Tourists and the Weather

In the summer season of 2009/10, 436 international visitors were surveyed to gain a better understanding of how they currently use climate and weather information and what could be done to enhance their experience by providing different information.

Some key results

- 94% of tourists got some information on NZ’s climate or weather before their trip, mostly from the Internet and guidebooks;
- The majority of tourists (59%) reported that the weather was different to what they expected (more thought it was worse than better);
- Most collected information on temperature, rainfall and sunshine hours; and this had an influence on trip timing for 68% of tourists;
- Within New Zealand, only a quarter did not collect any up-to-date weather information; the main sources were the Internet, newspapers, TV, i-sites and tourist accommodation;
- Only 6.2% reported that weather influenced their satisfaction negatively, but most tourists had to actively change (time spent in places, route and activities) their plans to accommodate the weather;
- Tourists would have liked more information about the weather, for example in relation to its changeability, the need for clothing, cold nights, and wind;
- The vast majority of tourists will talk about the New Zealand weather to their friends at home;
- Advice given to friends would relate to specific activities, equipment, the need to keep flexibility, and timing.

Implications

While tourists do not travel to New Zealand for the weather, it still plays an important role in their holiday and has some influence on satisfaction and word-of-mouth recommendations. Tourists are already keen users of climate and weather information. However, given the large proportion of visitors who were ‘surprised’ by the weather, and also the range of advice they would give to friends at home, it appears that information for tourists could be improved. This might entail tailoring data outputs to tourism end uses, or simply ensuring better access to existing data. Increasing our understanding of communication between providers of weather and climate information, intermediaries (e.g. Regional Tourism Organisations and businesses) tourists will be a next step in this research.