



MEDIA RELEASE
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RAKIURA MAORI LANDS TRUST & REAL JOURNEYS TO RUN WILD KIWI ENCOUNTER ON RAKIURA/STEWART ISLAND

Rakiura Maori Lands Trust (RMLT) and Real Journeys announced today that their first joint tourism venture will be kiwi spotting on Stewart Island called "Wild Kiwi Encounter". The trips will be operated by the Real Journeys Stewart Island Experience team.

Bravo Adventures founder Phillip Smith has been operating Stewart Island's original nocturnal kiwi spotting trip for over 25 years. The business will transition to the new operator for the commencement of the coming season. Bravo Adventures' Phillip Smith says he is delighted that he has been able to find a company with a solid conservation ethos to operate his Department of Conservation concession.

"I've been running kiwi spotting trips for over a quarter of century now. I still love seeing the look on people's faces when they see a kiwi in the wild for the first time, but was ready to put my feet up and let someone else head out into the night!"

Real Journeys Chief Executive Richard Lauders says kiwi spotting is exactly the type of experience Real Journeys and its Rakiura Maori Lands Trust partners have been looking for because it is so unique to Stewart Island.

"I've done the trip– you can't get much more authentic than this as an experience, and to have such a high chance of seeing a kiwi in the wild is an opportunity that visitors will cherish. This is largely thanks to the work Phillip has done keeping on top of the feral cats, possums and rats. Real Journeys will continue the pest eradication work required to look after this important kiwi habitat."

Once the Department of Conservation concession transfer is complete, Real Journeys expects to start running the tour from the 1st November, 2016 at its current price. Phillip Smith will continue to be involved in an advisory role and his three staff will be offered employment in their same roles.

The RMLT and Real Journeys formed a partnership a year ago to help grow world class visitor experiences on Rakiura/Stewart Island by developing joint commercial tourism opportunities on a profit sharing basis.

Simon Gomez, RMLT Chair says the partnership is off to a great start. "We can see so much potential and opportunity for the island through our partnership. I know Real Journeys will not only help bring more visitors to the island to see these special birds but we're satisfied they will play an active role in protecting them."

The Rakiura Maori Lands Trust and its beneficiaries have a long history in the area and is the largest private landowner on New Zealand's third largest island. Real Journeys has over 60 years' tourism marketing experience, and operates the ferries to the island, Stewart Island Lodge and various tours.

About Rakiura Maori Lands Trust www.rmlt.co.nz

Rakiura Maori Lands Trust represents beneficiaries' interests for the majority of privately owned Maori freehold lands registered with the Maori Land Court on Stewart Island. These interests stem from the sale and purchase of Rakiura to the Crown in 1865.

About Real Journeys www.realjourneys.co.nz

Real Journeys is a privately owned tourism business that was founded in 1954 by tourism and conservation pioneers Les and Olive Hutchins. Today the company remains true to its founders and their guiding principles of conservation and hospitality.

Based in some of the most untouched areas of New Zealand, Real Journeys has operations from Stewart Island to Queenstown – including the Te Anau Glowworm Caves, world renowned cruises through Milford and Doubtful Sounds and the heritage steamship TSS Earnslaw.

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