

Media Advisory

Visiting Friends and Relatives – good for NZ



EMBARGOED until 23 February 11:00am

The latest national Regional Visitor Monitor (RVM) report for the year ended 2008 is now available from the Ministry of Tourism website - www.tourismresearch.govt.nz/rvm.

The report provides analysis on the Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) market and highlights the characteristics of this large traveller group.

A short article outlining the main findings is attached.

The RVM is a partnership between the Ministry of Tourism, Tourism New Zealand and the Regional Tourism Organisations for Auckland, Rotorua, Wellington, Canterbury, Queenstown and Dunedin.

The RVM Benchmark Report is available from www.tourismresearch.govt.nz/rvm. For further information on the RVM contact Bruce Bassett - telephone (04) 498 7448 or email bruce.bassett@tourism.govt.nz.

www.tourismresearch.govt.nz

www.tourism.govt.nz

Visiting Friends and Relatives – good for NZ



Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) is the largest traveller group after the Holiday market. In the year to September 2008, all VFR travellers spent a total of \$3.5 billion in New Zealand. Of this, \$2.3 billion was spent by domestic travellers and \$1.2 billion by international. Over the same period, Holiday travellers spent \$6.4 billion (\$3.3 billion international and \$3.1 billion domestic).*

In terms of international arrivals, VFR travellers have performed well lately, being up 4.2% in the year to December 2008. Compare this with Business arrivals which fell by 5.0% and Holiday arrivals which fell by 2.2% over the same period.

Despite its valuable contribution to the New Zealand tourism industry, the VFR market is often neglected and not well understood.

One common misconception is that VFR travellers only stay with friends and relatives and so do not spend very much. In fact, the Regional Visitor Survey (RVM) shows that around a third (30%) of VFR travellers paid for their accommodation. It also found that those travelling in larger group sizes were more likely again to stay in paid accommodation.

VFR travellers have a higher than average length of stay. For instance, international VFR respondents to the RVM stayed an average of 14.4 days in the region compared to 6.8 days for those on Holiday.

VFR travellers are, for the most part, just as likely to seek out and experience all that New Zealand has to offer. They are more likely to explore wine and food, but less likely to experience sightseeing, adventure activities or Maori tourism. They also encourage their hosts to get out and about, further stimulating the economy.

In the current economic environment, the VFR market holds good prospects for New Zealand tourism. VFR arrivals are holding up well compared to other traveller types, and may be easier to attract during this time. Often the decision to visit friends and family is not entirely discretionary so is less likely to be postponed than a holiday.

*Data sourced from the Ministry of Tourism's International Visitor Survey and Domestic Travel Survey (YE Sep 08).