

Luxury train plan

News agency APNZ has reported that the directors of a local company, South Pacific Express, have plans to acquire carriages from the defunct Great South Pacific Express, a luxury sleeper train that operated in Australia 1999-2003. They are said to be in talks with KiwiRail over operating \$1500 per day deluxe tourist train excursions here.

The Brisbane *Courier-Mail* reported last year that the 21-car, A\$35 million train had been mothballed in QR sheds in Ipswich after having lost A\$12 million during its four years of operation. The public were told in 2004 that it had been sold to the Orient-Express company, which was examining its possible deployment in Italy, but this appears to have fallen through.



The public gets to check out Waka Maori, the 75m canoe-shaped venue on Te Wero Island at Auckland's Viaduct Harbour, when it opens today. It will remain in place until 23OCT and visitors will get the chance to meet famous rugby players and view the world's first 3D where - or Maori challenge - in a 30-seat theatre.

Safety first at Owen River Lodge

The well-being of Murchison's Owen River Lodge guests is of paramount importance to Felix Borenstein, the fly fishing lodge's owner and GM, who reports that he has revamped the health and safety plan to manage the risk involved with outdoor pursuits.

"We have also purchased a number of satellite communication devices - we now have a satellite phone, an EPIRB and five spot satellite GPS messaging products. This means that every guide will have an emergency communication device with them at all times," says Felix.

"Given our remote location, and the time it would take for medical assistance to reach us, I have also purchased an AED (Automatic Electronic Defibrillator) from the Red Cross," he adds.

Rotorua waitress takes KiaOraMai Awesome Service Award

BellarMarie Todd, a waitress at Rotorua's Boulevard Restaurant, has won a KiaOraMai Awesome Service Award, one of just 12 such award winners across New Zealand during 2011.

Auckland Chamber of Commerce chief executive Michael Barnett selects monthly KiaOraMai Awesome Service Award winners on behalf of the NZ Chambers of Commerce, and Rotorua Mayor Kevin Winters presented BellarMarie with her award on behalf of the city and KiaOraMai organisers.

She was nominated by Marilyn Guinan, a visitor to the thermal resort city, who had been coming to Rotorua for four years for a national Mah-jong tournament, and who had dined at the Boulevard Restaurant each year. "Each year we have been impressed by



BellarMarie's friendly, efficient service, and her great personality and way with people," said Mrs Guinan.

"Each visit we have mentioned her outstanding manner to the Boulevard Motel and Restaurant receptionist. This year we decided to nominate her for a KiaOraMai Awesome Service Award. We think she is the Waitress of the Year."

Mt Hutt announces 2012 pricing

Canterbury's Mt Hutt ski area has announced its season pass programme for 2012, with pricing that recognises the financial hit locals have taken in the past year.

NZSki has frozen season pass prices at 2011 levels and slashed the youth pass price by \$150, while kids 10 years and younger will get to ski for free. Those who held season passes in 2010 or 2011 will be rewarded with up to \$100 credit loaded onto their mypass to spend on services on the mountain.

Those who commit to a pass at Early Bird pricing by 31OCT11, whether they were a previous season pass holder or not, will be able to 'drip-feed' payments over eight months.

All who want to pay for passes between mid-FEB and mid-MAR12, the traditional time pass prices are released, will still be able to do so at Early Bird prices and can choose a three-month payment plan at that time.

www.nzski.com



Te Waonui Forest Retreat at Franz Josef Glacier has achieved a renewed Five Star Hotel Qualmark grading and an Enviro Gold award.