

Mackenzie Tourism Insights

May 2025



Spending grows while guest nights slip

In the Mackenzie Region, both domestic card spend (+16% YoY) and international card spend (+2% YoY) increased in May, while guest nights declined (domestic: -1% YoY; international: -2% YoY). This divergence suggests a rise in average spend per visitor or an increase in day trip activity, particularly among domestic visitors where the gap is more pronounced.

Card spending remains strong, led by food and beverage

May marked another strong month for card spend, following similar momentum in April (domestic: +20% YoY; international: +6% YoY). The top two spending categories—food and beverage retail and serving—grew significantly across both markets. Domestic spend rose +34% YoY and +24% YoY, while international spend jumped +56% YoY and +25% YoY in these categories, respectively.

Monthly domestic spending rebounds after year-end slump in Canterbury, Otago, Auckland

Domestic card spend was up +16% YoY, supported by key markets: Canterbury (+13% YoY), Otago (+16% YoY), and Auckland (+14% YoY). These results contrast sharply with the year-ending May '25 figures, where domestic spend fell -9% YoY overall, with declines in Canterbury (-9% YoY), Otago (-2% YoY), and Auckland (-11% YoY), driven by downturns beginning in July 2024.

Spend climbs with US growth, while UK sees ongoing decline

International card spend growth (+2% YoY) was led by the US (+29% YoY), the 'Rest of Asia' (excluding China, Japan, and Korea: +4% YoY), and the 'Rest of Europe' (excluding the UK and Germany: +10% YoY). However, all of these underperformed compared to their respective national averages (+36% YoY, +18% YoY, and +12% YoY). The UK market continued its decline, with card spend down -42% YoY.

Slight overall sector decline, stable occupancy, short-term rentals strengthen

Commercial accommodation in Mackenzie declined slightly (-1% YoY guest nights), while occupancy remained stable (0%pt) due to a -3% YoY drop in available stay units. Guest arrivals

increased slightly (+1% YoY), but were offset by a -2% YoY drop in average nights stayed. In contrast, short-term rental occupancy improved +2%pt over May '24, particularly at the beginning of the month.

Large motels and apartments lead YoY growth across accommodation types

Large motels and apartments (>20 units) saw the strongest growth among accommodation types, with guest nights up +13% YoY, driven by increases in both guest arrivals (+11% YoY) and average stay length (+2% YoY). Growth was consistent across domestic (+11% YoY) and international (+17% YoY) markets. Other accommodation types declined compared to May 2024.

Mackenzie faces an early seasonal drop in tourism jobs

Tourism-related employment in Mackenzie District dropped sharply by -10% YoY in May, well below the national average (0% YoY). The decline was led by food and beverage (-10% YoY) and accommodation (-18% YoY), with additional losses in travel and tour services (-17% YoY) and recreation services (-14% YoY), pointing to an earlier seasonal downturn in tourism activity.

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