

Sustainable Tourism Adviser in (North Canterbury) Regions 2009 BackTrax Quad Bike High Country Tours, May 2010



i. Business Vision

For us, sustainable tourism is the ability to work forward into the future in a way that provides our customers with the best possible experience of enjoying all of our natural wonders, and protects and enhances that natural environment and community for our combined futures. BackTrax would like to be leaders in environmental sustainability to show that quad biking can achieve business results with environmental integrity – therefore any industry can!

ii. Business Background

Riders are guided through exciting river crossings to stand at the bottom of a spectacular volcanic and sandstone cliff; working their way up the magnificent scree to a primal world, then on to enjoy a hot drink while taking in the stunning views from the glacial moraine. It is that combination of high country landscape and Hanmer river crossings, with small groups and professional guides which allows freedom and fun for all abilities. With access to over 30 kilometres of track, we're proud to convert the most nervous riders and thrill the most capable.

BackTrax is a limited liability company that has been operating in the Hanmer Springs basin North Canterbury for over ten years, providing scenic Quad Bike tours for small groups of 1-8 riders. Each year we meet between 2000 & 4000 riders. Off season we employ 2 full time and 2 part time staff, on season up to 4 full time and 4 part time staff.

iii. Sustainable Business Practice

Initially, one staff member was set the task of evaluating, monitoring, and reporting back on resource use and potential initiatives that could decrease our impact on the environment. This led to a review and development of a Sustainability Policy as an internal beacon and a public commitment, with a focus on 'reduce and reuse'.

Some examples of initiatives subsequently put in place.

- Staff training sessions with regards to best way to drive vehicles when towing; how to drive efficiently, and one on one buddy training)
- Completed at own cost, a spray-use certification so can undertake pest control on DoC land
- Do all track maintenance regularly and manually (shovel and pick), with a policy of keeping track edges quite 'organic', not removing any trees and working around natural obstacles
- Reuse plastic bags as waterproof gumboot liners
- Recognise marketing leverage available from being champions of sustainable business practice
- Has business-to-business packages and partnerships in place with local businesses
- Target of being a Qualmark recognised Responsible Tourism provider

iv. Analysis of Sustainable Business Practices

The main benefit we have found from having introduced sustainable tourism practices to our business, is being then forced to really look at all the components that make up our operation - financial, environmental and social.

With the changing needs of tourism, and increasing demands placed on small communities, (not to mention the world financial crisis), this has allowed us to better monitor and meet these changing demands.

Having quantified the resources we used, measured our demands and use and set up monitoring programs, it was surprising how much the usage of consumables like electricity, fuel, etc was reduced – and just through accurately measuring use, and having someone responsible for monitoring and guiding use.

v. Assessment of the STAR programme

We have found that, after the initial assessment, reporting and action planning (two of the owners oversaw over c.80 hours really reviewing and working with our STAR adviser), we now allow about 8-10 hours a week to coordinate, analyse, report and review against our sustainability initiatives.

The STAR programme ticks all the boxes, providing support, ideas and resources when needed. With commitment and resourcing from the business, this programme provides businesses with a solid pathway to the future we all require.

vi. Future plans and outlook

Our business model is now looking to the future to better utilise our time and commodity use.

- Our introduction of bio fuels is still a work in progress. An initial investment, the equivalent of about 20% current costs will be mitigated with future savings through reduced fuel use
- Future challenges will include the recycling of used motorbike parts
- Our local environment is in a state of constant change, including a national cycle way finishing at St James station that will bring more visitors into Hanmer Springs, so we need to be responsive to changing markets.

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