



# TE MANAHUNA KI UTA / DESTINATION MACKENZIE

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**SHAPING OUR TOURISM VALUES FOR THE FUTURE**

September 2022



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The Consulting Team



Project Governance Group



Mackenzie Development Group



## Whakataukī

Te Manahuna,  
Ki uta, ki tai

*There is wonder hidden  
In the alpine peaks all the way to lapping ocean tides*

Ko Te Manahuna  
Hē tapu ōna, he whakapapa ōna  
He pīrika takata, he pīrika tipua  
He taoka mō te āpōpō

*Te Manahuna – the Mackenzie District  
It is sacred and has a story  
It is a home for people, a place of wonders  
It is a gift to be treasured for future generations*

Ki te ora ki uta, ka ora ki tai  
Ki te raru ki uta, ka raru rawa ki tai

*If inland thrives, the coastlines thrive  
If there is neglect inland, the coastlines will suffer*



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## FOREWORD

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Te Manahuna/Mackenzie is an incredibly special place. It includes World Heritage Area and offers some of the best stargazing on earth. It's been recognised as an Outstanding Natural Landscape due to its expansive basins with open grassland and valleys created by braided rivers.

For mana whenua, it is a significant cultural landscape, the home to Aoraki, a place where traditional trails meet, activities such as mahika kai have sustained whānau for generations, and tīpuna live and provide an unbreakable connection to the past.

It's not just local people who love living and working here either. This region has a unique and fragile ecosystem that's home to hundreds of species (some being threatened, at-risk or endangered) of endemic animals and plants, a portion of which are not found anywhere else in Aotearoa.

The Mackenzie District Council is the third smallest in the country in terms of ratepayers, yet we punch well above our weight when it comes to our natural landscapes. In order to protect and enhance Te Manahuna, we need a sustainable funding model that will allow the district to continue to provide tourism infrastructure that can service our premium outdoor environment.

We know our rural communities are passionate stewards of their land. We're looking to support them to develop sustainable and innovative farming practices, both improving productivity and enhancing our environment at the same time

We've worked very hard, in partnership with local rūnanga, and with our partner agencies, key stakeholder groups and the wider community, to develop a Destination Management Plan that looks to reframe the visitor economy in our District. We are moving towards a world where Te Manahuna's wonder and treasures are restored, protected, and thriving – to be loved and valued while sustaining us, our visitors, and those who come after us.

Te Manahuna will offer a world-class visitor experience based on our peaceful and tranquil natural environment, outstanding landscape, and guardianship values. Visitors will learn and celebrate the hidden wonder of the place and its people – our whakapapa, shared history, nature, and heritage, ensuring the visitor economy is resilient and can be sustained going forward.

We know that a plan is only as good as the actions it delivers, and we're focussed on getting runs on the board early – making sure that we see real change in our communities. We will continue to be adaptable and flexible as conditions evolve and tourism's future becomes more certain. This is an exciting time for our residents and those who visit here. We look forward to taking you on the journey.

**Graham Smith**  
Mayor of Mackenzie District



# PART 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## 1.1. About Te Manahuna Ki Uta (TMKU)

Te Manahuna Ki Uta (TMKU) sets out an ambitious 100-year project. Tourism has always been a key contributor to Te Manahuna's prosperity and wellbeing. It supports jobs and businesses, provides infrastructure for communities and visitors to enjoy, generates investment and promotes regional growth and wellbeing.

By 2019 tourism growth in the Mackenzie region was stronger than for New Zealand overall, but the benefits were not keeping pace with growing impacts on the environment and communities. Then COVID-19 delivered an unparalleled shock and has had an immense impact on New Zealand's visitor economy because of the closure of international borders and limitations on domestic movements. However, it has provided us with a chance to pause and reimagine our visitor economy and identify strategies that will enable us to shape it into the one we want. TMKU, therefore, looks to the future. It is focused on developing strategies for Te Manahuna to achieve sustainable growth and protect our precious environment while also creating exceptional visitor experiences. We want our community to welcome visitors, but this requires ensuring the community has a say in how they would like to see tourism grow and develop.

TMKU has been borne out of extensive consultation across mana whenua, government, industry, and community. It recognises the need for a far stronger collaborative approach going forward. It is a strategy that brings all stakeholders together to ensure ongoing, sustainable success.

TMKU also provides us with a pathway to adapt to changing consumer and community expectations and build a new tourism future. It presents an opportunity to explore new ideas and markets and enhance our international destination competitiveness. As such, it recognises that we may have multiple domestic and international gateways for the future, with market demand able to enter Te Manahuna through three existing international gateways (Christchurch, Queenstown, Dunedin) and potentially additional ones in the longer term. Geographically, Te Manahuna is strategically very well advantaged.

TMKU sets out a carefully considered and debated vision and set of principles to act as compass bearings for the future. It proposes a range of short, medium, and longer-term projects that are required to support the sector's recovery and to achieve sustainable growth going forward. It also recommends a range of overarching mana whenua, infrastructure and environmental initiatives that are largely longer-term initiatives that address pre-existing challenges, opportunities, structural trends, and community expectations to ensure Te Manahuna's visitor economy rebuilds sustainably to ensure it is competitive, vibrant, resilient, and market driven.



Hooker Valley Track, Trojan Holdings Limited



## 1.2. Strategic Framework

### TE MANAHUNA KI UTA VISION

Te Manahuna's wonder and treasures are restored, protected, and thriving – to be loved and valued while sustaining us, our visitors, and those who come after us.



Principle 1  
Protecting our  
Treasures



Principle 2  
Enduring Partnerships



Principle 3  
Thriving People  
and Places

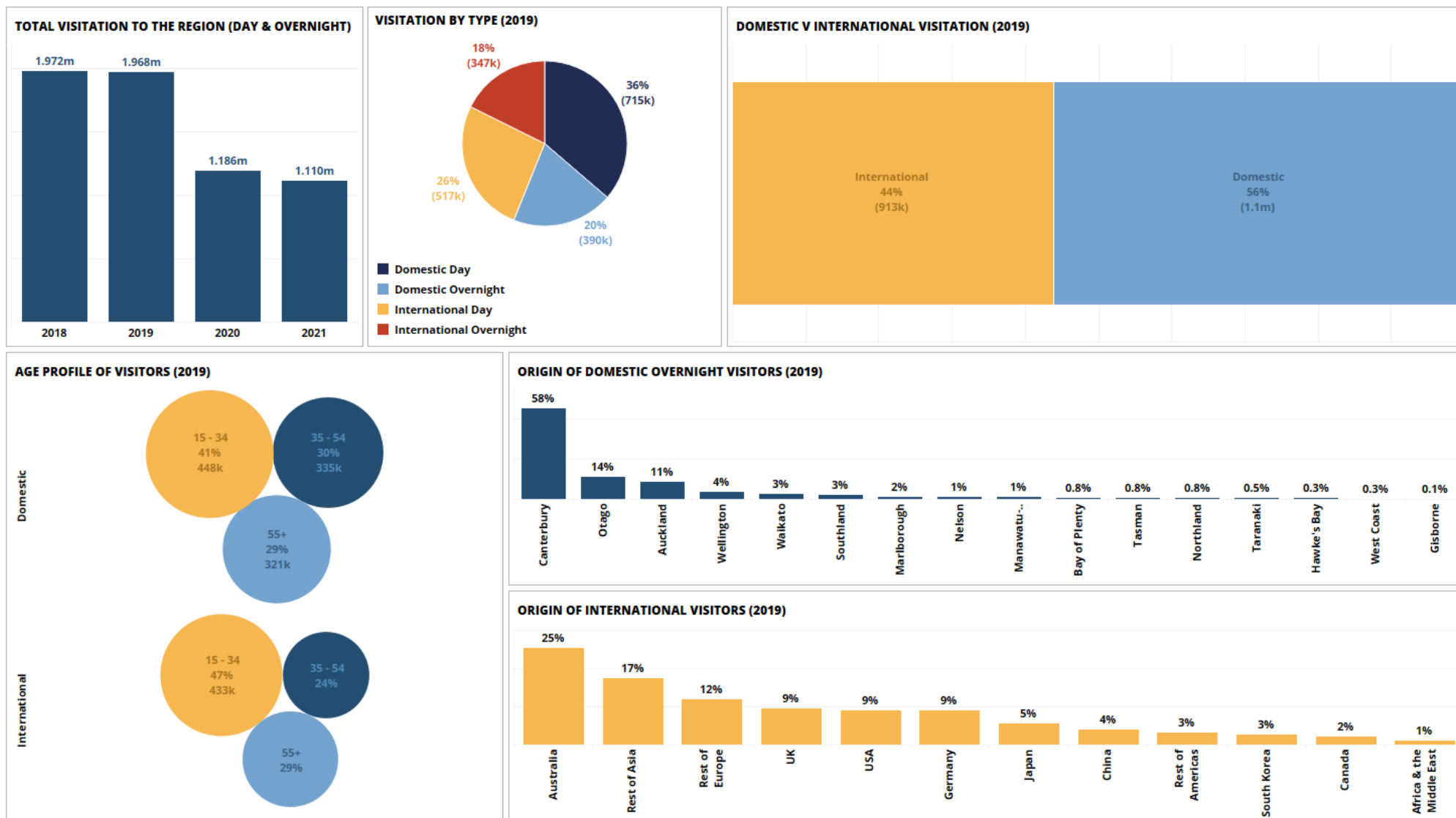


Principle 4  
A Unique  
Experience



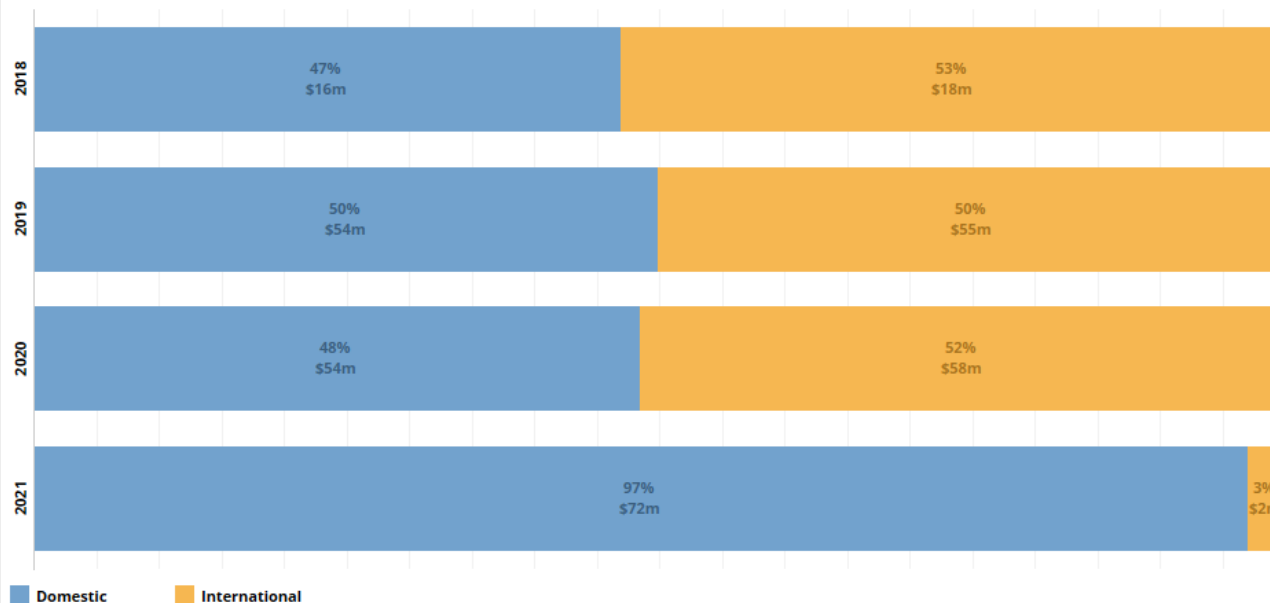
### 1.3. Te Manahuna Today: 2019 Visitation (pre-COVID)

Figure 1: Te Manahuna's visitor profile

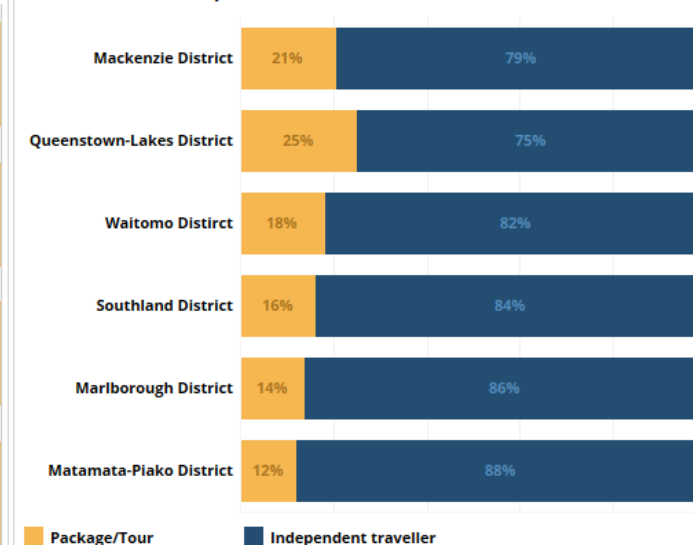




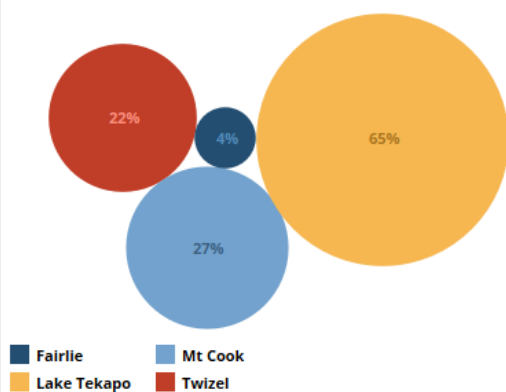
### VISITOR SPEND



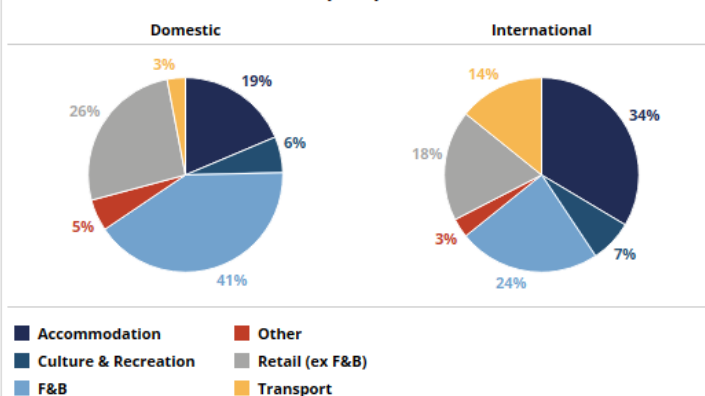
### PACKAGED V NON-PACKAGED TRAVEL WITH COMPARATORS (2019, INTERNATIONAL ONLY)



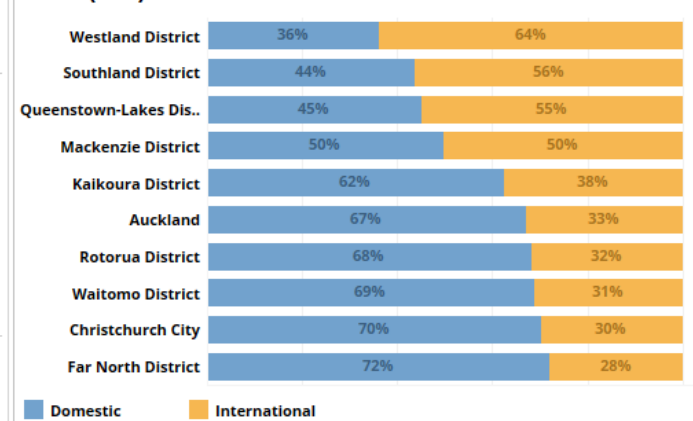
### WHERE INTERNATIONAL OVERNIGHT VISITORS ARE VISITING?



### VISITOR SPEND BY PRODUCT AREA (2019)



### TOP 10 DESTINATIONS WITH LARGEST PROPORTION OF INTERNATIONAL SPEND (2019)

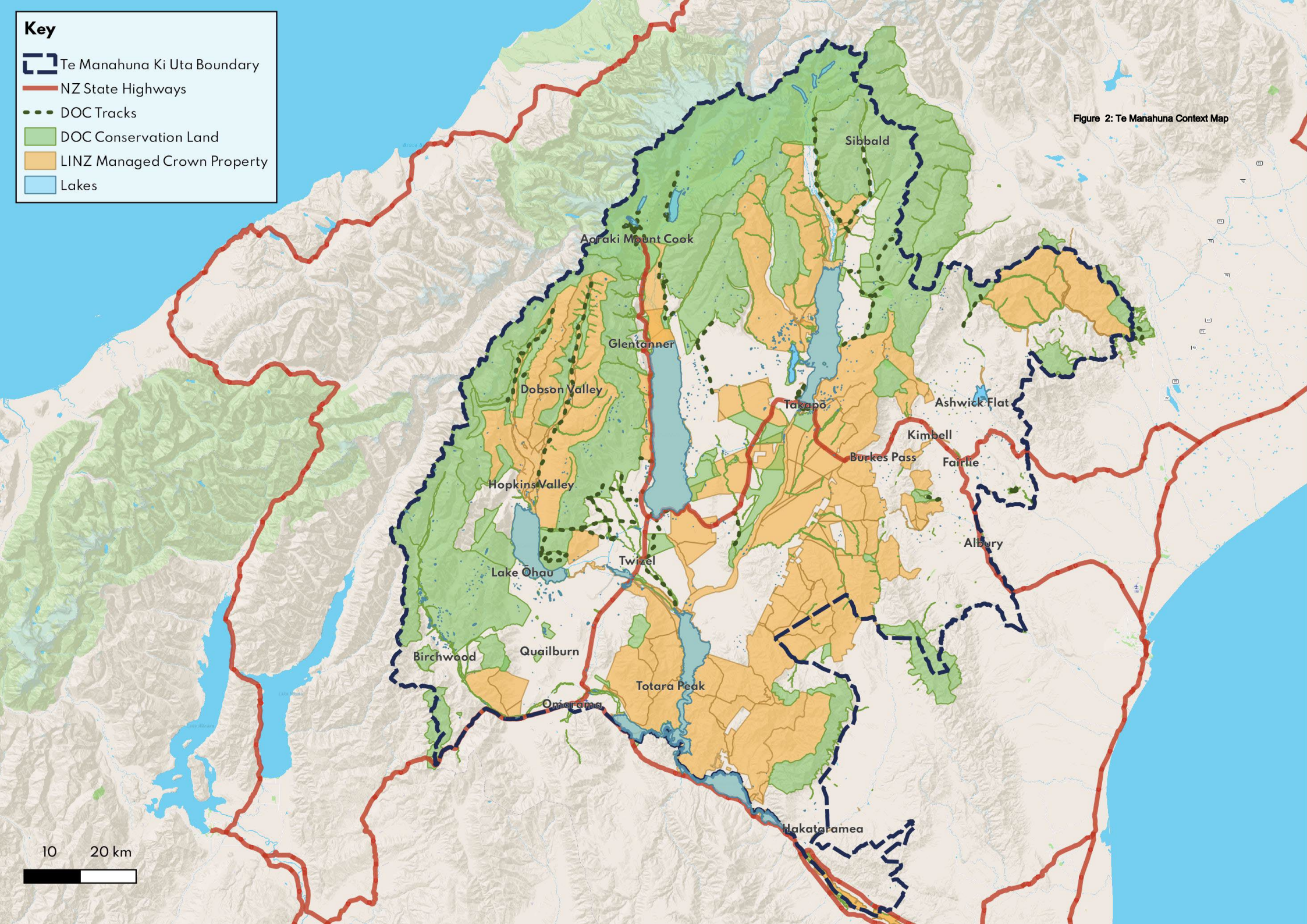




**Key**

-  Te Manahuna Ki Uta Boundary
-  NZ State Highways
-  DOC Tracks
-  DOC Conservation Land
-  LINZ Managed Crown Property
-  Lakes

Figure 2: Te Manahuna Context Map





## 1.4. Te Manahuna Tomorrow - The Tier 1 Projects

### 1. Water visitor experience hub with iconic design

About

**When:** Short Term  
**Type:** Product Development  
**Where:** Twizel  
**Estimated CAPEX:** \$30m  
**Principle alignment:** A Unique Experience

Te Manahuna has a rich and diverse history with water. To tell this story, an immersive visitor experience hub could be developed. This could include Te Manahuna's story of settlement, eels & alpine salmon, hydro, and various lakes and water bodies. Developing this would provide a paid, all-weather, and family-friendly attraction. These forms of indoor attractions are currently lacking in Te Manahuna.

Key Action

Work with the project proponent to assess the merit of developing a water resource experience hub with other components in a truly iconic design.

### 2. Diversified accommodation mix

About

**When:** Short Term  
**Type:** Accommodation Development  
**Where:** Regional  
**Estimated CAPEX:** \$85m

To encourage a broader visitor market to Te Manahuna, there is a need to focus on introducing a wider range of commercial accommodation options. These could include all-weather glamping (or eco-pods), eco chalets, boutique hotels, youth hostels and serviced apartment complexes etc.

Key Action

Undertake a detailed accommodation audit across Te Manahuna looking at the size, range, scale, and quality of accommodation throughout Te Manahuna and identify specific gaps that could be filled via private investment.

### 3. Agri-tourism showcase centre

About

**When:** Medium Term  
**Type:** Product Development  
**Where:** Fairlie  
**Estimated CAPEX:** \$7m

The agricultural sector has historically been the backbone of Te Manahuna's economy, and it is well-known nationwide as an important agricultural region. The opportunity exists to showcase this extensive history through the development of an agri-tourism showcase centre. This could include retail space, a café, a major display of produce via virtual reality area, an area for food markets and events etc.

Key Action

Complete a feasibility study assessing the potential to develop an agri-tourism centre to showcase the best of Te Manahuna's produce and to act as an information hub to encourage visitor dispersal throughout Te Manahuna.

### 4. Agri-tourism & aqua-tourism experiences

About

**When:** Medium Term  
**Type:** Product Development  
**Where:** Regional  
**Estimated CAPEX:** \$5m

Actively support the development of new and enhanced agri-tourism and aqua tourism ventures to help grow Te Manahuna's profile. Such experiences could include farmers' and food markets, destination food events, cooking schools, farm stays, and agri-tours. The region is recognised globally for its top quality merino wool fibre and strong brand recognition.

Key Action

Work with existing and new agri and aqua operators to identify mechanisms to grow the tourism profile of agri and aqua products throughout Te Manahuna.

### 5. Accommodation property (80+ rooms & conferencing)

About

**When:** Medium Term  
**Type:** Accommodation Development  
**Where:** Regional  
**Estimated CAPEX:** \$35m

To support the development of events, there is a need to introduce a new, larger-scale accommodation property (80-120 rooms) that also offers conferencing facilities.

Key Action

Complete an accommodation demand assessment to identify the feasibility of and most suitable location for a new, larger-scale accommodation property to support larger groups as well as a conferencing and functions market.



## 6. Meridian & Genesis sites for hydro-tourism experiences

About

**When:** Medium Term  
**Type:** Product Development  
**Where:** Twizel  
**Estimated CAPEX:** \$1.5m

Investigate the potential to leverage the Meridian and Genesis sites for hydro-tourism experiences. These could include self-drive tours to the various hydro facilities in Te Manahuna, online information along with profiling sites of significance etc.

Key Action

Identify experiences that showcase the importance of the two major hydro generating companies in Te Manahuna and leverage these for unique tourism experiences via journeys to sites of significance to better understand the hydro story.

## 7. Destination branding

About

**When:** Short Term  
**Type:** Marketing, Education & Events  
**Where:** Regional  
**Estimated CAPEX:** \$200k

Te Manahuna has a strong, connected, and productive local creative industry. To showcase the strength, originality, and diversity of the creative industries in Te Manahuna, a “Made in Te Manahuna” brand could be developed. This collective marketing approach could extend to art, craft, fashion, writers, media, culture, and food.

Key Action

Work with a nationally significant brand developer to create a Made in Te Manahuna produce brand that can feature food, produce, condiments, arts, crafts, accommodation, transport etc. It is important this is developed with the tourism sector and creative community’s input to generate buy-in and support.

## 8. Takapō hillside activity precinct

About

**When:** Short Term  
**Type:** Product Development  
**Where:** Takapō  
**Estimated CAPEX:** \$11m

Support the development of the Takapō hillside activity precinct which could include a variety of walking and cycling trails as well as a downhill experience supported by accommodation and a food and beverage offering. This will assist in extending the length of visitor stay in Takapō and the broader Te Manahuna region.

Key Action

Work with the existing landholder to develop the hillside activity precinct at Takapō as a unique sustainable lakeside nature-based experience.

## 9. Unique dark skies experiences

About

**When:** Medium Term  
**Type:** Product Development  
**Where:** Regional  
**Estimated CAPEX:** \$3m

While Te Manahuna has led the way in the development of dark skies tourism experiences, the landscape is becoming increasingly competitive as more destinations seek dark skies certification. There is a need to identify new value-add dark skies product experiences to differentiate Te Manahuna’s dark skies products.

Key Action

Work with existing and new tourism experience operators to identify ways to offer new and exciting dark skies experiences with value-adds that help the region maintain its position as a leader in dark skies experiences.

## 10. Whare Wānaka (Pou) concept & storytelling

About

**When:** Short Term  
**Type:** Sustainability & Regenerative Tourism  
**Where:** Regional  
**Estimated CAPEX:** \$1m

Whare Wānaka is the overarching concept for the promotion of mana whenua voice and presence in Te Manahuna. This offers the opportunity for Pou at entry points into Te Manahuna, designated kai, and other trails as part of storytelling for self-drive and guided tours, and a strong online story presence. These need to be carefully controlled and curated by mana whenua, so IP is respected and protected.

Key Action

Work with mana whenua to identify and develop experiences around mana whenua stories of Te Manahuna in a way that not only attracts visitors but also provides a deeper connection for mana whenua and encourages their participation in the visitor economy.



## 1.5. Where to from here?

TMKU offers a pathway forward for sustainably developing the regional visitor economy, for industry, community, mana whenua and government (at all levels). Stakeholder collaboration and cohesiveness are key to determining the solid building blocks required to address the challenges and start activating the opportunities, identified in this DMP.

A DMP, like any strategy or forward-looking plan, is only as valuable as its ability to show progress – that is, delivering outcomes rather than merely stating its intent to do so. TMKU, therefore, offers recommendations on a way forward, including short-term project activations, along with medium- and longer-term aspirational desires, which are going to take longer to deliver. Based on the research and analysis undertaken for this DMP in 2021-2022, several major strategic initiatives were identified which offer overarching solutions to support the vision and principles especially, and which are needed to support the various tourism development projects which have been identified.

In addition, TMKU has had to be formulated during a very complex and challenging period in tourism development and broader changes in government policy. These have meant that careful consideration has had to be given to how visitor flows in a post-COVID environment will occur, how long supply chain disruptions will limit product capacity, and how important policy changes within government to move to a low carbon and more sustainable environment generally, will impact and guide visitor behaviour and future activity. Overarching all of this is the need to move forward with a co-governance partnership with mana whenua, to protect the special values of the place, and to work closely with the wider community to ensure that the social licence provided to

the visitor economy, is maintained, and visitors are warmly welcomed.

Most importantly, there is also the need to ensure that the tourism sector's economic and commercial viability is maintained and enhanced, so greater local employment can be generated, the sector's productivity is greatly improved so wages can be increased, and that profit margins can be grown so existing and proposed product can be more regularly reinvested in and maintained to a higher standard, where possible.

The strategies developed in this DMP, coupled with the strategic initiatives identified and the 60+ projects for tourism development, provide the recommended direction for the way forward. They also illustrate what is required to inspire and leverage the private sector and other non-government areas of investment to help deliver the outcomes needed for the short, medium, and longer-term, noting that TMKU covers a 100-year period (2022-2122). Gaining support for the direction forward amongst a wide group of stakeholders has taken time. The harder element is the actual delivery of the initiatives and projects to see them activated.

To implement the DMP, a Tourism Governance Group will need to be formed with representation across all major stakeholder groups. Their primary task will need to focus on the delivery and activation of the strategic level initiatives, coupled with activating the various tourism development projects. These projects have been ranked to illustrate those which should be able to be activated earlier, as the top 30 priority projects (termed tier 1, 2 and 3) along with the balance of the 60+ projects, such as ongoing

development of cycle and walkways, which are still important. Getting things happening is the key.

As government policies and direction change over time, and as market conditions shift along with product demand, a flexible approach to the prioritisation of projects is required. A Tourism Governance Group will need to keep a close eye on government policies and market changes, to enable projects to be reprioritised and market opportunities to be activated quickly and efficiently. A key requirement will be the ability to find mechanisms to fund the major strategic initiatives covering mana whenua development aspirations, infrastructure and environmental improvements which are now needed.

In summary - the where to from here - is about progressing the actual delivery and activation of TMKU, with a highly collaborative approach from all public and private sector stakeholders, working in unison and partnership with mana whenua.

