

# Kia ora: Marlborough voted sixth Most Welcoming Region on Earth

Andy Brew · 13:28, Feb 09 2023



BROOK SABIN

The Marlborough Sounds is home to stunning cliffside drives, remote glamping spots and even an underwater observatory.

A friendly, informative cab driver and a warm, welcoming place to rest can make all the difference to a weary traveller after a day spent navigating delayed flights and cancelled ferries.

And that certainly seems to be the case here in Marlborough after the region was ranked sixth in the list for the Most Welcoming Place on Earth 2023.

It was also the only place in the Southern Hemisphere to make the Top 10 list in a poll carried out by global travel industry giants Booking.com.

Marlburians' generous hospitality has evidently left a lasting impression on many of the thousands of tourists who have spent time exploring the region since the borders reopened in July 2022.

Blenheim's 14th Lane Urban Hotel certainly falls into that category with it boasting on overall rating of 9.7 out of 10, and staff friendliness scoring an almost perfect 9.9.

Reacting to the news of the world ranking, one of the hotel's owner operators Vicki Young said it was a great accolade for the region and local tourism industry as it worked to rebuild itself post-Covid.

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"It's very cool for our region because I know Destination Marlborough has worked very hard to try and lift Marlborough's profile, and they're doing some incredible stuff to draw people into the region, so it's good to know the operators here are backing them up and making people feel welcome," she said.



ANTHONY PHELPS/STUFF

14th Lane Urban Hotel's owner operators Vicki Young, Craig Young and Janet Enright all agree that a warm welcome can make the world of difference to a weary traveller after a torrid day's travels.

Young, who runs the Five-Star boutique hotel with her husband Craig and friend Janet Enright, said they had been in the industry for "most of our lives" and said making people feel welcome came easily.

"Hospitality comes naturally to those who enjoy doing it.

"You want to make sure people have a good time when they get here, you want to greet them with a smile and not a grumpy 'who

are you, what do you want?'.“

Young’s husband Craig said they often had guests arrive after a stressful day’s travel, and it was their job to help them unwind, relax and settle in.



SUPPLIED

Waikawa North West marina in Marlborough attracts boaties from all over the world for safe harbour.

“What you find is that if a customer comes through that door grumpy, it’s usually because of the things that’ve [sic] happened to them during the day, but it’s how you handle that situation.

“If you get someone and their ferry’s been delayed or their flight’s been delayed, and they get here, and their baggage has been left in Wellington, they’re not quite sure what’s going on.

“Those people have already got enough stress factors in their life, so if you read that person and say ‘I tell you what, let’s get you to your room, get you settled, would you like a coffee? It’s getting late if you want to eat,’” he said.

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His wife Vicki agreed.



CHRISTEL YARDLEY

Craig Young says good hospitality encourages people to return again and again and is great for the local economy.

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“It’s anticipating what you think they might be needing when they get here,” she said.

“At the moment it’s incredibly stressful to travel. If you had any idea of how many flights and ferries are delayed or cancel at the last minute, we deal with it every day.”

The Youngs said many of Marlborough’s tourism-related businesses worked closely with each other and shared the same beliefs and values when it came to looking after visitors.

“And the people we connect with directly, we make sure they have the same ethos as we do.



CHRISTEL YARDLEY/STUFF

Visitors come for the Queen Charlotte Track, with epic views of the Marlborough Sounds.

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“So, if it’s the shuttle driver or tour group we make sure we’re not putting them into someone else’s hands that we’ve recommended that we don’t trust.

“We do all work together and have the same ethos and everybody’s wanting to do good and wanting to do the best for their clients, and you can sense that.”

One local business the hotel worked closely with was Marlborough Shuttles, whose owner operator Keelan Pickering said he had been driving visitors around the region for almost a decade.

Pickering too said he was proud of the region and good hospitality came naturally if you had a love for what you were doing.

“It’s the can-do attitude we have and we’re always here to help, it’s a ‘see a need fill a need’ kind of thing.

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DANIEL HUTCHINSON

Marlborough has been voted 2023's sixth Most Welcoming Region on Earth in a Booking.com poll.

"We take a lot of hikers up into the bush to do the Te Araroa trail, and quite a few people come through for the Queen Charlotte Track.

"We tend to get to know our clients on more than just a customer level.

"We're with them for quite a while in the vehicle so we get some pretty good stories, it's part of the job I love."

Pickering reiterated that it was like-minded businesses, with the same ethos around Marlborough working in conjunction with each other, that created a memorable stay in the region for visitors.

"There are quite a few companies and people in town that are just a real pleasure to work with.

"It's really good too when you're working with particular groups, you just build those relationships and the good experiences seem to flow right through from the moment people get here until the moment they leave."



MARLBOROUGHNZ

Group dining at wineries in Marlborough.

Marlborough mayor Nadine Taylor said the ranking was wonderful news for the region, and she hoped the new status would encourage more visitors, particularly Kiwis, to visit the province.

"To make the Top 10 in anything positive is good, but to make the Top 10 of most welcoming places in the world is just wonderful and is something we should be really proud of.

"I hope the message gets out to all the Kiwis who haven't visited Marlborough yet to come and visit and experience a Marlborough welcome for themselves because people from around the world think it's very special."

Picton also featured in the Traveller Review Awards in the Top 10 Most Welcoming Towns in New Zealand.



SUPPLIED

Kayaking the Pelorus River is a must-do experience in Marlborough.