

Visitors flock to Manukau

By FAYE ADAMS

Manukau is bucking tourism trends with increasing numbers of people choosing to visit the city.

Over the past year visitor numbers have increased by 8 percent.

This is against regional and national trends, which have remained static and in some areas decreased.

City council senior tourism planner Vickie Allen attributes the success to developments such as the opening of the Pacific Events Centre, greater promotion of the region and initiatives such as the Welcome 2 Manukau website.

In addition retailers, particularly in the Clevedon and Whitford areas, are becoming more marketing savvy and launching products that appeal to tourists, she says.

"Products like a new vineyard or a shop that sells chocolates. People are realising they've got potential in the tourism industry not just the local industry.

"Visitors to New Zealand these days are looking for the small scale boutique experience, gardens, food and wine, engagement with the communities and New Zealanders."

Council figures show a 10 percent growth in visits to the city would contribute \$60 million to the local economy.

About 1000 new jobs would be created particularly in the accommodation, travel and service industries.

Council officers are updating the Welcome 2 Manukau website with an interactive map and launching a tourist route promoting the attractions of Whitford, Clevedon and Maraetai.

There are also preparations under way for the 2011 Rugby World Cup, which is expected to bring more than 60,000 visitors to the region.

"And that's just the people who have tickets for games, a whole lot of people will arrive alongside of it," says Mrs Allen.

"Then there's the build up and the legacy. It's going to be big, particularly for Auckland."

For more information about tourism in Manukau go to www.welcome2manukau.co.nz.