

Sustainable Tourism Adviser in (North Canterbury) Region Programme 2009



Oxford Shuttle & Tours Case Study, March 2010

i. Business Vision

Oxford Shuttle and Tours started by my husband Ray and myself, was initially an add-on to our then B&B business. Within the B&B we had incorporated sustainability, driven from our own beliefs and reflecting what we were doing within our own home. When Oxford Shuttle & Tours became firmly established in the Oxford area as a stand alone business, we looked at ways in which we could incorporate 'sustainability' as a point of difference to the new transport business.

To make a start, we looked into buying more economical vehicles. This was one of the reasons we subsequently sold the B&B to concentrate purely on the shuttle business. There was an obvious niche market in Oxford, no-one else was providing a shuttle service and so it made sense to pursue the venture.

ii. Business Background

Oxford Shuttle and Tours are a passenger transport service specialising in airport transfers, and offering tours. Our target market is the people of Oxford township and the surrounding rural areas. To meet the needs of the local community (airport transfers is where there was an obvious need), we are available 24/7. The business is operated almost entirely by ourselves and only occasionally we have to employ a relief driver.

Airport Transfers: We cater for individuals, corporate or small groups and specialise in transfers to Christchurch airport from Oxford and the surrounding area, and are available to meet all international and domestic flights at Christchurch Airport.

Tours and sightseeing: The business offers a chauffeur driven service for weddings and special occasions. The shuttle can be booked for small groups or corporate functions. Full and half day tours can be individually tailored, with exclusive luxury tours for up to four people also available.

In addition, Oxford Shuttle and Tours is a preferred provider for ACC, transporting clients for hospital or physiotherapy appointments. We operate a Shoppers Special to the City on the first Wednesday of each month (4 hours shopping at a different Mall each month around school hours) and have a popular monthly movie trip.

iii. Sustainable Business Practice

- We advocate the "Go Local" mantra at all times. All maintenance/ servicing is done within the district and we use local businesses as much as possible for all supplies, including most of our food purchasing from our local Farmers Market (buying spray free/ organic, with minimal travel miles, direct from the grower)
- In July 2008, we bought two brand new CRDi powered vehicles. The vehicles comply with government greenhouse gas emissions and so help to reduce the carbon footprint of the passenger transport industry. We chose these because they both have the new European type Common Rail Turbo Diesel (CRDi) Engines, which have been recognised by the world standard regulations for CO2 emissions, and both vehicles operate well within the guidelines.
- The environment in which 85% of business is conducted is the Christchurch International Airport (CIAL). CIAL has recently been awarded carboNZero certification and we're pleased that our choice of vehicles is helping to assist CIAL with the effort.
- We purchase fuel on Fuel Card so can track our fuel economy monthly
- Both of us as owner/operators/ drivers are aware of the fuel efficiency saved in driving performances. We drive within the restrictions, drive to weather conditions and have passenger safety as our top priority
- Both vehicles have been lacquered to minimise water use when washing

iv. Analysis of Sustainable Business Practices

When we set up, we focused on finding the most efficient and economical vehicles on the market (at the time) to enable us to take groups of up to 10 persons, cater for the smaller groups and corporates that use our services. We chose the Hyundai Grandeur (as a Limousine/car) and which was No1 on the market at the time and also a Toyota Hiace van. Both vehicles had the new CRDi engines – the best for fuel efficiency and carbon emissions (Hyundai runs at 7.7 litres per 100kms and Toyota runs at 8.5 per 100kms).

We made the vehicles even more efficient by utilising them to “work the rank” at the airport. By doing this, we charged the locals only for one way thus keeping our cost to them affordable but also allowing us to make use of the trip to the city. There were costs involved, but the car now runs under the umbrella of Mainland Taxis and the shuttle is under the umbrella of Elite Shuttle when working at the airport. This enables us to be more versatile and efficient with time and charges.

We have now introduced Bio-diesel. I monitored the effects (we add 2 litres per every 60litres of ordinary diesel). Pricewise there was very little difference - we are saving about .5% in dollars. However, using 5% bio diesel means 50% less emissions. Also, the introduction of bio-diesel means that engine maintenance is greatly improved. Lower sulphur diesel now introduced to NZ, does not breakdown the same and, in the long term, is not good for our engine maintenance. Adding bio-diesel helps this breaking-down process - far better for the engines. In fact with the Hyundai, we’ve shown that with ordinary diesel we run at 7.7litres per 100kms and by adding bio diesel we run at 7.2litres per 100kms. The filters are kept much cleaner in the vehicles through using bio diesel and this also lessens our maintenance costs.

Overall, we’re more sustainable due to the cost of maintenance being lowered due to the implementation of bio-fuel, we generate less pollutant, and the bio-fuel (Kiwi Fuel) we use is manufactured in Rangiora (local!) from canola and at a cost of \$1.20 per litre.

iii. Assessment of the STAR programme

We have always advertised on our van and on our website that we are an eco-efficient, with eco-efficient vehicles. Being a member of the STAR programme has made me even more aware of the full range of issues and ways in which we can make our business more sustainable.

In the tourism industry it is important to have a ‘point of difference’ with other competitors, and in this way we can be one step ahead. People do look at these factors when making bookings.

The STAR programme has been very effective for us in our business by providing a structure that ensured we implemented our philosophy with actual initiatives early on in our establishment.

iv. Future plans and outlook

The future is looking good for Oxford Shuttles. Over the winter we will pursue the next opportunity and come up with our next strategy that continues to develop Oxford Shuttles to further successes.

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