

Mackenzie Tourism Insights

October 2024



- Data for October 2024 indicated a challenging outlook for tourism in the Mackenzie region, with declines in visitor card spending and stable accommodation activity. However, there was a slight increase in tourism-related employment.
- Domestic (-2% YoY) and international (+3% YoY) guest nights outperformed declines in domestic (-13% YoY) and international (-2% YoY) visitor card spending. This points to reduced average spending per visitor or an increase in day trips.
- International card spending saw notable increases in food and beverages, with retail food and beverages rising by +35% YoY and food and beverage services by +41% YoY. The stronger growth in food and beverage services highlights a growing preference for dining out, a trend contrary to national patterns. This shift is reflected in employment trends, with food and beverage services recording a +5% YoY increase in filled jobs.
- Among the top five international markets, only the U.S., ranked 1st in card spend volume, recorded growth (+11% YoY). The "Africa and Middle East" market, ranked 8th, showed a significant increase of +46% YoY. Additionally, card spending from the 'Other' international market nearly doubled since August '24, rising from \$56K to \$110K, reflecting a growing use of alternative payment providers by international visitors.
- Domestic card spending declined sharply by -13% YoY, driven primarily by an -18% YoY drop in spending by Cantabrians. Notable exceptions included visitors from Waikato, who climbed from 6th to 5th place in card spend volume with a significant increase of +51% YoY, overtaking Wellington. Visitors from the Bay of Plenty and Hawke's Bay also showed strong growth, with spending up by +38% and +25% YoY, respectively. The only domestic spending category to avoid decline was retail food and beverage products, which rose slightly by +1% YoY.
- Total guest nights increased marginally by +1% YoY, but the commercial accommodation occupancy rate fell by -2%pt YoY due to a +5% YoY increase in available stay units. Guest nights in motels with over 20 units grew substantially (+23% YoY), while smaller motels (up to 20 units) saw a steep decline (-33% YoY), driven by a -69% drop in international guest nights. International visitors increasingly favored larger motels (+14% YoY) and lodges & boutique accommodations (+13% YoY).
- Short-term rental occupancy remained stable (+1% YoY), buoyed by high rates early in the month during school holidays, with peak occupancy reaching 88%. Labour Day weekend also contributed to strong occupancy rates.
- Tourism-related employment rose slightly (+2% YoY), driven by a +5% YoY increase in food and beverage services jobs and a +18% YoY growth in travel and tour services jobs.

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