Wairua / Cape Reinga.

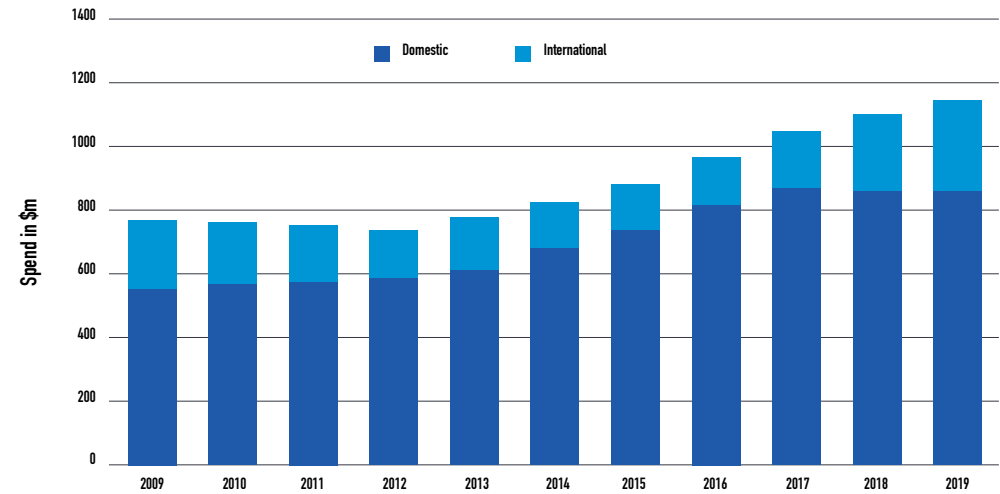


Our Industry at a Glance

- Tourism is one of Taitokerau Northland's largest industries, made up of hundreds of businesses, many of them small to medium enterprises (SME's) and sole proprietor operations.
- The industry accounts for over 10% of the region's employment and approximately 7% of the region's GDP (source: Infometrics.co.nz).
- By 2020, tourism spending in the region accounted for \$1.12b.
- While much of Northland remains 'undiscovered' the region is also home to some of the country's iconic attractions of high seasonal visitation. This creates the need to balance the development of less discovered areas with better management of these 'hotspot' destinations.
- Taitokerau Northland achieved 1.961m annual guest nights in 2019 (source: Commercial Accommodation Monitor, September 2019, Stats NZ)
- The July-December 2020 Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA) Domestic Satisfaction Survey ranked the region as the third most satisfying destination with 72% of people saying they were extremely satisfied or very satisfied.

- Taitokerau Northland has received \$575m (as at Nov 2020) through the Kānoa – Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit, across 156 different projects including those significant to the visitor industry including infrastructure upgrades and new visitor experiences.
- Māori tourism experiences that have story-telling of Taitokerau Northland and its people at its core are growing in number and quality. Private and public capital investment has been deployed for a number of projects and extensive engagement informing the Taitokerau Māori Tourism Strategy 2018 – 2023 highlighted a need to ensure that Māori-owned tourism businesses are continually supported to realise their full potential.
- Seasonality and regional dispersal are key issues for the industry, highlighted with half of the region's visitor nights spent in the Far North with the majority in the Bay of Islands (source: AA Traveller/Fresh Info Domestic Visitor Survey) and visitation concentrated in the summer season, peaking between Christmas Day and Waitangi Day.

Total Visitor Spend in Northland Y/E Dec 2019



*Incl spend by day and overnight visitors, excludes GST

Our Plan and Actions Rautaki Me Te Whakahaere

The following actions represent the combined insights from engagement and consultation. These actions have been grouped into seven overarching focus areas with importance to destination management: Insights, Leadership, Infrastructure, Capability, Product Development, Environmental Stewardship and Marketing.

1 Insights

- Establish an annual region-wide survey of residents and businesses.
- Establish a bi-annual tourism operator survey.
- Lobby MBIE and Statistics NZ (Stats NZ) to provide reliable and accurate international and domestic tourism data at a regional level.
- Capture baseline and future revenue from tourism-related income through concessions, licenses, and user pays access models.

2 Leadership

- Establish and strengthen a Leadership Advisory group including government agencies, iwi and hapū, councils and tourism businesses.
- Establish long-term sustainable funding for the implementation of the TNDMP
- Establish an independent Taitokerau Māori Partnership group.
- Assess a variety of visitor user-pays models across the region to access certain sites of environmental or cultural significance.
- Develop localised Destination Management Plans for areas surrounding iconic attractions.

3 Infrastructure

- Create physical and digital story-telling platforms across the region utilising existing council, iwi, hapū, and government owned assets.
- Support the Implementation of the range of infrastructure projects already set out in the TTNEAP.
- Actively seek private sector investment in accommodation, and attractions that create new jobs, appeal to a domestic and international audience, and support regional dispersal.

4 Capability

- Create cultural storytelling content and capability.
- Encourage and support tourism businesses to attain Qualmark accreditation.
- Explore with education partners opportunities to run seasonal and pop-up tourism/business programs in smaller towns.
- Create a tourism business feasibility framework and support network to guide new business start-up development.
- Establish a sustainable practical tourism skills development program or apprentice-style system in partnership with local education providers and industry.
- Create a register of tools and resources available to assist existing operators.

5 Product Development

- Education – Develop education-based itineraries and products that meet the learning needs and budget of schools from across NZ.
- Cultural – Identify and support iwi, hapū, or Māori-led businesses to develop products that attract a domestic audience.
- Cycling – Build new cycleways and trails to appeal to a range of audiences, leveraging the current cycling boom and creation of the Pou Herenga Tai: Twin Coast Trail.
- Arts and Creative – Support the work of Creative Northland (CN) and increase opportunities for local creatives and artists to be part of tourism product development and events.
- Produce – Paddock to Plate create a food and beverage tourism strategy for Taitokerau / Northland to add value and build the profile of local fresh produce.
- Events – Develop a Taitokerau / Northland events strategy and secure funding for implementation.
- Walking – Create a Great Walk for Taitokerau / Northland that would be the closest and most accessible great walk from Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland.
- Twin Coast Discovery Highway – Secure resources to continue to develop this touring route asset as a platform for marketing, new product development, and building communities

6 Environmental Stewardship

- Develop a consistent, region-wide plan to manage freedom camping.
- Regenerate Taitokerau / Northland's coastal and marine environment.
- Accelerate plans for predator free reserves across Taitokerau / Northland.
- Develop a climate action framework for Tourism operators in Taitokerau / Northland.
- Encourage and support tourism businesses to adopt the TIA Sustainability Commitment and Tiaki Promise ethos.

7 Marketing

- Develop and implement a Marketing and Public Relations (PR) strategy for Taitokerau / Northland with focus on the domestic and Australian markets.
- Investigate the feasibility and assess the benefits of developing the regional brand.
- Execute year-round marketing and PR campaigns with focus on the domestic and Australian markets.
- Create a communication strategy to positively position Taitokerau / Northland, reinforce the region's brand value and grow a positive reputation.



Turning the Plan into Action

With the support of the partnership group, a Leadership Advisory Group (LAG) was created, comprising of members from Taitokerau Northland's iwi/hāpu, visitor industry, local government and central government agencies.

The primary role of the Group is to enable the development and implementation of a future plan for the visitor industry in Taitokerau Northland. The members of the LAG are motivated to effect change and have the influence to do so.

The implementation of the actions in the TNDMP will be led and supported by a working group and facilitated by Northland Inc.

The TNDMP is a living document, and will undergo regular reviews to its strategic direction and actions to remain relevant. It will provide a regional approach and also encourage destination management at a more localised level.

This work will be one of several important pillars that will see Taitokerau Northland achieve vibrant success.



For further information please visit www.northlandnz.com

