

clearing weather. The locals also point out that if the weather was perfect everyone would want to live at Haast!

Haast people are keen to work with Forest and Bird to build on these successful tours. They want to encourage more tourists to spend a few days holidaying in South Westland rather than the usual overnight stop at the glaciers and a headlong rush to Queenstown or vice versa. June Johnston hopes to attract more Forest and Bird members. "They are ideal visitors. They always enjoy Haast and don't expect city-style entertainment."

### Knocking down the barriers

This view is endorsed by Ian who believes it is time to "knock down the barriers" between Haast people and conservationists as there is so much to be gained through co-operation.

One way this can be achieved is to jointly promote sensitive tourist development of the region's natural areas. Top of the list is a visitors centre to inform tourists of the available attractions and activities. Attractions within easy reach of Haast that could be featured in the visitors centre include the following:

- seal and penguin colonies
- kahikatea swamp forests and unique sand dune forests
- Cascade Forest and the Red Hills
- Jackson Bay and the Smoothwater Valley
- Arawata Valley
- Lakes Ellery, Mary, Moeraki and Paringa
- Tawharekiri wetland and its 20km of canoeable waterways

- Landsborough River valley (rafting, tramping)
- Hooker-Landsborough wilderness
- Paringa-Haast cattle track



*Brian and Phillippa Glubb, Haast motorcamp proprietors, are keen to see a Haast visitor centre established.*

Other essential developments include the upgrading of existing sub-standard forest and coastal walks and the building of several strategically placed additional tracks. Haast could have New Zealand's first kahikatea swamp forest walk — at present most tourists can only peer at these incredible forests from the roadside. A track through the unique sand dune forest alongside the Hapuka estuary by the motor camp would also be popular.

The Haast tourist operators are aware that they need to provide a greater range of activities for tourists. Brian and Phillippa Glubb are looking to provide canoes for hire so tourists can experience the quiet flax and

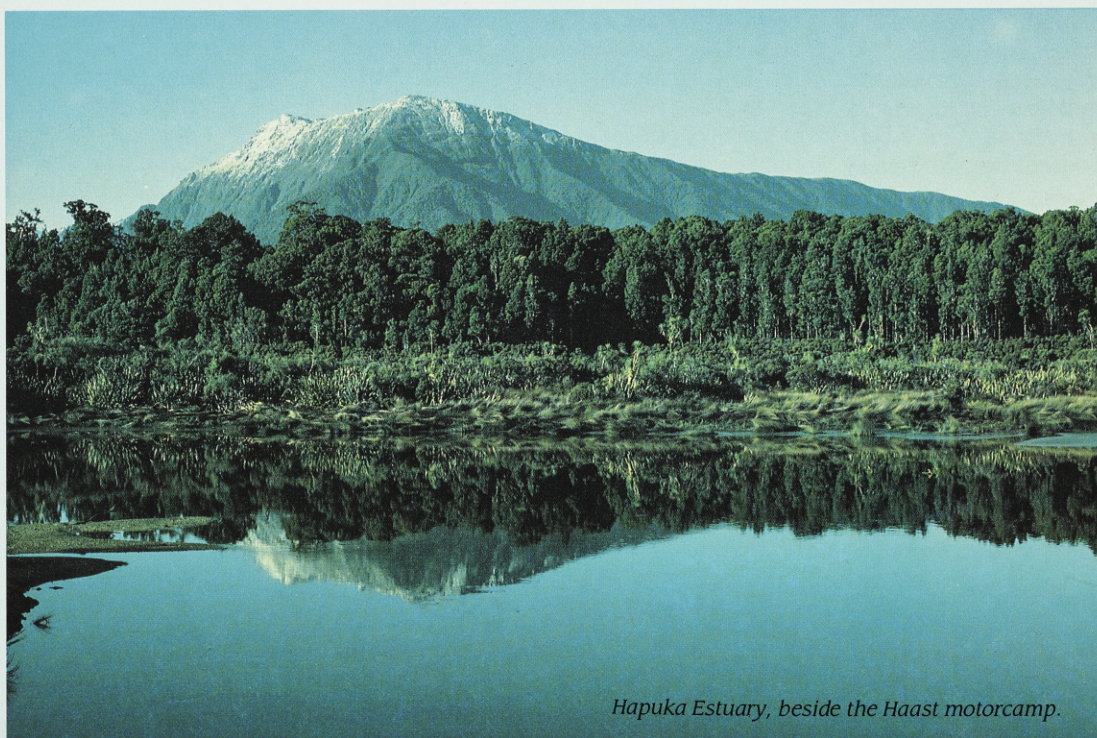
kowhai-lined waterways that penetrate the forest behind their motor camp.

They are also hopeful DoC will resume the nature programme run at Haast in 1983-85, since terminated. DoC's guided activities and evening talks can play a key role in encouraging tourists to stay longer in the region.

John Dennes, one of the new owners of the 120-bed Haast Hotel, is keen to offer recreational activities to get the bus-bound and fly-drive tourists who stop overnight, out enjoying the Haast environment. The hotel works in with Aspiring Air, which offers scenic flights to Mt Aspiring and Milford Sound, and with local helicopter operator Dave Saxton who can land visitors at a beautiful alpine lake only a few minutes flying time from the hotel.

Tourism earns nearly a \$100 million for the West Coast each year, far more than the troubled sawmill industry. In remote localities like Haast, it has a competitive advantage over sawmilling with which it is competing for the forests. This is clearly evident in the traditional tourist towns of Fox Glacier and Franz Josef, the only South Westland towns to prosper over the last decade. In Haast tourism is already one of the major employers and has a better growth potential than fishing and farming, the other economic mainstays. By co-operating with local people and promoting sensitive tourist development, conservationists can help make conservation more acceptable in this strategically located small community. ✈

## HAAST PEOPLE WELCOME VISITORS



*Hapuka Estuary, beside the Haast motorcamp.*

*"Now you know what Haast has to offer, come and enjoy our beautiful environment."*

*For more information on a Haast holiday write to:  
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