Napier, New Zealand

Pre-departure Destination Brief

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Introduction

Napier, New Zealand is a small port city off the coast of Hawkes Bay, with an estimated population of about 58,000 citizens (Statistics New Zealand, 2009). It is known as the largest cross-bred wool centre in the Southern Hemisphere and the largest apple, pear and stone fruit producing areas in the country of New Zealand. The city is rich in cultural heritage from the architecture styles of art deco to the most photographed tourist attraction in the country, a statue on Marine Parade called Pania of the Reef (Lonely Planet, 2008). Through historical perspectives, environmental aspects and economic factors, Napier is a city that is formed for tourist travel. However, the tourists only visit Napier for notable events such as the annual February Art Deco Weekend, the wine and food festival and Mission Concert in Taradale.

History of Napier

Similar to other cities and towns within New Zealand, Napier holds an immensely documented Maori history. Ngati Kahungunu of Taraia arrived in the district of Hawke’s Bay centuries ago existing among the Whatumamoa, Rangitane and Ngati Awa in the areas of Petane, Te-Whanganui-a-Orotu and Waiohiki. The Ngati Kahungunu was one of the first Maori tribes to meet European settlers in the region and controlled the coastline to Wellington (Lonely Planet, 2008). Captain James Cook eventually discovered Napier, with the Crown purchasing 1.4 million acres of Hawke’s Bay land and leaving only 4,000 acres to Ngati Kahungunu (New Zealand Tourism Guide, 2008).

In 1931, Napier experienced a catastrophic earthquake of 7.9 on the Richter scale. The earthquake lasted two and a half minutes, with approximately 4,000 hectares of sea bed becoming dry land (New Zealand Tourism Guide, 2008). Although completely
The devastating 1931 earthquake in Napier, New Zealand, led to hundreds of deaths and injuries. The city was able to rebuild in the 1930s with art deco style. Art deco originated in Europe between 1920 and 1940, commonly known from the Exposition des Arts Modernes Decoratifs et Industriels taking place in Paris in 1925. Art deco encompasses various themes, such as sunbursts and fountains representing the dawn of a new modern age; the Skyscraper shape, symbolic of the 20th century; symbols of speed, power and flight representing new development in transport and communication; geometric shapes representing machines and technology development; the new woman, representing her new social freedoms; breaking the rules with jazz, short skirts and scandalous dancing; and ancient cultures and civilizations of Egypt and Central America (Art Deco Trust, 2009). Some buildings were replaced with contemporary structures during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s but the remaining are protected and restored in art deco architecture style. Compared to Miami Beach, Florida which is another art deco city, the architecture is completely different. Miami Beach uses Streamline Moderne Art Deco including characteristics such as rounded edges, corner windows, glass blocks, stucco walls and flat roofs (New Zealand Tourism Guide, 2008).

**Environmental Issues in Napier**

Since the 1931 earthquake, the coastal region was altered significantly, with some areas being raised to upwards of eight feet. This new topography situated on the Bluff Hill headland endangers Napier for major tsunamis (Lonely Planet, 2008). In 1988, Bannister recorded more than 350 micro-earthquakes on the North Island of New Zealand in two months. The Hawkes Bay region overlies the shallow zone of subduction of the Pacific plate beneath the Australian plate. These plates converge and fault over one another and create earthquakes of all types of magnitudes. Page (1994) studied sediment
cores from Lakes Tutira and Waikopiro in the Hawkes Bay region to analyze the magnitude and frequency of storm-induced erosion since European settlement. Hawkes Bay and Napier only receive about 93 days of rainfall annually, which means the land and soil are extremely dry throughout the year. In March 1994, hailstones of about 3 centimetres in size fell in Napier and caused NZ $10.8 million in damage to orchards and vineyards (New Zealand Tourism Guide, 2008). Napier also receives the highest sunshine hours in the country due to being located in the rain shadow of the North Island Volcanic Plateau (The Volcanic Plateau District Report, 2007 & Lawson, 1998).

The commercial city centre of Napier and the central business district is located near sea level, which risks raising sea levels to flood the entire city centre. The New Zealand Department of Conservation (1994) found three environmental issues surrounding Napier and the Hawkes Bay region. The Department of Conservation uses a scientific approach to evaluate forest remnants for indigenous forest use. New Zealand government and the Indigenous Forest Policy legislation do protect private forests for landowners. Exotic forest development is another environmental issue Napier is facing, as exotic forest provides habitat for indigenous wildlife. However, development of forest can also degrade the environment through fire, roads, pesticide use, and other wildlife. Finally, riparian zones are affected by forest development as they are to maintain conservation by adhering to carrying capacities.

**Napier and the Economy**

Much of Napier’s economy is comprised of apple, pear and stone fruit farming as well as vineyards for wine. Napier is famous for wool trade and is becoming a leader in the production of fertilizer (New Zealand Tourism Guide, 2008). Before March 1999, one
of New Zealand’s largest smoking tobacco plants was located in Napier. However, it was
closed and moved to Australia as production declined. 19 people lost their jobs at the
plant due to “fewer people are smoking” (July 1999 decisions). Napier’s local paper was
shut down and combined to create the Hawkes Bay Today, which included the entire
Hawkes Bay region. The Napier hospital was also shut down and services were moved to
the Hawkes Bay regional hospital. With all these services being amalgamated, the
economy was moving towards the global recession period. Smaller businesses were being
replaced by larger businesses and corporations that include the Hawkes Bay region rather
than the cities and towns within it.

**Napier Tourism**

Napier’s tourism revenue is from tourists with an interest in architecture and art
deco style. The Art Deco Weekend features many famous singers and bands that attract
tourists from all over the country. The city offers historical museums and art galleries
following the art deco style and has information regarding the 1931 earthquake. The
Pania of the Reef statue is valued to be one of the most photographed tourist attractions in
the country. It is a life-sized bronze statue and part of the Marine Parade landscape. In
October 2005, the statue was stolen. However, it was returned a week later without any
damage (New Zealand Port Authority, 2005). Marineland, a marine mammal park that
included dolphins, seals, penguins and gannets was also a main attraction in Napier until
2009 when the park closed its doors.

**Conclusion**

Napier, New Zealand is home to a variety of tourist attractions and activities that
are open to all types of tourists. Napier is a city with it all: historical significance,
farmland, spectacular views, museums, art deco style architecture and within close
distance to the other attractions in the Hawkes Bay region. Although the city was
cataclysmically rocked by a devastating earthquake, the city rebounded and rebuilt to
increase tourism. The economy was hit by the global recession but is attempting to return
to stability with increased farming and production of fruit, wool and fertilizers. The
environmental aspects and issues with Napier adverse, but cannot be controlled due to
climate change factors and rising sea levels. Bannister’s (1988) study observed the 350
micro-earthquakes from converging and faulting tectonic plates, but there is no
management practice for Mother Nature and the possibility of global climate change
without adequate policies and legislation.
References


<http://www.tourism.net.nz/region/hawkes-bay/>


<http://www.waitangitribunal.govt.nz/resources/researchreports/rangahaua_whanui_reports/district_reports/whanui_district7.asp>