

# Mackenzie Tourism Insights

## January 2025



### Summary

- Tourism performance in the Mackenzie region during January 2025 closely aligned with national trends, with domestic visitor card spend declining slightly, international spending showing moderate growth, and accommodation activity experiencing only minor changes in occupancy rates.
- Domestic card spend fell by -4% YoY, while domestic guest nights in commercial accommodation declined slightly (-1% YoY). Meanwhile, international visitor activity grew significantly, with both card spend and guest nights increasing by +11-12% YoY.

### Detail

- In the international market, the strongest card spend growth was recorded in food & beverage serving (+51% YoY) and retail food & beverage (+40% YoY) products. This suggests an increasing preference among international visitors for dining out rather than self-catering. By contrast, domestic visitors exhibited the opposite trend, with retail food & beverage spend rising (+4% YoY) while food & beverage serving spend declined (-9% YoY).
- The Chinese market showed strong national growth in card spend (+43% YoY), reaching pre-COVID levels. Mackenzie significantly outperformed the national trend, with Chinese visitor card spend surging by +102% YoY, exceeding 2019 levels by +20%. This exceptional growth might partly be due to the timing of Chinese New Year, which began on January 29 this year.
- The decline in domestic card spend was primarily driven by a -6% YoY decrease in spending by Cantabrians, though this was partially offset by moderate growth in visitor spend from Auckland (+5% YoY). Notably, this growth was well ahead of the national trend, as Auckland visitor spend declined nationally (-4% YoY).
- Guest nights in commercial accommodation increased by +5% YoY, slightly outpacing the growth in available stay units (+3% YoY), leading to a minor occupancy rate increase of +1%pt. The overall rise in guest nights was exclusively driven by the international market, which recorded an +11% YoY increase.
- Among accommodation types, holiday parks & campgrounds (+32% YoY) and lodges & boutique accommodations (+7% YoY) captured more international guest nights over Jan '24 but saw declines in domestic guest nights. Conversely, small motels (up to 20 stay units) attracted significantly more domestic guest nights (+24% YoY) but recorded a sharp decline in international guest nights (-40% YoY).

- The short-term rental accommodation occupancy rate declined slightly (-1%pt YoY), a slower decline than the national average (-3%pt YoY). It is important to note that the overall drop in short-term rental occupancy is likely due to a significant data outage at the beginning of the month, when occupancy rates are typically higher. The percentage point changes should thus be only seen as a comparator to the national average. Daily occupancy levels showed a strong increase from mid to late January.
- Overall, employment in tourism-related industries grew by +6% YoY, significantly outpacing the national average (+1% YoY). The strongest job growth was observed in tourism-characteristic industries, including recreation services (+33% YoY) and travel & tour services (+8% YoY). Additionally, employment in food & beverage services increased by +5% YoY, supported by strong international visitor spending growth in food & beverage serving products (+51% YoY for the month, +46% YoY for the year-ending figures).

Note: The monthly Tourism Data Insights are provided by Vistr who are contracted by Mackenzie Tourism (part of Mackenzie District Council).