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SkylineViews³⁰

Newsletter of the Skyline Group of Companies



Top of the world... bottom of the Earth!

Skyline Queenstown is the best restaurant in the world with a view, and that is absolutely official!

You don't need to take our word for it, one of the world's highest-rated TV news channels made the proclamation with the release of ABC News' Top 10 Restaurants in the World with a View list.

It may be possibly the most convoluted title in the world but there's nothing long-winded about the result, Skyline Gondola Restaurant and Luge is number one. The best on the planet!

"It's a huge recognition when you stop to think about the superb restaurants we've been rated above," says delighted manager Blair Deasy.

"That includes some of the world's best known landmarks in some incredibly famous locations, and Queenstown tops the lot. Obviously we've always known how great it is up here but to hear it from such a discerning and august source as ABC, it's just superb!"

ABC's reporters cover the globe in their search for stories so their team is well

and truly versed in searching out the truth wherever they go, which makes the result extra special.

"They noted our restaurant's tiered seating and excellent design as the key features which make Skyline unique, and the fact we were named number one by a team renowned for reliability gives the recognition real credibility," says Blair.

Marathon man Jeff in for the long haul



New CEO Jeff Staniland has big plans for Skyline's property empire, its intellectual property empire that is.

With a long background in international banking and corporate finance Jeff (above) is well versed in the value of innovation and sees the luge as one of the company's exciting divisions for the future.

"It would be logical to expand further into new markets. It's a lengthy process to establish the business in a new country but we are considering several options," he says.

It's hardly surprising Jeff's career should put him in Queenstown as his hobbies and interests make him an ideal resident.

He's got three Coast to Coasts under his belt along with numerous marathons and cycling races, but so far he's been busier getting his feet under the table than pounding the tracks.

"I'm looking forward to settling in properly. I've brought my kayak and bike with me but I've hardly had time to use them yet," he says.

And it's no wonder. Jeff's already travelled the country meeting staff at Skyline properties and familiarising himself with the product.

"I'm very fortunate to be joining a truly iconic company that ticks all the boxes. Skyline has a good business model, interesting size, solid finances, excellent people and a wonderful location," he says.

And that's one thing that's going to get a lot of Jeff's attention.

"I might not get enough time to train for something major like the Coast to Coast competitions but work-life balance is important to me and it would be a shame not to use the opportunity for outdoor activities here in Queenstown," he says.

So it's nice to know that when the boss says 'on yer bike' it's more likely to be an invitation to a workout than getting your marching orders then!

Onwards and upwards

Business as usual at Blue Peaks means continually improving, learning and adding comfort and value to the Queenstown experience.

Managers Anne and Michael McMillan have spent the winter and spring ensuring the property stays at the forefront of the resort's accommodation offerings while welcoming guests from all over New Zealand and around the world, not to mention fitting in the odd educational trip along the way.

A number of rooms are being refitted as part of the ongoing Blue Peaks modernisation project being carried out, with guest inconvenience reduced to an absolute minimum.

"That's a very important factor for our guests of course, and for us too, not least because we're lucky to count a number of Skyline shareholders among our regular visitors!" says Anne.

Winter's first visitors included an increased number of Australian holidaymakers in line with press observations of a 16 per cent jump in Trans-Tasman trips compared to 2008.

Village people come to stay

International contacts were forged at Blue Peaks when Alison and Ian Metcalfe, principals of Great Village Holidays signed the visitors' book.

Their Christchurch-based company takes its guests to locations selected for their ambience and beauty.

"It's an important part of their company ethos that accommodation in their 'Great Villages of the World' experience matches up to the destinations themselves," explains Michael.

The Metcalfes' clients enjoy a huge range of activities including cooking lessons and participation, specialist foods, specialist meals specific to the region, as well as touring opportunities.

"We were delighted they spent time with us revisiting the opportunities Queenstown can offer as well, he adds.

IT'S A MANZ WORLD AT BLUE PEAKS



Meeting a MANZ man – Anne and Michael help new MANZ president, Queenstowner and former Skyliner Peter Smith, to celebrate his appointment.

July's Motel Association of New Zealand conference in Blenheim was a great opportunity for Anne and Michael to hone their skills.

"This was a chance to hear about changes in the industry, the direction of tourism and to attend workshops and discussion groups working through systems and practices that will enhance the functioning of Blue Peaks," says Michael.

The conference's main emphasis on sustainability suggested every task in the day-to-day running of a busy accommodation property, from room cleaning to highly organised marketing, can enhance effective, profitable continuation of the business.

"The message was 'review, train and improve' on what is currently taking place, says Anne, who believes the opportunity to rub shoulders with fellow managers from around the country was equally enlightening.

"Overall it was a quite thought-provoking time and it was good to meet with many successful moteliers whose work is continually proving the sustainability ethic," she adds.

No blues for French leave at Leisure Lodge

Despite making a famous victory of their All Blacks fixture in Carisbrook, the French rugby team left a great impression in Dunedin.

Gallic charm and European manners won the day back at Mercure Leisure Lodge, HQ for Les Bleus during the run-up to the victory, their first, and now only ever Carisbrook match against New Zealand.

But the history wasn't wasted on hotel staff, delighted to play their part in a never-to-be repeated occasion.

Though Leisure Lodge is known as a place where staff go the extra mile to make their guests feel at home, rumours of waiters wearing berets and an impromptu can-can performance from housekeeping have been dismissed as untrue, but the team certainly left with smiles on their faces.

Must have been something to do with the game.

Reception staff do the scrubbing up

Navy pinstripes and lilac is the soothing combination awaiting Leisure Lodge guests since the arrival of the new Mercure corporate livery over winter.

Front office staff are the first to receive guests and they've been fitted out first with the tailored suits, shirts and blouses that make up a look discerning travellers recognise at a glance around the world.

Next on the menu is the restaurant team who'll no doubt be posing for the Skyline Views camera in time for our next edition.



All dressed up – front office staff Rickie Kewene, Emma Hamilton and Katie Osbourne model their new uniforms in some style

However the biggest rugby event for some time is looming large on the horizon when The Brook's final fanfare features one of the world's greatest ever oval-ball nations turning up in force to face the All Blacks.

As any rugby fan knows, the Welsh never travel without enough support personnel to make a 10,000-strong choir, and even though the stadium's had its day as a premier venue, sources have revealed teams of workmen have been drafted in secretly by night to strengthen the roof of the stand as the Celtic fans will be doing their very best to raise it with their choral efforts.

With any luck the post-match sing-off will end up back at Leisure Lodge after a day when the result will be less important than the occasion – as the Welsh supporters may well be saying...

Whatever happens on the field, this one will be a tear-jerker of mammoth proportions, book your room now if you want any chance at all to share in a real piece of history.

A rose by any other name? Yup, it's Lynne!



Gardener Lynne Coombs doesn't let the grass grow under her feet when it comes to keeping Leisure Lodge's trademark grounds in tip-top order, but flowers, now that's a different matter altogether.

While the rest of us have been trying to keep warm indoors throughout the winter, Lynne's been out among the roses, ensuring they're all spick and span for their spring show.

No guest remains unmoved by the sight of the lush blooms in the hotel's centrepiece and it's very rare to see Lynne taking a break, so we buttonholed her for a shot to take a bow. Cheers Lynne!

Meet the new Lodgers



People make the difference in any hotel and Leisure Lodge is no exception as staff arrive to further their ambitions in the hospitality industry.

The latest additions to the hotel's team are Jessica Sinclair (above), who joins Leisure Lodge as restaurant and bar manager; in the kitchen, Georgina Scrivener is the new Modern Apprentice, while Kent Hitchens takes over as chef de partie.

Meanwhile, moving on to the next step in their careers are Darryl Condon from the kitchen, trainee manager Carmel Lawn and assistant manager Dean Nicol. Manager Jan and the team wish them all the best for their future.

Flying colours

Mercure Leisure Lodge completed its Workplace Safety Management Practise Programme Audit, an ACC accident prevention programme, at the end of April, and again retained the highest level of compliance – with a Tertiary rating.

And the winter months provided the ideal time to put the staff through their first aid paces, with everybody getting plastered and resuscitated in fine form.

"Rest assured you're in really good hands at our hotel, whatever happens!" says manager Jan McDougall.

SKYRIDES IS HERE TO STAY, FOREVER!

It looks like Skyline Skyrides is going to be a part of the country's tourism fabric for generations to come if the attraction's latest achievement is anything to go by.

Skyrides is now the proud holder of a Qualmark Enviro award, with a prestigious bronze status recognition.

As one of the country's long-established visitor icons the award acknowledges Skyrides has not only a profitable future but also an environmentally responsible place

in New Zealand's world-leading sustainable tourism culture.

"Skyline Skyrides Rotorua is proud to be a part of New Zealand tourism's commitment to looking after the country for future generations to continue to enjoy," says general manager Neville Nicholson.

"The Enviro Award offers us the opportunity to promote ourselves as a responsible tourism business working towards more sustainable practices, as well as to support New Zealand's 100 per cent Pure positioning," he adds.

The Qualmark Enviro Award recognises businesses for initiatives in energy,

waste, water, conservation and community involvement.

"We are proud to be starting on the road of environmental responsibility, and aim to improve on our Enviro rating through the re-establishment of our sustainable committee. Our ultimate aim will be to achieve the Enviro Gold status!" says Neville.



ROTORUA ALL WRAPPED UP



Forget picking and choosing in Rotorua from now on, Skyrides has everything you need in a neat, package of adventure, relaxation, scenery and dining.

Rotorua's Ultimate Ride is the deal to look out for in the geyser capital of New Zealand, combining the thrilling gondola ride, Skyswing, unlimited luge races and a helicopter trip all together, there's even a buffet lunch in the ticket to keep you going through the day.

"Visitors are often on a tight time budget so we reckon the easiest way to give them the best possible service is to combine the products at an attractive price," says Neville Nicholson.

The package lasts for a whole day so visitors can enjoy everything Skyrides has to offer at their leisure.

"This takes the guesswork out of visiting Rotorua. All you need to do is set a day aside during your stay in the town and the itinerary is all set out for you. It makes perfect sense and people are really beginning to embrace it," adds Neville.

Forest functions perfectly



With the festive season on its way and its accompanying hot summer nights Skyrides' unique Forest Function venue looks set to be as busy as ever.

Set among the trademark towering redwoods beneath the main Skyrides complex, the magical hillside setting is the only venue in the world where guests have the choice of arriving on foot, in a vehicle or riding a luge!

The Rotorua evenings are reliably warm and welcoming but in case the odd bout of inclement weather pokes its nose in there's a fully enclosed marquee to keep everybody's enjoyment unspoiled.

Skyrides chefs have designed special menus to fit the occasion including delicious canapés, hugely popular gourmet barbecues and a variety of set menus for any time and any function.

The recently renovated bar and facilities have led to some legendary nights in the forest for up to 300 people.

The venue is known for its relaxing ambience that encourages guests to mingle and unwind.

It's a smash hit for weddings and Christmas corporate nights, while the 2009 diary is filling quickly for the renowned Christmas Day events. Whatever the occasion, imagination is the only limit, and that hasn't beaten the team yet!

Blinking marvellous!

North Sky Luge manager Danny Luke reckons the 2009 Canadian luge season has gone by “in the blink of an eye”, but there’s no doubt he and the team had their peepers wide open for another record-breaking summer.

“The 117 days of operation doesn’t give the staff a lot of time to relax and take in the beautiful surroundings of the Tremblant area as it’s heads down and bums up as soon as the season kicks off in mid May,” explains straight-taking Danny.

This season, Team Tremblant pulled off 231,919 rides, the third time in the company’s seven-year history the 230,000 ride count was broken.

The figure also spawned a small army of new luge fans with a massive 9,000 more rides than last year.

“This was a tremendous effort by the team, considering three days were lost due to a mechanical failure on the lift,” says Danny.

The downtime would have meant another 9,000 on the tally but an undaunted crew got stuck in and achieved what is seen as a great benchmark for future seasons.

“On the day after the closure we were able to do 5,380 rides, the first time 5,000 was achieved in a single day.

“The staff took extreme pride in their efforts as this was a huge number to reach,” says Danny.

He has a simple mantra for helping luge staff keep smashing these records, ‘a happy team is a successful team’.

“The key to reaching these milestones is keeping the team together and happy. As it’s only a very short season with the majority of the staff being students on summer break who like to enjoy the summer fun in a resort town like

Tremblant rather than work in a more serious location.

“I have placed a lot of emphasis on making sure the team is a group of people who all get along and become a strong-knit team.”

The system clearly works as 18 of the 25 2009 staff had already worked last year, and more than 75 per cent of the team have already committed to the 2010 season.

“This makes life a lot easier not only for myself but for the shift-leaders who manage the day-to-day running of the operation.

The only notable exception is the departure of sales and marketing manager Yanick Desmarais during the year.

A North Sky Luge veteran since day one, Yanick and his family have relocated to Mexico to begin a new chapter of their lives.



Dragon tail to scale up island luge

Sentosa Luge team members must be among the busiest people on Singapore as visitor numbers keep on climbing like the equatorial heat.

July, August and September carried on the June trend with projections for each of the months exceeded.

The results have ensured the luge remains firmly among Singapore’s top attractions and must-do lists for visitors to the island.

And if that wasn’t enough, it looks like things are going to get a whole lot more successful with construction crews hard at work building a track extension.

The Dragon Tail winds down the hill towards the sultry Sentosa shoreline and offers riders an alternative set of curves to conquer.

The start remains the same at the existing site, but soon after the first few

bends there’s the choice of taking off on an extra 400 metres through the leafy Sentosa landscape.

Once that’s been completed lugers join the original track once more for an exciting finish at the base of the Skyride chairlift.

Ride architects had to put more than 75 per cent of the new route above ground level with an engineering solution that’s keeping the builders busy without causing any inconvenience to everyday business.

“With the luge now into its fifth year in Singapore the addition of a new track is a great way for Sentosa Luge to reinvigorate the product in this very competitive Singapore market,” says operations manager James Dudfield.

“With the two tracks giving guests more options on riding the luge it is hoped that multiple ride sales will increase and people will spend more time at the luge,” he adds.

Site capacity already increased earlier in the year with the introduction of the three-cart pick-up system so there’s an air of anticipation among the staff for the coming school and festive holidays, points out James, who’s full of praise for the team.

“A big thanks must go to all the staff at Sentosa Luge. With the last few months being busier than expected they’ve constantly maintained a high level of customer service, not to mention the ideas and feedback they’ve put forward for the new track development.

“The efforts of the staff have also been noticed by Singapore Tourism Board with team member Chen Wei Ting taking home the Customer Service (visitor attraction) award.”

The Boys are Back in Town!

Frank, Deano and Sammy may be long gone but their sound comes back once again at SkyCity Queenstown Casino this December 5 with a fabulous dinner show.



Recreating the heady golden days of the Sands Hotel, Las Vegas, Doug Kamo brings the threesome back to life in a magnificent tribute after a sell-out smash hit last year.

‘The Rat Pack Returns Live’ recreates the pizzazz, the sound and the comedy that Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr became so famous for.

Drawing on the very best of The Rat Pack’s material – director and choreographer Kamo guarantees to deliver a knock-out evening of hits with plenty of cheeky one-liners and audience participation.

Presented in dinner theatre format, you can expect to swing to New York New York, Come Fly With Me, Luck Be your Lady, Mack the Knife, Mr Bojangles, They Can’t take that Away From Me and many, many more of the hits that sparked a whole new generation of big band and jazz fans.

It’s a great excuse to get the glad rags out too with ‘cocktail’ the dress order of the day, and a table of friends would be the perfect accompaniment.

Tickets for the show are on sale now from SkyCity Queenstown Casino and include a three course dinner along with a glass of bubbles.

Casino gets a new birthday suit!



Turning the tables. Christchurch Casino's gaming room after its fabulous 15th birthday makeover

Not many 15-year-olds can claim to have put a New Zealand city well and truly on the international gaming map so when Christchurch Casino clocked up a decade-and-a-half in November there was never going to be any holding back on the celebrations.

The occasion was marked with a commission to update the décor in one of the casino's busiest areas.

Renowned architects Warren and Mahoney were briefed to refresh the gaming floor, increasing the use of space and light and adding a touch of contemporary styling in time for the city's busy spring festival, and the results are outstanding.

Casino CEO Brett Anderson says the new look floor was timely and will complement last year's new restaurant, The Gallery.

"We are really pleased with our aesthetics in The Gallery and the continuation of this theme through the main gaming floor was an obvious choice", he says.

"The mirrors around the top third of the walls increase the feeling of space and add a timeless glamour to the room", he adds.

The four impressive crystal chandeliers have remained, but take on a new lease of life in the design scheme.



Dealing up a New Zealand first

In line with the birthday celebrations, Christchurch Casino now hosts a New Zealand first in the menu of table games – Three Card Poker.

The game is enjoyable and simple to play, which has helped it grow in popularity around the world according to CEO Brett Anderson (left).

"Three Card Poker is among one of the most popular versions of poker internationally. We're excited to offer our customers the opportunity to experience the game right here at the home of New Zealand Poker, and nowhere else in the country.

"It's a fun game that's not only easy to learn, it's also great fun to play. Unlike other versions of poker, you're actually playing against the dealer and you can essentially play two games in one," he says.

Cup runneth over with excitement

The birthday atmosphere carried right on into New Zealand Cup and Show Week with Christchurch Casino as major sponsors of the event.

The famous Christchurch Casino New Zealand Trotting Cup Day was kicked off in real style at the official pre-race festival at the casino.

High fashion, live music, chilled bubbles and canapés were just some of the ingredients of a launch that turned the

verges of Peterborough and Victoria Streets into glamour central.

With the accent on 'party', the casino took it upon itself to educate Cup and Show Week festival goers on the need to have fun responsibly.

In conjunction with Christchurch City Council, the Casino developed a campaign based on the recently launched host responsibility model, PlaySafe DrinkSafe.

The messages are simple and relevant to people attending any

events encouraging forward planning, responsible behaviour and looking after friends and family when both drinking and gambling.

There was no shortage of exposure to these messages with all Christchurch Casino New Zealand Trotting Cup and Christchurch Casino Cup guests over 18 receiving a 'quick tip guide' to hold onto, and a series of pointers broadcast over radio and print in the build up to the week.

Backing helps get Matt upfront

Christchurch Casino Rally Team driver Matt Jansen has taken out the coveted New Zealand Rookie of the Year and Junior Championships.

"To wrap up both championships is fantastic. Our aim from the start of the championship was to clinch both the junior and rookie titles. The team has been focused and committed to achieving this. They have done a fabulous job all year and we're

hugely grateful to Christchurch Casino and all our sponsors," says Matt.

Meanwhile Canterbury Rugby team has had yet another fantastic season with a number of new players being called up to fill the boots of those

who've made their All Blacks debut in great style.

Christchurch Casino has thoroughly enjoyed supporting the team in their 2009 campaign.



GRAVITY WORKS BOTH WAYS!



Just to prove gravity doesn't just bring everything down, Skyline's own captain of the force turned out to help raise a smile for the Cure Kids charity in Queenstown.

Skyline Gondola Restaurant and Luge staff were delighted to host the Ticket to Hope trip where an excited party of children got to hang out with Captain

Gravity and luge to their hearts' content, all in the name of working up an appetite for their Skyline buffet dinner!

The visit has become a regular fixture on the organisation's visit to the resort that sees numerous local businesses doing their bit to offer the kids a holiday to remember.



MANAGING THEIR FUTURES

The world is Carmel Lawn and Dean Johnson's oyster since the pair graduated from their management Trainee programme with Skyline.

CEO Jeff Staniland was on hand at a celebratory dinner at Skyline Queenstown to mark the end of Carmel and Dean's two years of hands-on experience which has seen them at work in numerous company properties.

While studying for level four of their National Certificate in first line management both trainees spent time working in Rotorua and Queenstown, while Carmel also enjoyed a six-month rotation at Mercure Leisure Lodge in Dunedin.

Carmel's just finished her time as restaurant supervisor and duty manager, and the OE she's just begun will give her a well-earned break.

Meanwhile Dean is approaching the end of his first year in his role as activities manager at Skyline Skyrides.

"It's great to see these two young people making such a positive start to their careers in the industry and looking for more experience," says operations manager Maryann Geddes.

"The work they've put in during their two years will stand them in good stead anywhere around the world and whatever they do we're sure they'll take a bit of Skyline with them. We wish them both all the best for the future."



Photo system clicks with visitors

Visitors haven't stopped smiling since Skyline's in-house photographic department swung into action in August.

The system is simple and unobtrusive – visitors board the gondola where a photographer captures the moment they take off on their journey to the complex.

By the time they finish their visit and return to the base building their picture has been transformed into a personalised photo pack complete with two large photos, and four postcards all in a presentation folder.

The wallet opens out to a panoramic image of Queenstown and a concise description of Skyline's history and the area in the picture.

"The new team of photographers and sales staff are doing a fantastic job offering customers that little something extra to take away and remind them of their memories and visit to Skyline," says manager Blair Deasy.



Syncopated Skyline swings

The Caitlin Smith Trio supplied the music, Skyline supplied the food and venue and the ASB Queenstown JazzFest supplied the reason for another hit event in the resort.

The lazy Sunday morning occasion at Skyline has become synonymous with an easy start to the jazz day and there was no shortage of music fans keen to relax in the restaurant. All this while nature supplied the backdrop, now that's cool.



Winner David gets sent away!

Employee of the year David Ervin (above) wins a couple of days off in recognition of his efforts.

That may not sound much until you realise the prize includes return flights to Christchurch for two adults, two nights accommodation, buffet breakfasts, a \$150 dinner voucher and an NZSki day pass.

David's award came for outstanding contribution and consistent high performance in his role on gondola photos and the luge.

The quarterly awards are underway to shortlist for the 09/10 winner and to reward Skyline's best performing superstars throughout the year.



Cooking from the inside out. Chef Ross Woodvine presenting a workshop on Molecular Gastronomy

Skyline first for careers

When a huge party of school-goers head up the gondola you'd think it would be a public holiday, but these youngsters had work on their minds.

Skyline hosted and organised this year's Queenstown Tourism and Hospitality Expo and 90 students from Otago and Southland schools and colleges headed up the Gondola to explore the opportunities the sector has to offer.

Representatives from leading hospitality and adventure tourism companies were involved, as well as Queenstown Resort College, Otago Polytechnic and the Hospitality Standards Institute.

Students were encouraged to participate in activities less often expected on a visit to Skyline, like napkin folding, plate carrying and icing cupcakes, before visiting workshops on mocktails and molecular gastronomy.

"It was an incredibly successful day and hopefully the beginning of many wonderful careers in hospitality!" says manager Blair Deasy.

Veterans recognised

Ross Davidson is such a part of the furniture it's hard to believe there was ever a time when he wasn't there.

But Skyline's chief engineer has been at his post for 20 years and he's been recognised for his long service along with two other dedicated employees.

Keith Syme from the maintenance department has recently reached the 15 years mark and Jim Sheard from cableway has notched up 10 years service with Skyline.

"We would like to say thank you for all their hard work and commitment over the many years working at SGRL and hope there's many more years to come!" says manager Blair Deasy.

Australia on the agenda

If ever there's a good chance to showcase Skyline's most recent refurbishments to the people that really matter, the company annual general meeting must be about the best!

More than 400 Skyline shareholders turned up to enjoy the occasion in September and had the opportunity to share the ambience of the newly appointed Wakatipu Room.

The night was a huge success, largely thanks to the quality of food and service provided by the staff but if there's one thing that made it even better, the 33-6 win over Australia was the perfect end to the night!