

MEDIA RELEASE
23 February 2009



RECORD NUMBERS VISIT FLIGHT CENTRE'S 2009 TRAVEL EXPOS

- **Approximately 30,000 visitors to three Expos around New Zealand**
- **Wellington and Christchurch visitor numbers increase significantly**
- **More than \$60,000 raised in charity travel auctions held for the first time**

Flight Centre's 2009 Travel Expos saw approximately 30,000 people visiting the three shows around New Zealand, the highest number of visitors since the Expos inception in 1999.

Visitor numbers to the popular Expos, held in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, have increased by more than 10 per cent on last year and Tamsyn Alley, general manager marketing at Flight Centre, is thrilled with the results.

"We are extremely pleased with the results of all three Expos. It's a challenging economic environment at the moment, however the visitor numbers to our Expos show people are still interested in travelling.

"Each year we strive to provide consumers with the most comprehensive travel expo in the market and give suppliers the opportunity to showcase their products to the largest number of potential travellers.

"This year we have exceeded expectations and we couldn't be happier with the results," said Ms Alley.

Visitors to the two-day Auckland Expo were up slightly on previous years, however Wellington and Christchurch were the biggest surprise with a visitor increase of 33 per cent at each of the Expos.

"The atmosphere at the Wellington and Christchurch Expos was electric. Feedback from suppliers and consultants was that people were there to book and take advantage of the exclusive expo deals.

"We were also able to take advantage of other travel shows that did not provide on-the-spot bookings, with enquiry levels to our stores increasing over the past weekend," said Ms Alley.

Sales figures from all three expos were comparable to last year.

"For us to hold strong on attendance numbers and bookings at our expos, given the current economic climate, is an extremely positive result for us and a great sign for the travel industry this year," Ms Alley said.

For the first time, travel auctions were held with a range of holiday packages and air travel available for purchase at below market rates, raising more than \$60,000 for two disaster relief efforts.

\$45,000 was raised at both Auckland and Wellington Expos to aid disaster relief in Fiji, while \$15,400 was raised at the Christchurch Expo which will go directly to the Victorian Bushfire Appeal through the New Zealand Red Cross.

“Both Fiji and Victoria have seen great devastation over the past two months and the travel auctions were a chance for Flight Centre to aid relief efforts by auctioning travel packages,” said Ms Alley.

While expectations have been for short haul holidays to increase as consumers spending decreases, long haul holidays are still continuing to sell well, particularly at this year’s Expos.

“Interest in Asian destinations is high, particularly as the Kiwi dollar is still buying great value in many Asian destinations. Cruising is a popular option with increasing itinerary choices and all-inclusive packages attracting customers to this type of holiday,” said Ms Alley.

Ms Alley also noted that despite the dip in the Kiwi dollar, the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States of America are still popular destinations with many offers at the Expos representing exceptional value to travellers at this time.

Ms Alley went on to say that feedback on consumer travel from both suppliers and consultants at all expos was positive with many people choosing to book their holidays on the day and take advantage of the unbeatable deals at New Zealand’s largest expo.

“There were extremely competitive airline deals and packages available at each Expo with a range of destinations available. Consumers were absolutely there to purchase their travel and it’s encouraging to see this level of positive feedback from consumers.”

With such success from all three Travel Expos, Flight Centre confirms it will continue its Expo model going forward into 2010.

- ENDS -

For more information or images from any of the three Travel Expos, please contact:

Marie Pilkington
Flight Centre
Mob: +64 21 753 767
Email: marie.pilkington@flightcentre.co.nz